

Mind's Eye Theatre™

LAW S *of the* Night

STORYTELLERS GUIDE



A Sourcebook for Mind's Eye Theatre

VAMPIRE
THE MASQUERADE

Mind's Eye Theatre®

BAWS *of the* Night

STORYTELLERS GUIDE

from Ancient Hearth-fires

Once cavemen told each other stories of the day's hunt, of the things beyond the firelight. In these modern nights, we tell each other stories of hunters again — hunters who shun the sunlight and seek human blood for sustenance. What lies outside the streetlight's beam? What hides in the alley's shadow? What stories will you tell to keep the darkness at bay?

Under tonight's streetlights

This book is chock full of exciting information to build richer **Masquerade** chronicles. Want to bring in a very different antagonist? Here are the Baali, the Nagarajah, the True Brujah. Want to try something different at your next game? Here's how to play with flashbacks and other new Storytelling techniques. Plus, information for running better crossovers and a few pointers, such as the Internet's place in your game or how to build more exciting scene descriptions.



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SLOPPY SECONDS

Bronger's Park isn't my favorite place, even on a good night. The layout frankly stinks — it's mostly a long slope overgrown with creeping vines and brush that runs down into a valley where the fog collects and a little stream meanders through. Not much for lights, which means the place turns into a pit after dark. The original idea for the place came from some Audubon Society do-gooder who wanted something "natural." In this city, "natural" means "neglected," so Bronger's is now a favorite after-dark spot for just about anything that shouldn't be happening in public. Consequently, Gina and I (who play beat cops for the brick who likes to pretend he's sheriff) spend a lot of time there.

Over the past six months, there'd been a bunch of bodies showing up in the valley, all with serious blood loss and strange mutilations, which means we've got to assume the worst. Even better, the bodies had been found by mortals out for their morning jog or walking the pooch or whatever, and the papers were all over it, yammering about serial killers. So Prince Warner is screaming at the brick for the heads of the Masquerade-breakers, which means the brick is screaming for ours if we can't hunt this bastard down. Which brings us to tonight.

We're hanging out in Gina's car in the upper parking lot, watching the lower lot and waiting for something to show up. Gina's grumbling



about how much she had to pull down with the police so they didn't run us off park grounds like necking kids, I'm mentally calculating my odds on tomorrow night's races, and it's the 10th night running we've been on stakeout, with nothing. That's when a car pulls into the empty parking lot below us. Gina nudges me, and I lean over for a look. Older model sedan, dark color, with the plate-light disabled. I make a mental note to check the plate and have it run.

The car parks, cuts its lights and sits in the darkness for a few minutes. Finally, the driver's door opens, and a dark-skinned man in a suit gets out. No one I recognize. The passenger side opens too, and a black girl gets out. She's dressed in a nice-looking skirt and white sweater, maybe a college student.

They start heading for the crude stairway of dirt and railroad ties that goes down through the creeper and into the valley. My hand's on the door handle, but Gina lays a warning hand on my arm. No, not yet. They descend, and as they dip just below sight and out of hearing range, she opens her car door and we follow.

We descend from the upper parking lot to the lower one, and I check the car as we pass — a dealer's drive-off plate, damn him. Still, the car isn't one I recognize from the parking lots during court. Now we're moving into the weed-choked darkness, following the faint trail they're leaving behind. Gina's leading — I'm following what I can see of her dark jacket and pale hands in the starlight. Around us, the trees seem to close in, like great hands cupping around an insect to trap it. I'm no more paranoid than usual, but this feels different. It feels like something is watching us, maybe from the trees or laying in the masses of creeper. I shrug my jacket into place, tapping at the two stakes and silenced pistol I've got laying in wait.

We're approaching the valley. I can smell water and damp soil, hear the faint gurgle of the stream passing over rocks. The rest of the woods is strangely quiet — no birds, no crickets, nothing but the water. The watching feeling is getting stronger; my fists clench, almost automatically. Then there's another smell — incense of some sort, something exotic, spicy. I stop on the trail to get a better read on the situation. Now I hear what sounds like groans, and I pause. Caution turns to frustration. Christ. Just two kine wanting a cheap place to rut. I reach for the hood on Gina's jacket to pull her back, but she's stepped out of my reach. Irritated, I try to close the distance between us, and that's when the other smell hits me.

Blood.

I ate earlier, so I'm not feeling hungry. The cool air of the valley now seems more like a slaughterhouse — thick, moist, strangely warm, the



incense mingling with the coppery stench in a mix that's starting to make me queasy. I almost crash into Gina, who is standing stock-still on the trail. We look at each other, and I know what she's thinking, because I'm thinking it too: Found him. Whether it's a messy Kindred, or a kine gone batshit, we found our valley serial killer.

She's holding her flashlight (which could cold-cock a man) like a club. I check again for my means, and take out my pistol. She motions to me that we should circle around and catch him from behind. I motion that I think otherwise, but she indicates he's currently too busy to notice us. I sigh inwardly — at least her risks are calculated ones.

I creep through the brush, trying not to think about what could be under my feet, focusing on the noise the whole time. I can just make out movement about 10 feet away. I remember the student girl had that white sweater, and what's ahead of me looks darker. The sounds are starting to change, but I'm not sure what's happening. I hear wet, meaty tearing... gulping... little growls deep inside the throat....

I see Gina about three feet from me, and the slashing motion she uses to indicate "get ready." I turn my face toward the noise, pistol in hand and ready to scare *something* shitless. Someone is squatting on the ground, bent over something dark, and the growls and groans seem to be coming from him. Gina's flashlight clicks. Suddenly the guy's in a spotlight, and my evening meal is trying to climb my throat.

The man turns on us, snarling with surprise, his mouth a bloody gash in his face. Blood runs from his open mouth, and I realize he doesn't have fangs. In one hand is a lump of dripping, maroon-colored flesh. The student, her mocha skin now ashen and mottled, is laying under him, her eyes wide and blank. Her white sweater has turned mostly crimson. The smell of blood, incense and death would make a lesser man faint.

The guy drops his meal and makes a run for Gina, who's too stunned by the scene to react. The flashlight is knocked from her hand, hits the ground, and the beam rolls before it's stopped by a tree and lights up the dead girl's face. He shouts a bunch of gibberish, and Gina briefly whirls past me, her hands batting at her face and she's screaming something like "Get them off me!" I've got a stake in my hands, and I'm trying to find this guy, and suddenly it's there's hundreds of angry voices howling and screaming in my ears, and tiny mouths biting me, digging into my flesh. I drop the stake while I'm trying to fight off whatever's swarming me. Whatever it is, I can't lay hands on it — even as I swat at my face, I'm getting bitten on my hands and mouth.

Even in the middle of this Charlie Foxtrot, I manage to crash into the monster. As I'm fumbling desperately for the other stake, he grabs my tie to pull me toward him. I can see his teeth — all pointed, like



a shark's. I try to find enough purchase to push his face away, but the swarm is making it tough. He yanks my head back and starts to bite into my cheek — he's actually ripping the flesh out of my face, and his teeth are scraping the bone—

He shrieks and drops me. I look up through a haze of pain, and he's facing down Gina, spitting out the hunk of my cheek as he does. The stake I dropped earlier is buried in his left flank, the point sticking bloodily out of his lower ribs. Maybe we're more fight than he planned for. Maybe he just wants to get away. For whatever reason, he turns and runs. I tell Gina to follow him, but the swarm of... whatever... makes a last pass at her, she trips and falls a couple times, and that's the end of that. I hear tires squealing as his car peels out of the parking lot.

I will my mangled cheek to close over so I don't lose more blood. Gina returns, picks up her flashlight, and I can see she has dozens of tiny gouges, like bite-marks, all over her exposed hands and face, like me. Her hands are shaking and her pallor is pronounced as we turn our attention to the student. It's hard to tell what killed her — the massive bite to the throat, blood loss (the ground is saturated with it), the long jagged knife-wound down her torso, her missing liver...

The air in the valley has definitely turned hostile. It sounds strange, I know, but it's not a friendly place to be right now. We both stagger up the hill to retrieve the tarp kept in the trunk for clean-ups, and spend a few minutes fixing the crime scene as fast as we can — unidentifiable lumps of flesh, blood-spattered leaves, soil that practically screams when we step on it — always within sight of each other. The paranoia and menace I felt earlier is returning with a vengeance, and whatever's out there is pissed at us for disturbing what happened. Caine forbid this thing comes back for a doggy bag.

As soon as things look passable, we stow the body in the trunk and get the hell out of there.

* * * *

My elder, Matisse, doesn't turn around from the monitor when Gina and I come in, and at first, I think he didn't hear us. His fingers are moving a mile a minute on the keyboard, his concentration on the scrolling words. After a few moments of this, I clear my throat, and his fingers pause, hovering above the keyboard. He leans toward the monitor as if scrutinizing something, then says, "Ah, Nick. Is Gina with you?"

"Yes, sir," I reply.

There's a pause, he seems to take a breath, and I know he's adjusting forms. Gina's cool with usual Nosferatu attire, but it's still polite to put a face on for company. After a few moments, he turns to us, wearing his usual mask. Normally, Matisse isn't one to show when he's rattled, but I see his



eyes widen as he takes us in — bites, blood and all. In the next moment, he's all business. "Tell me everything."

I notice Gina's hands starting to shake again, and decide I'd better do the talking. Matisse doesn't say a word while I tell what happened, just looking at me with that long, thoughtful stare that he uses every time he gets secondhand info.

I wind up by mentioning the body in the trunk and how things currently stand down at Bronger's, and he just nods and doesn't say anything. He seems to be considering the space on the floor in front of us, pursing his lips, and the lines on his forehead getting deeper by the minute. You could power a city block with the tension in this place.

Finally, he glances up at us with hooded eyes. Maybe he thinks we're bullshitting him. I feel Gina tensing beside me, and God's truth, I am too. I know I wasn't dreaming tonight; I know Gina wasn't, and there's a body in our trunk that says we weren't.

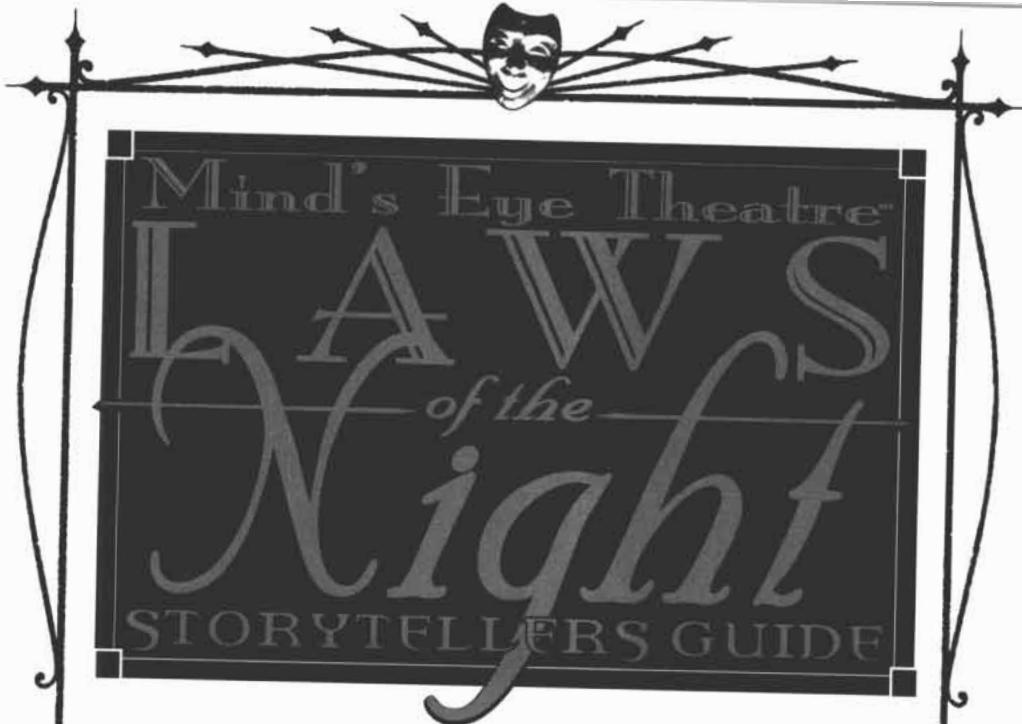
"So what was it?" I ask.

That's when Matisse, my always-knows elder, who probably never admitted he was stumped in his last life or this one, looks confused. He hesitates before he says: "I have no idea."

For the first time that night, I'm frightened.



[Storytellers Guide]





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Sean Carter (order #19521)



INTRODUCTION

Are you a Storyteller? Are you an Assistant Storyteller or Narrator? Do you entertain notions of becoming a Storyteller? Well, come on in, because this book is for you!

This is part translation from the *Vampire Storytellers Handbook*, part collection of things Storytellers are likely to find helpful and exciting. It's not about being given a Bible of Storytelling *Mind's Eye Theatre* or a mandate on how to run your game. Think of it as a bunch of Storytellers hanging out with our feet up, a cold one in hand (non-alcoholic, of course), talking about this thing we love and hate and spend so much of our free time on.

Come in, have a seat, the soda's in the fridge, and let's get cozy.

GATECRASHERS

We're fully aware that even now there are players picking up this book. Now there is some material that they might find helpful, but it may not mean their intentions are altruistic. Maybe they want to try trumping the Storyteller with her own tools, or maybe they want to "be prepared" for the Storyteller's next tricks. We play as well as Storytell, and there's something to be said for reading the Storyteller sections to figure out what's ahead.

That said, trying to use what you've read to trump the Storyteller is frankly not nice. Remember way back in *Laws of the Night*, where we said the object of the game was not winning but telling stories? That's not the action of someone who wants to tell a story, but who wants to win, who wants to beat the Storyteller at her own game. It seems to us that all that will accomplish is spoiling potential surprises for other players, and creating antagonism (or adding to it).



So, even if you're bound and determined to read ahead, at least refrain from being a weasel and spoiling your fellow players' enjoyment of the evening's entertainments. If you're bursting to tell someone about the neat things you've read and created already, tell your pets, dig a hole in the backyard and tell the worms or scribble it out to yourself. Let the story unfold in its own time and let the Storyteller do her job.

How to Use This Book

As stated earlier, this is part translation from *Vampire Storytellers Handbook* and part collection of interesting topics that a Storyteller might find value in. We also included the new blood magic paths from *Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy*.

You'll find things in here you disagree with—that's always a given. But there's also things in here that you can agree with. Hopefully there's information in here that makes you pause and reconsider your chronicle or gets you excited about a story that seemed to be dying ungracefully or solves a persistent problem.

Chapter One: Introduction—The official welcome to the party.

Chapter Two: The Thousand Eyes—Here's an introduction to some of the most disturbing denizens of the World of Darkness, and their murderous ways.

Chapter Three: Blood Magic—The new blood magic paths and rituals from *Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy*.

Chapter Four: Wheels Within Wheels—In this section, you'll find the conspiracies to make the Freemasons look like child's play, from the *Manus Nigrum* to the Week of Nightmares.

Chapter Five: Storyteller Help—Did a player figure out your plot too early? Wondering what to do with the Web? Want to try something different in your chronicle but don't know where to start? Look here!

Chapter Six: Under One Dark Sky—We know you're going to do it. Crossovers, that is. If you're going to do it, you might as well do it safely, and this chapter will help you out.

OTHER PLACES, OTHER GAMES

Sometimes, there's only so much we can get between the covers. In between the rules, or the art, or the mood-setting fiction, things get dropped to make room and often get forgotten. Maybe we realized as the book was headed for the printers that we could have added more on this topic, or said something on that topic, or we completely forgot about that other topic. With that in mind, check out the **Mind's Eye Theatre Journals** for more interesting information about problem players, ideas on handling tough situations in your game and other pithy advice.

While the majority of the content was adapted from *Vampire Storytellers Guide*, that doesn't necessarily mean that everything in here is strictly for *Masquerade* play. Storytellers of *Shining Host* or *Apocalypse* may find some useful things about dealing with players or considering new story ideas. So, if you have fellow Storytellers struggling like you are, pass them this book. They'll be glad you did.



I DON'T NEED A STORYTELLER GUIDE!

Sure, there are going to be some folks that say, "I've got my chronicle under control, I don't need someone else's buttinsky advice, and everything's cool." That's great you're so confident about the state of your chronicle. As we said, we're not out to tell you otherwise. But for those times when you're not so sure, we'll be here and waiting.

THE STORYTELLER'S CREED

We all have those nights when the thought of Storytelling makes us green with fright. We don't know why we're putting ourselves through this torture; we second-guess ourselves when we make judgment calls; we cringe at the thought of refereeing a fight. Consider the mission statement of Storytellers everywhere. Repeat this mantra when you find yourself questioning why you're hauling yourself out to a game, when you need confidence to tell someone his request is (to put it politely) addled or when you just need that extra boost to remind yourself what it's all about.

Take this book and head for your favorite mirror, something that will allow you to see a little more of yourself than, say, a compact. Now, look yourself in the eye and repeat:

I am the Storyteller. I am here to tell stories.

People come to me to have a good time, and I will do my best to give it to them.

Without the story, there is no game. A good story is my goal and my guide.

I will recognize that I can't please everyone, no matter what I do. When in doubt, I will favor the story.

I will be fair and balanced in my judgments. I will not play favorites or punish without cause.

I will do what is best for the game — I will deny the bad character concept, the unreasonable request, whining and temper tantrums.

I will have the guts to do what is necessary, especially when it's unpleasant, be it mediating a dispute or banishing a disruptive player.

I will do my best to be open to the players' needs and understanding of their concerns.

If a player comes to me with a grievance, I will listen and try to help her.

If ever I find myself not having fun, I will give myself a break rather than let the game or players suffer.

I am the Storyteller. Let the story unfold.

Now that that's done, let's get to work.





CHAPTER TWO: THE THOUSAND EYES

In this chapter are three bloodlines that have almost vanished from the World of Darkness, and with very good reason. The Cainites herein have bloodily carved out places for themselves, and found roosts upon which to squat (most usually consisting of a pile of elegantly butchered corpses). As the opening story shows, these creatures are rare. Even elders are unlikely to have heard of these vampires beyond a few stories whispered in the corners at a grand conclave, or So-and-so's sire having a particular encounter back in 1547, or the like. In short, any encounters with these creatures should be suitably momentuous. Because of the frightful powers of their Disciplines and their "lifestyles", these Cainites can easily throw game balance out the window into heavy traffic. They are best used as Storyteller characters.

The fact that not even elders know much about these monsters should put the fear of Caine in the younger generations. What Man (and Kindred) does not know, he fears, and here are no less than three bloodlines that the majority of Western Kindred know nothing about. Resist the temptation to put one of each in every city — that defeats the purpose of their rarity. When they do appear on the screen, make their time memorable, and impress on the characters that the World of Darkness has some secrets not worth knowing.



B A A L I

Even monsters have their bogeymen. To their erstwhile cousins, the Baali are the devils under the bed. Legend claims that an Antediluvian dallied with a singing slave-boy, and the youth turned against the Third Generation. He wrought foul pacts with those who hid between the shadows of this world and the next and gathered followers from his Cainite siblings. Calling himself *shaitan*, he and his followers made war against the Second City. The Third Generation ended the war with the deaths of the *shaitan's* generals, routing their hordes. None knew what happened to the *shaitan* himself, and the names of what he had served were lost to the night.

Once thought eradicated by the Inquisition, the Baali have come into the awareness (and enmity) of modern Cainites and are rooted out wherever they are found. Faced with an infestation of Baali, Camarilla and Sabbat often set aside personal agendas to burn the offending nest from sight. The recent unearthing of a Baali hive, along with the recovery of their unholy tomes, has cast doubt on the long-held belief of their destruction.

Never numerous, the ranks of the Baali have dwindled even further in recent nights as more and more succumb to a wasting erosion of spirit. They are beset on all sides by the Camarilla, Sabbat, and a host of enemies, and their internal unity fractures nightly. Their havens are visible to those who know the signs — strange sigils in hillsides, the prevalence of places of power, children and livestock in nearby villages born deformed. Contrary to popular belief, they are not the cackling, mustachioed minions of evil, but sages and academics intent on the discovery of knowledge few others have the courage to pursue. They are evangelists, of a sort, bent on the task of bringing all to destruction for the greater glory of Those-Who-Wait.

Roleplaying Hints: While some Demons do fit the tongue-wagging, leather-clad devil worshipper profile, most Baali look on these as marks of immaturity or, in more persistent cases, evidence of someone seriously missing the point. It becomes difficult to convert the faithless if you cannot be taken seriously. Seduce your prey, not with wild displays of "evil" but with a genteel and urbane offer of enlightenment. Let them know that the truth is theirs to be had, if they but ask for it. Do not force the issue. The sweetest conquest comes from the willingly conquered.

As Baali age and grow wise in the ways of their masters, they fall further and further from their human roots. Many older Demons develop an affection for vermin, keeping them as pets or companions, sometimes in vast hordes to rival those of the Nosferatu. Many young Demons have Humanity (albeit abysmally low), but fall off rapidly and take up a different path. Some older Baali follow the *Path of Cathari* or *Death and the Soul*. Recently, though many have taken up the *Path of Evil Revelations* and *Power and the Inner Voice*. There are whispers of a Path particular to Demons, the *Path of the Hive*, but none have dared get close enough to the Baali to know for sure.

Disciplines: *Daimoinon, Obfuscate, Presence*

Advantage: The very existence of the Demons is bent toward the discovery of dark secrets and hidden lore. By their nature, the Baali seek out



forbidden knowledge and forgotten paths to power. As a result, all who come to the Blood gain a free *Occult Ability* to reflect their rigorous study of the darkest roads. This focus is not exclusive to the magical world. The Baali treasure all forms of learning and typically make inroads into academia and the halls of mundane power as easily as in the occult world. Neonate Demons may also choose one bonus trait in *University* or *Occult Influence*.

Disadvantage: Perhaps because of the nature of their patrons, or even if just the lingering ghosts of human morality, the Baali are particularly affected by acts of faith. When confronting a mortal with True Faith, all Baali must risk twice the normal number of Traits to even have a chance of succeeding. If struck by a holy symbol wielded by one of True Faith, the Baali takes twice the damage normally inflicted. Most cannot even handle any paraphernalia related to religion.



The Thousand Eyes



NAGARAJA

Reviled for their unsavory practices by all but the most charitable of Kindred, the Nagaraja's ranks have eroded in these late nights to the point of insignificance. Once rumored to be members of a secret cult called the Black Hand, the bloodline is no more than a handful now. A war deep in the Underworld has whittled away at their ranks until less than 20 (some sources say no more than a dozen) remain.

Most tales put their origins somewhere in the Middle East, but rumor and truth are nigh indistinguishable when it comes to the Nagaraja. What is known is that they are necromancers on par with (or greater) than the Giovanni, that their troves of blasphemous knowledge are prodigious and that not only the blood of their victims is needed to sate their hunger but the flesh as well. Victims of their hungers are often a beacon to the Camarilla and Sabbat, who hunt them mercilessly.

With their numbers shrinking nightly and their eldest destroyed, there aren't many takers who would wager on the Nagaraja's continued existence. Isolated from Kindred and kine alike by their gruesome diet, hunted by the ghosts they once commanded, the Flesh Eaters can do little but hide and watch the world go by, eking out meager unlivings before Final Death comes at last.

Rumors have filtered west from Korea of an ancient court of Eastern vampires offering a dozen or so of the surviving Flesh Eaters sanctuary, but poor relations between Cathayans and Cainites have prevented confirmation. If the rumors are true, perhaps the Nagarajah are not finished, but biding their time and gaining strength. The wise Cainite rules nothing out.

Roleplaying Hints: Yours is a solitary existence, an unlif of discipline and study. Those that may have once been your allies have all perished beyond the Shroud. Those who were your slaves pursue you in hopes of taking vengeance. You do not have the luxury of the occasional misstep. Only a handful of your blood remains, and you mean to keep yours as long as possible. You cannot afford the extravagance of Humanity. Your very existence denies it, calling out for the flesh of the kine to sate its terrible hunger. Immortality is precious and terrible, power its only salve. Cling to both and you just might live to eat the flesh from your enemies' bones. There can be no sweeter morsel than that.

The peculiarities of the Nagarajah diet leave little room for maintaining one's Humanity. As a result most Flesh Eaters opt for the vampiric Paths of morality and often choose the *Path of the Bones* or *Death and the Soul*.

Disciplines: Auspex, Dominate, Necromancy

Advantage: Hunted for millenia as the most vile of monsters, the Nagaraja have developed a knack for deception, if only for the sake of concealing their studies and dietary needs. All Nagaraja receive a free Subterfuge Ability. In addition, their scholarly pursuits and morbid interests lead them to make inroads as they can in fields where such things might, at the very least, be tolerated if not appreciated. Each may choose one Medicine, Occult or University Influence trait at no cost.



Disadvantage: Not only must a Nagaraja drink blood to maintain her existence, she must also eat of her prey's flesh. Without fresh meat, a Nagaraja's body wastes away. As with Blood Traits, a mortal has 10 Flesh Traits. Unlike blood, however, each Flesh Trait consumed by one of the Nagaraja inflicts one health level of unspeakable lethal damage — this is not skimming off the top, but loss of muscle tissue or organs. For every night that a Nagaraja does not eat at least one Flesh Trait, she loses two Physical Traits as her body withers away. This deficit must be repaid in full before she can return to complete health. Every point of flesh consumed after such an episode restores two Physical Traits, up to the character's normal maximum.

Nagaraja do not have retractable fangs like other Kindred. Instead, their mouths are full of sharp teeth like a piranha's.





TRUE BRUJAH

Every family has its secrets. The True Brujah have borne one such secret for centuries. Sagacious and erudite, the Elois are the scholars the Brujah often aspire to be, ensconced in their studies as firmly as iron rods set in stone. Sage philosophers that they are, the True Brujah bear a legacy of bitterness as well.

It is the claim of the Elois that the founder of their blood was slain by its childe ages ago, and that those who claim the name Brujah are no more than the bastard childer of that ancient diablerist. Carthage, they say, the city so lauded and lamented by their cousins was, in fact, the pinnacle of their achievements, where they strode godlike over the night. As timeless as the Kindred themselves, the Elois's resentment for their fractious kin festers into these nights.

For all their claims of once-shared blood, the True Brujah hold none of their cousins' passion. Cold and imperturbable, the Elois pursue ancient lore and discourse with serpentlike detachment. Indeed their Blood does seem to deaden the spirit as it preserves the flesh, immutable as stone. And for all their vaunted mastery of *Temporis*, time itself bears hard upon them, each descending into anachronism as the present climbs swiftly from the past, unable to muster warmth enough to thaw their glacial ways.

Events of recent nights have struck hard again at the Elois. As with the Nagaraja, the True Brujah found shelter and collaboration in the Black Hand cult. Since the destruction of that order and some of the eldest of their blood along with it, the Elois have sought allies where they may, particularly with their African neighbors, the Followers of Set. Though they do not share philosophies, there is some common ground between them. Each seeks hidden knowledge though to different ends, and in these nights, when safe haven is a scarce commodity, that much is more than enough.

Roleplaying Hints: Passion is the haven of the ignorant, emotion the crutch of mediocrity. You are of the true blood and lifted far above such things. All things are yours to observe and understand. Calm is the tool of the learned. Be calm. Disdain the ignorant and the unrestrained. Be patient and wise. When time at last runs out, you alone will remain to watch a universe die.

Most True Brujah adhere to Humanity, though elders sometimes espouse the ideals of Paths of Enlightenment unique to them alone. There are even the infrequent followers of the *Path of Typhon* among those True Brujah who have dealings with the Setites.

Disciplines: *Potence, Presence, Temporis*

Advantage: The True Brujah are academics without peer. They typically devote their long unives to obscure and esoteric pursuits, gathering vast pools of knowledge over uncountable subjects. As a result, each True Brujah receives one Academics Ability at no cost and may choose an additional Ability in any one *Lore* for no cost as well.

While solitary by nature, the Elois do value discourse and intellectual debate very highly. To this end, the clan meets twice each century to discuss current developments and argue the finer points of philosophy. Some small cells continue this contact between the larger meetings and occasionally assist their brethren in scholastic pursuits.



Disadvantage: Even as it lends vigor to their long-dead flesh, so does the blood of the Elois smother their emotions. This decaying passion draws them further and further from the living world, washing away over centuries of study all semblance of human warmth. In the end, though they might debate the concepts of morality in great depth, they can no longer feel what is right and what is wrong. Those that can take up the Paths of vampiric morality. Those that cannot are consumed, the vast knowledge they've amassed forever lost to the ravages of the Beast. As nights go on it grows ever more difficult for the True Brujah to maintain their connection to their Humanity. Elois wishing to increase their Morality or Virtue traits must pay double the standard experience point costs. On all *Conscience* and *Conviction* challenges, True Brujah must bid two extra Traits or automatically lose the bid.



The Thousand Eyes



DISCIPLINES

DAIMOINON

In the blackest temples of prehistory, ancient priest-kings made sacrifice to their dark masters and as the sibyls spoke, their lives fleeing with their breath, the arts of Daimoinon were writ on parchment of skin and bound up in flesh. Wielded by the faithful, passed from sire to childe, the arts of Daimoinon are subtle, potent and wholly evil.

This power retests with the Occult Ability.

BASIC DAIMOINON

Sense the Sin

Like calls to like, and the first lesson of the Baali is to hear with the ears of one's darkness. Invoking the power of their masters, the Demons may hear the call of the secret evils that hide in all souls: the doubts, the fears, the petty envies.

To use *Sense the Sin*, the Baali must engage her target in a Mental Challenge, bidding Traits in accordance with the depth of knowledge sought. By risking a single Trait, the Demon may learn some small transgression or weakness: a lack of resolve (low Willpower); cowardice, callousness or poor control (low Virtues); or even some small personal failings (a Negative Trait). At two Mental Traits, the Demon may learn more intimate knowledge: a dangerous secret or undiscovered crime. With three traits, the Baali opens the door to her target's soul, exposing derangements or similar flaws, past diablerie (though not necessarily the identity of the victim) or other deeply hidden sin.

Note: Just what exactly is learned is always the decision of the Storyteller and should be couched in subjective terms. For example: "Anabelle is always the first to run when words come to blows" rather than "Anabelle has just one Courage Trait."

Fear of the Void Below

At this stage, the disciple has begun to wield the power of his masters. With the footholds of sin as his guide, he may invoke the horror of those beyond and inflict it on his target.

Before invoking the *Fear of the Void Below*, the Demon must first perform *Sense the Sin* on his target, ferreting out what might cut a path to the victim's heart. For every Trait beyond the first successfully risked in *Sense the Sin*, the Baali gains one Trait to use to invoke the *Fear of the Void Below*. (This challenge may occur at any time, up to one night prior to the use of *Fear of the Void Below*. If the sun rises before *Fear of the Void Below* is used, the Baali must start again from the beginning.) When the target's secret is known, the Demon then engages her in a Social Challenge, and should roleplay the verbal assault on her target's hidden sin. By playing on the fear and shame of the secret, explaining the unavoidable consequences of the target's



crimes, the inevitable retribution to be exacted, the Baali inspires abject terror in his victim. For a one-Trait risk on *Sense the Sin*, the target stands trembling before the Baali until she ceases her verbal assault. If two Traits were used for *Sense the Sin*, the target flees as though taken by Rotschreck. For three Traits, the target faints dead away and remains unconscious until disturbed.

The target may avert *Fear of the Void Below* with a Courage Test.

INTERMEDIATE DAIMOINON

Conflagration

At this level of mastery, the Baali may actually call forth a portion of what lies Beyond, channeling some of the power of her masters as an eerie flame. For the brief time it burns in this world, the flame may take any number of forms from a barely visible shimmer in the air to a ripple of jet black fire. Conflagration's destructive power is never in dispute and often reminds its viewers of traditional tales of the infernal.

With the expenditure of a Blood Trait, the Baali calls into being a bolt of black flame which can then be hurled at her enemies as a Physical Challenge. Typically, if the bolt strikes its target, it inflicts a single aggravated wound and gutters out immediately. The Baali may elect to maintain the flame by spending a Blood Trait each turn for as long as she wishes it to remain. The target must remain in sight and the Baali must maintain full concentration or the flame will vanish, but for every turn the Baali maintains the flame, the target suffers another aggravated wound.

Kindred confronted with this mystical fire must make Courage tests to prevent Rotschreck just as if facing a normal flame of similar size. Targets may dodge as per any other ranged attack.

Psychomachia

After mastering the ability to draw power from beyond, the Baali now learns to shape that power into a living nightmare. Striking deep into his victim's psyche, the Demon may draw out her deepest fears and give them physical form.

After performing *Sense the Sin* on her intended target, the Baali spends a Willpower Trait and forces the victim to make a Virtue Test against her weakest Virtue with a difficulty equal to the number of Traits the Baali successfully risked in *Sense the Sin*. If the target fails, an apparition from the darkest hours of her past (perhaps a childhood boogeyman or a lost lover) takes shape, visible and material to her alone. The victim must immediately make a Courage Test or fall into frenzy. Even if she succeeds in the Courage Test, the victim must then face terror given flesh. Most often, this nightmare construct will have Traits identical or slightly inferior to the victim herself. The final state of the entity is fully at the Storyteller's discretion and all damage suffered in the subsequent struggle should always be completely illusory. At worst, the victim may suffer unconsciousness or a brief torpor for dying at the



hands of fear. For purposes of combat with the victim, the psychomachia should be treated as a normal, material being. If the Baali stops concentrating, the spectre vanishes.

ADVANCED DAIMOINON

Condemnation

Since the first of the Baali crept into the wilderness and made an abominable pact with forces beyond this world, their childer have forged a litany of contracts and bargains with infernal powers longer than can be counted in the lives of even the Methuselahs. The Baali can call upon these ancient pacts to lay a curse on his enemies with all the power and hatred of the infernal legions.

To invoke the curse, the Demon must first give voice to the deed, enunciating his *Condemnation* in detail before engaging in a Static Willpower Challenge against a difficulty of the target's Willpower traits. If successful, the Baali must then sacrifice a number of permanent Mental Traits, reducing his permanent total by that number for the duration of the curse. For every Trait sacrificed, the Baali may reduce one of his victim's Attributes, Virtues or Willpower by a single Trait to a minimum of one. The Baali may end the curse whenever she chooses, although it is unlikely.

Abuse of this ability may well result in the Baali herself feeling the curse as Those-Who-Wait do not take lightly to the frivolous use of their gifts.

ELDER DAIMOINON

Concordance

Those Baali who reach this level of enlightenment all make what can only be called a leap of faith. In their devotion to Those-Who-Wait-Beyond, they have taken into themselves something of their monstrous patron and are strengthened by the gift. Such boons are not without cost, however — legends speak of the Baali priests as twisted monstrosities without any resemblance to humanity.

Once purchased, this ability grants its wielder one of the powers often attributed to the minions of darkness, be it flight, an unholy resistance to flame, or any of the dozens of infernal gifts spoken of in story. Always, though, this gift comes at a price. With the gift of flight might come monstrous bat wings; with immunity to flame might come a deep bronzing of the skin. Just as varied as the powers bestowed are the curses that follow them. Hooves, talons, scales or stranger features are all fair game when it comes to infernal investiture. In addition, this Discipline may be purchased more than once, allowing for truly monstrous distortions of the Baali's flesh.

Players and Storytellers alike are encouraged to use their imaginations in developing "gifts" granted by the unholy. Take note, however: The curse of Caine may never be lifted, nor alleviated, by the gifts of demons. The subject may never use this Discipline to overcome the need



for blood, the vulnerability to sunlight or the clan's sensitivity to acts of Faith. All Boons must be approved by the Storyteller.

MASTER DAIMOINON

Summon the Herald of Topheth

Name them djinn or daemon, angel or efreet, the spirits of the outer darkness come only to those with the strength to compel them. Those Baali whose faith and wisdom have progressed as far as this power may part the curtain between worlds long enough to allow something of the other side through.

To even begin this ritual, the Baali must first make a blood sacrifice (no less than three Traits worth) and spend one permanent point of Willpower. The creature summoned will appear shortly after. At the Storyteller's discretion, a Demon who has strayed from his faith may be required to engage the Herald in a Mental Test (retest with *Occult*) or become the vessel for this spirit. Regardless, the spirit comes and though none will ever be identical, all are at least as capable as the following statistics would indicate: Attribute Traits 10/7/3, six Willpower Traits, seven Ability Traits, 10 Discipline Traits, no less than Intermediate *Fortitude* and the ability to regenerate at least one health level every other turn. The spirit remains until its task is completed or the sun rises three times, whichever comes first.

ASCENDANT DAIMOINON

Contagion

So powerful is the Baali's faith at this level, she becomes a focus for the divisive energies of her god, bleeding dissension and discord into the hearts and minds of all those in her vicinity. The mere presence of the Demon sends businesses spiraling into ruin, marriages dissolving in bitter divorce, and lifelong friendships descending into bloody hatred. As hope dies, Baal grows ever stronger until entire towns fall under the sway of Those-Who-Wait.

To use this power, the Baali first spends a number of Willpower Traits in accordance with the breadth of the disruption he wishes to instigate. With one Willpower, the Demon may affect those in her immediate vicinity. Two Willpower allow him to reach a small apartment complex or office building. Three traits stretches his reach over a city block; four, an entire neighborhood, stadium or sports arena. With the expenditure of five Willpower Traits, the Baali may touch a entire city (megalopoli like New York, London or Tokyo may require six Willpower at Storyteller discretion). Each Willpower Trait spent takes a full day and night to take effect.

Next, the Baali spends Mental Traits to determine the degree of chaos she inflicts. Every two Traits spent in this way increases the intensity one step as shown on the table below. As with everything, it's easier to start a fire with oil than with water. So it is with *Contagion*. At



Traits Spent	Result
2 Mental Traits	Unease, irritable behavior
4 Mental Traits	Suspicion, civil/domestic unrest, prejudice
6 Mental Traits	Anger, lawlessness
8 Mental Traits	Hate crimes, murder
10 Mental Traits	Mob rule

the Storyteller's discretion, naturally occurring aggravating factors may reduce the number of Traits necessary by one, or even several, steps. For example, it would be far easier to incite murderous riots at the peak of a hot spell just after a questionable police shooting than on the first sunny day in May.

Kindred schooled in the arts of *Auspex* (*Spirit's Touch* or better) may detect the source of this disturbance with a successful Mental Challenge against the Baali. Any detection will be vague at best, revealing only the fact that *something* is causing the unease in the area.

METHUSELAH DAIMOINON

Call the Great Beast

This Discipline is always known to one of the children of Baal and only one. The eldest among them, like unto a god itself, bears this gift alone, for it must be able to match what arrives. Never in the history of the world has this power been used successfully, but many are the tales of warning that tell of those that tried.

To say the least, the ritual to invoke this power is exacting. Nothing but vague sketches of the requirements exist, the most illuminating tomes speaking of scores of sacrifices and months of ritual — only the Eldest knows for certain. And should the rite stray from the prescribed path in any particular, the consequences promised are dire indeed, even for one great enough to make the attempt.

Should the ritual succeed, though, the final act is simple enough. The priest must expend the whole of her Willpower and hurl her very soul at the barrier between this world and Those-Who-Wait. As her very essence is extinguished, her body becomes a vessel for the terror Beyond, granting what was never meant for flesh a foothold on this world. Thus, they would say if any remained, ended the world.

NECROMANCY

VITREOUS PATH

More a complement to more common necromantic powers than a power in and of itself, *Vitreous Path Necromancy* is practiced almost solely by its Nagaraja creators. Steeped in the entropic energies of the Underworld, energies even the most talented and experienced



D U H

Call the Great Beast is a world-breaker, and should by rights be the focus of several stories, if not an entire chronicle. Armageddon just isn't a topic for beer-and-pretzels night. Calling the Old Ones out is nothing like throwing a three-day party with a little human sacrifice pitched in for excitement. If you think you want to incorporate the attempted use of this power in your game, think it over a second time, maybe even a third. If you still want to use it, make sure you have all your ducks in a row before you begin. Any Lick with the atrophied stones necessary to bring on Armageddon will damn sure be prepared for Joe Neonate and his band of merry vampires. Make sure you are, too.

necromancers hesitate to wield, the Flesh Eaters' were afforded considerable opportunity to study Oblivion and the power that drives it. The *Vitreous Path* is the result of their efforts, its secrets guarded jealously, and with good reason — any who pursue mastery over death and restless souls would give near anything to acquire even the basest primer of *Vitreous Path* lore.

As do most Necromancers, Nagaraja begin their studies with the *Sepulchre Path*. The *Vitreous Path* follows soon after. Even the least talented of the Flesh Eaters, armed with knowledge of the *Vitreous Path*, can be a formidable force. Indeed, this last precious lore may well be the secret to the Nagaraja's survival, if they can just keep it from the sort of creature that would risk a great deal to learn it, such as the Harbingers of Skulls.

This Discipline retests with the Occult Ability, although the Storyteller may allow the more specialized *Wraith Lore* to be used instead.

BASIC VITREOUS PATH NECROMANCY

Eyes of the Dead

Ghosts, or wraiths, are born into the Underworld with certain gifts stemming from the nature of their new existence. Use of *Eyes of the Dead* allows the necromancer to usurp one of these gifts, *Deathsight*, from a nearby wraith and use it herself. There must be at least one wraith in the vicinity as the necromancer actually sees through the wraith's eyes for the duration of this power. For the unschooled, it can be disorienting trying to sort through the strange auras visible to the dead, not to mention the distraction of literally seeing the world from another (or several) person's point of view.

To invoke *Eyes of the Dead*, the necromancer must spend a Mental Trait. She may then attempt to view her subject whether it be in the Shadowlands or the living world. By using this power, the necromancer may determine the general health of the subject, including any injuries, illnesses or disease. The likelihood of imminent death can be determined, and even such things as curses and hostile enchantment may be



discerned. The Storyteller may decide that particularly subtle readings require a Static Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*) to decipher the death energies' meaning.

Eyes of the Dead lasts for one scene or one hour, whichever ends first, though the necromancer may decide to return to his own perceptions at any time.

Hour of Death

As his mastery over the energies of Oblivion increases, the necromancer gains the ability to perceive death energies in the auras of those around him. Like *Eyes of the Dead*, this power grants the necromancer use of the Deathsight. Unlike *Eyes of the Dead*, however, *Hour of Death* actually grants the user Deathsight of his own without need of borrowing the eyes of a wraith. *Hour of Death* also allows for much greater detail in readings. With it, the necromancer may determine just how far his subject is from death, how soon death is likely to occur and what the cause of death is most likely to be. In addition, fluctuations of death energies may be interpreted to reveal the subject's feelings toward others when first meeting them.

To exercise this ability, the necromancer must first spend a single Mental Trait, empowering himself with *Eyes of the Dead* for one scene or one hour, whichever is shorter. To make a reading, the necromancer performs a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty designated by the Storyteller in accordance with the depth of knowledge desired. A one-Trait challenge might reveal the subject's probable death within several weeks to a month. Three Traits may reveal time of death to within a few days along with impressions of the cause of death (ghostly wounds or withering organs), while five Traits may give the time of death to within an hour, vicinity within a few blocks, and strong impressions of the cause of death.

This Discipline may only be used on one target at a time. Targets viewed beyond the first require successive uses of the power.

INTERMEDIATE VITREOUS PATH NECROMANCY

Soul Judgement

It seems the Kindred are not the only creatures that struggle nightly with a dark side. Wraiths, too, wrestle with the passions of a baleful reflection lying

It should be noted that *Hour of Death* is by no means an exact science, and prognostication of any kind is a chancy thing at best. Circumstances can change in an instant, and Fate is often as fickle as the weather. Storytellers should keep this in mind when offering information and reserve the right to invalidate projections when circumstances warrant. Don't let the plot train run away with your game. Allow for chance and changing Fate. You won't be sorry you did.



just below the surface of their psyches. Though more urbane than the ravening Beast, a wraith's Shadow is no less ruthless or destructive. Knowing which persona is in command at any given time can be an invaluable boon to a necromancer looking to strike a deal.

By spending a Willpower Trait and defeating the wraith in a Mental Challenge, the necromancer may discern which personality is ascendant at any particular moment as well as which personality typically holds dominance. Wraiths controlled by their Shadows are called Spectres and are dealt with at the necromancer's peril. Those dominated by their higher selves, however, are often prime pickings. The wise vampire can reap great returns playing one personality against the other, taking gains from each as the Psyche is often unaware of the dealings of his Shadow. And while the Shadow is not similarly unaware of its Psyche's affairs, it is often more than willing to cooperate to the Psyche's detriment.

Breath of Thanatos

This power marks a significant step on the road to a necromancer's mastery over the energies of Oblivion. With it, the wielder may actually expel entropic energies from his body in a baleful mist. This mist, invisible to any not particularly attuned to entropic manifestations, acts as a siren call to any Spectres in the vicinity, drawing them to the infected area in droves. This foul haze can be spread over an area or focused into an object or person. When dispersed into the air, this foul mist will summon Spectres to the area, but does not offer any means to control them when they arrive. Necromancers who instigate such a gathering without knowledge of other *Necromancy* paths sufficient to sway the tide do so at their own risk and are just as likely to be a target as anyone else in the vicinity. Objects or people infused with this power bear a lingering malaise of the spirit and inspire unease in those not accustomed to the touch of death.

The necromancer need only spend one Blood Trait, one Willpower Trait and succeed in a Simple Test to manifest the *Breath of Thanatos*. If dispersed over an area for the purposes of summoning Spectres, the radius covered is one-quarter mile plus one-quarter mile for each additional Blood Trait spent and is always centered on the necromancer. Again, the mist grants the user no authority over those who respond; other powers must be used to gain control of the approaching spirits. In any case, the cloud of fog lasts for no more than a scene. If concentrated in an item or person, the wielder must touch the target or, if used at range, defeat her in a Physical Challenge (retest with *Occult*). If the necromancer is successful, the target suffers a single aggravated wound — often manifesting as disease, decay or rot — as she is infused with the death fog and filled with entropic energies. The infusion will persist until sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first. For the duration of the infection, the victim will be two Traits down on all social interactions with those unfamiliar with the touch of death — werewolves, faeries, certain mages and



most normal humans. In addition, to those with senses tuned to detect such things, the victim will appear as tainted by the entropic energies that fill her. Most will mark the victim as a threat, and some (werewolves in particular) will regard her as worthy of immediate attack. Those already infected with the *Breath of Thanatos* cannot be infected a second time until the first has worn off.

Failure in the Simple Test means the necromancer has failed to expel the negative energies, instead incorporating them into his own body. After the first failure, certain minor nuisances are his to endure — the attentions of a particularly mischievous Spectre or a short-lived *Aura of Corruption* as per the Flaw. Subsequent, consecutive failures will inflict effects equivalent to those he sought to turn on his victim in all particulars, each successive failure increasing the effects' intensity.

ADVANCED VITREOUS PATH NECROMANCY

Soul Feasting

At this level, the necromancer has gained as comprehensive a mastery over the energy of Oblivion as anything not truly of the Underworld can. Now her power has grown to such heights that she can actually use the essence of the Dead to power her gifts. Whether absorbing power from a locale rich in such energies or feeding directly from the dead, the necromancer may convert the essence of Oblivion into a crude fuel, if not actual sustenance.

Only places recently touched by death hold sufficient energy to be harvested using this Discipline. Whether the site of a recent murder or an ancient burial ground with generations of the dead buried within it, the place must have been touched by death recently or in such volume as to leave a retrievable surplus. Depending on the source, a vampire may draw the equivalent of one to four Blood Traits of energy, as determined by the Storyteller, in a single night. Doing so eliminates all benefits that might otherwise apply to the use of Necromancy or ghostly abilities in such a place as the energy that facilitates such things is consumed. In the case of cemeteries and the like, these energies will replenish themselves within a few days. For the scene of a murder or a fatal accident, however, it may well take another death before more energy can be harvested in that place.

A vampire with knowledge of this Discipline is not restricted to gathering ambient energy alone, though. She may also feed directly from wraiths, robbing the hapless ghosts of their vital essence to fuel her vampiric powers. To do so, the necromancer must attack the wraith as though she were feeding normally. Upon doing so, the vampire enters a sort of half-state wherein she inhabits both the Underworld and the lands of the living. During this time, the vampire is vulnerable to any of a wraith's attacks, even those that would not normally affect the material world. The wraith must defeat her assailant in a Will-power Challenge before attempting any action and is considered



immobilized and unable to escape until doing so. Wraiths all have the equivalent of 10 Blood Traits in an "Entropy" pool. Each Entropy Trait drained renders the wraith less and less substantial until it finally dissolves into nothing as the last shred of its spirit is drained away. This power may be used in conjunction with *Ash Path Necromancy*, allowing the vampire to gain power (though not sustenance) from wraiths as she travels the Shadowlands.

Wraiths drained in this way are completely destroyed. They do not fall into the Labyrinth or suffer a Harrowing. They are utterly and irrevocably destroyed. Energy gained in this fashion can be used only to fuel Disciplines. It is ineffective for any physical task in which Blood Traits are normally spent, such as healing or increasing Attributes.

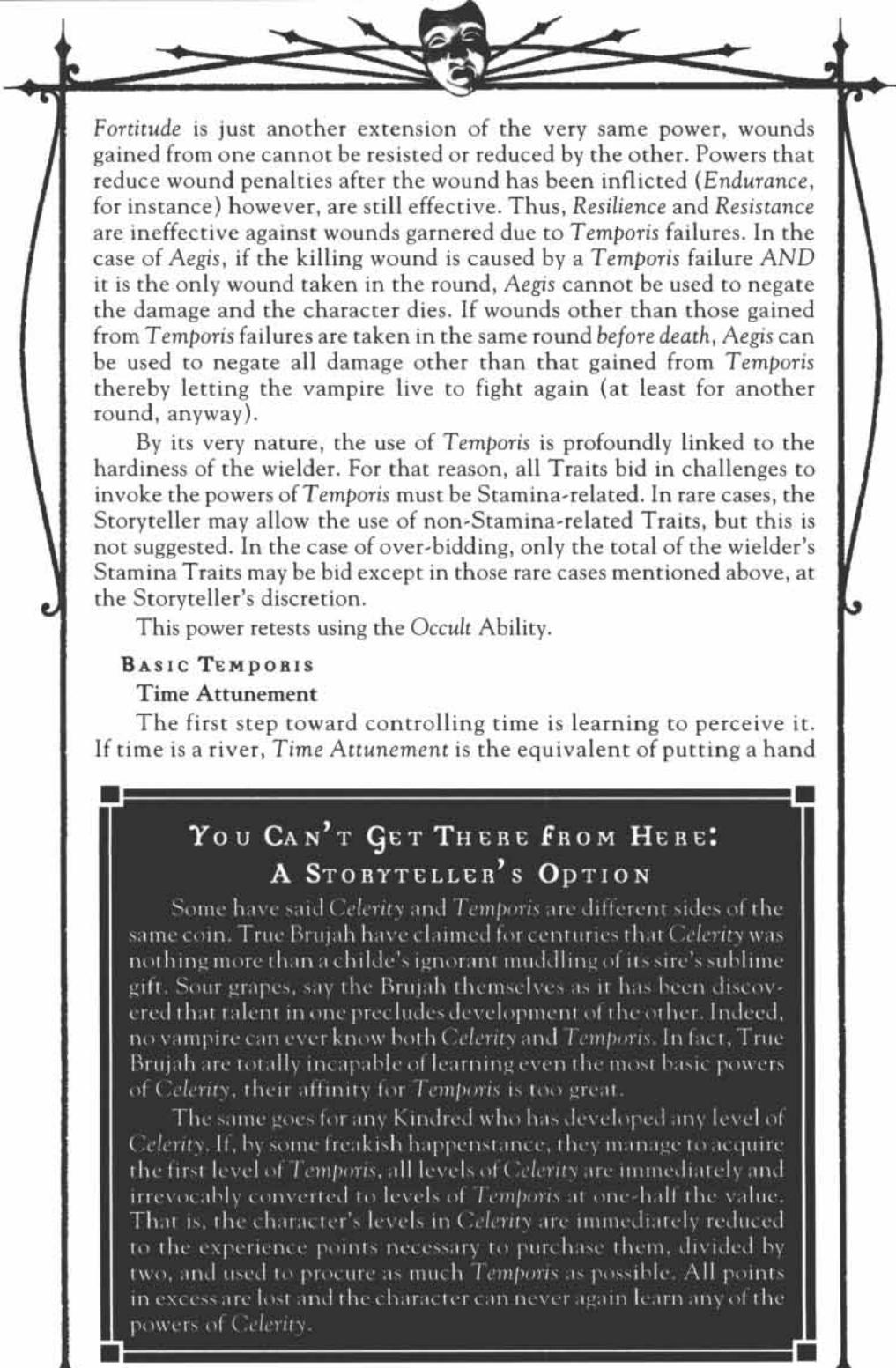
At the Storyteller's discretion, subsequent and consecutive failures in implementing this Discipline may result in the vampire becoming trapped between the two worlds for a short time, thus being vulnerable to attack from either side for the duration of her entanglement.

TEMPORIS

Once touted as certain proof of the True Brujah's claim to sole descent from the legitimate founder of their clan, *Temporis* has become in these late nights less a badge of honor and more the last bastion of survival for the true blood of Brujah. As with their former allies and associates the Nagaraja, many Elois were destroyed as Enoch fell and with them the greatest of those ever to wield *Temporis*. Of the handful that remain, only a fraction know more than a smattering of the Discipline. The highest arts may well be lost forever with the passing of their eldest, and what is left is hardly better than folklore and rumor. Even the imperturbable Elois are stirred to rage at the slightest whisper that one not of the blood seeks the secret of *Temporis*. They do not part with it — they must not, they will not. Those that claim to have stolen the secret rarely live long enough to enjoy it as the cold vengeance of a desperate bloodline is borne out against them with cruel expedience. To the Elois, it's academic. No better way, they say, to make an enemy than to put a knife in the hands of a friend.

At the moment of the Embrace, all of Caine's childer are frozen in time, their flesh made immutable and unchanging, their bodies suspended precariously on the cusp of life and death. It is this selective stasis that is the source of all the power of *Temporis*. Even the most trivial exercise in power is like doing a soft-shoe on the brink of oblivion. Each time she wields *Temporis*, an Elois takes her immortality in her hands. Failure in the use of any *Temporis* power from the Advanced level on up inflicts an aggravated wound for each consecutive failure after the first. This count resets as soon as the vampire succeeds in one use of *Temporis*, allowing her two failures before taking damage again. If the sun rises before she succeeds in using *Temporis*, the count is also reset.

Because of the nature of *Temporis* (each use is like stopping your own heart so you can use the electricity to jump-start your car) and because



Fortitude is just another extension of the very same power, wounds gained from one cannot be resisted or reduced by the other. Powers that reduce wound penalties after the wound has been inflicted (*Endurance*, for instance) however, are still effective. Thus, *Resilience* and *Resistance* are ineffective against wounds garnered due to *Temporis* failures. In the case of *Aegis*, if the killing wound is caused by a *Temporis* failure AND it is the only wound taken in the round, *Aegis* cannot be used to negate the damage and the character dies. If wounds other than those gained from *Temporis* failures are taken in the same round *before death*, *Aegis* can be used to negate all damage other than that gained from *Temporis* thereby letting the vampire live to fight again (at least for another round, anyway).

By its very nature, the use of *Temporis* is profoundly linked to the hardiness of the wielder. For that reason, all Traits bid in challenges to invoke the powers of *Temporis* must be Stamina-related. In rare cases, the Storyteller may allow the use of non-Stamina-related Traits, but this is not suggested. In the case of over-bidding, only the total of the wielder's Stamina Traits may be bid except in those rare cases mentioned above, at the Storyteller's discretion.

This power retests using the Occult Ability.

BASIC TEMPORIS

Time Attunement

The first step toward controlling time is learning to perceive it. If time is a river, *Time Attunement* is the equivalent of putting a hand

YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE: A STORYTELLER'S OPTION

Some have said *Celerity* and *Temporis* are different sides of the same coin. True Brujah have claimed for centuries that *Celerity* was nothing more than a childe's ignorant muddling of its sire's sublime gift. Sour grapes, say the Brujah themselves as it has been discovered that talent in one precludes development of the other. Indeed, no vampire can ever know both *Celerity* and *Temporis*. In fact, True Brujah are totally incapable of learning even the most basic powers of *Celerity*, their affinity for *Temporis* is too great.

The same goes for any Kindred who has developed any level of *Celerity*. If, by some freakish happenstance, they manage to acquire the first level of *Temporis*, all levels of *Celerity* are immediately and irrevocably converted to levels of *Temporis* at one-half the value. That is, the character's levels in *Celerity* are immediately reduced to the experience points necessary to purchase them, divided by two, and used to procure as much *Temporis* as possible. All points in excess are lost and the character can never again learn any of the powers of *Celerity*.



in the water. In addition to granting an extremely accurate time sense (allowing him to keep track of the exact time before the next sunset, down to the second, among other things), this level of *Temporis* also gifts the vampire with a unique sensitivity to disturbances in the flow of time around him. Whether caused by another of the Elois, a mortal magician or something even less common, the vampire may sense the disturbance by succeeding in a Simple Test. The range of this sensitivity is wholly dependent on the intensity of the disturbance — minor powers (Basic and Intermediate) can be sensed up to a mile away. Advanced and Master-level powers can be perceived from as far as 10 miles away, and use of even more potent abilities can be detected from a hundred to as far as a thousand miles away. Also, any attempt to alter the vampire's internal clock must first succeed in a Static Mental Challenge at a difficulty of the target's level of *Temporis*, in Traits. (This is only true of powers intended to change the character's perception of time. Abilities that speed or slow the character's body through time affect the character as it would any other.)

Time Attunement also allows its practitioners to detect *Celerity* when used in their immediate vicinity. By succeeding in a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty equal to seven minus the level of the power being detected, the character may sense the use of *Celerity* in the round it's activated up to 10 yards for each level of *Temporis* the character possesses.

Time Attunement is always in effect. Characters possessing it can always tell the exact amount of time that has passed between two events, to the second. When given an amount of time, a practitioner of *Temporis* can count it down as precisely as any clock known to man. Those using *Time Attunement* can always tell the hour exactly, night or day.

Internal Recursion

With a deft flex of his temporal power, the vampire who's mastered *Internal Recursion* can knit his victim into a loop of time, forcing the target to relive some small, simple segment of life over and over again. Only the victim's mind is actually affected, body and surroundings chug on through normal time immobilized for lack of intelligent motivation.

To initiate the *Internal Recursion*, the vampire spends a Blood Point and engages the target in a Social Challenge. If successful, the target's mind is trapped in a looping replay of some harmless, commonplace event. Unless the wielder is capable of invasive psychic probing, the event to be replayed must have been physically witnessed by the wielder (and likely will have occurred only shortly before the power was activated). As described above, the event to be relived must be relatively uneventful or commonplace and must require no interaction on the part of the victim. Thus, a patrol of familiar, empty corridors would be a viable subject for replay while a conversation (no matter how banal or boring) would not. Some of the less humane members of



the Kindred population may be tempted to inflict painful or horrific recursions on unwitting victims. This simply will not work as the emotional placidity required of the event and target is destroyed by the intensity of such a situation.

Once snared in the *Internal Recursion*, the victim remains motionless and insensible for one minute. Each Blood Trait spent by the wielder after the first will extend this duration by 10 minutes. The victim will be totally unaware of his surroundings and incapable of taking action for the full duration unless disturbed in some way. Anything causing loss of health levels, even if the victim feels no pain, will end the recursion and bring him to his senses. Quiet speech will not rouse the target, but a shout or gunshot, or even a gentle nudge, will break the trance.

INTERMEDIATE TEMPORIS

Lapse

At this level, the vampire's mastery over time has progressed far enough that she may physically alter a subject's passage through time, slowing her target's progress by half for a brief moment. Just the feeling of being afflicted by this power can be unsettling to fragile minds as the world rushes past at twice speed, leaving the victim straining to keep up.

To invoke *Lapse*, the vampire first spends two Blood Traits and engages in a Static Physical Challenge with a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. Each trait successfully risked in this challenge enforces *Lapse* for one round in combat. In non-combat situations, the duration is one minute per Trait successfully risked. Successive uses of *Lapse* are cumulative and extend the duration of the effect appropriately. *Lapse* takes effect in the round immediately following successful application.

ANTE UP: BIDDING MULTIPLE TRAITS

With many *Temporis* powers, the vampire is given the ability to increase the effectiveness of the power by bidding multiple Traits in a challenge. In these cases, the number of Traits bid by the initiator has no effect on the defender's required bid. All *Temporis* bids made are assumed to be one Trait unless the initiator specifically states that the extra bids are not for use in changing the effects of the power. Thus, the defender in a challenge against a True Brujah who has risked five Traits to age the defender up to 100 years need only risk one trait in the test because the five traits risked by her assailant are dedicated to enhancing the effect of the power. If the True Brujah failed, she would lose five traits and the defender would lose none. If the True Brujah failed, the defender would lose one Trait and be aged up to 100 hundred years. Such is the price of power.



Those under the sway of *Lapse* must bid twice the usual Traits in any challenge involving speed of motion or thought. Thus, a *Lapsed* character must bid at least two Traits to hit an opponent in combat, though a Physical Challenge made to lift a heavy object would be unaffected. Challenges intended to reflect quick thinking (as determined by the Storyteller) are similarly affected.

Characters using *Celerity* for additional actions may sacrifice one half of their actions (round down) to eliminate the penalty for all remaining actions. Thus, a character with five total actions in a turn may sacrifice two of those actions to eliminate the penalty in the remaining three or take five actions and bid at least twice the usual number of Traits for each.

This power in no way affects the damage inflicted by attacks. Bullets and arrows, though slowed, retain the full force of their impact.

Subjective Suspension

At this stage in her development, the vampire may actually remove inanimate objects from the flow of time, suspending them for a little while as the rest of the world is carried past in the current. As with *Lapse*, the benefits of this power are not restricted to combat alone. Subjective suspension could be used to halt a falling object in its descent, suspend a sudden conflagration long enough for a hasty escape, or preserve a fragile artifact from decay. When *Subjective Suspension* is activated, all processes, whether mechanical, electrical or chemical, are frozen for the duration of the effect. Bullets hang motionless in mid-air; fires appear as no more than charred logs, falling objects freeze in mid-tumble.

To invoke *Subjective Suspension*, the vampire must first be able to perceive it. In most cases this is automatic, with particularly difficult observations requiring a Static Mental Test at a difficulty determined by the Storyteller. For objects moving too quickly to be seen by mortal eyes, some means of enhancing the senses beyond mortal means is necessary. Most often, the *Auspex* power of *Heightened Senses* is sufficient, though the Storyteller may still require a successful Mental challenge to make best use of the power. Once the object is perceived, the vampire must

Blood	Duration
0 Traits	One round
1 Traits	One minute
2 Traits	10 minutes
3 Traits	One hour
4 Traits	One day
5 Traits	One Week
6+ Traits	One additional week per trait spent



spend two Blood Traits and succeed in a Static Physical Challenge (retest with *Occult*). Each Physical Trait spent increases the duration of the *Suspension* as indicated on the table below. Suspension of an object includes the suspension of all its energy and any chemical processes occurring within it. Thus, a suspended bullet has no kinetic energy with regards to the world around it, chemical reactions are held in stasis, and fires cease to emit heat, light or smoke until such time as the power's duration expires. At the end of *Subjective Suspension*'s duration, all processes, energies and reactions resume activity as though no time had passed. Fires roar to life, chemical reactions run their course, and objects in motion continue on their original trajectory at the speed they had originally been traveling.

Subjective Suspension may never be used on an object larger than the vampire herself and cannot be used to suspend living or unliving thing more complex than a dog.

ADVANCED TEMPORIS

Clotho's Gift

By speeding the flow of time through himself, the vampire gains the ability to perform acts of speed normally reserved to uses of *Celerity*. Unlike *Celerity*, *Clotho's Gift* does not simply enhance the user's physical speed and reactions but accelerates him through time, thus allowing the use of Disciplines normally requiring full conscious thought to invoke. There is a price to pay, however, as using vampiric powers while *Clotho's Gift* is in effect taxes the force that maintains

UNLIFE AND THE TIME-WIELDING VAMPIRE

As mentioned above, *Temporis* is a particularly taxing Discipline, in some cases so taxing as to cause the wielder lethal — and even aggravated — damage. This is what happens when one turns the very force that maintains one's immortality to work on the world at large. When a vampire takes damage from her use of *Temporis*, it's because the exercise of her own sustaining energy on the outside world has left her vulnerable to the ravages of time and the full weight of her immortal years. As a result, most damage inflicted thus manifests as rapid aging and, in some cases, the sudden disintegration of whole portions of the vampire's flesh. Excessive use of such powers can easily lead to torpor or, for the truly foolish or desperate, Final Death.

Self-inflicted damage stemming from use of *Temporis* can never be resisted, controlled or transferred in any way. One may not choose which portions of her body suffer the consequences of her temporal manipulations. Damage so suffered may be healed normally. Each power describes whether the damage inflicted is lethal or aggravated.



the vampire's immortality to its limits and beyond. Vampires choosing to exercise other Disciplines while under the influence of this power find their bodies withering with the strain as the force that maintains them is consumed by their exertions. True Brujah tell their childer horror stories of unwise vampires made ash-heaps by accelerated use of *Dominate*.

To use *Clotho's Gift*, the vampire spends three Blood Traits and must succeed in a Static Physical Challenge (retest with *Occult*). For a number of turns equal to his levels in *Temporis* divided by two (round down), the vampire gains one extra action for each trait successfully risked in the Physical Challenge. These actions may be used in any way the player wishes, including the use of Disciplines normally forbidden from multiple uses per turn (*Dominate* and *Thaumaturgy*, for instance). As said before, however, there is a price. Each use of a Discipline within the duration of *Clotho's Gift* inflicts one health level of unsoakable lethal damage on the vampire.

Uses of accelerated powers occur at normal speed, relative to the victim. Victims of *Dominate* hear commands as if spoken at normal speed and *Temporis* in no way eliminates the need for eye contact.

Use of lesser *Temporis* powers is also permitted under the same strictures as those of other Disciplines as listed above. Greater powers (Elder-level and greater), however, cause the immediate destruction of the vampire using them. Similarly, any vampire attempting multiple use of *Clotho's Gift* immediately collapses in a pile of ash, the force of his unlife instantly dispersed.

ELDER TEMPORIS

Kiss of Lachesis

At this stage, the vampire may affect the toll of time on physical objects and individuals. Through his mastery of *Temporis*, the vampire may age a subject decades in a few scarce moments. With some greater sacrifice, the vampire may draw out the effects of time from another into himself, thus reducing the subject's physical age. This power does not change anything that has gone before. The subject's experiences and memories remain the same, only the effects of time on her physical form are affected.

To age a target, the vampire must concentrate and touch his target, spending two Blood Traits and engaging the subject in a challenge using the wielder's Social Traits versus the victim's Physical Traits (retest with *Occult*). Each Trait successfully risked moves the result one step down on the chart below. The chart does not dictate absolute results, but rather sets an upper limit for the use of the power. The user of *Kiss of Lachesis* may age the target a number of years up to and including that listed as his result, though is not forced to do so. The actual effects of this aging are left to the Storyteller, but there are very few mortals who could last very long in a body over a century old.



Traits Risked* **Effect**

1 Trait	Up to one year
2 Traits	Up to five years
3 Traits	Up to 10 years
4 Traits	Up to 50 years
5 Traits	Up to 100 years
6+ Traits	An additional 100 years per trait risked over 5

*To reduce age, spend one additional Physical Trait (This Trait is lost whether the challenge is successful or not.)

The system is identical for purposes of reducing the age of one's target, but the wielder must *spend* a Physical Trait, in addition to risking the appropriate number of traits to achieve the desired effect. Also, for each Trait risked, the vampire suffers one lethal wound level. These wounds can be healed normally, but may not be resisted, transferred or removed in any other way. Again, the effect level indicated on the table is an upper limit, not an absolute result. The vampire may choose not to enforce the full potential of his power and reduce the total effect by any amount he wishes. This power may not regress any victim past the point at which it assumed its current form. Adult humans may not be regressed past the point of full maturity; mortals that have not yet reached maturity may not be regressed past the point of birth. Inanimate objects may not be regressed past the point of construction. A Kindred's lowest regression is his Embrace.

Changes in age affect only the physical form — mystical properties and mental faculties are not affected. Thus, while an elder vampire's body may be returned to a neonate's age, she does not lose the benefit of her centuries of immortality — all Disciplines, Attributes and Abilities remain the same. Aging the same vampire will, again, not change those capabilities built up through experience, but any signs of diablerie may fade and the dietary peculiarities of extreme age may begin to show themselves.

Traits Risked **Effect**

1 Trait	Double or half speed (one hour = 30 minutes)
2 Traits	Quadruple or one-quarter speed (one hour = 15 minutes)
3 Traits	Sextuple or one-sixth speed (one hour = 10 minutes)
4 Traits	12 times or 1/12th speed (one hour = 5 minutes)
5 Traits	60 times or 1/60th speed (one hour = 1 minute)



Traits risked	Effect
2 Traits	24 hours
3 Traits	one month
4 Traits	one year
5 Traits	10 years
6 Traits	100 years
7 Traits+	Any time since the vampire's Embrace

MASTER TEMPORIS

Hall of Hades' Court

With this degree of mastery, the vampire's powers have grown so great that she is no longer restricted to affecting a single creature or object. With the use of *Hall of Hades' Court*, the wielder may speed or slow the flow of time through an enclosed area and all those within it. Usually this is used for social or defensive purposes, though not exclusively. The vampire may, at her discretion, stretch time so that what passes as one night outside the affected area seems like days within it. Or, she may compress time in an area, spending a few drowsy moments in her haven while an entire day races by outside.

The player must spend a single Blood Trait per hour of normal time that this power will affect. She must then succeed in a Static Physical Challenge (retest with Occult). For each Trait successfully risked in this challenge, the vampire may move her effect level one step down on the table below. *Hall of Hades' Court* affects the environs and occupants of a single enclosed structure no larger than a high school gymnasium.

ASCENDANT TEMPORIS

Clio's Kiss

Those who reach this level of mastery may actually summon history forward to the present night and in some cases bring people or objects permanently into the present. Those True Brujah who have reached this height often use *Clio's Kiss* to bring past events of the past forward so they might be studied "as-they-happened." Others summon aid or long-lost artifacts. No less than four attempts to summon Brujah himself have been made, each ending in horrifying failure. None have ever attempted to summon Caine with *Clio's Kiss*. Perhaps it's a testament to the wisdom of the True Brujah that none have ever tried.

To invoke *Clio's Kiss*, the vampire must first spend one-half current blood traits, rounded up, and succeed in a Static Physical Challenge, bidding at least two Traits. The number of Traits successfully risked determines how far into the past the vampire may reach, as shown on the table.

Successful use of *Clio's Kiss* summons the desired scene to the present, replacing the existing "real" situation and environment. All



individuals in the area of effect — any room as large or smaller than a ballroom or an outdoor area of similar size as determined by the Storyteller — are affected. Only the wielder may choose to interact with the scene; all others are relegated to insubstantial observation unless they possess *Time Attunement*. They may, however, affect each other normally.

A vampire using *Clio's Kiss* to permanently summon an item or person from the past must spend one permanent Willpower Trait. The current use of *Clio's Kiss* ends and leaves the summoned person or item in the present. Persons so summoned are undoubtedly disoriented, confused and will require considerable explanation and education in the nights to come.

Uses of *Clio's Kiss* may never alter history in any meaningful way. Individuals or items whose disappearance would change the course of history simply cannot be summoned as the tremendous inertia of time is just too great for any vampire to overcome. Only those individuals whose footprint on the past is so slight that their presence will not be missed can be summoned permanently. As well, the actions of the vampire on a scene summoned from the past will be immediately undone when use of this power ends. The course of history is impermeable — what has already been written must remain so. At all times, the Storyteller has the final word on what is and is not possible with this power. In general, no change may be made that would affect the course of recorded or remembered history or the present. It is possible to summon a historically significant person or object after the notable portion of their existence has passed, but only if it is called to the present from a time after any event that might be remembered in the present. For example, summoning a book that is believed to have been destroyed is allowable, provided it is summoned from a time after it was last read. If evidence of its destruction exists, however, it cannot be summoned. Thus, Adolph Hitler could not be summoned from the past, nor could the *Titanic* (though one of the crew may be summoned if no one actually witnessed his death). Also, a vampire may never summon the previous form of a currently existing item or individual.

METHUSELAH TEMPORIS

Tangle Atropos' Hand

At this level of mastery, the vampire may unravel the recent course of time to undo her own mistakes or preventing the actions of others. The elder attempting such a thing pays a high price, literally burning away the energies that sustain her to reverse the flow of time. The vampire must take different direction from her past course of action or watch the previous events unfold all over again. If she repeats her actions, so will all those affected by the power with *exactly* the same results. The vampire must actively



change the course of events or the use of this power will be wasted in replaying precisely what went on before. None of those affected by this power, except the wielder, will remember any course of action other than the final one. The memories of the subjects are reset just as time is.

To *Tangle Atropos' Hand*, the vampire must spend a permanent Willpower Trait, three Blood Traits, and succeed in a Static Physical Challenge. For each Trait successfully risked in the test, the vampire may rewind one turn's worth of time. For each turn so rewound, the vampire suffers one aggravated health level of damage. This power may be used only once per scene and only affects events taking place within the user's line of sight.

If successful, the character remains where she is and does not return to her previous position (unless she chooses to do so). She has full recollection of the previous course of events as do any others in the area of effect who possess *Time Attunement* or similar aptitudes; all others lose all memory of those actions undone by this power.





CHAPTER THREE: BLOOD MAGIC

THAUMATURGY

Thaumaturgy, though considered to be a Discipline for game purposes, is not a true gift of Caine (after all, the Usurpers aren't actually descended from the First). While most Thaumaturgy has its basis in the properties of Cainite vitae, it also has elements of what the mages call "static magic": magic performed through tried and tested occult experimentation wherein the results are the same every time. In game terms, all non-Necromantic vampiric magic is called "Thaumaturgy," though individual paths vary dramatically.

Thaumaturgy involves two main elements: paths and rituals. Paths are similar to Disciplines — they have the same number of individual powers — except that they may be designed to achieve nearly any end while true Disciplines are immutable. Some paths (like those listed in *Laws Of The Night*) are so effective or traditional that they have fallen into common usage, but many, many more paths exist. A Tremere who creates a path that eventually becomes standard curriculum in other chantries is a proud Warlock indeed, and many elder Tremere owe their fame and station to the creation of powerful and innovative paths. Rituals are more of a one-shot effect and often require odd or expensive material components; thaumaturges favor them when creating an entire path would be too time-consuming or wasteful. Thaumaturges may also create their own rituals — a process explained more clearly in the "Rituals" section of this chapter.



While Clan Tremere is the best-known font of blood wizardry, other clans have managed to learn unique forms of Thaumaturgy, notably the Assamites, Tzimisce and Setites. Their paths are much different from the Hermetic style of the Warlocks and rely on different skills to power them. The Assamite wizards gain their abilities through the haze of powerful narcotics; the *koldunic* sorceries of the original Tzimisce, now pursued by fledgling Sabbat eager for power, are fueled by the thaumaturge's will and knowledge alone; and the Setites often use the act of corruption to further their magic. The translation of these paths into a live-action setting is discussed in "Creating Non-Tremere Paths."

As a Storyteller, you have final say over what you will or won't allow into your game. Thaumaturgy can be a wonderful spice to add to your chronicle's menu — the long searches for rare components or forgotten tomes, the successful completion of a ritual that took years to write — but it can also make those characters too powerful to interact with other Cainites. You can always give the players more bells and whistles later, but once you've introduced something it's extremely difficult, if not impossible, to take it away without engendering player resentment. Before handing things over on a silver platter, consider the impact it will have on your game; "I Win" doesn't reflect the spirit of the game you've worked so hard for.

CREATING TREMERE PATHS

A Tremere who wishes to create her own thaumaturgical path should have at least five levels of the Occult Ability and have previously mastered two standard paths. Once she is properly "grounded," player and Storyteller need to sit down and discuss what she has in mind. Could it be accomplished more effectively through ritual magic? Is there a single thread tying all five powers together? Paths revolve around a central focus or theme, and that focus should be maintained throughout: It might be easy to come up with five completely unrelated powers, but they certainly won't reflect the structure necessary to a proper path.

One way to plan the power curve of a path is to first determine the maximum power you're going to allow. This gives you a point to work down from as opposed to starting big and getting bigger. Once you both have agreed upon the Advanced power of the proposed path, you can then decide what the first Basic power should be. With the weakest and strongest powers already decided, it's much easier to fill in the blanks with level-appropriate effects. Storytellers should squash "instant-kill" or "blow-up-the-world" powers and encourage those players who are aiming for game flavor over game power. Also, paths created to mimic a true Discipline should function as if they are at least one level below the equivalent of the real thing, and never rival the Advanced power: Paths are good, but nothing beats the original gifts of Caine.

Paths should take a ridiculous amount of time to create and learn. A character might work on a path for at least six months before she is "in tune" with her vitae enough to learn the first power. Such work should include



investing vitae, possibly as much as three Blood Traits per level. After all, this is about releasing new properties of the blood. Created paths are one point above the usual expense for Thaumaturgy purchases.

CREATING NON-TREMERE PATHS

Tremere and Giovanni don't have the monopoly on vampiric magic in the World of Darkness. From their rotting mansions, the Fiends' *kolduns* call upon the elements to obey their will; in the dark chambers of Mount Alamut, the viziers of the Assamite clan weave smoky, *kalif*-induced enchantments; the Followers of Set perform grotesque rituals of defilement in their attempt to wake their god. Eventually, as a Storyteller, you may wish to incorporate other magical systems into your game.

The *koldun* sorcery of the Tzimisce is an ancient, mystical art that calls forth the elements of nature to take shape and obey the *koldun's* will. The specific paths, or "Ways" of this spiritual magic — Earth, Wind, Fire, Water and Spirit — were originally taught by elder Tzimisce corresponding to the novice's regional surroundings (for example, the Way of Wind was originally only known to *koldun* who lived in the Carpathian Mountains, the Way of Water to those who made their havens near bodies of water, and so on); tonight, however, young Sabbat who have heard rumors of these enchantments are thirsting for a taste of the eldritch power.

Using glyphs, herbal mixtures and the powerful sympathetic connections housed in canopic jars (ornate clay vessels used to contain the organs of mummies), the Followers of Set usurp the power of the fertile Western Lands and bend it to their twisted desires. Despite the clan's chaotic reputation, Setite paths are remarkably precise and deliberate in their practice. Some focus on the exaggeration of vices already present in their victims; others involve the creation of cursed amulets which blind their bearers to anything good or pure, making even the most wholesome influence seem hideous and barren. They also employ a number of rituals to invoke their god, using the ancient Egyptian magic of aeons past to give their more mundane pursuits a silent and insistent partner.

Unlike their martial brethren, Assamite viziers regard themselves as above the struggles to maintain a single ethnic purity. Combining the magical traditions of several groups of regional sorcerers, these wizards work their magic through ritual intoxication, often maintaining a "herd" of perpetually drugged servants to feed from. *Kalif* (hashish watered in blood) provides revelations beyond human imagination, gifting the "field" Assamites with powerful protections or advantages even when they are not in the presence of the vizier. Perhaps these wizards' most awesome blessing is the ability to transcend the boundaries of space, their rituals enabling them to make their voices heard across thousands of miles or to transport objects across a distance instantly.

Blood Magic: *Secrets of Thaumaturgy* offers an in-depth look into the other magics of *Vampire: The Masquerade*. As a Storyteller, it's your privilege to decide which paths will work in your game and which won't.



and alter and adapt them as you desire. So long as overall game balance is kept firmly in mind, players can expand their characters' range without becoming bloated powerhouses. The guidelines listed in "Creating Tremere Paths" can be used when considering the impact alternate paths will have on your game and help you balance the relative power levels. While the alternate paths may go by other names, for game purposes it's easier just to call them *Thaumaturgy*.

TREMERE PATHS

Perhaps the most disputed power in all of *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *Thaumaturgy* makes the Warlocks both mighty and mistrusted as (given enough time) Clan Tremere can accomplish just about anything. This kind of power has its price, however. It's worth noting that while many consider the Tremere advantage unbalancing in a live-action game, the magnitude of their influence is, and must be, balanced by the rigidity of their hierarchy and the vigilance with which they guard their secrets. Before you instantly outlaw certain paths or rituals because you feel they are overpowered, it's useful to consider how you can make the consequences of abusing their advantage too high a price for the Warlock to pay. Remember, the Tremere guard their secrets jealously and do not take kindly to their members "showing off" — such frivolous or ostentatious use results in too much attention for the Warlocks' taste, and Tremere who flaunt their gifts are always stifled quickly (and forcibly) by their superiors. Treat *Thaumaturgy* as you would a powerful but fickle firearm: If you use it too many times in the wrong way, you just might blow your own head off.

Many of the paths listed here are extremely rare, some of them unknown to all but the most elder or worldly Warlock. A first-circle apprentice who demands to know Biothaumaturgy can legitimately be giggled at; a fourth-circle regent who meets a thrysus, on the other hand, might be given the opportunity to learn *The Vine of Dionysus*. Storytellers should use common sense when determining if a character may know about and learn any of the following paths. Also note that inquiring about a few of these paths (such as *Path of the Blood's Curse*) will raise a few stern eyebrows among the higher-ups; they might even feel it necessary to pay the curious Warlock a visit to ensure that their colleague isn't entertaining any "ideas"....

Unless otherwise noted, powers require a Blood Trait to activate and a full action to use.

To Touch or Not To Touch?

As outlined in "The Rules Thou Shalt Never Break," players are not permitted to touch one another in the course of roleplaying. However, some powers of *Thaumaturgy* require nothing but a light touch to enact. It can be difficult, as a Storyteller, to find the right balance between player comfort and character realism, especially when sometimes it could be just as simple as a character accepting a handshake from the thaumaturge.



Tremere have their reputation for being sneaky bastards for a reason, and taking away a goodly portion of their thaumaturgical advantage isn't necessary. A good rule of thumb in dealing with this sticky situation is that the character must *willingly* have accepted the thaumaturge's touch. A player who hides behind a corner and pounces on other players as they walk by not only looks ridiculous but is also breaking the rules; on the other hand, a player who extends her hand and beams a disarming smile is not. Socially Challenging someone into a passionate embrace is acceptable (after all, one of the greatest betrayals was enacted with a simple kiss). A player who refuses to accept any challenge out of fear of Thaumaturgy is metagaming. Encourage your thaumaturges to be creative in their in-character touching and don't hesitate to require a proper Physical Challenge if you are in doubt.

Powers that work by touch require skin contact.

ALCHEMY

A seminal path, *Alchemy* has its basis in the Hermetic practices of the earliest Tremere and is mostly overlooked by thaumaturges of the 20th century. With tonight's technology at their disposal, many Tremere disdain this path as inefficient and outmoded; however, a handful of elders still teach this path as a reminder of the principles modern blood magic is built on.

Alchemy deals with Hermetic "ideals," not realistic interpretations of such, so while it is possible for a thaumaturge to turn lead into gold, she cannot turn lead blocks into a pile of gold coins or melt the resulting gold down to make something else; all the thaumaturge can do is work with raw elements in their "natural" states. Anyone attempting to use *Alchemy* must first have detailed knowledge of the elements involved (requiring at least two levels of Science or Science: Chemistry) and must work in a controlled environment. *Alchemy* is a highly exacting process that cannot be realistically accomplished outside of a laboratory-type setting. The path's effects make no distinction between natural or man-made elements; it will affect helium or Holmesian equally.

The level of *Alchemy* the Tremere possesses determines how greatly he may alter a given element; note that before the thaumaturge may alter a substance, he must first be aware of every element in the compound, and *Alchemy* does not work on animate ideals (no attempting to change a vampire into salt element by element). *Alchemy* takes one hour per level to work, at the end of which the Tremere must succeed in a Static Mental Challenge (with the difficulty being at the Storyteller's discretion). The path of *Alchemy* retests with the Science Ability.

BASIC ALCHEMY

Commuta

Changes in state — solid to liquid, liquid to gas, etc.



Conforma

Simple changes in form — water to separate into amorphous clouds of hydrogen and oxygen, liquid to a desired shape of solid (note that it will remain the same element), etc.

INTERMEDIATE ALCHEMY

Scinde

Complex changes to form — water into breathable oxygen and loose hydrogen, compounds into their separate elements, etc.

Mutate

Minor shifts in composition, such as changing a given element into another (up to five greater or five less than its original place on the Periodic Table of Elements).

ADVANCED ALCHEMY

Transmutate

Radical shifts in composition — any element can be transformed into any other (note that the state and form of the transmuted element will become that of the new element's "natural" composition).

BIOTHAUMATURGY

This macabre path, supposedly crafted by Sabbat thaumaturges, deals with flesh, whether it's living, dead or somewhere in between. Biothaumaturges are the proverbial "Dr. Frankensteins," and are regarded with a mixture of curiosity and revulsion — this path has more to do with vivisection than mysticism and is a radical departure from the clan's Hermetic roots. Though not forbidden, Biothaumurgy is generally only pursued by the strong of stomach or the slightly unhinged....

Biothaumurgy does not require any Blood Traits to be spent; instead, it has other costs that are listed under the individual powers. Additionally, while the biothaumaturge need not have a state-of-the-art facility, she must have some kind of laboratory in which to perform her tasks. The Tremere must have at least three levels of *Science* and one *Medicine* Ability in order to begin this path, and may retest it with the *Science* Ability.

BASIC BIOTHAUMATURGY

Thaumaturgical Forensics

By taking a tissue sample back to her laboratory, and succeeding in a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty at Storyteller discretion), a thaumaturge may ascertain a wealth of information beyond what "normal" forensics or genetics would yield. This information will always be physical in nature, such as gender, clan, generation, age, diablerie traces or relative health, and it is up to the Storyteller how much is gleaned under a given examination. *Thaumaturgical Forensics* may be used on plants, but not inanimate objects, and requires a week's worth of study upon the tissue sample.



Thaumaturgical Surgery

The thaumaturge may use her abilities to increase a body's regenerative prowess, even those of the undead, so long as she and her target are in her laboratory. Once per evening, for every Mental Trait the caster spends (up to three), one wound level may be converted to a lesser type. Aggravated damage becomes lethal, lethal damage becomes bashing and bashing damage vanishes completely. The actual surgery takes about 10 minutes of work per wound level reduced, the target taking time to rest for the remainder of the evening or session. The thaumaturge may not regain those Mental Traits until the next evening, even with the expenditure of Willpower.

INTERMEDIATE BIOTHAUMATURGY

Lesser Animation

The biothaumaturge imbues an intact, dead being with part of his own life essence, although at this level the power is limited to plants or animals the size of a dog or smaller. These creations may be given simple instructions to carry out, which they will do so mindlessly until they are destroyed.

Creatures animated in this way are considered to have the same Strength- and Stamina-related Traits they had in life, although their Dexterity-related Traits drop by one (but never below one). For obvious reasons, these zombie servants are considered to have zero Mental and Social Traits; they are, however, immune to *Dominate* and Social-based powers as a result. The automaton's wound levels are half of what it had in life, rounded up. It will immediately crumble to dust if struck by sunlight and suffer double damage from fire. Note that decayed, maimed or partially eaten corpses will be extremely ineffective as the corpse cannot regenerate any bits that might be missing.

If the caster succeeds in a Static Mental Challenge (the Storyteller may modify this to reflect the state of decay), the carcass is successfully animated and may be given a basic one-sentence command any time the caster wishes. Animating a corpse takes at least seven days of preparation and experimentation, and once an order has been given, the creation may not be given another.

Greater Animation

At this level, the biothaumaturge has refined the process of reanimation to the point that she can now revive the corpses of humans and larger animals; additionally, modifications may be made to smaller creatures revived with *Lesser Animation* by grafting and manipulating body parts from other creatures.

While the larger creatures and humans follow the same rules as *Lesser Animation* for instructions, Traits, wound levels and immunities, the thaumaturge may now begin to creatively alter the plants and animals she has previously animated. Plants can be given tiny snapping jaws, or a rat may have grafted wings. Before any vivisection may begin, however, the thaumaturge must first acquire the appendages she wishes



to graft onto his creations. Storytellers should adjust the creations' Traits and damage levels accordingly.

Animating a larger corpse will take two weeks of intense experimentation; altering an existing *Lesser Animation* takes only one week. In both instances, the caster must first succeed in a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty at the Storyteller's discretion).

ADVANCED BIOthaumaturgy

Cognizant Construction

The apex of biothaumaturgical prowess, the animated creations the thaumaturge controls may now be given back a degree of the mental acuity they had in life. Although they now have a number of Mental Traits equal to what they had in life less one (but never below one), they will still serve their creator faithfully. Now, however, these creations possess some cognitive capacity — animate animals gain an evil cunning while higher lifeforms can reason deductively and strategically. Unlike the other animations, the biothaumaturge may change the orders given to a *Cognizant Construction* at any time; it will follow the most recent order.

Cognizant Constructions take three weeks of work after a Static Mental Challenge.

THE FOCUSED MIND

Developed by a Tremere Kabbalistic scholar, this extremely rare path is only practiced by a select few. The serenity and dedication necessary to train the mind is often lacking in these chaotic nights, but those few who master their own thoughts become frighteningly effective opponents.

This path retests on the Occult Ability, and thaumaturges must have at least seven Mental Traits to begin it.

BASIC PATH OF THE FOCUSED MIND

Readiness

This power grants the ability to jumpstart sluggish synapses, allowing for a quicker and more lucid understanding of a situation. While it is only usable upon the thaumaturge herself, she will be three Traits up on Mental Challenges relating to leaps of logic, investigation, memory or reasoning. This power lasts from one scene to an hour.

Centering

By muttering soothing words to himself or another, the caster can influence a person's psyche, even talking her out of frenzy. While experiencing this serenity, the target is better able to focus on tasks and problems ahead of her, even ignoring pain and the threat of bodily harm. Some magi in fear of frenzy use this on themselves.

For the duration of the power, the target is unaffected by wound penalties; additionally, for every Mental Trait the thaumaturge spends (up to three), the target gains a Trait to defend against any attempt to evoke emotion and resist (or break out of) frenzy, even those which resulted from



Disciplines. The target must be within earshot of and able to hear the caster, and the caster must spend at least one full turn speaking to the target. This power lasts for one scene or an hour.

INTERMEDIATE PATH OF THE FOCUSED MIND

One-Tracked Mind

By extending her focus to another person and speaking to them rationally, the thaumaturge may fixate her subject upon a single action or thought. The target ignores any and all distractions around him, and simply concentrates on the idea in front of him. If cast during combat, the target may not perform any other actions for the remainder of the combat other than the one he most recently declared at the time of casting; even extra actions gained through *Celerity* are directed toward this end. As a bonus, the target gain an extra Trait that may be added to any challenges made in pursuit of his target obsession. This fixation will fade at the end of the combat. If cast outside a combat, the target must continue doing exactly what he was doing at the time of casting for one scene. In both cases, the target's actions are perfectly logical to him, and he will even believe it was his idea.

To fixate a subject, the thaumaturge must first succeed in a Mental Challenge with the target and speak with the target for one action. The target must be within earshot and able to hear the caster.

Dual Thought

This degree of mental perfection permits the thaumaturge to concentrate on two completely different tasks and perform them both with equal acumen. By spending a temporary Willpower, the caster may now take an extra action during her turn so long as that action is Mental in nature, be it Mental-based Disciplines or the tackling of a problem. These actions take place simultaneously on the thaumaturge's turn. There are no other benefits to this power; all actions still require any expenditures, challenges or penalties they would have if performed separately, and no more blood may be spent per turn than is allowed by the thaumaturge's generation. The power lasts for one scene or 10 minutes.

ADVANCED PATH OF THE FOCUSED MIND

Perfect Clarity

With a burst of concentration, the thaumaturge is able to achieve a moment of pure thought, transcending emotion and distraction. By spending a temporary Willpower, the caster becomes temporarily immune to frenzy and Rötschreck (even through supernatural means), has a two-Trait bonus in *any* challenge, and all opponents attempting to influence or control the thaumaturge in any way (including with *Presence* or *Dominate*) lose all ties to do so. This power lasts for one combat scene, or 10 minutes.

THE HEARTH PATH

Originally a collection of rituals, this path deals with the security of a thaumaturge's haven. The thaumaturge may end these enchantments at any time. This path retests with the *Occult* Ability.



BASIC HEARTH PATH

Guest's Herald

When used on a door or other entryway, this power creates an auditory or visual effect that will alert the thaumaturge that an intruder has breached the portal. This signal could be anything the thaumaturge desires — a bell ringing in another room or the door slamming shut behind the trespasser — but it is the same for the duration of the power (although the thaumaturge can change the form the signal takes from casting to casting). Note that the thaumaturge must actually be in the haven for the alarm to be effective, and the signal must be small and subtle (no Uzis firing automatically at the opening, for example). This power lasts for 24 hours.

Master's Order

By becoming mystically attuned to her haven, a thaumaturge with this ability instinctively knows where every one of her possessions lies in the haven so long as she is in it. Note that this only works on inanimate objects the thaumaturge owns (though objects the thaumaturge has successfully stolen will also show up without difficulty). It lasts for 24 hours.

INTERMEDIATE HEARTH PATH

Rhyme of Discord

This power fuddles the minds of intruders in the haven, causing them to become hopelessly confused and wander in circles, no matter how small and plain the haven might actually be. Any intruders must succeed in a Mental Challenge against the caster or else be trapped inside the haven until the thaumaturge breaks the spell or until it wears off naturally. As well, any person affected by *Rhyme of Discord* will be unable to remember details of the protected haven even after he has left its influence until such time as he visits the haven when it is not enspelled. Note that while intruders affected by this power will be unable to effectively pursue the thaumaturge through his haven, they may still fight and defend themselves normally if the thaumaturge engages them. This power lasts for 24 hours.

Temporal

As master of his haven, a vampire may briefly warp the space inside it so that the doorways connect to each other any way he chooses. A closet door might suddenly open into the laboratory, or the bathroom on the third floor might be made an escape route into the back garden. Anyone following the thaumaturge through the door will end up where it should normally open to; clever vampires will use this to lead pursuers into an oublie or trap. This power lasts until sunrise.

ADVANCED HEARTH PATH

The Cauldron's Rede

By imparting a primitive awareness into the haven itself, the thaumaturge creates a network of spies from her household furnishings. Anything happening within the haven (or within eyeshot outside, as the



windows can "look" out) can be relayed to the magus by the furniture, ornaments, draperies or bric-a-brac. The thaumaturge must verbally ask questions of her belongings; anything within and around the haven is available for her perusal, even if the item she is questioning wasn't present for the event. Havens have short "memories," so the thaumaturge may only ask questions regarding events that occurred in the duration of that casting. In cases of extreme danger, such as fire or a pending ambush, the voices of the haven will actively scream out to the Kindred. This power lasts until sunrise.

MASTERY OF THE MORTAL SHELL

Thaumaturges practicing this path gain control over the physical workings of a body. While this path cannot actually animate corpses, it is effective against the living and undead. Unless otherwise stated, the powers of this path last for a number of turns equal to the number of Mental Traits the caster spends on the casting. This path retests with the Occult Ability.

BASIC MASTERY OF THE MORTAL SHELL

Vertigo

With but a light touch, the thaumaturge causes a wave of dizziness and disorientation to overtake her target. Anyone affected by this is rendered one Trait down on all Physical Challenges for the remainder of the scene. This dizziness might also trigger appropriate effects, such as acrophobia, at the Storyteller's discretion. A ready or suspicious target will probably require a Physical Challenge to affect.

Contortion

This power enables the thaumaturge to cause wracking spasms in his target. The use of this power requires a Physical Challenge to touch the limb he wishes to affect. A "normal" Physical Challenge will strike an arm or leg; if the caster wishes to affect the target's head, he must declare this intention and win two Simple Challenges after succeeding in the initial Physical Challenge (if the two Simple Challenges are unsuccessful, the caster misses completely and loses the Trait bid). For each arm or leg warped in this way, the target not only loses the ability to use it but also gains the negative Physical Trait *Lame*. If the head is affected, the target suffers a complete loss of speech and is three bids down on all Social Challenges as his facial muscles spasm wildly. These effects will span the duration of one scene.

The thaumaturge may also cast this effect upon himself to tighten his muscles, very effective during a bite or choke attack. This power grants the caster two Traits he may use during Physical Challenges if the target attempts to break free.

INTERMEDIATE MASTERY OF THE MORTAL SHELL

Seizure

Thaumaturges using this power cause uncontrollable convulsions in their targets, sometimes resulting in death to mortals as they choke on their



own tongues. With a successful Physical Challenge, the thaumaturge causes her target to twist and writhe upon the ground in utter agony. In this state, the person so afflicted may only bid passive Physical Traits and may not initiate challenges, and will suffer one level of bashing damage per turn as he jerks around. This power lasts for one scene, and may be fatal to mortals (at the Storyteller's discretion).

Body Failure

Those wielding this devastating power have incredible insight into the workings of the body — and how to shut them down. This power will kill mortals, as their autonomic nervous system simply stops working, and is extremely uncomfortable, if not usually lethal, to Kindred. With a successful Physical Challenge and the expenditure of a temporary Willpower, the thaumaturge causes her target to go into total system shock. The victim will suffer three health levels of lethal damage immediately, and one more every subsequent turn they are affected by this power (until death or torpor). During this time, mortal victims may only bid passive Physical Traits, may not initiate challenges and are four Traits down in all actions. Kindred may attempt to soak lethal damage.

ADVANCED MASTERY OF THE MORTAL SHELL

Marionette

At this level, thaumaturges truly usurp their enemies' bodies from them, taking total control of their movements with their will alone. With the expenditure of a temporary Willpower, a successful Mental versus Physical Challenge and established visual contact, the thaumaturge can cause the target to perform any physical actions desired, including speech. The thaumaturge must keep the target in sight for the duration of the power. Because of the intense concentration this power requires, the thaumaturge may not initiate any challenges while "puppeteering" a target.

This power does not rob a victim of thought, only physical control. During this time, the target is aware that some outside force is having its way with him and his actions are not his own. This requires gracious roleplaying on the part of the target — the movements are not jerky and robotic, but as fluid as his own normal ones might be. Owing to logistical difficulties, the thaumaturge may wish to give a series of commands for the target or follow within earshot and whisper instructions.

ONEIROMANCY

The wellspring of the Sabbat's *Path of Morpheus*, Oneiromancy (the ancient Roman study of dreams) has become more popular in light of the demise of the Tremere *antitribu*. Many Tremere are turning their attention back to the divinatory path, hoping that its hazy glimpses will offer guidance in the apocalyptic nights to come. Use of any of these powers requires at least five minutes' worth of dreamlike trance (to be treated as the vampire's daytime sleep, with any related penalties if awakened before the power is completed). This path retests with the Occult Ability.



This power requires the presence of a Storyteller or Narrator to provide results. Storytellers are encouraged to be deliberately vague when giving the results of these powers; no one ever said dreams had to be specific....

BASIC ONEIROMANCY

Portents

By piecing together remnants of her dreams, the thaumaturge may perform a reading regarding her immediate future. This power must be used immediately after awakening from the dreamtrance, and takes 10 minutes of meditation to collect all the fragments of information. If the thaumaturge succeeds in a Simple Challenge with the Storyteller, she may then be given a series of allegorical or symbolic images concerning one upcoming event in her unlif. Repeated use of this power may only result in the same images appearing over and over.

Foresee

This power allows the Warlock to delve directly into the mind of a sleeping individual, exposing shards of her unconscious mind. While Portents may only be used to foretell the future of the thaumaturge, Foresee allows the same kind of divination for someone else. The subject must be in the presence of the thaumaturge and asleep, although the thaumaturge may be *Psychically Projected*. If this power is performed on Kindred, the caster must spend a Willpower Trait in order to see the dreams and understand the results.

If the casting is successful, the Storyteller will then relate the dream-images regarding the target's future, as in Portents.

INTERMEDIATE ONEIROMANCY

Dreamspeak

The oneiromancer can now send messages, warnings or even threats to a target through dreams. While these messages will blend seamlessly into the target's own dreams, he will remember them clearly upon waking. This power may be used upon anyone the thaumaturge has met, provided the target is asleep at the time. If successfully cast, the thaumaturge can insert a static dream-sequence no longer than five minutes into the sleeper's reveries. A thaumaturge may not haunt her target all night/day, but the image will recur at intervals until the target awakes.

Augury

Where Portents offers mere fragments, Augury allows for more explicit prophetic vision or a potential breakthrough in a problem. Through the course of a dreamlike trance, the oneiromancer may now travel through her mind into the collective unconscious. If the caster wins a Simple Challenge with the Storyteller, the Storyteller may give the thaumaturge a series of dream-images spawned either by the thaumaturge or someone the oneiromancer has previously contacted through Foresee or Dreamspeak (whichever the thaumaturge designates before casting). Dream divination is still an imperfect art and may



provide misleading symbols or information useless to the diviner — *caveat emptor*.

This power may be used only once per night and only after the thaumaturge has prepared herself by at least 20 minutes of meditation. The Storyteller has final say on what information an *Augury* provides (or doesn't), and should not reveal things that could ruin a plot or chronicle.

ADVANCED ONEIROMANCY

Reveal the Heart's Dreams

At this level of mastery, the thaumaturge gains astounding insights into others simply by observing them. If successful, the oneiromancer learns of the target's single guiding passion, or the thing he fears the most. The target must be within sight of the caster. For a mortal target, the caster spends a Willpower Trait and wins a Mental Challenge; a Kindred target requires the thaumaturge to spend two Willpower Traits and win the Mental Challenge. In either case, with success, the caster may ask for the target to reveal either his heart's dream or his deepest fears. These are not merely temporary passions, but go to the very well of the soul. Armed with such information, a thaumaturge can make the target an offer that's almost impossible to deny, or threaten him through his greatest fear (which may well result in frenzy).

Storytellers should be present during the use of this power to ensure that the target of this power answers appropriately.

PATH OF THE BLOOD'S CURSE

It is the privilege of elder vampires to flagrantly abuse their power and status while the neonates and ancillae fume impotently. With the threat of Gehenna suddenly looming on the horizon, these "underdogs" are seeking creative ways to turn their tormentors' age against them. This path, developed by rogue Pander and Caitiff thaumaturges, is just such a way. It may only be learned by Kindred of 10th generation or weaker, as the thinness of the thaumaturge's blood is an integral part of the magic of the path, and the powers only work on vampires of equal or better generation. The path remains a guarded secret by those who learn it, and those upper-level Tremere who are aware of it watch their underlings closely for signs of it. Displaying knowledge of it is an excellent way to get a one-way ticket to Vienna.

This path retests with the Occult Ability.

BASIC PATH OF THE BLOOD'S CURSE

Ravages Of The Beast

A thaumaturge invoking this power (which may affect any Kindred within her line of sight) prods the target's Beast into sudden and terrifying action. By succeeding in a Mental Challenge, the thaumaturge forces the target to immediately test for frenzy (type of frenzy should be appropriate to the situation). Note that Kindred with *Instinct* instead of *Self-Control* will always frenzy if this power is successfully



used on them; otherwise, normal frenzy rules apply (see page 209 of *Laws Of The Night*).

Weight Of The Sun

As dawn approaches, Kindred feel their limbs and eyelids grow heavy and must quickly find shelter before they succumb to the irresistible weight of day-sleep; thaumaturges invoking this power inflict this same terrible helplessness upon their target. By succeeding in a Mental Challenge with her target, the thaumaturge causes the Kindred to not only gain the negative Physical Traits *Lethargic* x 2, but also prevents him from bidding any number of Traits greater than triple his Morality (or Path) rating. This power lasts for one scene and cannot affect characters who have achieved Golconda.

INTERMEDIATE PATH OF THE BLOOD'S CURSE

Abated Tooth

A vampire unable to use his fangs is in sorry shape. By succeeding in a Mental versus Physical Challenge with his target, the thaumaturge causes the target's fangs to become mystically blunted, unable to pierce flesh and robbing her of the ability to use them effectively. While affected in this way, a Kindred cannot use her fangs to either cause aggravated damage in combat or to feed normally. Even if the vampire manages to bite a victim, it will no longer trigger the ecstasy of the Kiss. This can make feeding problematic, if not nearly impossible, requiring the Kindred to find other means. Storytellers should feel free to throw whatever obstacles into the Kindred's path, from irritated would-be vessels in the Rack to vexed sheriffs and princes dealing with a Masquerade threat.

This power lasts for an entire night.

Treacherous Bonds

Many elder vampires have built a power base through judicious use of the blood bond, sometimes creating entire "broods" of thralls they know that can trust. This insidious power reverses the bond, wreaking havoc upon the hapless regnant.

If invoking this power against a regnant, the thaumaturge must first touch the regnant, possibly requiring a Physical Challenge. If the touch is successful, the blood bond between that regnant and one thrall becomes corrupt and unstable. Regardless of how he genuinely feels about her, the regnant's thrall now become actively distrustful and suspicious of her actions, possibly spreading her secrets to her enemies or plotting against her. This power works even if the thrall is unaware of the bond. If the thaumaturge turns this power against a thrall, only that thrall's bond becomes warped. Both uses last for one night.

Storytellers should be informed of this power's use, and the thaumaturge should not be told out of character if the power has succeeded or failed. Many regents levy harsh censure on those apprentices with knowledge of this power.



ADVANCED PATH OF THE BLOOD'S CURSE

The Withering Of Ages

This devastating power works directly upon the blood within a Kindred's veins, stripping her of her immortality until she resembles her true age. By making a successful Physical Challenge with the target, the thaumaturge renders her decrepit, shriveled and warped. The target's fangs elongate, and vampiric features become more pronounced.

For every Willpower Trait the thaumaturge spends, the target is physically aged one decade. Each decade means the loss of two Physical Traits. While the target cannot be aged past zero Traits, without Physical Traits she cannot move, feed or even defend herself, and her speech becomes so soft as to be nearly inaudible. If aged to zero Physical Traits, she may also not initiate challenges, and any of her Appearance-based Social Traits are negated. For every five decades the target ages, she gains the Negative Traits *Decrepit* and *Repugnant* as her features become more feral and her body shrinks into a skeletal heap, in addition to the loss of Physical Traits. The target may attempt to restore herself by spending one Willpower Trait and five blood Traits in the same turn she was afflicted.

Storytellers should feel free to increase or decrease these penalties as appropriate (if, for example, the vampire is only 10 years old, but was Embraced at age 70, or if the character has the Flaw: *Child*). This power lasts for one night, whereupon the vampire sheds her years and appears as young or old as the night of her Embrace.

PATH OF CURSES

This path, a natural extension of human spite, was developed early in the history of Thaumaturgy. Whatever it is called — whether it be hexing or bestowing the evil eye — it always involves a “calling down” of evil forces upon the victim. Some theorize that it is purely the psychological impact that makes the superstitious unlucky or ill, but thaumaturges know better. This path is extremely powerful, but is also dangerous; unlike other paths, the accursed usually know exactly who it is who is making their unlivings miserable — a Warlock must speak aloud her curse directly to her target. While modern industrialized nations pooh-pooh the notion of curses, there are places in the world where such a brazen witch could find herself pursued by a mob.

Warlocks wishing to bestow a curse upon the unlucky target must first possess a sympathetic link — a bit of blood, a lock of hair, a fingernail or the like — and then must win a Social Challenge against their victim while intoning to them the details of the curse (although not necessarily in a language the target understands). The sympathetic link might need to be acquired through a Physical Challenge; this is a good time to remind players of the “No Touching” rule. A new sympathetic link must be used each time a power is invoked, even if it is upon the same person. This path retests with the *Intimidation* Ability. The thaumaturge can remove her own curses any time she wishes.



BASIC PATH OF CURSES

Stigma

This, the most basic of curses, "marks" the victim with an invisible aura of revulsion. While no one will ever be able to say exactly why the target is uncomfortable to be around, it will make social dealings difficult nonetheless. The subject of this curse (who may be mortal or Kindred) must bid an extra Trait in all Social Challenges and loses all ties in Social Challenges. This power lasts until the next sunset.

Malady

This power allows the thaumaturge to infect Kindred or kine with a debilitating sickness. Even a powerful Cainite might think twice about crossing someone who could make them suffer the sicknesses of a common mortal.

If this power is successfully invoked, the accursed suffers a two-Trait penalty to all physical actions due to intense discomfort; the disease looks and behaves similarly to influenza. The player should tell everyone around her of these developments and roleplay appropriately. This curse might also endanger the Masquerade as the accursed Kindred sneezes and vomits blood. It lasts until sunrise.

INTERMEDIATE PATH OF CURSES

Pariah

This curse touches upon the greatest fear in organized society, that of being wholly outcast. By twisting the perceptions of the target's peers, the thaumaturge curses his target to appear as the most hateful of enemies to her peers (the target should indicate to anyone she interacts with that she appears to be the most horrible enemy that person can think of). This altered perception is only in body — the target may still act and speak as normal.

Like *Mask of 1000 Faces*, this power affects the perceptions of the onlooker, leading him to believe that he sees his worst enemy before him. How he chooses to react is up to him: He may simply snub the target, or he might throw the first punch. *Auspex* cannot see through this power. This power lasts until sunrise.

Corrupt Body

While *Pariah* simply alters the perceptions of those around the target, *Corrupt Body* makes that appearance reality. By denouncing the physical form of the accursed, the thaumaturge forces her body to warp into a grotesque parody of what it once was. This outward caricaturing is accompanied by mind-wracking pain, and Kindred who have undergone this curse are often scarred both mentally and physically.

If successfully cast, this power reduces the target's Physical Traits to half (rounded down), bestows two Negative Physical Traits (Storyteller discretion, based on the curse) and renders all Appearance-based Social Traits unusable for the duration of the curse. The target must also spend one turn doing nothing but writhing in agony. After that turn of transformation, the full weight of the curse descends, lasting until sunrise or until the thaumaturge lifts it.



ADVANCED PATH OF CURSES

Fall From Grace

This power curses the target with supreme ineptitude, making even the most familiar of tasks an uncertain endeavor. If successfully invoked, the thaumaturge ensures that the odds will always be against the accursed — the target will lose all ties, in any challenge, and cannot use any retests, including those given by Merits (i.e. to succeed in an action, a person accursed in this way must straight-out win every challenge). This power lasts until sunrise.

PATH OF TRANSMUTATION

This path is regarded by elder Tremere as a kind of poor man's *Alchemy*, as it deals with similar principles without the true mastery of the art. However, it is quick and does not require the structure of a laboratory to perform. Also, these powers may be used in conjunction with one another for more dramatic alterations and work upon any object within the thaumaturge's direct line of sight (meaning that blood within a body cannot be affected, but blood exiting the body can).

This path retests with the Occult Ability.

BASIC PATH OF TRANSMUTATION

Fortify The Solid Form

By strengthening the atomic bonds in an object, the magus increases the strength of an item, negating any *Fragile Negative Traits* it has and allowing for inherently weak objects (such as pencils) to function more effectively in combat situations. It can also be used to make armor tougher, enabling it to withstand one more Health Level than it would normally. Creative thaumaturges can use this power in other ways, at the Storyteller's discretion. The magus must spend a Mental Trait to use this power.

Objects thus enhanced will remain so for the duration of one scene.

Crystallize the Liquid Form

Originally developed to keep other Kindred from imbibing the thaumaturges' vitae (as Kindred cannot consume congealed blood), this power will transform up to one Blood Trait's worth (about two pints) of liquid into solid form. The substance will not change in temperature or volatility, only form (so solid acid will still corrode, solid molten metal will still burn, etc.). Liquids within living forms may not be affected. At the end of the scene, the material will revert to its natural form; solidified objects can be broken, although this weakness can be lessened through use of the first power of this path. The thaumaturge must spend a Mental Trait to enact this power.

INTERMEDIATE PATH OF TRANSMUTATION

Liquefy the Solid Form

As its name implies, use of this power melts objects into liquid puddles. The thaumaturge must spend a number of Mental Traits relevant



to the size of the object affected (a stake might cost one, while a tank might require seven or eight). At the end of the scene, the object will revert to its "natural" form unless the puddle is scattered; Storytellers should be aware that the object will try to resume its previous form with as much material as remains. Also note that this power does not work on living (or unliving) beings.

Gaol

This power allows the Warlock to solidify air into an opaque, indestructible barrier. A shimmering prison forms around the target's body, encasing her within an impenetrable field; this power can also be used to form walls within doorways, solidifying the space within the doorframe.

The thaumaturge may affect any area within 50 yards (and line of sight) of himself and must spend a number of Mental Traits relevant to the size of the area encased (a small rodent would cost one, while a normal-sized person would cost five). Once encased, Kindred suffer no penalties, but mortals experience the discomfort of adapting to breathing "liquid air" as the oxygen in the block becomes liquid-like but still breathable (and indeed, after being freed from their prison, mortals must cough out the condensed contents of their lungs, suffering one bashing level of damage while they retch). This prison is completely impenetrable, even by Kindred using *Potence*, and lasts for one scene.

ADVANCED PATH OF TRANSMUTATION

Ghost Wall

At this level of the path, thaumaturges find that solid objects offer no resistance. With due concentration, any material is rendered vaporous and may be passed through easily. While this power does not affect sentient beings, floors underneath foes may suddenly disappear, parachutes suddenly "don't work," or the prince's favorite ghoul suddenly falls right through the car seat into traffic....

The thaumaturge must spend a number of Mental Traits relevant to the size of the object being made gaseous (one Mental Trait would be enough to affect a target's clothes, while a city bus would take seven or eight). This power affects anything within the thaumaturge's line of sight, and lasts for one scene, after which the object reforms itself exactly how and where it was when this power was used (vaporous objects may not be dissipated in any way). Should a victim be occupying the same space as an affected object after the power expires, the victim suffers a number of health levels of aggravated damage (amount determined by the Storyteller based on the object). Objects conflicting this way remain together until one is invoked to vaporous state or is physically removed.

VINE OF DIONYSUS

Years before the coming of Christianity, temples devoted to the god Dionysus flourished throughout Greece. As a symbol of rebirth, vampires in those areas were drawn to him and worshipped nightly at his shrines,



eagerly involving themselves in orgiastic bouts of wine and revelry. These practices eventually became reflected in the magic of the Tremere, although few Warlocks will openly admit to engaging in the shameful (and often cannibalistic) rites.

Most practitioners of either gender on this path refer to themselves as *thyrsi* (sing. *thrysus*); female Warlocks are sometimes called *Maenads* (usually from a safe distance). These Warlocks often display jewelry or symbols of their faith, including representations of pinecones and ivy.

Followers of this path find it is more of a religion than a series of magical formulae and cannot resist becoming entrenched in its hedonism; as a result, Kindred beginning this path automatically lose one permanent Willpower Trait as they become "addicted" to the pleasures. This path retests with the *Occult Ability*.

BASIC PATH OF THE VINE OF DIONYSUS

Methyskein

By making physical contact with his target, the Warlock causes her to behave and appear as if she were drunk. For one scene, a person affected by this power suffers a one-Trait penalty on all challenges involving Dexterity or Intelligence, and generally acts intoxicated, from slurred speech to euphoria and clouded judgement.

If used on a mortal or ghoul three nights in a row, the victim becomes addicted to the euphoria this power brings and may suffer ill effects from this addiction (such as Trait penalties for each night without a "fix").

Omophagy

This power hearkens back to Dionysus' ability to invoke animal urges in his victims. By making direct eye contact and winning a Mental Challenge with her target, the Warlock imbues her target with an all-encompassing gluttony. Mortals eat until they become sick and even then will feel hungry and continue to gorge after they vomit. Kindred affected in this way will not only drain a vessel completely of blood (even if it is another Kindred!) but attempt to devour the victim's flesh (although this does not grant the ability to digest whatever flesh is eaten, ensuring predictable, gory results). A Kindred who kills another in a fit of gustatory ecstasy cannot "accidentally" diablerize the victim.

A vampire affected by this power seeks out the easiest "prey" readily available. If the vampire is hungry and confronted by the sight, smell or taste of blood, hunger frenzy occurs. The target loses awareness of her surroundings to the extent that a breach of Masquerade is probable. By spending a Willpower Trait, the victim may resist the hunger for one scene but will lapse back into it with gusto. This effect lasts for the rest of the night.

INTERMEDIATE PATH OF THE VINE OF DIONYSUS

Hamartia

Far more intense than the mere euphoria created by Methyskein, this power causes intoxication to the point of perversity, delirium and possibly



torpid stupor. In those who possess the path themselves, however, it also grants superhuman strength.

By making physical contact with his target, the thaumaturge induces such euphoria in the victim that she is two Traits down on *all* challenges for the remainder of the scene. How the victim reacts to such intoxication is in the hands of the Storyteller — lust, depression and violence are possible, and the target's Nature, Flaws or derangements may further affect her actions.

Interestingly enough, while they also suffer most of the negative effects detailed above, when this path is used upon another follower of the Vine of Dionysus the victim takes no penalty to physical actions and gains a two-Trait bonus in challenges involving strength.

Enthousiasmós

With this power, the follower of Dionysus exudes a powerful pheromone with which she may "infect" others within a 10 foot radius. Anyone affected will fall into a narcotic stupor as the hallucinogen induces pleasant, dreamlike images. In this state they will simply giggle, dance or sigh as they sink into the visions.

By succeeding in this power, the Warlock ensures that the targets are far too *Submissive* x 2, *Lethargic* and *Willless* to pose much of a threat; they're inclined to passive euphoria, content to while away their time with their visions (which are better than television). Someone affected by this power may spend a temporary Willpower to shrug off the effects for one turn, after which he slides back under. This power lasts for one scene.

ADVANCED PATH OF THE VINE OF DIONYSUS

Oinos Aimatos

By invoking the essence of the wine-god into themselves, the *thrysus* transforms his blood into a powerful elixir. For the duration of one scene, anyone imbibing even the tiniest drop of the Warlock's blood will be affected as per *Enthousiasmós*. The thaumaturge need only spend a Blood Trait and a Willpower Trait upon first invoking this power: He can affect as many targets as drink his blood without further expense.

If dumped into a communal punchbowl or the like, it can only be detected through the use of *Heightened Senses* and a successful Mental Challenge (difficulty at the Storyteller's discretion). It can also be detected by enhanced powers of taste, but by then of course it is too late for the Kindred in question.

The effects of this power last for one scene.

TREMEBE RITUALS

Thaumaturgical rituals can be defined as a unique series of gestures, invocations and material components that achieve a particular magical purpose. The more dramatic and far-reaching the effect desired, the more complex and difficult the ritual will be.

The creation of rituals requires lengthy and painstaking experimentation. A Kindred must possess at least five levels of the Occult Ability



before she can even begin to sketch out her own ritual, and must also possess a level of Thaumaturgy at least one step greater than the level of the ritual she is attempting to write; after that, the player should let the Storyteller know what effect she is after and how exactly she is going about it, and be willing to negotiate. The actual details of the ritual are up to the Storyteller; factors to consider when determining the power of the ritual are level (Basic, Intermediate, Advanced), components (are they rare or mundane? will they result in a loss of Humanity to use or obtain?), casting time (is the "usual" time for a ritual of that level, or does it take longer/shorter?) and overall difficulty (does it require a Blood Trait from the target?). When both the Storyteller and player have agreed upon a balanced ritual, the character then "experiments" in-character for a length of time appropriate to the level of the ritual (double the time it takes to learn Disciplines of the same level is one idea), at the end of which the character has a completed set of notes to actually learn the ritual from.

Learning existing rituals requires the study of someone else's written notes on the ritual until it is committed to memory; the more common rituals listed in *Laws of the Night* may be found in nearly every Tremere library, but some of the rituals listed below are particularly inaccessible. Storytellers may decide to make the rituals with a path listed after them only available to, or taught by, followers of that path.

Casting rituals requires a Static Mental Challenge (against five Traits for a Basic, seven Traits for an Intermediate and nine Traits for an Advanced) and, unless otherwise stated in the ritual description, 10 minutes for each level (10 minutes for Basic, 20 minutes for Intermediate, and 30 minutes for an Advanced). Although all of the rituals listed here include necessary components (usually readily available through the use of Influences), you may opt, as the Storyteller, to allow them to assume the components were on hand. Very few of the rituals in *Laws Of The Night* have component requirements, it's true; but the rituals listed here are more specialized and less ubiquitous, and therefore might require a bit more effort on the part of the thaumaturge. Just keep in mind that the acquisition of arcane objects and occult materials is an ongoing task for thaumaturge and can be the basis for many intricate plots.

A Note

Some of these effects can be darned hard to simulate in a live-action setting or make demands of a Storyteller (such as following an unlucky target of *Jinx*). You may choose to designate a Narrator to handle such duties, to alter the effects of a ritual in the name of expedience or simply to disallow it altogether.

BASIC THAUMATURGICAL RITUALS

Blood Mead (*Vine of Dionysus*)

Followers of Dionysus claim that their potions do more than just intoxicate. By invoking Dionysus' blessing upon a special concoction of



mead (fermented honey) and two of his own Blood Traits, the ritualist creates a brew that is both invigorating and anesthetizing. By drinking this potion immediately after casting, the thaumaturge gains an extra Healthy health level, but also becomes one Trait down on all challenges involving dexterity or intelligence due to intoxication. This ritual lasts for one night.

Brand of the Paramour

This ritual enables the thaumaturge to maintain constant awareness of her ghoul's physical condition. The Warlock obtains a Blood Trait from mortal twins of any age (two Blood Traits in total) and performs the ritual over the blood. Both ghoul and Kindred then drink equally of the vitae, after which time the Kindred will feel a "ghost" pain in the same place that the ghoul suffers, although the severity of the damage will be uncertain. The thaumaturge suffers no unusual physical effects (other than pain) no matter how badly injured the ghoul is, even if her ghoul is slain. This ritual lasts until the ghoul is Embraced or killed.

Craft Bloodstone

By imbuing a small pebble with her own vitae, the thaumaturge creates a mystical tracking device to which she will always be connected. This ritual takes three consecutive nights to cast; on the first night, the thaumaturge soaks the pebble in three Traits of her blood and recites the ritual while the stone absorbs a portion of the vitae. On the second night, she completes the next phase of the incantation, during which the pebble absorbs more of the blood. On the final night, the last of the blood is absorbed (although the pebble's appearance does not change) and the thaumaturge instinctively knows where the pebble is at all times. While this does not grant precise knowledge of its location, it does give the caster a strong sense of distance and direction. This ritual takes five minutes per night, for three nights.

Encrypt Missive

Centuries of clan secrets have been preserved through judicious use of this ritual, although now it also seems common among the anarchs of the new states, who use it to encrypt graffiti on slum alleyways. By writing the message in blood and speaking the name of the person he wishes to read it, the thaumaturge ensures that anyone else spying the document will interpret it as meaningless scribbles. Only the writer and the person to whom the note is addressed may read it.

Enhancing the Curse

This ritual is used almost exclusively to punish or torment ghouls. By scratching or striking the ghoul, drawing blood and speaking the ancient words of the curse, the Warlock bestows a terrible vulnerability to sunlight upon her. For as long as vampiric vitae courses through her veins, the ghoul now suffers aggravated damage from exposure to sunlight at a rate of one health level per two turns as her skin blisters and blackens into third-degree burns. This ritual lasts for one month.



Extinguish

By first intoning the ritual and then pinching out a candle flame (possibly requiring a *Courage* check) and spitting on the floor, the caster of this ritual ensures that for the remainder of the night he has a degree of mastery over flames. After this ritual is successfully cast, the thaumaturge may at any time for the rest of the evening speak a magical syllable that will completely extinguish any one flame up to the size of a small bonfire. After it has been used, the spell is broken. Even if this ritual goes unused after casting, it must be recast the next night if the caster wishes to retain its effects.

Impassable Trail

The vampire can travel through even the densest woods without betraying any sign of passage aside from her faint scent (which can only be detected by *Heightened Senses* or other supernatural sensory abilities). The thaumaturge must either carry an owl's feather steeped in Kindred vitae or burn the legs of a dead toad and carry the ashes with her while this ritual is in effect. It lasts until sunrise.

Impressive Visage

This ritual grants the caster a degree of sheer physical magnetism and ensures he will be neither ignored nor forgotten. He simply appears to be more desirable and attractive than anyone else in the room. By performing this ritual and then placing a sprig of dried mint in his right shoe or pocket, the Warlock gains two Appearance-related Social Traits for an evening. While they may not be bid, they may be counted in ties and overbids even if it goes over the Kindred's generational maximum. This power may not be "stacked" for an evening.

The Imp's Affliction

This ritual only works on mortals, and infects them with an uncomfortable and embarrassing illness. While under the effects of this ritual, the target's eyes and nose overflow with mucus, her throat becomes raw and raspy, and her eyes constantly brim with tears. Storytellers should assign penalties appropriate to the target's actions (Social and Physical Challenges are certainly more difficult). This ritual lasts for one scene and requires the thaumaturge to write the target's name on a scrap of paper and then burn it.

Jinx

By sacrificing some of the victim's blood, the thaumaturge afflicts a Cainite with bad luck. The thaumaturge must possess at least one Trait of the target's vitae, which disappears during the sending, after which the Storyteller should be informed of the ritual's success so she can properly interpret the consequences. For one scene, anything that can go wrong for the character will — he trips on his shoelaces as he enters a room, his car fails to start at a critical moment, or he alerts a firewall while he's hacking into a mainframe.

This ritual won't do direct damage to the victim but should definitely make the *Jinxed* person's evening more interesting.



Learning the Mind Enslumbered

With this ritual, a thaumaturge can determine the cause of a Kindred's torpor or demise. After placing a penny or other small coin on the vampire's eye, she will hear the Kindred's spirit tell the particulars of its current state. She may also invoke this power on a vampire's ashen remains. The thaumaturge cannot carry on a conversation with the spirit. This power takes a full half-hour to perform and only works on Kindred.

Mourning Life Curse

Although this ritual causes no real physical harm (outside of blood loss) to mortals, it can be incredibly frightening to those who view it. The Warlock drinks a dram of thrice-distilled crocodile blood, then makes a paste of copal oil, ground eyebright and dates. He may carry the paste until he finds a suitable target. When the thaumaturge wishes to enact this ritual, she must first dab the paste onto her target's eyes (possibly requiring a challenge) and then whisper a two-line incantation in his ear (the target must be able to hear the words to be affected by this ritual, although he may be asleep). The mortal then begins to uncontrollably weep bloody tears. This unstoppable blood loss continues until the thaumaturge stops visually concentrating upon the mortal. Thaumaturges performing this ritual are unable to take any other actions, as the totality of their will is focused on the mortal. The bleeding is painless but slow; one Blood Trait will be secreted for every five minutes. Some Tremere use this to feed upon sleeping victims.

Purge the Inner Demon

All Kindred face the Beast; thaumaturges developed this ritual to control it. By pushing a sturdy pin through her own hand, the Warlock causes a vampire's Beast to be temporarily separated from her psyche. She may be pulled out of frenzy by this ritual. In this state, she cannot be made to frenzy by anything non-supernatural in nature, but she also gains the Negative Social Trait *Submissive*. This power lasts a number of hours equal to the caster's Morality Traits. The thaumaturge may not use this power on himself.

Rebirth Of Mortal Vanity

Often a useful chip for bargaining with the Toreador, this ritual allows a vampire to effectively "grow" hair. For every inch of hair he wishes, the recipient of the ritual (whether the caster or another Kindred) must pluck a hair from the head of a living human child. The thaumaturge then places the hairs on a mirror and invokes the ritual. As the vampire's hair begins to grow, the child's hairs disappear into the surface of the mirror. Once the ritual is finished, the hair ceases to grow, but the hair will remain at the new length until cut. If it is ever cut shorter than it was at the vampire's Embrace, it will return to its original pre-ritual length the next sunset. Note that this ritual will not grow hair on a bald vampire, and the ritualist cannot change the color or other features of the hair.



Rite of Introduction

This ritual is used for a newly arriving Tremere to make a formal introduction to the regent of the city. The arrival of the telephone and e-mail has made the ritual mostly obsolete, but some tradition-minded regents will not accept a visitor who has not followed protocol. The caster boils a handful of ground tamarisk root in a pot of rainwater, then recites an incantation into the vapors that form over the water and adds a drop of galangal oil, then speaks a brief (30 second) message of introduction for the regent of the city. The regent may reply telepathically for up to five minutes if she wishes.

Sanguineous Phial

This ritual enables the caster to mystically enchant a vessel so that it will hold a quantity of blood without spoiling. The Warlock must obtain a covered earthenware jar and bury it in the earth for two nights, after which she digs it up and crumbles an ash leaf into the empty canister. Then the blood is poured in, and the jar is closed and sealed with tallow from a candle. The blood remains fresh until the seal is broken; after the jar is opened, the blood will begin to rot at a normal rate, but if the jar is broken, the blood immediately decays as if it had never been preserved. This ritual must be recast every time the thaumaturge wishes to preserve blood, even if she uses the same container.

The Scribe

With this power, the thaumaturge's spoken words are mystically transcribed into a written document. The document can take almost any form — the words may appear in a bound book, on loose-leaf paper, on a wall, the head of a pin or whatever, but clarity may be sacrificed (100 pages will not translate onto a notecard without difficulty). Some younger Warlocks even use this to mimic a computer's speech recognition program. Note that the transcription is literal — the ritual will not improve a speaker's quality or clarity. The caster may also lay this ritual on another with the same effects, but must crush a bird's beak or lizard's tongue between her thumb and forefinger each time. This power lasts for one scene, or until the thaumaturge chooses to end it.

Sense The Mystical

This ritual enables the thaumaturge to sense magical effects and enchanted objects. The Warlock chants non-stop for five minutes to invoke this power, then carries a lit candle with him. When the candlelight finds an object or effect touched by blood-related magic, the item glitters. This power will sense any kind of blood-related magic (including *Thaumaturgy*, *Necromancy* and the user) as long as it is currently being invoked, any magically created or manipulated items and, at the Storyteller's discretion, any traces of True Magick in the area of the candle's light. This power does not distinguish between the different types of magic it reveals and lasts for one scene. It is not triggered by "normal" Disciplines.



Trima (*The Vine of Dionysus*)

This type of *oinos* is made with spices that warm the drinkers' blood and make them drowsy and content. Thaumaturges often use this ritual at parties where both Kindred and kine mingle, the better to protect the Masquerade if the vampires choose to feed. Although the creation of the spiced wine requires a Trait of the caster's *vitaे*, Kindred feeding from mortals under the influence of the enspelled beverage need not worry about becoming blood bound to the caster; all supernatural properties of the thaumaturge's blood are dissolved into the *trima*.

Mortals drinking the concoction suffer the Negative Traits *Submissive* and *Lethargic*, and any details about the evening they try to remember later will be fuzzy and indistinct. The power of the *oinos* lasts until sunrise.

Whispers Of The Ghost

This ritual, when combined with the *Auspex* power of *Psychic Projection*, enables the ritualist to speak directly into the material world while in his astral form. After weaving the spell, the Cainite may only speak in whispers to the physical world (he cannot be seen or touched). This power lasts for one scene, counted from the first word the thaumaturge utters. The thaumaturge must carry the ear of a still-living creature in his left hand while performing this ritual.

INTERMEDIATE THAUMATURGICAL RITUALS

Blood Allergy

A grim reminder of the frailties of mortal flesh, this ritual enables the caster to forcefully "purge" blood from a victim's body. By mixing a Blood Trait with dead rose petals and speaking the incantation, the ritualist makes it impossible for the target to keep blood in her system; for every Blood Trait above three the target possesses, she spends one turn vomiting it from her body. The Kindred cannot retain more than three Blood Traits in her body for the duration of the ritual; if she attempts to drink more, she immediately suffers severe nausea and vomiting until the extra blood is gone. While this loss of blood will not induce torpor, it may require the vampire to make a hunger frenzy check (at the Storyteller's discretion). This power lasts for an entire evening. This power will not work on those Kindred who are older than the caster.

Cleansing Of The Flesh

With the spread of blood plagues such as AIDS, Kindred often find themselves unwitting carriers of these unflattering "social" diseases. A Warlock wishing to rid himself of these kinds of maladies must spend a full night in a bathtub (or cauldron) filled with purified water, bleeding all but the tiniest drop of blood from his body. As the blood is diffused into the water, any addictions and diseases (non-supernatural) the Kindred's body might carry are bled out. This ritual may be performed upon another Kindred; in this case, the subject must lie in the water, having opened his own veins, while the thaumaturge chants for the course of the night.



Kindred with no blood in their bodies are ravenously hungry; a source of blood should be immediately on hand or else the vampire might frenzy (Kindred with low *Self-Control* are particularly dangerous after this ritual has been completed for this reason).

Craft Dream Catcher (*Oneiromancy*)

By incorporating Native American beliefs with their own ageless arts, oneiromancers both create a portal into a target's dreams and guard them against hostile spirits. A Dream Catcher is an intensely personal talisman composed of the target's hair, spittle, blood and other sympathetic links. Owners of these "shields" are afforded more protection against any ghostly attack (spirits trying to adversely affect the owner are two Traits down to do so); also, the oneiromancer who crafted the artifact is granted a two-Trait bonus when affecting its owner with that path, while other oneiromancers attempting to do so take a two-Trait penalty. This power lasts until the artifact is lost, stolen or destroyed.

The Curse Belated

This ritual is used to safeguard particularly precious ghouls against untimely death, especially when they are being considered for Embrace. By increasing the power of the vampiric blood running through his thrall's veins, the ritualist all but insures the mortal's survival; the instant a ghoul under this spell dies (in any way) the infused vitae in her body will revive her as a Kindred within 10 minutes (ghouls who die in a particularly mangled state should probably be given the Flaw: *Permanent Wound* or something else appropriate when they return as Kindred). To cast this ritual, the thaumaturge willingly loses one permanent Blood Trait, which is returned to the caster's blood pool when the ghoul dies. The inaccessible Blood Trait remains in the ghoul's system and may not be used to power Disciplines or be lost in any way. If someone else attempts to Embrace the enspelled ghoul, the mortal will revive as a Kindred — as the childe of the thaumaturge who cast the spell. The thaumaturge must brand the target ghoul with his sigil, which disappears when the ghoul awakens as undead.

Infirm Inert

One of the most powerful properties of a Kindred's vitae is its ability to heal the vampire of nearly any trauma; this ritual deprives a Kindred of that advantage, rendering her impotent to close her wounds. The thaumaturge must first imbibe a small quantity of blood laced with laudanum (which will grant the caster the Negative Physical Trait *Lethargic* for the scene immediately following the casting); after that, he only need smear a tiny bit of his blood onto the victim's skin to bestow the curse upon her for the rest of the evening. The target may not be aware of the change until she first attempts to heal. She may spend a Willpower Trait to negate this effect for one turn. When the ritual expires, she may heal as normal, according to the level of damage.



Major Creation (*Path of Conjuring*)

While the *Path of Conjuring* is limited with regard to the size of the items created, this ritual gives the conjurer more range. It requires the caster to sever her thumb (requiring the expenditure of a temporary Willpower); the digit disappears when the enlarged item is successfully conjured, although it will regenerate at a normal rate. After this ritual is cast, the thaumaturge may now spend either two or three temporary Mental Traits to make a summoned item either double or triple the size he can normally conjure. Note that this ritual works in conjunction with whatever power of the path the caster is using (so combining this with *Summon The Simple Form* will still only enable basic items to be conjured, but now they can be bigger basic items).

Once the thumb is consumed by the ritual, the thaumaturge can no longer create enlarged objects until the ritual is recast.

Return of the Heart (*Path of the Blood's Curse*)

This ritual overwhelms the target with human guilt. By mixing a Trait of the victim's blood with the tears of an infant, the thaumaturge forces the victim to reflect upon her past actions through the eyes of an innocent. While this does not affect a Path rating, the Cainite behaves for the rest of the evening as if she had a Morality rating of 5 and is governed by the Path of Humanity. This will probably result in several Conscience/Conviction Virtue tests, at the Storyteller's discretion. This power is particularly terrible against Sabbat elders, who may be destroyed by their packmates for such "weakness."

Scry

The thaumaturge causes a body of water, whether natural or artificial, to become a scrying pool after mixing it with owl's blood. The water must be relatively still, and confined pools no larger than a bathtub work better than open lakes. The caster can either concentrate on a known location he has visited or a person; if spying upon a person, the ritualist must possess an object of personal significance to the target. *Auspex* or other powers may not be used while Scrying to "remotely" affect the victim. The thaumaturge may not change the target of the Scry once cast; for example, if the focus is a location, it will remain locked on that area for the duration of the ritual. This power lasts for 10 minutes, although viewing time may be lengthened by the expenditure of one temporary Mental Trait for each additional 10 minutes.

Stolen Kisses

Thaumaturges use this macabre power when they do not wish to, or are unable to, feed by fang. By making a small incision on her body and performing the ritual (which requires that the thaumaturge always carry a "witch's kiss" — a thistle steeped in vampiric vitae), the ritualist seals the self-inflicted wound into an undetectable mouthlike sucker which only opens when pressed against a mortal's warm flesh, and which can mystically drain blood from the vessel. Warlocks feeding in this manner



quietly steal one Blood Trait every other turn from the time the contact persists. Particularly lascivious thaumaturges will create this orifice to be used during sexual contact, thus combining both the passions of life and undeath; more conservative Warlocks prefer a lengthy firm handshake. Whatever the medium for exchange, vessels will not be immediately aware of their blood loss (although they will suffer the usual health effects); this particularly tidy method of feeding causes neither the rapture of the Kiss nor any immediate discomfort to the vessel. The "mouth" will last until sunrise.

Telecommunication

In these nights, precocious Tremere are relying more on electronic devices than the animal spies and familiars of yesteryear. With this ritual, any television the thaumaturge has touched in the last week may now be used as both an "eye" into the room as well as a device for beguiling those watching the set. The thaumaturge, by performing this ritual and dropping into a meditative state, may observe everything from a "television's-eye-view" and can also regulate any images or sounds the television generates, from changing the channel to crafting a fake broadcast. This power lasts for 10 minutes from the completion of the ritual, although it may be prolonged for an extra 10 minutes per temporary Mental Trait spent. While in this meditative state (which may be broken at any time, also breaking the ritual), the caster may not initiate challenges.

A Touch Of Nightshade

This ritual allows the thaumaturge to poison a single victim with but a slight touch. The caster must anoint his hands with the bitter extract of deadly nightshade before conducting this ritual. Anytime after the ritual, anyone the caster touches with his bare hands will become poisoned; this weakness lasts until sunrise and inflicts one health level of bashing damage (not halved) per hour to Kindred and one health level of lethal damage to mortals. The caster may not reverse these effects; once the victim is poisoned, it must run its course. This poison may not be treated by medical means or by "burning" the blood in a Kindred's body. The effects of the poison will not transfer if the victim's blood is drunk.

Track Transgressor

Developed as a means for Tremere to track down those non-clan Kindred who have managed to learn the secrets of *Thaumaturgy*, this ritual makes the target's most recent footsteps visible to the caster. By uttering mystical syllables and spilling a Trait of her vitae upon the ground where the infidel is known to have worked *Thaumaturgy* within the past 24 hours, the caster may then be able to track the magus for the rest of the evening. This tracking follows the exact path the other magus took after leaving the area where the magic was worked. This ritual may only track down *Thaumaturgy*, not *Necromancy* or other kinds of blood magic, and does not distinguish between Tremere and non-Tremere.



Ward Versus Fae

The fae are not nicknamed “The Wild Ones” erroneously; the Tremere developed this ritual to keep the Fair Folk from interfering with their affairs. While most modern Tremere scoff at the notion of faeries, this ritual lurks in faded tomes and forgotten libraries still. It is cast in much the same way as *Ward Versus Ghouls* (with identical size restrictions), except that a handful of cold iron filings is used in lieu of a Trait of blood.

ADVANCED THAUMATURGICAL RITUALS

Cobra’s Favor

Echoing the curse laid upon the Assamites, elder Tremere created this ritual to make their vitae so poisonous that it would burn anything living it touched. After combining one Trait of her blood with a brew of toxic herbs and snake venom, the thaumaturge then recites a complicated incantation over it, calling upon the spirit of all things baneful. After this, the concoction turns a fetid black, and the ritualist must ingest the elixir (suffering a level of unsoakable aggravated damage). For one full month, the thaumaturge’s blood turns to a deadly poison and inflicts one level aggravated damage per Trait to anyone ingesting it. Needless to say, this makes creating ghouls or childe near impossible.

Court Of Hallowed Truth

Once created for Tremere tribunals, this ritual has seen much wider use in these treacherous nights. Indeed, princes who know of this ritual often call upon the Tremere to cast it for them, and the Tremere will, of course, oblige — for the right price. By placing a pair of crossed bones before every entry into a room (including windows), the ritualist weaves a powerful magic through the chamber. While this ritual is in effect, no falsehood may be spoken within the room regardless of how much the speaker wishes to deceive, and direct questions from the presiding judge or power must be answered completely candidly, with no creative omissions. This power lasts for a single night in the room, after which it must be cast again to be effective.

Princes who rely too heavily upon this power quickly lose the respect of their peers and become ridiculously indebted to the Warlocks, not to mention eroding their own power-bases. Most Kindred resent such heavy-handed tactics and may refuse to attend meetings where this will be used.

Severed Hand

Developed during the Dark Ages, this ritual forms a particularly effective method of punishment for Kindred who have transgressed, but have not been deemed worthy of destruction. Use of this powerful rite (which requires an entire night of preparation) prevents a Kindred’s severed appendage from healing normally, even if they attempt to re-attach the body part. The thaumaturge must possess the severed body part (which may be a hand, arm, foot, eye, tongue or anything else) and have lengthy access to the victim’s stump (or socket, or...). By swabbing both pieces with volatile and mysterious compounds, the



thaumaturge ensures that the Kindred becomes permanently maimed. Kindred affected in this way will have an appropriate Flaw given to them by the Storytellers (such as *One Arm*, *Bad Sight*, *Mute*, etc.); the appendage may not be regenerated by any means short of supernatural healing (such as *Obeah*).

Stone Of The True Form

This ritual forces the transformation of any form-altering creature back into its natural state. By coating a small pebble in one Trait of his vitae, the thaumaturge creates a talisman capable of rendering even enraged Garou unable to shift their shape at will. Anyone touched by the pebble (which is good for one use) must assume his "natural" shape; Garou shift to their breed form, Gangrel using *Protean* are forced into their usual vampiric shape (including the temporary loss of *Wolf Claws*), a Nosferatu's *Mask of 1000 Faces* vanishes, and Tzimisce altered through *Vicissitude* return to the shape they had at the time of their Embrace. The Warlock must successfully touch the target with the pebble, probably requiring a Physical Challenge; the victim's inability to change form lasts for a scene, after which they may resume their shapeshifting.

Stone Slumber

Inspired by the Gargoyles they kept enslaved for so long, this ritual enables Warlocks to transform their bodies into solid stone, becoming completely immune to most of the dangers they might face during the day. This ritual is highly precise — any mistake might result in that morning being the last sunrise the thaumaturge will ever see.

Beginning exactly one hour before sunrise, the thaumaturge first smears her body with the blood of a 12-hour-old corpse. Then, she must stand completely still in an open area, facing east. If the ritual has been performed correctly, she turns to stone as the sun's rays strike her. In this form, the Kindred is completely protected from all forms of physical damage, most types of flame (including sunlight) and heat (unless the heat is great enough to melt rock, such as lava). *Telepathy* and other mental Disciplines are useless, as the thaumaturge's mind is dormant. The Kindred is not aware of her surroundings during this time, will not dream, and will wake 10 minutes after sunset that evening, although she must spend an additional Blood Trait to rouse herself.

MASTER THAUMATURGICAL RITUAL

Refined Digestion

This powerful curse gives even the weakest neonate a Methuselah's hunger for Kindred blood. Cainites affected by this ritual can now gain no nourishment from mortal blood. To cast this ritual, the thaumaturge first requires five Traits of the victim's blood, which he mixes with five of his own. Then the ritualist must spend a permanent Willpower Trait, after which time the victim is afflicted with this hunger for a month's time. Such a curse may be a death sentence for the unfortunate Kindred as such hungers are seen as a step away from that most forbidden of thirsts. The ritualist may reverse this effect



with an additional five Blood Traits from the victim and all the blood from a normal mortal.

ASCENDANT THAUMATURGICAL RITUAL

Eyes Of The Ever Vigilant

The original (and extremely powerful) version of this ritual is the mainstay of the most clandestine of Tremere chantries and strongholds; this weaker version has trickled its way down into more ubiquitous usage. Few outside Clan Tremere even know of its existence as it is a fairly recent addition to the Tremere libraries. Successful casting of this ritual requires three thaumaturges to perform the incantations. During the five-night ritual, the eyes of seven vampires who have lied to any of the three thaumaturges casting the ritual must be dropped into an alchemical compound, which is boiled away through the ritual. The ritual enchant's one structure (one haven, one building — a multi-building campus requires multiple rituals). After that, Kindred within the structure are unaffected by *Obfuscate* and *Chimerstry*. Should an *Obfuscated* Nosferatu attempt to cross the threshold of a place under this ritual, the Discipline fails. This power lasts for a year; if it is to be re-dedicated, one of the elder Warlocks present at the initial casting need only recite the original incantation to empower it for another year.



Sean Carter (order #19521)



CHAPTER FOUR: WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

THE WEEK OF NIGHTMARES

The Week of Nightmares shakes the supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness, reminding most Kindred that there is much more to unlife than even they see. In short, the Ravnos Antediluvian awakens, battles three of the most powerful Cathayans, and is finally destroyed by the combined (though not allied) power of those Cathayans and the Technocracy, after which the Ravnos as a whole go mad, attempting to slaughter each other. For those who have made a study of the mythology of the Kindred, these events point toward the arrival of Gehenna. This is not a local affair, though; when a being as powerful as the Antediluvian awakens, the ramifications are felt across the globe.

This section is divided into four sections. The first section presents an overview of what actually happened, both at ground zero and across the globe, how it fits into the World Of Darkness' grand story arc and the aftermath. It looks at who was left standing, who met their final death and other such concerns on the large scale. The second section offers **Mind's Eye Theatre** systems for handling the effects of the Week of Nightmares on the local scale across the globe. The third section delves into how you can shepherd your own chronicle through the Week of Nightmares, inviting your players to be perplexed and shaken by events far larger than they are. The last section looks at the long-term effects



of this event, how they can affect a chronicle and possible directions for new storylines and themes.

WHAT HAPPENS OFFSTAGE

Ground zero for the Week of Nightmares is Bangladesh — south of China and east of India. In official World of Darkness chronology, these events take place in July 1999. Wise Storytellers will keep their players' characters away from Bangladesh at this time.

ACT ONE: THE FIRST AND SECOND NIGHTS

The Ravnos Antediluvian — known by some as Churka and others as Ravanna — awakens in Pakistan, drawn by the blood of its children spilt in their battles with the Cathayans. The Antediluvian promptly slakes its millennia-old thirst on those of its Methuselahs that are available.

Since the awakening of an Antediluvian is a mystical event of grand magnitude, its spiritual reverberations are felt across the world by those open to such experiences. Vampires (as well as the rest of the world) experience nightmares during their slumber. They can remember nothing when they awake, but instead have a sense of missing something important. They are ill-tempered and edgy. Psychics, the mentally ill and other sensitive beings across the globe experience spontaneous and uncontrollable visions of these events, but such visions are allegorical and oracular in nature rather than providing explicit news of what is transpiring.

Three Cathayan bodhisattvas (the most powerful of Cathayans), recognize the situation for what it is and move with their acolytes and allies to intercept the antediluvian.

ACT TWO: THE THIRD NIGHT

On the third night, the Antediluvian and the three bodhisattvas meet in battle. One of the Cathayans summons forth a hurricane, both as a weapon and as a shield against the sun so they can continue the fight into the Bangladeshi day. Another weakens the Gauntlet and calls forth the creatures of the spirit worlds to aid in the battle. Thousands of Bangladeshis die in the resultant flooding.

The Technocracy has taken note of these developments and responds by declaring Code Ragnarok — an alert condition that results from a threat to the entire planet. They bring giant solar reflector satellites to direct and concentrate the light of the sun upon the site of the battle. They also fight the hurricane with their techno-magical aircraft, and finally, they dropped a handful of Hellstorm neutron bombs — magically enhanced nuclear devices — on the battlefield.

The battle with the three Cathayans weakened the Antediluvian. Though the nearby nuclear detonations kill the bodhisattvas as well as all other beings in the area, it further weakens the Antediluvian enough that when the clouds part, the light of four suns, reflected by the satellites above, shine down and obliterate it.



Across the world, the nightmares and visions continue, though throughout the battle, the visions tell of the strange and terrible fight rather than just warning of the awakening of the Antediluvian. All vampires continue to feel irritable. In addition to the global effects, all Ravnos experience a sympathetic accord with their progenitor's anger and power. They find their mastery of Chimerstry to be both more powerful and less predictable. Additionally, the Beast is stronger within them, making them more prone to frenzy.

ACT THREE: THE FOURTH THROUGH SEVENTH NIGHTS

The Antediluvian dies early in the morning on the fourth day — near sunset in Europe, in the middle of the day in the Americas. The hurricane over Bangladesh dissipates, and rescue and recovery operations begin. For most creatures, the world seems to return to normal: Those who are trapped in visions abruptly recover, and the unnatural nightmares fade into the past.

For the Ravnos, the horror has just begun. Each Ravnos hears the death cry of the Antediluvian, full of wrath and hunger. The creature's final act before it meets its Final Death is to send a command to all its childer to hunt each other down and destroy each other, purging the world of all its progeny. This affects all Ravnos, regardless of sect affiliation, blood bonds, Vaulderie, torpor or any other conditions. In areas where there is only a solitary Ravnos, that vampire need only contend with the unnatural hunger, but should one Ravnos meet another, each is consumed by an overwhelming, cannibalistic bloodlust and attacks on sight. Over the next three nights, the Ravnos slay each other, and then the curse abruptly fades away, leaving confusion, suspicion and very few Ravnos.

THE EPILOGUE

Three days after the Final Death of the Ravnos Antediluvian, the last of the mystical effects of the Week of Nightmares fade. The surviving Ravnos lose their abnormal bloodlust. Most Kindred return to unlife as usual, though some, those who have an inkling of understanding of the events and those who realize that they do not, find reason to question the validity of the status quo.

All told, the Week of Nightmares racks up quite a body count: The Ravnos Antediluvian and three of the most powerful Cathayans are the most noteworthy casualties. Over a million mortals and uncounted supernatural beings in Bangladesh die from the hurricane, the battle and the Technocracy's Hellstorm devices, though the supernatural nature of these events is quickly covered up. Beyond Bangladesh, most of Clan Ravnos fall prey to each other following the dying curse of their ancestor — by the end of the week, there are perhaps a hundred Ravnos left in the world, none of whom are elders. All of this happened when a single Antediluvian rose. The question remains: What might happen when the rest awaken?



WHAT HAPPENS ONSTAGE

The events of the Week of Nightmares are of such mystical gravity that they are felt across the globe in one form or another. This section offers systems for letting these effects manifest in a chronicle.

THE FIRST AND SECOND NIGHTS

During this period, everyone is on edge. Handle this as you feel is necessary for your vision of the Week of Nightmares. If you want the effects to be more subtle, perhaps rule that vampires do not receive any special penalties due to their edginess, but these feelings should be roleplayed — which may lead to more situations where Virtue Tests are called for more than usual. Particularly harsh Storytellers may rule that all characters have gained the *Nightmares* Flaw (*Laws of the Night Revised*, p. 117), imposing a one-Trait penalty on all characters for all challenges. Even if the penalties seem to cancel out for most non-Static Challenges, you might rule that all characters must bid at least two Traits in order to have a chance of winning. As the price of losing rises, everyone gets more desperate.

Additionally, Kindred or mortals who possess a Merit such as *Oracular Ability* or at least three derangements experience involuntary visions of the awakening of the Antediluvian and its call to its childer and grandchilider. Freeing oneself from these visions requires expending a Willpower Trait, and even then, this freedom only lasts for a scene as the psychic pressure from this cataclysm is too powerful to be held back for too long. The possession of *Auspex* has no effect on these visions, and Malkavians gain no special insight into this matter or likelihood of experiencing visions through their brand of insanity.

THE THIRD NIGHT

For most beings, the third night is the same as the first two: Unease for most, overwhelming visions for the few.

VISIONARY THINKING

The visions experienced by vampire and mortal alike should be related in terms of symbol and allegory. The most common visions of the Antediluvian perceive it as Ravana, the 10-headed king of the Rakshasas or as the king of nightmares. The three Cathayans are perceived as the dragon, the tiger and the crane — symbols of their Dharmas (similar to Kindred clans), the Thrashing Dragons, the Devil-Tigers and the Resplendent Cranes, respectively. The weapons of the Technocracy are perceived in astronomical or meteorological terms: as stars and suns come to Earth. It is possible that someone with a particularly strong world view — to the point where it qualifies as multiple derangements — could see the battle in terms of her own personal mythology, further confusing the issue, but such a being would be extremely rare.



ELDER-LEVEL CHIMERSTRY

Currently, there are no revised translations for elder-level Chimerstry. This leaves you with a good deal of leeway in handling the powers of Ravnos whose powers transcend the advanced level. Some options include reduced Blood Trait or Willpower Trait costs, bonuses in challenges against the targets and powers that affect more targets. Feel free to use your best judgement with respect to the chronicle.

Ravnos, on the other hand, all receive three extra levels of Chimerstry for the duration of the battle. These levels may ignore generational limits as the forces the Antediluvian calls forth alter the rules of the game for all its childer. You may also increase or decrease the difficulty of any uses of Chimerstry to reflect the changing fortunes of the battle. At the beginning of each scene, you may decide to assign from one to five bonus or penalty Traits to any use of Chimerstry.

Additionally, the Ravnos suffer a one-Trait penalty in all Virtue Tests. Finally, should a Ravnos frenzy during this time, he need not expend any Willpower to use any of his Chimerstry powers.

THE FOURTH THROUGH SEVENTH NIGHTS:

For most vampires, everything seems to return to normal. The edginess fades, the visions go away. Vampires can concentrate on their usual problems.

For the Ravnos, things get worse. With the death of the Antediluvian, each Ravnos must make a successful *Self-Control/Instinct* Static Challenge or enter a cannibalistic frenzy. Ravnos of 12th generation or greater make the test at a difficulty of two Traits; Ravnos of 11th to eighth generation make it at a difficulty of three Traits; and those of the Seventh Generation or lower perform it at four Traits. The vampire must make this test each time she awakens and each time she encounters another Ravnos — this thirst is not affected by any form of disguise or not knowing the other Ravnos' clan. The Blood knows who is Ravnos, and that is enough.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

So the Ravnos Antediluvian awoke, had a fight and met its Final Death two continents away. How does this affect a specific, active chronicle?

Ultimately, the answer depends on you the Storyteller and the nature of the chronicle you're running. If you and the players are getting enough enjoyment and drama out of nepotistic politics, backstabbing and the night-to-night trials and tribulations of maintaining the Masquerade, jockeying for position in their home city or wiping out the Camarilla sissy-boys, then you may want to think twice about adding a complication as large as this one. If the chronicle is moving smoothly — from your perspective, not necessarily the players' — along some great story arc toward a major revelation of your own



devising, you probably don't want to toss this new element into the mix — at least not yet. On the other hand, if the chronicle is just coming out of a major story arc and you're looking for a something new to shake your players out of their self-congratulatory (or self-pitying, depending on how they fared) denouement, this could be what you want. The Week of Nightmares adds to the mythic dimension of the vampiric experience, and if you want to see that facet of unlife enhanced, the Week of Nightmares could offer a rewardingly ominous portent of things to come. And it may be just what you need if you want to remind your players that it is a *World of Darkness*, not just a City of Darkness or if you just want to throw some chaos into one or two of your elders' carefully laid plans.

One other point to consider is the potentially fatal effect of the Week of Nightmares on any Ravnos in the chronicle. *Laws of the Night Revised* (p. 55) includes an explicit warning of the tenuous situation of the Ravnos, though it treats the Week of Nightmares as already having passed. And, of course, if the chronicle's timeline presumes that these events have already occurred, it's unlikely that they will happen again. Careful Storytellers may want to reflect on the plight of any Ravnos they have in the chronicle before they commit themselves to the Week of Nightmares — or they may want to set the carnage in motion and let the cards fall where they may.

Despite all these warnings and caveats, incorporating the Week of Nightmares into a chronicle can be a very rewarding experience for a skilled and ambitious Storyteller. Rather than present a precise recipe for telling this story, this section examines some of the situations and their potential effects on a *Mind's Eye Theatre* chronicle.

OTHER SOURCES

This section only presents an overview of the Week of Nightmares for Storytellers who want to include it in their *Mind's Eye Theatre* chronicles. Those who desire a deeper understanding of these events and the conditions that led to them should review the Appendix of Time of Thin Blood for *Vampire: The Masquerade*. Other sources include Denizens of the Dreaming for *Changeling: The Dreaming* and the Clan Novel series, particularly *Clan Novel: Setite* and *Clan Novel: Ravnos*.

Official *World of Darkness* canon places the Week of Nightmares in July 1999, and all subsequent sourcebooks reflect that chronology. Unless the chronicle has not caught up to the present or you feel the need to run a flashback adventure, you'll probably want to adjust the time to bring it into line with your own chronicle. In most cases, there will be no serious repercussions to doing this; however, you might need to coordinate with the Storytellers of any other groups your troupe



interacts with to see that any possible conflicts in storyline are as seamless as possible.

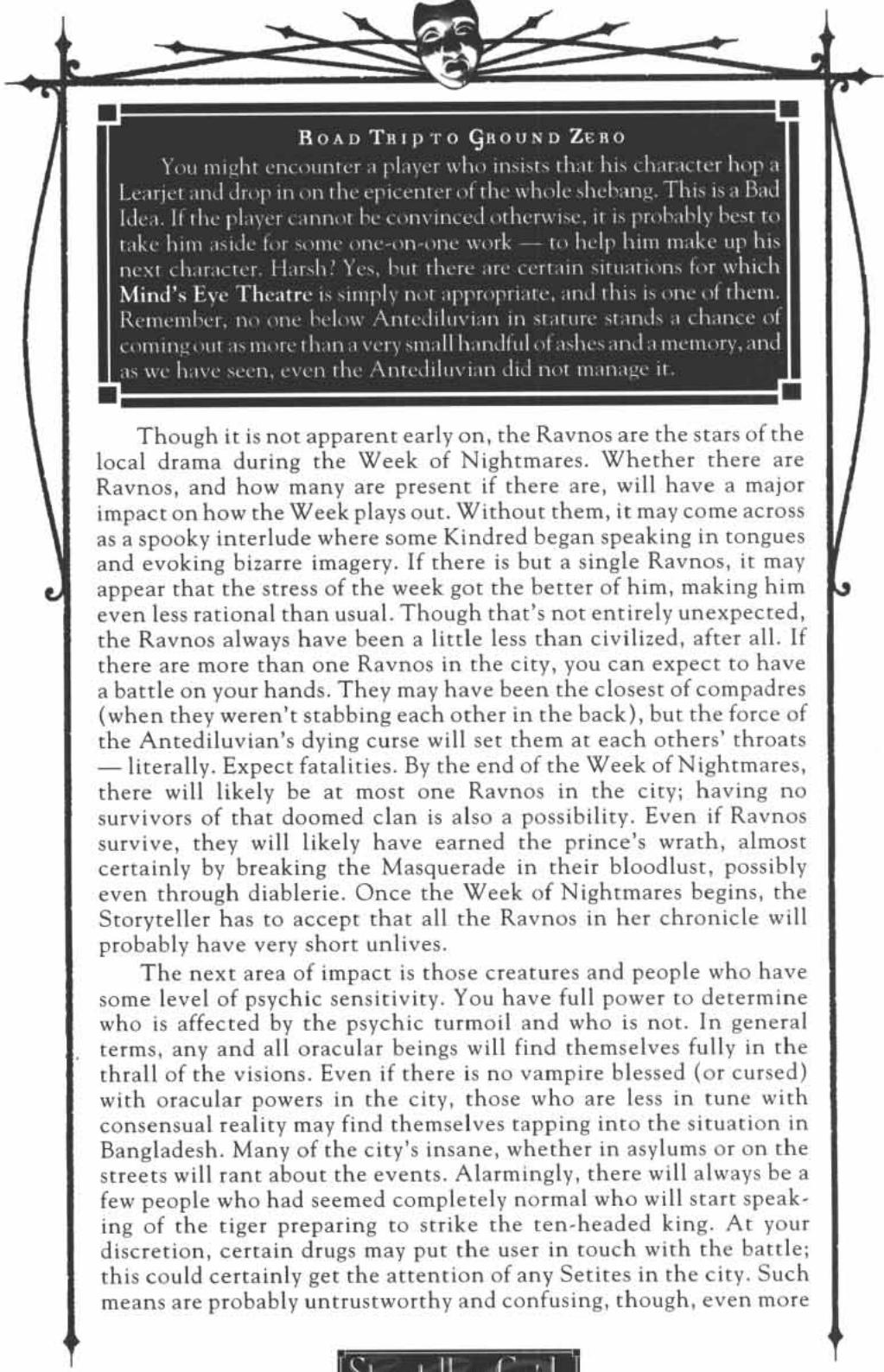
In general, it is more important that you time the Week of Nightmares to fit well into the chronicle. It should not arbitrarily steal the thunder from a player who is trying to accomplish something, though it may be used to knock down a character whose self-importance or hubris has gotten out of hand. Under most circumstances, it should not be interjected at a time of extreme confusion — unless you're looking to create an atmosphere of extreme pandemonium. In the end, the decision of the timing of the Week of Nightmares has to be left in the hands of the Storyteller; you know the chronicle's direction, the troupe and how they work together best, after all.

UP TO THE KNEES OR UP TO THE THROAT?

So you decided to incorporate the Week of Nightmares into your chronicle. All right, then — the first thing you need to determine is how deeply it will affect your city, or whatever the setting of your chronicle is.

If there are no Ravnos nearby, no one consults the oracles regularly, and no one pays any attention to the rantings of the local asylum inmates and street people, your entire troupe could get through the Week itself with only a little tension and a bit more bickering. This does not mean that they escaped the long-term effects of the Week, only that they missed out on the opening salvo. If, at the opposite extreme, the city has an enclave of Ravnos, a chantry of oracular Noddist scholars and a cunning Malkavian who takes his institutionalized comrades very seriously, the prince and the Storyteller will have a lot on their hands.

In addition to the universal edginess, there are a few obvious areas where the events of the Week of Nightmares could directly affect the Kindred of any given city. All vampires, supernatural beings and mortals will be edgy from the nightmares and the psychic fallout from the rising of the Antediluvian, but in many locations there will be other, more noticeable symptoms. First, and most obviously, come the Ravnos. If there are Ravnos in the city, or a neighboring city, the Kindred will probably hear of or experience at least some of the side effects of the Antediluvian's wrath firsthand. The second prominent phenomenon is the eruption of spontaneous visions among any who have any sort of sensitivity to the winds of fate. This can range from an prophesying Tremere primogen to Kindred who notice that a lot of the local crazies are spouting the same gibberish. Next there are *Contacts*, *Allies* and areas of influence who may provide information that something peculiar is going on and call for a second opinion. Finally, there is the mundane media in all its glory, feeding the characters local color, red herrings and a skewed view of the big picture. Each of these can contribute, detract or confuse the experience of the Week of Nightmares in a chronicle, depending on how you employ them and how much they come into play in the chronicle's city.



ROAD TRIP TO GROUND ZERO

You might encounter a player who insists that his character hop a Learjet and drop in on the epicenter of the whole shebang. This is a Bad Idea. If the player cannot be convinced otherwise, it is probably best to take him aside for some one-on-one work — to help him make up his next character. Harsh? Yes, but there are certain situations for which *Mind's Eye Theatre* is simply not appropriate, and this is one of them. Remember, no one below Antediluvian in stature stands a chance of coming out as more than a very small handful of ashes and a memory, and as we have seen, even the Antediluvian did not manage it.

Though it is not apparent early on, the Ravnos are the stars of the local drama during the Week of Nightmares. Whether there are Ravnos, and how many are present if there are, will have a major impact on how the Week plays out. Without them, it may come across as a spooky interlude where some Kindred began speaking in tongues and evoking bizarre imagery. If there is but a single Ravnos, it may appear that the stress of the week got the better of him, making him even less rational than usual. Though that's not entirely unexpected, the Ravnos always have been a little less than civilized, after all. If there are more than one Ravnos in the city, you can expect to have a battle on your hands. They may have been the closest of compadres (when they weren't stabbing each other in the back), but the force of the Antediluvian's dying curse will set them at each others' throats — literally. Expect fatalities. By the end of the Week of Nightmares, there will likely be at most one Ravnos in the city; having no survivors of that doomed clan is also a possibility. Even if Ravnos survive, they will likely have earned the prince's wrath, almost certainly by breaking the Masquerade in their bloodlust, possibly even through diablerie. Once the Week of Nightmares begins, the Storyteller has to accept that all the Ravnos in her chronicle will probably have very short unlivess.

The next area of impact is those creatures and people who have some level of psychic sensitivity. You have full power to determine who is affected by the psychic turmoil and who is not. In general terms, any and all oracular beings will find themselves fully in the thrall of the visions. Even if there is no vampire blessed (or cursed) with oracular powers in the city, those who are less in tune with consensual reality may find themselves tapping into the situation in Bangladesh. Many of the city's insane, whether in asylums or on the streets will rant about the events. Alarmingly, there will always be a few people who had seemed completely normal who will start speaking of the tiger preparing to strike the ten-headed king. At your discretion, certain drugs may put the user in touch with the battle; this could certainly get the attention of any Setites in the city. Such means are probably untrustworthy and confusing, though, even more



so than the "regular" auguries. You might also want to give any Ravnos a better chance to receive the visions, or to have such visions manifested in spontaneous eruptions of *Chimerstry* — even more deadly during the phase when their powers are enhanced.

Remember that *Auspex* does not allow any special insight into these events. The thaumaturgical *Path of Spirit Manipulation* may grant some information from whatever spirits the thaumaturge can reach, but such information is likely to be every bit as confusing as that coming from the people experiencing visions. If you feel it's necessary, you might allow some thaumaturgical rituals to shed a little light on what is going on — or you may rule that the all-but forgotten ritual in question requires eight nights of preparation, by which time there is nothing happening to spy on.... Malkavians do not gain any particular understanding either — they may be subject to the visions if they meet the three derangement requirement, but the forces the Ravnos Antediluvian calls into play are not the same as the madness of the Malkavians. They are as much in the dark as the other clans.

The third place these events may manifest is through allies and contacts the characters may have. Even if there are no Ravnos in the chronicle and no one happens to qualify for visions, there is a good chance that someone in the chronicle will have contact with *someone* who has gotten a closer look at all the weird shit that is happening. Mentors may express a sudden, uncharacteristic interest in what is happening on the streets. Allies may contact the players with questions of their own. Contacts may report bizarre events, or become the source of such reports. Quick checks into the character's areas of Influence may

PLAYING WITH TIME AND SPACE

For Storytellers who keep track of such things, setting the main events in Bangladesh means that an event that happens at midnight in the battle with the Ravnos Antediluvian takes place at noon in Chicago, one P.M. in New York, six P.M. in Paris, and so on. This does not mean that the events take place at different times — the death of the Antediluvian is felt at the same instant across the globe. It means that when something happens at 2 P.M. according to the clocks in Atlanta, it is happening at eight P.M. according to the clocks in Paris. In most cases, these details will not matter; having a good idea when the battle begins and when the Antediluvian dies its Final Death — in the chronicle's time zone — should allow you and the Narrators to time things in an appropriately dramatic manner. It is entirely possible that no one in the city will be aware that these curious phenomena are taking place outside their home turf, much less on a global scale. However, for those who do have international contacts and the mind to use them for this sort of research, you might want to figure out when things happen with the characters' contacts as well.



reveal bizarre trends. In most cases, this will be the first indication the characters have that the weirdness is not another local event — another case of the Tremere botching a ritual or some remarkably potent act of Dementation. It is up to you to what degree the characters' contacts will be affected by the Week of Nightmares, but it is safe to say that the greater the number of social backgrounds the character has, the broader her source of information.

Vampires with higher levels of Influence are more likely to encounter more alarming, and more informative, reports. In general, characters who have Backgrounds of level four and below will only hear about odd local occurrences, and only if they specify that they are keeping an eye out. At levels greater than that, the character may receive information from a commensurately larger spectrum of sources.

You may want to consider the sort of information that comes from the different backgrounds. You may decide that the only information having *Political Influence* 8 offers is that the UN is trying to get relief to Bangladesh, but the weather has frustrated them so far, or you may decide that *Political Influence* 8 reveals that the President's astrologer is muttering about cranes and dragons just like the neonate who made such a mess in Elysium last night. In all likelihood, you'll want to tailor the release of information for maximum impact and drama. A clever Storyteller can tailor the release of information to thrust different characters into the limelight or create some of those strange bedfellows politics is supposed to make. Perhaps all the Noddist scholar's *Occult* contacts are too busy with or confused by these developments to provide anything useful, but there are a couple of *High Society* performance artists who are astonishing the Toreador with their synchronized ranting. Almost any Background offers the potential to produce information, though the quality of information should vary dramatically. *Bureaucracy Influence* may tell the character that calls to counseling hot lines were up 23 percent across the tri-state area, but might not offer any relevant details. *Occult*, *Health*, *Church*, *Media* and *Street Influences* are likely to provide the most appropriate intelligence because of their proximity to the unusual and the marginalized, who tend to be more aware of such things. Each area brings with it its own skewing of the data, and that skewing is vital to maintaining the sense of mystery.

The final likely source of information on these events is the mortal media. Though hardly as useful as having a man on the scene, for those who do not have allies in Dresden and Influence that spans the globe, the media is often the only source of information on world events. In this case, the coverage may well be limited to the occasional mention of the unusual typhoon over India — probably hidden in the weather section — or a human-interest story about a new artist whose works on the Ten-Headed God and the Crane are causing a minor sensation in Des Moines. But that is only the mainstream media, which has traditionally been shaped to maintain the Masquerade; there are other sources out there for those who know to



look. Small-press and alternative newspapers provide one source, but they rarely have the larger perspective. The Internet is erratic at best, but it is always possible that there is a Web site out there containing a lone programmer's complete selection of visions. As before, the accuracy, availability and prevalence of this information depends upon your needs and your chronicle's needs.

THE VIEW FROM THE GALLERY AND THE VIEW FROM THE PIT

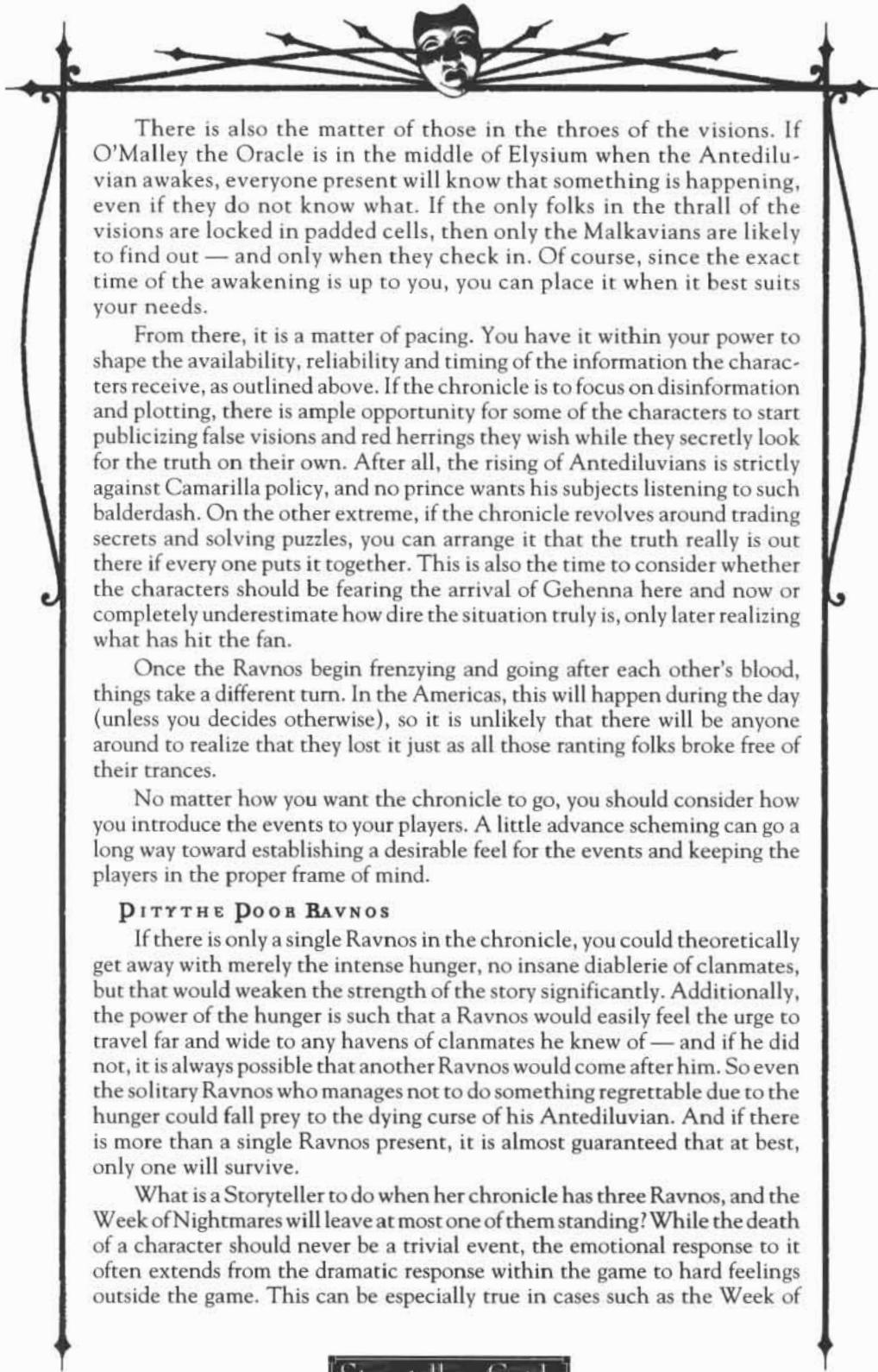
The next aspect to consider is how the players (and characters) receive their information. Unlike the previous section, which looked at the source of the information in the game world, this section examines the dissemination of the information from Storyteller to player. Much of the experience of the Week of Nightmares will depend on whether the characters feel that they are at the epicenter of another local crisis or experiencing fallout from some far larger event. Depending on how the storyteller plays it, it is even possible that many of the characters will perceive some of the events as a personal attack. Vampires — and players — are a paranoid lot, after all.

If you favor a paranoid chronicle, full of mystery and suspicion, you might want to tell each character separately that they feel a little more anxious and irritable than usual for no reason that they can put their finger on. This will probably have each character wondering which of her enemies and rivals has found a subtle method of getting at her and will probably start a series of quarrels before it becomes apparent that something is bothering *everybody*. On the other hand, if you want the players to start out with an idea that they are under the influence of something larger, you could tell the troupe as a whole that they are suffering from high levels of hostility and anxiety. This will likely let them bypass the someone-is-out-to-get-me stage and start out wondering what has happened to the city.

THE PLAYER WHO READS TOO MUCH

There is always the chance that a chronicle will have a player who has read this chapter or *Time of Thin Blood* or heard about it from a friend. Depending on the player, you might be able to recruit him as a mole, giving his character some extra dramatic duty for the duration of this situation, perhaps as one of the people in the throes of the visions. If that does not sound viable, the best move might simply be to request that he not spoil the story for the other players.

Another solution is to change some of the facts. It would require a fair amount of extrapolation and preparation, but nothing destroys a spoilsport's credibility like learning that the crisis is really about the awakening of Arikel, or a massive Tremere ritual gone wrong, or....



There is also the matter of those in the throes of the visions. If O'Malley the Oracle is in the middle of Elysium when the Antediluvian awakes, everyone present will know that something is happening, even if they do not know what. If the only folks in the thrall of the visions are locked in padded cells, then only the Malkavians are likely to find out — and only when they check in. Of course, since the exact time of the awakening is up to you, you can place it when it best suits your needs.

From there, it is a matter of pacing. You have it within your power to shape the availability, reliability and timing of the information the characters receive, as outlined above. If the chronicle is to focus on disinformation and plotting, there is ample opportunity for some of the characters to start publicizing false visions and red herrings they wish while they secretly look for the truth on their own. After all, the rising of Antediluvians is strictly against Camarilla policy, and no prince wants his subjects listening to such balderdash. On the other extreme, if the chronicle revolves around trading secrets and solving puzzles, you can arrange it that the truth really is out there if every one puts it together. This is also the time to consider whether the characters should be fearing the arrival of Gehenna here and now or completely underestimate how dire the situation truly is, only later realizing what has hit the fan.

Once the Ravnos begin frenzying and going after each other's blood, things take a different turn. In the Americas, this will happen during the day (unless you decides otherwise), so it is unlikely that there will be anyone around to realize that they lost it just as all those ranting folks broke free of their trances.

No matter how you want the chronicle to go, you should consider how you introduce the events to your players. A little advance scheming can go a long way toward establishing a desirable feel for the events and keeping the players in the proper frame of mind.

PITY THE POOR RAVNOS

If there is only a single Ravnos in the chronicle, you could theoretically get away with merely the intense hunger, no insane diablerie of clanmates, but that would weaken the strength of the story significantly. Additionally, the power of the hunger is such that a Ravnos would easily feel the urge to travel far and wide to any havens of clanmates he knew of — and if he did not, it is always possible that another Ravnos would come after him. So even the solitary Ravnos who manages not to do something regrettable due to the hunger could fall prey to the dying curse of his Antediluvian. And if there is more than a single Ravnos present, it is almost guaranteed that at best, only one will survive.

What is a Storyteller to do when her chronicle has three Ravnos, and the Week of Nightmares will leave at most one of them standing? While the death of a character should never be a trivial event, the emotional response to it often extends from the dramatic response within the game to hard feelings outside the game. This can be especially true in cases such as the Week of



Nightmares where events may seem arbitrarily stacked against a certain group of characters — Ravnos in this case.

Another matter you must consider is whether to give the players foreshadowing about the deadliness of the situation. This is especially true in a situation like the Week of Nightmares, where fatalities are almost guaranteed in one segment of the vampiric population while the rest face only a marginal increase in their usual nightly danger. This is a case of deciding what knowledge the player can handle without adversely affecting his role in the chronicle. In some cases it is best to tell the player outright that his character stands a good chance of experiencing Final Death in the next couple of sessions. In others, it is better to keep it all under wraps but be prepared for damage control when heads start to roll. If you don't want to tell the players outright that "there can be only one," another option is to offer some sort of vision. This vision need not be one of the overpowering visions of the Ten-Headed King that will become so common during the Week of Nightmares, but a smaller, more intensely personal vision. If played properly, the character might not even realize when the vision is coming to pass until the week is well under way.

As with so many situations, the proper handling depends upon the players and the Storyteller. Below are a few ways of handling this dilemma, which can be used or combined as you see fit:

Let the cards fall where they may: Mind's Eye Theatre chronicles take place in the World of Darkness, where life is cheap, and so is unlife — even immortality does not last forever. You could argue that experiencing the unfairness inherent in the system is a part of the dramatic process and elect not to cushion the blow in any way. A player who lost her Ravnos to the Week of Nightmares is just like any other player who lost a character. This is probably acceptable to players who enjoy making new characters or those who truly see their characters as subservient to the story. Others may feel railroaded into a Final Death they could have avoided had they chosen a different clan.

Ravnos Death Match: Perhaps even more vicious, you could warn the Ravnos' players that only one of them will survive an upcoming event. This should only be employed with players who are willing to compete strongly with each other and will not take losing poorly, either inside or outside the game. It is quite possible that the players will suspect the nature of the upcoming storyline. Hopefully they can be convinced to keep their speculations under wraps, both for the sake of the other players and because such knowledge could help them in the coming fight against one another. This option should only be used if you believe that this level of mutual antagonism would not traumatize any of the players involved.

All things being equal (and they rarely are), you will likely be able to guess who, of a group of Ravnos, will come out on top. In most cases it will be the one with the lowest generation, but it might be the oldest or the best knife-



fighter or the one who runs with the Brujah pack. In any case, unless some of the players are willing to take the fall for the sake of the story, it is almost guaranteed to be a bad idea to play favorites or try to arrange for a certain Ravnos' victory over the others.

The Dramatic Exit: Another possible solution involves recruiting the players to take an active role in their characters' demise. When faced with the certainty of character death, many players will rise to the occasion and make certain that the death will be one that is remembered for years. If you believe you have a player who can handle the responsibility, this can be the most rewarding way of handling the situation. With this option, the player can come to see the story as not just a story about unlife in an unfair world, but the epic saga of her demise — and a chance to "inadvertently" leave her comrades in deep trouble as they must clean up whatever mess her death caused.

The Consolation Prize: Some players are unwilling to take the death of their characters quietly. For some of them, they have invested too much into the character to willingly let it go; others are just munchkins. It may be necessary to offer them some sort of consolation prize, a bribe, to do what other players do freely. This prize usually takes the form of special treatment for his next character: "If you don't create a big stink about dying, I'll let you play the Camarilla mole you wanted to play." It usually sets a dangerous precedent to offer bribes in these cases, but if the player is worth it overall, or if you want to reward a player who did not ask for compensation but played her death well, do so. Just remember that future fatalities may expect similar treatment.

The Plant: If there are no Ravnos in the chronicle, or if you feel that the current number of Ravnos is inadequate for the task, there may be another solution. If you have a spare player or a Narrator who has wanted to just play a single character for a while, you may introduce more Ravnos into the chronicle for the sole purpose of enhancing the experience of the Week of Nightmares. Any Ravnos brought in for this purpose should be warned that their stay will be rather brief, but some players enjoy playing marginal characters to whom they need not feel any real attachment. The introduction of these characters needs to be carefully managed so it is not obvious that they are only being brought in to add to the body count.

AFTER THE SHOW

It is possible that the Week of Nightmares will come and go before the players in the chronicle have figured out what is happening — quite likely in fact — unless someone has friends in very high places. Fortunately, the long-term effects of the waking of the Antediluvian are more than enough to make those nights come back and haunt everyone.

EPILOGUE EVENTS

You the Storyteller have quite a menu of tricks and events you can use to drive home the long-term implications in the aftermath of the Week of



Nightmares. Whether you deploy these according to a precise schedule you prepared in advance, interject them on an *ad hoc* basis where you feel the chronicle could benefit or ignore them completely depends on your designs for the chronicle. Used properly, these elements can make the Week of Nightmares a dire portent of things to come or a call for planning and action; used improperly, they add little more than chaos to an already confused situation.

Rumors from Near and Far: Regardless of the state of the home city of the chronicle, rumors filter in from neighboring cities as soon as the lines of communication permit. It could come from the mouths of ghoul couriers, secret IRC chat rooms, hushed phone calls, solemn board meetings or any of the hundreds of ways vampires have discovered for communicating with each other.

It is safe to say that the earliest rumors will be the most confused and incoherent, but they will also be the least touched by the "official version" of whoever controls the source. As time passes, princes and bishops will establish "what *really* happened" in their domains. You might want to use this as a way of illustrating the mood of the various locations that surround the home city, stressing whichever aspects you find most interesting. Alternatively, you might use the similarity of reports from wide-ranging places to impress upon the characters the universality of their experience. As time progresses, the quality of what is reported from Sabbat and Camarilla territories will probably diverge, and if the characters have access to information across sect lines, you can use this information to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the sects in your chronicle. You may also use it to foreshadow power plays or larger changes in sect direction. Though most rumors are just clues or distractions, each one could be a seed for some future development in the chronicle.

As time progresses, the stories will probably diverge in three directions: the urban legend, the official story and the carefully researched truth. Telling one from the other will, of course, be difficult. Of these, the urban legend is probably the most entertaining — that is why such stories are so enduring. The story of the Ravnos in Glasgow who somehow grew 10 heads and vowed that she would diablerize a different vampire with each head and was seen by a Nosferatu only one city away is the sort of tale that could terrorize a neonate. It also contains just that hint of what went on to almost have the resonance of truth. Besides, the World of Darkness is a big place, and stranger things have happened.... Other rumors may take the form of conspiracy theories, difficult to disprove, seductively plausible, and pointing toward the creator's scapegoat of choice. At the other end of the spectrum, the official story is probably far less entertaining, but it is also probably a little more comforting. For both Camarilla and Sabbat vampires, their respective official stories will justify what they are doing and remind them that they are on the right track — leaders almost always justify the status quo. Naturally, the official story makes



sense and cover most of the known facts. Conspiracy theories may be popular among the purveyors of official truth as well, so long as their enemies are at the core of the conspiracy. To do otherwise runs the unpleasant risk that the underlings will figure out that their masters are lying, which often has inconvenient consequences. Finally, rarest of the rare, there will be those vampires who manage to figure out some of the truth and carefully spread it to those they feel deserving. As any Storyteller knows, there is nothing like the select reporting of accurate information to keep everyone guessing.

Camarilla Denial: Clearly it was a massive hoax. Or it was a bizarre form of lunacy caused by those thrice-accursed Lupines. Or it was nothing at all.

Camarilla doctrine denies the existence of the Antediluvians and specifically denies that they are going to rise from their torpid slumber and devour all of their descendants. So how does the largest organization of Kindred on the Earth handle the Week of Nightmares? By denying it, of course. Accepting that an Antediluvian stalked the Indian subcontinent and was able to affect vampires around the world is just too close to Sabbat doctrine. Some princes will offer their own reasonable explanations for the strangeness. Some princes will recognize that there is strength — and plausibility — in numbers and form a united front of disinformation. Some princes will simply claim that what happened was not at all out of the ordinary. Some of them might actually believe these lies, but many will only be using them to pacify their charges while they frantically attempt to come up with some plan to allow their surviving a Gehenna that now seems all too close.

This dichotomy between what happened and what is said to have happened could result in some serious changes in the night-to-night operation of the city. Anyone who publicly argues that an Antediluvian did awaken is just asking for correction of one sort or another, and a prince who is unable to keep such blatant lies at bay might find his city visited by an archon. At the same time the lesser Kindred are being kept in the dark, or at least being kept quiet, anyone in the know has motive to hunt down whatever lore she can find. Also, fragments of the *Book of Nod* and scholars thereof stand to become even more valuable, so long as they can keep their knowledge from falling into the wrong ears.

Many of the city's lesser Kindred may know that something has happened, but not what. Even a few months of unlife should warn vampires that the elders are not entirely concerned with their well-being and that there are enough secrets floating about that it is best to try to unearth the truth before it comes after you with fangs and claws. And if the elders are not offering any answers, it is time to look for someone who is.

Sabbat Propaganda: Naturally, the Sabbat wants the word out: *The Antediluvians are real. We were right.*

It is never that straightforward, though, even among the Sabbat, who are often stereotyped as simpler than other vampires. While certain leaders will want to take this opportunity to gain as many converts as



possible, by whatever means possible, others will want to whip their troops into a battle frenzy and wipe out all the other vampires who might be potential pawns of the Antediluvians. And of course, there will be those who knew all along, but wish that Gehenna could have held out just a bit longer so they could have seen their plans to fruition. Sabbat politics are fractious enough without the added pressure of Gehenna starting ahead of schedule. In theory, all Sabbat agree that the Antediluvians must be destroyed, but no one seems to agree on who should lead the forces.

Much like the Camarilla, the various leaders of the Sabbat will be doing their best to see that the rabble is kept occupied while they try to figure out how best to turn this situation to their advantage. The ambitious will need to act with greater speed, and the wary will need to use even greater caution. Noddist scholars will almost certainly collaborate, debate and fight with each other. A few will share their information, seeking to unravel the truth before it is too late. Others will hoard their hard-won knowledge lest it be used against them now that all vampires' nights are numbered.

Among the lower echelons, priests who craft new ritae taking the events of the Week of Nightmares into account may find that they have gained greater renown. Pack leaders who lack greater vision will keep their packmates in fighting form — and try to find a couple good places to hide if it becomes necessary.

Independent Curiosity: Perhaps more than any other vampires, the independent clans want to know exactly what happened. In addition to those surviving Ravnos, the four remaining independent clans need to determine what is happening and what they can do to protect themselves. In most cases, this will involve trying to get as much accurate information about the events of the Week of Nightmares as possible and to do whatever they can to protect themselves and increase their own power. It may involve spying on the other clans to see what they know or what they are planning. It may involve trying to create alliances in which neither side necessarily trusts the other. Feel free to use this opportunity to strengthen intra-clan ties or allow internal bickering to create chinks in a previously unified front.

For the Assamites, the Week of Nightmares could not only represent an inconvenience in fulfilling one of their contracts, it could force them to step up their efforts against the children of Khayyin. Luckily, the increased worries of other vampires should result in a commensurate raise in calls for their services. The Gangrel may be expected to retreat further into the wilderness — at least as well as they can given the Lupines — but they are a clan of individualists, so it would not be unexpected for one or two to be prowling around looking for answers or at least clues. Many independent Gangrel may retain loose ties to their clanmates within the Camarilla, so they may show up to exchange stories. The Gangrel and the Ravnos have stood against each other almost as long there were Gangrel and Ravnos clans. Gangrel may be interested in what happened to their rivals, especially if that rivalry was



personal; some will want to gloat and rejoice, others will be more curious and, naturally, there will be those who are furious that they were deprived of the chance to deal with them personally. Of course, some vampires may put two and two together and realize that this all happened suspiciously soon after Clan Gangrel's departure from the Camarilla: Clan Gangrel must be the instigators of all this madness. While the Giovanni would seem to be in the best position to obtain information about the Week of Nightmares using their wraithly connections, those wraiths in a position to see what happened were all destroyed by the Technocracy's hellstorm bombs. And though it would seem beneficial having their progenitor as one of the more active members of the Third Generation, rumors about the Harbingers of Skulls are enough to keep Giovanni on their toes. It is only natural that the Followers of Set would want to use this opportunity to extend their influence over the rest. A confused situation where powerful people want hard-to-find information is a potential windfall for those who have information to offer. It need not be accurate information, of course, just enough to encourage dependence or cement an alliance. And while they are offering information to those who crave it, the Setites will be seeking the truth for themselves, not that they would ever admit it.

In many ways, the plight of the independents is a more honest reaction to the Week of Nightmares than the reactions of the Camarilla and Sabbat. You can use these reactions as a sort of reality check against the actions of the grand sects, you can use them as extra boogymen to further confuse things, or you can just ignore them and concentrate on the clans at hand.

Backlash against the Remaining Ravnos: The Ravnos, like all vampires, have made many enemies. They have had a reputation as annoying bastards for millennia, and spending a night with more mystic power than usual followed by half a week of bloodthirsty fratricide has probably not improved public opinion. Some might even blame the entire Week of Nightmares on the Ravnos: They were the most active during it, after all. In the past, individual Ravnos had the protection of their clan. If a prince gave one Ravnos too much grief, he would soon find that he had more Ravnos dropping by than he could handle.

Unfortunately for the Ravnos, it will not take long after the Week of Nightmares for people to figure out that there are far fewer Ravnos around than there used to be. And once that happens, some vampires' thoughts will turn to revenge. The Ravnos who wronged that particular vampire might be long dead, but there are always those who will see any clanmate as an acceptable substitute. Fortunately for the Ravnos, it will take a while for most vampires to figure out how complete the devastation is. The Ravnos have never been popular, so many of them have learned to lie about their heritage. Of course, others just lied for the hell of it. Still, eventually someone will realize how few Ravnos there are, and the word will spread, and vampires will do what they always have done for the underdog — eat him.



Some princes or bishops may treat the Ravnos as lepers, others may use them as scapegoats for whatever ails their domains and some may claim to not care but secretly encourage their removal. One or two may even take the opposite approach, offering sanctuary to a particular Ravnos, perhaps any of the clan. After all, it is always useful to have a subject with rare abilities, and the danger outside may actually encourage loyalty in an otherwise treacherous vampire. Some may even have a particular use for a vampire whose Antediluvian has been annihilated. Regardless of how things work out in the chronicle's main city, you may employ the other scenarios at will for neighboring cities or other areas the players visit.

The Search for Information: It will not take long for many vampires to decide that they need more information. In and of itself, this is not a new development. What will be new is that a large number of vampires will actively be searching for ancient lore for the first time in their unlivess, a situation that opens a world of possibilities for a cunning Storyteller.

One of the most obvious developments from this turn of events is that vampires who possess such arcane knowledge — or are able to convince others that they do — will find a marked increase in their perceived importance. They may be courted by princes and primogen, bishops and paladins. Some may find this attention and importance seductive, a way to social power that they previously lacked, others may find that it gets in the way of their studies. There will be those who believe they know the truth, but only know false tales spread by others who did not want competition in their quest for knowledge. And, of course, there will be the charlatans who are adept at sounding profound and producing forgeries that tell their audience what they most want to hear. Vampires are not the only creatures that will seek to profit from this situation; there is no shortage of demons that are more than willing to offer information — accurate or not — to those who are willing to pay the price.

Beyond the active players, is the information itself: moldy tomes, lost fragments of the *Book of Nod*, ancient manuscripts, recently unearthed icons with strange writing and all such stuff will be in high demand. Depending on the needs of the chronicle — or the ingenuity of the players — these could be vital clues or simple McGuffins designed to keep the rabble busy.

Gehenna Cults: For centuries, some vampires have believed that the key to surviving Gehenna lies not in universal camaraderie and blind acceptance of leadership, but in secrecy and selective solidarity. Some of these secret societies are new developments, spawned by the apparent approach of Gehenna; others are centuries, perhaps even millennia old. Some have members who span the globe; others are strictly local affairs. Some seek to avert Gehenna entirely, others seek defense against the Antediluvians, still others seek to curry favor with these ancient creatures. Some exist only within a given sect, others have members who cross



sects. Though most have a tiny membership, the only common element among Gehenna cults is a covert plan for the members to survive the impending doom in some way.

There are two obvious reasons for the aftermath of the Week of Nightmares to involve Gehenna cults. The first is that many of the established cults (See *Time of Thin Blood*, pp. 55-60 for some of the more prominent Gehenna cults) will perceive this as a sign that Gehenna is nigh and will be very interested in those who seem more involved with these events. Some might take an interest in those who were in the throes of visions or even the few surviving Ravnos. Whether this interest takes the form of observation, questioning, thaumaturgical experimentation or something else entirely depends on the nature of the cult and the desperation—or determination—of the vampires involved. The second form of Gehenna cult involvement occurs when someone takes the events of the Week of Nightmares to heart and decides to form her own cult. Unless the new cult had some special source of information and a great deal of subtlety, it is probably doomed to failure. The Camarilla disapproves of Gehenna cults for doctrinal reasons, and the Sabbat does not want its members loyal to any organization other than itself. Even if it is not destroyed outright, a new cult stands a good chance of being infiltrated and used as a pawn. Those who are interested in what power and information the new cult has may monitor it for that reason while someone who is only interested in keeping track of the dissidents in the city could use it to gather the Noddists together for easier monitoring.

THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

The temptation to allow characters to be special, to somehow avoid or be immune to the fate of everyone else, is always there. The characters are the focus of the story, and it is fun to play exceptional characters, even exceptional vampires. Nevertheless, you should be careful about allowing Ravnos in the city to be strong enough to resist the Antediluvian's final curse or, for some reason, have one be the only one in the world who is totally unaffected. The power of the Week of Nightmares comes from the fact that it is biblically all-encompassing—the awakening of a single entity evokes nightmares and carnage throughout the world. Allowing exceptions weakens that power.

THE SOLE SURVIVOR

So there is still a Ravnos in the chronicle who did not meet Final Death? Even the surviving Ravnos are not in the clear.

Three nights of blood thirst and fratricidal madness can do a lot to alienate wherever the survivor calls home. Even without the prohibitions against attacking vampires (and diablerie, should the Ravnos be in a Camarilla city) and drawing the attention of the mortals, raving madness is not a popular trait. A Ravnos may recover



from frenzy only to discover that she is the subject of a blood hunt or there is a Sabbat pack after her, angry about what she did to their packmate. And if the Ravnos committed diablerie, she may soon discover that others can tell merely by looking at her. In fact, if she was in the throes of frenzy while doing the deed, others may discover it before she does.

Also, there is the lack of support. One of the benefits of belonging to a clan is that clanmates will look after their own. Ravnos never had the reputation as the most militant of clans, but other vampires were careful about harassing them too much because it could draw the wrath of the rest of the clan. Having a party of trickster vampires arrive in town because the prince killed one of their sisters was never a pleasant situation. With most of the clan gone, many vampires are looking to the survivors to redress old humiliations — others just think of it as open season on Ravnos for the fun of it.

There are a few potential benefits to being a Ravnos who survived the Week of Nightmares, but they are limited at best. For example, it is possible that a Ravnos under the influence of the Antediluvian's death curse might have managed to lower her generation during one of her frenzied binges. Sadly, the lack of elders of her clan to teach her the higher powers of Chimerstry will probably hinder her studying them. Another possible benefit is the reduced competition for herd space among the Gypsies. Unfortunately, many of the Roma are rather leery of anyone claiming to be Ravnos, especially after the stories of their three-night bout of madness and blood thirst. Additionally, the Gangrel, especially those who have left the Camarilla might be looking to move occupy these openings. Possibly the most useful development for the few survivors is the potential for anonymity. Ravnos are now so rare that almost no one will believe that the new Lick in town is from that lost clan. This leaves the stage open for as much fun as the vampire can get away with — until the work started by her Antediluvian gets taken up by the rest of the Third Generation.

THE BLACK HAND

When one imagines the organizations of the Kindred world, there are the Sabbat, the Camarilla, the mysterious Inconnu and those vampires who claim to stand outside all sect concerns, but in that act, are themselves parceled into organization — the independent clans, the anarchs, the Autarkis. One, however, has fallen from the great heights of secrecy and self-claimed mastery into destruction and diaspora. The passing of the "True Black Hand" has reverberated through the Sabbat and into the World of Darkness itself.

There are few certainties regarding the cult — after all, anything that has its origins in human prehistory must be clouded with supposition. Most cults rarely leave step-by-step instructions regarding their world domination plans. Even the survivors continue to sweep away their tracks



with rumor and legend. All that remains are fragments pieced together from the accounts of survivors, describing what is both horror unimagined and hubris unchecked.

The True Black Hand was said to have sprung up in the ancient Middle East, long past the nights of the First and Second Cities, founded by a cult of mortal magicians studying death and the afterlife; some called this gathering the *Tal'mhe'Ra*. The early magicians made contact with Cainites, and the two groups traded knowledge, each attempting to understand the other's craft, without success. Cainites could not learn mortal magic nor could the magicians learn Disciplines. In pursuit of knowledge, some of the magicians accepted the Embrace at the cost of their mortal gifts. As the new vampires learned more of the mythology behind their condition and shared their knowledge with their mortal brethren, the cult determined that the loss of the Antediluvians held back the world from its potential. Henceforth, the cult would bend its entire effort to the revival of the Third Generation, ushering in a new age of magical potential under the will of the Antediluvians. In modern parlance, the group would be considered a Gehenna cult, albeit one that had both mortal and vampiric followers.

As so frequently happens, the Cainites gradually wrested control of the cult from the mortal magicians, turning the mortals to serve their own schemes. Around 500 BC, the magicians left and founded a society of their own devoted to the study of death and fate. Mortal descendants of these early wizards tell a vastly different tale of the society's origins that makes no mention of a secret society of vampires; it would seem to be left to outsiders to judge which makes a better tale — vampires who prefer living in the Underworld or immortal mages who risk a magical backlash should they dwell in physical reality.

With the cult's composition and means altered to a Cainite perspective, the vampires expanded their studies, spreading into Europe. They were unsuccessful in learning the secrets of mortal blood-magicians, but did succeed in infiltrating mortal institutions. During this era, the cult's masters of vampiric studies created new Disciplines exclusive to their ranks, which continued to evolve for several centuries to come.

Around 450 AD, something happened that caused the *Tal'mhe'Ra* to fracture. Survivors debate the reasons for this, and everyone seems to have a particular theory regarding the hows and whys. Some blamed it on Setite influence, others on the Inconnu or on vampires who were too reluctant or eager for the group to study the Underworld. More outlandish tales pointed to beings and intelligences from unknowable places that infiltrated the group. Whatever the reason, the cult split into the Western branch (which focused on mortal concerns) and the Eastern branch (which followed a more mystic bent). Somewhere around this time, the group's Latin name, *Manus Nigrum*, came into use. As the internal squabbles resulted in more notice, victims and observers termed these half-glimpsed machinators "the *Manus Nigrum*". The name eventually stuck.



During the Middle Ages, the *Manus Nigrum* believed that it could prevent vampiric interference (other than its own, of course) of mortal organizations by strengthening those organizations. The results were not what was intended — the Inquisition did benefit from the organization and strength, turning its fury on those careless vampires found hiding in the midst of humanity. But it was only the youth (who posed little threat to the *Manus Nigrum*) that fed the flames; the elders, the original targets, proved more capable of escape. None in the cult paused to consider that the ensuing disaster could have been of their own making, or that their strategy was flawed. Instead, the leaders pressed on, blaming the events on enemies real and imagined, and apparently heedless that the vampires avoiding the slaughter were the ones who could most challenge the *Manus Nigrum*'s power and control over mortals.

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN

In between their attempts to direct the focus of the fire they had unleashed, the cult continued with its earlier pursuits into insights of death and magic. During an expedition into the Underworld of the dead, *Manus Nigrum* explorers encountered the memory of a city that they believed was the Enoch of legend, the First City founded by Caine.

A word of explanation becomes necessary here. The Underworld is believed to stretch to infinity, below the surface, as it were, of the living lands. If one were to enter the deadlands, one would first encounter the Shadowlands, so called because they mirror the appearance of the living world (albeit through a darker reflection of death and decay). Below the Shadowlands boils the Tempest, a perpetually raging storm of spirit created from the debris of emotion and memory of the mortal world. Occasionally, islands of calm can be found in this storm, and it was on one such island that this next crucial piece of the *Manus Nigrum*'s history was found.

Was the city truly the memory of legendary Enoch? After all, things of great personal importance can materialize in the Underworld once they've been destroyed. Or could it merely have been the sum total of vampiric dreams, hopes and fears of Enoch, perhaps the remnants of the dreams of the Antediluvians? None could say for certain, but to the *Manus Nigrum*, only the first possibility counted. Surely this was revealed only to the faithful for their own use. The cult's eldest Eastern members and more mystically inclined Westerners settled in Enoch and made extensive studies of the city's treasures, seeking clues to the Antediluvians' purpose.

During the early occupation, the settlers found the tombs of four beings called the Aralu down in Enoch's foundations. The inscriptions on the tombs suggested these creatures might be Antediluvians. Over time, the explorers had dreams clearly sent by the Aralu that used familiar symbols from cult rituals. Though the evidence did not quite fit the Antediluvian paradigm, gradually all doubts faded and any potential challenges disappeared. The cult became quite certain that



this must be Enoch and no other option was possible. None ever paused to consider if the Aralu might be shaping the *Manus Nigrum* to fit their own agenda.

The city became a headquarters for the cult. Most cultists made at least one trip there at some point (usually through a ritual involving ceremonial death) to remind themselves of past glories and to inspire dreams of future triumphs. The passion inspired by the pilgrimage made any troubles getting there worthwhile.

THE HAND'S FINGERS

The *Manus Nigrum* brought together a very mixed bag of vampires. Like other Gehenna cults, its members often claimed to feel alienated from "normal" Kindred society and to be possessed of special insights which their own clans did not heed. What resulted was several dozen vampires, all convinced of the correctness of their own insights, forming a fractious organization where the common goal and their personal goals had little, if anything, in common. They squabbled amongst each other almost as often as non-member Kindred and were not above stereotyping or blaming each other for mishaps.

The cult was never very large to begin with. Its sum total membership was between 150 to 200 vampires (with occasional lapses during crises). With the formation of the Camarilla and Sabbat, the cult divided itself between the two sects and independent Kindred enclaves. These latter ones made their homes in the Middle East, central Asia or India. The cult also attracted non-Kindred supernatural members to its ranks by its studies into the afterlife. Wraiths were the most common of these, followed by death-magicians and other, less well-known creatures.

The majority of members came from the following clans and bloodlines:

Assamite antitribu — A few Assamites helped found the cult and recruited members in the wake of the Tremere curse. They believed they were the protectors of those brethren who flocked to the Sabbat.

True Brujah — This bloodline's members claimed direct descent from Brujah, rather than from Troile, who had diablerized his/her (Troile's gender remains a mystery) sire. The True Brujah differ from their brethren in Disciplines and psychology. Some *Manus Nigrum* members speculated that the bloodline was much younger and had diablerized its way to respectable old age, but such insults usually brought intricately plotted revenge from the offended party.

Gangrel and antitribu — The cult respected this clan as the keepers of the old, pure traditions, and thus good servants of the Antediluvians. Gangrel who went to the Camarilla, or City Gangrel, were viewed as traitors.

Malkavians and antitribu — The cult's lore claimed that favored vampires had received dreams from the Antediluvians, so mystical insights were held in high regard. Any Malkavian might find a place in the cult if he followed its teachings.



Nagaraja — This strange bloodline, known only within the *Manus Nigrum*, dates back barely two millennia. The cult had experimented to fuse mortal death magic with vampirism; the result was considered a perfect fusion of the worst blasphemies of Eastern religions. The Nagaraja's survival depended on the most despicable predatory acts, and their very unlivess cut them off from the cycle of reincarnation. The bloodline can practice none of the major tenets of Buddhism or Hinduism, the religions of their mortal lives. Whenever the bloodline came to the attention of Hindu or Buddhist vampires (not to mention moderately devout mortals or Kuei-jin), purges inevitably followed. The bloodline found safety only within the *Manus Nigrum*.

Nosferatu and antitribu — Those Nosferatu who joined the cult usually did so believing they could purge their clan's sin against Caine without actually dying. Caught between suicidal despair and fratricidal rage, they often succumbed to their own anguish.

Toreador and antitribu — Toreador provided aesthetic insight to the cult's spiritual teachings and valuable connections to the mortal world. This was particularly necessary in India, where the Nagaraja required extra assistance to hide themselves. Such assistance included portraying vampire-hunting as superstitious or steering the hunters themselves at other targets, a talent turned against the cult's rivals.

Old Clan Tzimisce — This collection of Tzimisce elders believed the main clan had fallen into delusion and rebellion. They blamed the elders of the main clan for allowing the disastrous insubordination and rebellion that had been part and parcel of the Anarch Revolt. Most found havens with the *Manus Nigrum* and spent most of their time endlessly scheming to recover the clan homelands.

Venture and antitribu — The Venture brought a sense of hierarchy and tradition to the cult, preferring merit and nobility over mere wealth. Their greatest assistance was to bring their own influence among mortals to the cult's needs.

GHOULS

The *Manus Nigrum* took its ghouls from three families. Most ghouls served the cult as long they proved useful, meeting unpleasant ends by dying in service or from lack of vitae, which was withheld when they outlived their usefulness. A number of newly Embraced vampires within the cult were selected from the ghouls' ranks.

ENRATHI

The Enrathi family traces its line back to Etruscan farmers in the time of Rome's early years. As the republic became an empire, the family dabbled in the slave trade and found it to be profitable (not to mention they had an unpleasantly good knack for it). Within two generations, the Enrathi became slavers instead of farmers. When the empire fell, the family continued its work — there would always be those who wanted slaves, Cainites among them. When slavery was outlawed by convention or location, the family developed contacts and an array of tricks to



continue the business. When the *Manus Nigrum* approached the family about a more extended and permanent relationship, it merely remained for the Enrathi to iron out the details. The family already knew enough about vampiric society to spot a good thing.

For over 1000 years, the Enrathi family provided the *Manus Nigrum* with some of the finest ghouls, chosen from the family's own ranks. Such tasks were not only out among the mortals, but also to assist the cult's vampires and other supernatural members. The most favored among them even grew up in Enoch, tutored by the cult in the lands of the dead.

One of the cult's major tenets (and a major sore point for the Enrathi) is that no other vampires should interfere with mortals but those of the *Manus Nigrum*. The cultists simply believe that no other vampire is more capable of ruling the humans properly than they. A few members find this restrictive, preferring to command the kine and destroy those who disobey. As such, the Enrathi work quietly and don't bring up the fact that their contract with the *Manus Nigrum* is one of mutual social obligation, not terms of submission.

With the opening of the Americas and trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Enrathi rose to undreamed-of heights. Through a variety of names and disguises, the family grew to fabulous wealth. Political power remained beyond their reach — their experiments in the 17th and 18th centuries went badly awry when their ghoul natures attracted the attentions of witch-hunters. Since then, the Enrathi have been content to be rich, favored and private.

MARIJAVA

The Marijava family line had associations with vampires as far back as early Hindu history. Devout Thuggees appeared in every generation, supported by their mortal kin with magical studies. Marijava ghouls were seeded into the Assamite and Ravnos clans when the *Manus Nigrum* came calling. The family rejected the cult's overtures, finding the Gehenna cult to be too alien and too obsessive to most Marijava.

Around 500 BC, a branch of the family went into service of the cult and disappeared from family records thereafter. Between the cult's penchant for secrecy and the family's own magical defenses, the new *Manus Nigrum* servants never knowingly encountered their mortal kin again. The family turned its attentions to esoteric studies, particularly in Indian religion, along with the cult's vampires, especially the Nagaraja. The cult's Marijava maintained vast libraries of theological and philosophical writings on Indian mysticism and religion, much of it blasphemous.

The Marijava's primary task was to serve the cult as observers of Kindred activity in mortal guises. They spread themselves out across the world into blood cults, domains that made heavy use of ghouls and various mortal agencies that would allow them to watch Kindred from a distance. Much of



the *Manus Nigrum*'s knowledge about current Kindred affairs came from Marijava intelligence.

Not all of the family provided sound information. Some sold out to the Setites or Ravnos, passing false information as bait for unwary cult vampires. Some made up details to fill in gaps in their knowledge while others simply made up stories wholecloth. When the traitors were discovered, the cult purged these servants and their immediate families; the family as a whole was apparently too useful to destroy.

RAFASTIO

The Rafastio began serving the *Manus Nigrum* several centuries before the beginnings of Christianity, practicing the magic of blood and nature for their vampiric masters. Some cult members claim that the Rafastio family gave them a link with the powerful magi called the Verbena, while others find the claim stretched a little thin for credibility.

The family traces its ancestry to northern Italy in the Po River Valley. Most of them stayed close to the villages and ancestral holdings of their foreparents, even into the modern nights. A few family branches moved out to the New World in the 19th century, and one group has operated farms in Kenya since the turn of the 20th century.

Unlike the Enrathi, the Rafastio have served the *Manus Nigrum*, never taking a more equal stance. They operated and lived solely at the cult's discretion. Only rarely would particularly talented members be Embraced; the Rafastio's service was the sort of magic that the Embrace kills. Though they showed great aptitude for blood magic upon their change, the Rafastio were considered far more valuable in life than death.

Magic was the Rafastio's sole reason for inclusion in the cult. Anything the vampires couldn't do for themselves, the witches likely did, from potions and mystical wards to bindings and protections. The cult paid them well, but supplemented their payments with abuse of all kinds. Some witches attempted to flee, but none escaped, and their gruesome fates were left as object lessons to the rest of their clan. Such was the price paid for shelter against the encroaching Final Nights.

NON-FAMILY GHOULS

The familes occupied special places in the hierarchy of the cult. Other ghouls signed on in response to certain needs. At least 20 ghouls spent their nights dealing with the storm debris that the Tempest threw against Enoch, which could include hauling toxic wastes or even "living" creatures. Such work was extremely dangerous, with a turnover rate of as high as 50 percent during the most violent Underworld storms. Others might spend their time sorting manuscripts in the vast libraries. Other than the strange living conditions, these ghouls lived like any others, attending to their masters and working at tasks they might never know the significance of.



CHATTERLINGS

Chatterlings came to the Underworld as human children, brought by the Enrathi who had kidnapped them and growing up in the lands of the dead. As crossing the Shroud could be extremely risky, most of these unfortunates spent years in Enoch before they saw the living world again. They spent their time being instructed in esoteric lore by elder vampires and tutored in the ways of the Underworld by wraiths. Any other living humans these children saw were either other chatterlings or ghouls who had reasons to be in Enoch. The Aralu often walked in the children's dreams, but what they mumbled very few could understand.

Few adults are cut out for such a life, and children's malleable minds were no more adaptable. About a third of any given group brought to Enoch went insane before finishing their instruction, and up to one-half of the rest perished in Underworld accidents or while trying to cross the Shroud. The rest learned to cope with the nightly strangeness of their situation — the constantly boiling storms of the Tempest, visits from violently insane Spectres hunting for prey, even the residents of Enoch. They were indoctrinated with the *Manus Nigrum*'s teachings, and the Aralu's whispers confirmed what they had been taught. Fully inculcated, the chatterlings returned to the living world.

After living most of their lives in the colorless, sensory-deprived world of Enoch, many chatterlings were overwhelmed with the mortal world. Some had to turn to smaller doses of humanity while the strongest among them managed to thrive and prosper. These served the cult's efforts to guide humanity by working from the inside. Most chatterlings served for as long they were useful, then perished. Even disapproval from their masters drove some to suicide; there was no life outside of the cult and service, and the thought left some unable to cope. Even those who were successfully returned knew they were outsiders, alien to the rest of humanity. Their secret knowledge forever weighed heavily on them.

Only a few chatterlings from each "class" received the Embrace. Of these, they were either particularly suited for life in the Underworld, or they could move among mortals without difficulty or revealing themselves. The former provided Enoch with its yesmen, administrators and other servants. The latter became the window to humanity during the cult's planning and observed the results of those plans on the mortals at large.

RISE OF THE SABBAT

Mortal tools hadn't worked as planned for the *Manus Nigrum*; perhaps Cainite tools would work better. The cult was positive that unseen forces were at work in the creation of the Camarilla and sought to create a counter-balance to it. It assisted the Anarch Revolt and was pleased to see several elders (and enemies) destroyed. Then, as before, things went awry.



The cult got a rude surprise with the destruction of the Lasombra and Tzimisce Antediluvians. How could such youths mount a devastating attack on Antediluvians? Most of the cult was comprised of elders, and the notion disturbed them greatly. Finally, they rationalized that the youths hadn't actually done such a thing — it had been the Antediluvians who had faked their destructions for reasons that made sense only to them. The cult decided to monitor the new anarch organization and try to direct its energies more appropriately. Let them slaughter all the elders they wanted, so long as they thought it was preparation for Gehenna and the cult could do its work.

The cult also attempted to infiltrate the Camarilla, seeking to topple the sect. When the young sect proved too stable for them to knock over easily, the members concluded that the Inconnu (who, according to *Manus Nigrum* doctrine, stood in active opposition to the Antediluvians) had blocked their efforts. They reconsidered their strategy and decided the Camarilla would make a better tool.

THE CULT IN THE EAST

Meanwhile, the Eastern branch of the cult had other concerns. Though it had once billed itself as being closer to the original purpose of the cult, most members spent their time in individual study or building their own personality cults. The study of death and the afterlife was gradually shuffled aside, and most Enoch residents had no idea what transpired in wraithly affairs beyond the black marble walls.

Those Eastern cultists still in the living world engaged in shadow wars with the Assamites and Setites, starting in the Middle Ages and lasting down through the centuries, or so they claimed. Two dozen vampires that only met in secret to study and most times effected independence were hardly considered an enemy by Kindred society at large, and it is likely that the cult's "wars" were not taken seriously.

However, they did fight more seriously with the other supernatural beings of India. The Nagaraja were the particular targets of much of the worst opposition, primarily for their flesh-eating ways. As such feeding is much harder to cover up than typical blood-drinking, vampiric hunters tracked the Nagaraja before such activity could stir the mortals in the area to take up monster-hunting. In response, the Nagaraja saw such panic as both a mark of incompetence on the native vampires' part and jealousy of their own superior insights. Some of the Ravnos took particular umbrage at the Nagaraja; they were quite serious about their history, and part of that included a role as the defenders of their local culture and religion. Even if the mortals were unaware, the Ravnos would be there to fulfill their role as keepers of India's spiritual order, one which the Nagaraja had no part of.

THE CULT REGROUPS

The *Manus Nigrum*'s disdain for the wraiths around them would lead to disaster. During the early 16th century, an army of wraiths attacked Enoch, using a mighty storm sweeping through the Deadlands



for cover. Only a handful survived, and the city's defenses crumbled. It took over a century for the Eastern cultists to persuade their brethren to help them retake Enoch and another three years for the crusade itself. The commander of the operation, called the Del'Roh, took over as leader of the entire cult. During the mid-1700s, the cult's division came to a formal end. Still, groups in the cult would continue to pursue different aims and goals.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE SABBAT

The Sabbat, the more visible Black Hand, was never solely a tool of the *Manus Nigrum*. Members joined at their discretion, not the whim of some unseen mover's. Likewise, the sect would move or not as it chose, sometimes in spite of efforts by the *Manus Nigrum* to steer them in another direction. As tensions elevated in the Sabbat, the *Manus Nigrum* saw its pawns as troublesome, things to be dismissed rather than people to be understood. Indeed, the cult rarely saw the sect's members as being personalities at all. It continued to be surprised when tensions escalated into violence, and would more often than not attribute the chaos to the work of its unseen enemies. Manipulation caused the problems: Manipulation could solve them. The cult saw the terms that ended the two Sabbat Civil Wars as being but scraps thrown to the hounds so it could continue its own work. Such a disregard for the responses and motives of others would continue to unbalance the cult's views and eventually be the first stones paving its downfall.

The cult claimed it had preserved the Sabbat during the first Sabbat Civil War (running from the end of the 1700s to the early 1800s), and there was some truth to this. The Camarilla certainly could have poured into warring domains and decimated the ranks if not destroyed them outright. Instead, the Camarilla focused on expanding into new domains, opening new territories and waiting for the peace of thinned ranks before attacking any Sabbat domains, usually guided into such by the words of certain elders or *Manus Nigrum* agents in various courts. Part of the war's terms included the Purchase Pact, forbidding war between Sabbat members, which allowed the cult's influence over one faction to influence the Sabbat as a whole.

The second Sabbat Civil War changed this drastically. The early 20th century saw incredible mortal conflict, and the Sabbat followed with factional battles over the opportunities (and threats) arising from it. The Camarilla made gains during this time while the Sabbat was distracted, particularly in Canada, although the Camarilla's victories were made pyrrhic by a few quick strikes. The Code of Milan in 1933, which ended this conflict, was a masterpiece of doublespeak: It proclaimed the true ideals of the Sabbat then made them worthless by putting the true power in the hands of the sect's leaders. *Manus Nigrum* agents acted to secure their own positions from challenges below and channel any remaining hostilities into more acceptable expressions; the



cult itself had very little to do to ensure its interests. Even more, the Code of Milan committed the Sabbat to supporting the *Manus Nigrum*, granting the cult even greater influence.

The third Sabbat Civil War proved equally satisfying in results, even though the war lasted a mere 100 nights in 1957, things were settled before the cult had time to make a response to its agents. The upshot was the recognition of the Caitiff as a new "clan," which suited the cult; after all, groups and factions were far easier to manipulate than individuals, and this organized the most troublesome members of the Sabbat in one easy package.

The rise of the Inquisitors among the Sabbat worried the *Manus Nigrum*, who recalled how unsatisfactory a tool their mortal counterparts had once proven. Of course, none ever considered that such disaster had ever been remotely their doing.

IN THE FINAL NIGHTS

Whether Gehenna is imminent or not, the *Manus Nigrum* was struck by a number of disasters over several months — the work of millennia literally fell in the blink of an eye.

ENOCH FALLS

Enoch's end was the first of these catastrophes. Over the centuries, a few wraiths stumbled across the city. Each time, the wraith ended her existence as a prisoner of the cult, met an unpleasant end while trying to escape or returned to the cities of the dead with the news and no one willing to believe her tale about vampires living in the Underworld. However, the Deathlords who governed the Empire of Stygia, the mighty domain of European and North American wraiths, had learned of Enoch long ago and longed to wipe it from the face of the Underworld completely. Reliable guidance for getting through the storm, though, had been another matter, and their forces could only sit in harbor while the lords brooded. Then, recently, a band of wraiths presented the Imperial forces with precise information about Enoch's whereabouts in the Tempest. The Imperial Navy, comprised of ships from across the centuries, set out to bombard Enoch.

Enoch's defenses included magical wards and 100-foot-high black marble walls that had often stymied and amazed those few travelers who had ever seen the city. Stygia's navy came prepared, however, bringing the very best firepower available, and was able to hide its approach until it was too late for Enoch's residents to flee. The dozens of vampires, ghouls and wraithly servants within commanded enough power to sink most of the first ships approaching. Superior numbers and familiarity with the Tempest prevailed in the end for the wraiths. The blockade held long enough for Stygia to call out its greatest weapon — the ghostly reflection of a nuclear warhead. In a blinding flash, the city and any within it vanished into nothingness.



There was no advance warning to anyone. The mysterious Aralu fell like the rest of the city — whether they did not know, or did know and chose not to reveal it, remains a mystery. Early on, three ghouls were caught trying to slip through the blockade. When the destruction had spent itself, the Empire ordered them to carry the news to the *Manus Nigrum* adherents in the Skinlands. Let the vampires know that beyond the Shroud would only be the justice they had evaded among mortals.

For more on Enoch's destruction (and the wraith perspective), see *Ends of Empire for Wraith*.

THE HAND IN TURMOIL

The current Del'Roh and all her senior commanders perished when Enoch fell. Further, the liches, three potent blood magicians of the ancient Middle East who advised the Del'Roh, perished as well. Rumor claimed that they had managed to escape the destruction briefly, trying to siphon enough energy from the wraiths around them to maintain themselves, but eventually vanishing altogether. Any attempts by the cult to track them down proved fruitless.

The Seraphim, the elite guard of the Black Hand, fell to internal squabbles about choosing the new Del'Roh. Someone must bear the blame for Enoch's fall — the Seraphim could not agree on who this should be, except that whoever it was was in the cult and must be destroyed. Factions not previously represented in the leadership started demanding their voices be heard. Clan fought against bloodline, fanatics against moderates, vampire against humans, those who favored mortals against those who managed Kindred society — any argument that could escalate into violence did.

THE WEEK OF NIGHTMARES

The *Manus Nigrum* might have survived the loss of Enoch. After all, the core tenets were still intact — the loss of a single city in the Underworld wasn't part of those. If some Antediluvians were destroyed (there never had been any definitive confirmation regarding the Aralu beyond cult doctrine...), then it must be part of a master plan. Gehenna hadn't begun yet, and the cult could regroup and gather its strength.

Then the final disaster struck.

In July 1999, the Ravnos Antediluvian awoke in a blast of dreams that struck sensitives from Malkavians to mortal psychics and madmen. For a week it fought a variety of opponents and continued to send out telepathic messages symbolically describing the battle. Only a combination of supernatural and technical powers were able to bring the monster down. The reverberations continue to echo throughout Kindred society, but the *Manus Nigrum* found particular meaning.

The cult always believed that it did the work of the Antediluvians. From the finding of Enoch to the various movements in Kindred society, the *Manus Nigrum* did the work of the Antediluvians. The sleeping giants sent dreams and prophecy to their favored ones, confirming those beliefs. The Ravnos Antediluvian, however, had nothing to say to the



cult when it awoke. It never addressed them in its mental ravings. It never chastised them for a failing or praised them for preparing the way. It never called on them during the battle. It did not seem to know they were there at all. Worst of all, it did not seem to care. For the cult, the revelation brought despair.

Rationalization soon followed, though. After all, the Antediluvian had been insane. It had been busy. Surely the next Antediluvian would awake with more composure. But every new explanation fell as events unfolded. None of the Antediluvians spoke to anyone anymore, not in dreams or directly. Perhaps they never had. Perhaps the cult had once understood the pure truth, but had lost its way while dealing with baser vampires (or other creatures). Prophecy had not spoken of the Week of Nightmares. Could it be the prophets had misled the cult, or deluded themselves?

In the wake of disillusionment, the cult shattered irretrievably. Some await what must be inevitable ends at the hands of the Antediluvians, while others cast about frantically for new hope. The *Manus Nigrum* as a unified entity, however, no longer exists.

THE HAND SEVERED

The events of the Year of Reckoning left remaining members of the *Manus Nigrum* disbelieving both their own infallibility and the cult's teachings. There is a lot of frustration to be felt when one believes one's been wasting hundreds of years on a path that leads nowhere.

The world still knows nothing of the *Manus Nigrum*. Only a handful of observers have noticed the increased turmoil as the cult continues to fragment (thus removing previous guiding hands), and of these a few have put together the clues to deduce the cult's existence. Those who have seen only pieces but no coherent whole build conspiracy theories that would make the cult proud.

SEVERED FINGERS

THE CLANS

Most cult members who belong to major clans resume normal unlives after the Week of Nightmares. Most believe that vampiric society in general will not survive, but perhaps smaller groups can save a few. Smaller Gehenna cults begin springing up among Assamites, Gangrel, Malkavians, Nosferatu, Toreador and Ventre, where a single elder (or two or three) speaks of the approaching end times and of submitting to the Antediluvians.

Such a message would not have brought a positive response in any other age. After all, these apocalyptic preachers suggest submitting to unknowable beings with incomprehensible wills that just might eat them all. Still, as the skies darken and stranger things prowl the nights, the Kindred do accept that they don't know as much as they thought they did, although no clan's majority has accepted the Gehenna cult message.



Elders reevaluate their places on the ladders of the Jihad, while the neonates and ancillae find their lots look even bleaker than before. Is submission a message of hope or despair?

TRUE BRUJAH

Given ideal circumstances, the True Brujah would respond with cool reason and analytical appraisal. They began their plotting before the *Manus Nigrum*, and the cult's end does not change things a whit. They take the Gehenna message quite seriously, but their rationalistic natures make them less likely to succumb to raving prophecies. They see their desire to serve the Antediluvians as being the product of carefully appraised historical precedent and current reality. Too bad the approaching end times aren't ideal circumstances.

The True Brujah have little idea how to deal with the crises approaching. Unused to high emotion, they have been forced to enter the End Times with little information and act quickly, a situation not to their liking. They knew they must abandon the *Manus Nigrum*, but what comes next continues cause bitter argument.

Most True Brujah agree that all wicked vampires (read: nearly every other vampire) must be punished. If there are fewer sinners needing punishment when the Antediluvians wake, perhaps the carnage will be more restrained. To this end, the bloodline's members have insinuated themselves into coteries, posing as members of other clans. As the bloodline is unknown to Kindred at large, its members operate knowing they are unlikely to be connected to each other from city to city. They often assist in the hunting of the Thin-Blooded or other forms of Kindred slaughter, though their efforts are minor in the grand scheme.

A few True Brujah and Setites have formed a loose confederation. The Setites are well-aware of the secrets of the past with their confederates, and their histories recount the fateful old times. True Brujah pass along information and tactical intelligences for the Setites to apply (as the bloodline has discovered it has some trouble persuading anyone outside itself), a combination of ruthless intelligence and cunning along with a sense of others' weaknesses. Some Setites make a particular effort to undermine prominent main-clan Brujah, while others merely look for opportunity.

Dissension plagues the ranks of the bloodline, particularly among the truly ancient elders and those wanting to move ahead. Efforts to begin recruitment and Embrace fall on deaf ears. The time for extended action has passed, and as the world crumbles, conflict may further thin the ranks of the bloodline.

NAGARAJA

Never very large to begin with, nearly all Nagaraja active in the modern nights fell with Enoch. Less than a dozen who had been on the other side of the Shroud managed to survive. Knowing they would need more shelter than the cult's remnants could provide, they sought shelter with the Cathayans.



Their reputation in India assured that they would find only death there, so the Nagaraja turned to the Green Courts of Korea. The Green Courts listened to their suit with fewer preconceptions, and offered shelter in exchange for information (whether or not they knew as much about the Nagaraja as the Kuei-jin of India). The price was steep — the Nagaraja traded nearly everything they knew about Necromancy and necromantic organizations. The Nagaraja are now recognized as honored guests of the Green Courts.

The Green Courts were most interested in the news of the war against Enoch and the origins of the monster storms currently raging in the deadlands. Few Kuei-jin oriented toward the dead can tolerate the Giovanni, and the news could bring a united campaign of the courts against the Necromancers. As for the Nagaraja, they remain on the brink of extinction, unable to Embrace (their requests to their hosts for such are all put aside politely for "further discussion") and trying to maintain a footing in their precarious shelter.

OLD CLAN TZIMISCE

The Old Clan Tzimisce includes both the usual disgruntled elders and a handful of lunatics, as well as their loyal children. It is the lunatics who have changed the timbre of the clan's activities.

The Old Clan possesses *Animalism*, *Auspex* and *Dominate* for its Disciplines, rather than *Vicissitude*. The clan believes that these powers reflect the needs and concerns of ancient rulers in rugged domains. They find *Vicissitude* to be a perversion, completely unhealthy for a vampire to indulge in. A Tzimisce should be a leader steeped in ancient lore and wisdom, not a freak show. The lunatics took this dislike a bit further, claiming that the Discipline wasn't a true Discipline but the manifestation of an evil spirit or even a vampiric disease. Those leaders who found such rants to be ridiculous were branded as members of the *Vicissitude* conspiracy. Rants led to purges, and most of the saner members now try to keep the lunatics somewhat contained.

Most of the Old Clan now spends its days preparing for what it knows must be the End Times. Its members know they must prepare themselves to be worthy on their own terms, not trying to shore up other, weaker vampires. Many now spend all their time on their ancestral estates (those who didn't have them previously have been acquiring them by various means), preparing themselves for the Tzimisce Antediluvian (who may have already risen).

In post-Communist Eastern Europe, many Old Clan Tzimisce find their old-style tyranny to be reassuringly stable to the peasantry. They restrain overt displays of vampirism, preferring to walk among the people as returned heirs of noble estates or business leaders, concealing their vampiric powers. They have withdrawn from the worthless Kindred society at large to cultivate virtuous domains at home.



GHOULS AND CHATTERLINGS

ENRATHI

The fall of Enoch cut the Enrathi family off from its greatest source of income. As the *Manus Nigrum* further fragmented following the Week of Nightmares, the Enrathi's ties to the cult disintegrated. The family never committed its entire resources to the cult, in the event of just such an emergency, and concentrated on building up its slave trade, despite the short-term hardships.

The Enrathi are skilled survivors in the World of Darkness and know how to make themselves unseen to the world at large. They don't advertise that their vastly extended family is all related; their outward guise is of ghould and unghould mortals of varying ethnicities who all happen to traffick in the flesh trade. Their gifts as mediums can be found in any ethnic group, so that doesn't cause suspicion. In short, only the most dedicated observers might trace down connections.

Princes of major port cities and airport hubs are aware of the slave trade, but so long as the law isn't aroused and "gifts" keep showing up in their coffers, most princes are willing to let it slide. There are a few more experienced ghouls looking for domitors in these nights, but hardly enough to rouse suspicion except in the most paranoid of princes. Enrathi ghouls bring with them the family's accumulated wisdom regarding the dead and the Masquerade, always welcome resources.

The drawback to all this has been the storms in the Underworld. Enrathi medium gifts have become a curse and burden as wraiths plead and demand their attention. Some Enrathi fall to psychosomatic illnesses or try to lose their gifts through lobotomy; some even commit suicide. The unintentional purge results in individuals who are savvy enough to understand the dead, but callous enough to resist their calls.

MARIJAVA

Marijava committed themselves to service with the *Manus Nigrum*. When the cult splinters, the ghouls panic. Some attempt to bind themselves to the isolated survivors, but the need for servants is little, and more than a third are dying simply for lack of vitae to prolong their lives. Those who haven't died yet have become vampire-hunters, taking the blood they need as rogue ghouls.

Some Marijava search for their long-lost family, without success. Half the searchers disappear altogether due to threats from Lupines and other monsters outside the cities. There is confusion over the fates of the old Marijava family that refused service with the *Manus Nigrum* — did they all simply die out, or are they unfindable to those ghouls whose auras bear the stamp of cult service?

A number of Marijava simply continue their existence and service to new masters, trading information about vampiric rivals for blood, cash and other resources. Those private or government agencies seeking to hunt vampires may find the Marijava willing to work for them.



RAFASTIO

The Rafastio perhaps suffer the greatest in the wake of the *Manus Nigrum*'s disintegration. Without their masters standing over them as they have for millennia, what can give determination to their sense of self? Most vampires are unlikely to trust mortal magicians who talk of serving some cult of Kindred overlords, and those few who attempted to defect to other magical communities found they had no friends among other mortal magicians. In short, they find themselves truly isolated with few resources. Dozens of Rafastio die in the months after the Week of Nightmares. Some cross the path of a vampire on the verge of frenzy, some attempt a ritual without adequate preparation, some meet gruesome (unprintable) fates, and many commit suicide, bereft of hope and purpose without the cult. The remaining family members regroup to plan and redirect their clan's activities in the name of survival.

Sub-families within the clan bind themselves to individual cult members or offshoot groups. Old Clan Tzimisce take many of these "orphans" in, the two traditionalist groups being comfortable with the arrangement. Others gather in spots around the world in groups of varying sizes, such as six serving a very old Malkavian or two living with a mixed coterie. Most select such new masters with an eye toward the future, hoping that their masters' purity might deflect whatever carnage follows when the Antediluvians awaken.

About 50 to 100 of the Rafastio hunt for the remaining Ravnos. After all, if these vampires came so close to contact with their Antediluvian and survived, they must bear a special holiness which could protect those around them. Finding a Ravnos is a task in and of itself, and once found, few Ravnos understand what the Rafastio want, and even fewer accept the offer. A Ravnos who allows the Rafastio to remain soon finds herself with a following of devoted disciples very interested in her continued existence.

The rest of the family go into business for themselves in various enterprises. Some turn to the vampire-hunting organizations of the Inquisition; after all, if the *Manus Nigrum* could not survive, then no other vampire is worthy. Others offer their particular magical influence and assistance to vampires outside the cult or even to mortal clients. As mortals seek whatever anchor they can find in such dark times, the Rafastio cater to many requests with both genuine magic and superstitious pandering.

CHATTERLINGS

Nearly all chatterlings serving the *Manus Nigrum* died when Enoch fell. Unusual numbers of chatterlings happened to be in the city at the time due to a variety of reasons. Any survivors were in the physical lands. Most of these are exceptionally gifted at moving among mortals, and most operated under deep cover, going for years without contacting their masters. These deep-cover agents have no idea that the cult's remnants don't care about them. A few more informed chatterlings are aware of events transpired, but they continue with their mission, waiting for new leaders to give them their next orders.



THE HAND AND FATE

To conspirators, everything else looks like part of a plot or an accident. When conspirators continually work in disciplined secrecy and use even minor events to advance the grand agenda, they forget that most people are not part of any great scheme. They look for rival plots, search for non-existent evidence and see such as confirmation of cagey enemies. Everyone is either raw material or in on the conspiracy. Motivations that have nothing whatsoever to do with the conspiracy mean nothing to those who can't understand why events don't follow the grand scheme. The *Manus Nigrum* failed in part because of its members forgot that history happens because of many personal drives coming together in unpredictable ways, and individuals ultimately act for their own reasons, for better or worse. On several occasions, the cult even dismissed the idea that those outside the cult had personalities, goals and motives — in short, that they were people. Those who were not of the cult were merely tools, servants or just part of a mass that was being used as a tool. Such beliefs rarely take independent thought into account, and by this the cult collapsed.

The *Manus Nigrum* was certain that the chaos that affected both the Camarilla and Sabbat was its own doing. Debacles like the Anarch Revolt or the Inquisition weren't their fault, and any successes were entirely their doing. They didn't believe that any non-cult vampires could create long-term plans or that neonates and ancillae might actually work together out of shared concerns rather than under the coordination of some great scheme. In the end, such unrealistic appraisal of themselves and their "enemies" brought them down.

So how much history is the *Manus Nigrum* responsible for? That depends on your perspective. As Storyteller, you can make the cult as irrelevant or as critical as you see fit. The cult's insight into its own doings makes it unlikely to be completely true, but likewise, the cult's critics may have made their own mistakes in assizing the cult. Loyal members examining the cult's claims may either find their beliefs confirmed or core-shaking disappointments. If you choose to use *Manus Nigrum* material in your chronicle, remember that the cult overestimated its impact on the Kindred world. It attempted to play at Illuminati with only minimal success due to the continual maintenance of secrecy.

THE SECTS AND LIBERTY

The *Manus Nigrum* boasted members from both sects, and the cult's fracture resounds on both sides of Kindred society in different ways.

For the Camarilla, the *Manus Nigrum*'s claims of influence and control were frankly overinflated. Some prominently placed individuals took orders from the cult or responded to prompting through various channels, but on the whole, the sect owed nothing to the cult and the cult couldn't extend its reach without the risk of exposing its agents (who would have been promptly ashed for serving outside influences). The greatest evidence of the cult's passing is that those who were receiving



orders are now without leaders. Some former pawns lose their direction completely, so used to taking orders after several centuries that they have lost much of their innovation. Others become more aggressive, trying to show themselves that they haven't lost their individuality after years of service. Those who genuinely followed the cult's doctrine simply carry on as best they can, wondering what happened to their old masters and hoping that things will soon return to normalcy (when they're not proselytizing).

The Black Hand, however, is in far more dire straits in some cases. Two Seraphim battle for control of both the cult and the Sabbat — Djuhah, who sought to speed the pace of the cult's recruiting and now finds himself suspected of plotting against the Sabbat leadership, and Izhim ur-Baal, who believes himself the new Del'Roh and presides over the cult's remnants from the crater that was Enoch. The other Seraphim of the Sabbat had no connection to the cult; the cult's own Seraphim perished along with the Del'Roh and liches at Enoch, and Izhim and Djuhah survived only because their duties took them away at a crucial time. Some have debated bringing Seraph Elimelech aboard, but most believe him to be too insane. Others would prefer to see the cult die a dignified death rather than totter along as a shadow of its former glory. Those packs that took orders from the cult know some of the fallout from the Week of Nightmares. Now the packs seek to prove themselves ready for the great battle, working without secret instructions, which results in reckless acts of bravery that get more killed than anything else. The other factions in the Sabbat at large don't understand the fury of these packs and seek to rein it in or at least channel it. Some Sabbat leaders, only now aware of the subversion of the *Manus Nigrum*, seek to weed out the cult's influence where they can, finding the cult's doctrines completely against their greater mission and the degree of its influence disturbing.





CHAPTER FIVE:

STORYTELLER CORNER

Come on in and sit for a while. This isn't anything formal, nothing fancy — most of us probably have our feet up and a bowl of our favorite snackings within easy reach, and that's just fine by us. Consider this a roundtable where we sit around and discuss some new ideas to use in Storytelling and some possible solutions for what gives us grief.

ALTERNATE STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

Many stories are rarely told in a straightforward way. Some play fast and loose with time and place as authors gloss over minor events in order to get to the main action. They'll tell you the history of a character when you need to hear it most and not a moment earlier. And sometimes, just to get your attention, they'll tell you how the story ends before it even begins. These twists and turns in the narrative line keep things fresh for the audience.

As a Storyteller, you have the freedom to use these same techniques to keep your chronicle's narrative fresh and entertaining. Your play sessions might be limited to one night out the week, but your chronicle is only limited by your imagination. If the current story hinges on events that took place centuries ago, take those events and let your players bring them to life. If you want to galvanize the players into action, let



them see what Gehenna might be like. Show them their dreams, or let them compose the threads of their nightly lives in detail. Your chronicle is not limited to a few brief hours a week and neither is your role as Storyteller. If you feel the need to change the pace and direction of your game, you may want to use some of the following techniques to throw a curve in the road.

STOP READING NOW IF...

These techniques require a lot from you and your players before you use them. Here are some of the demands that these tools will place on you. If you don't feel up to these needs, come back to this section later. You aren't a "bad" Storyteller if you don't use these techniques; it may be that your game simply doesn't need these systems to make it work. Each game has its own demands.

All of these techniques are tools to building a better game. They're tools; they aren't full-blown chronicles in and of themselves. Each of them can add excitement to a story, but they need to be used sparingly or they'll get too familiar (and thus lose that excitement, which was why you brought them in). If you have a flashback scene every session, eventually players will get bored with them. Roll these techniques out when you want to add an exclamation point to an event in your game or when you want to explore a character's emotions in depth. Never use them simply because *you're* bored. If you honestly can't get any excitement out of your current game, you need to do more work than just throwing a couple of these ideas at the screen.

All of these techniques are meant to encourage roleplaying. If your players are more interested in blowing away Sabbat members with their submachine guns than exploring the emotional depths of their characters, then they aren't ready for these scenes. Don't give up hope though; eventually they'll be ready for this kind of stuff. Until then, don't spoil their fun by forcing this down their throats. You can't force a person to roleplay well; you can just give them the opportunity. Until they take that opportunity, wait and be patient.

These techniques often focus heavily on a single character. They will demand a lot of one-on-one work between yourself and a player. If you have players who get jealous of that sort of attention, be ready to deal with the consequences and the politics before you dive in. If you spend a lot of time with one character in particular, other people will likely start demanding the same sort of attention. Be prepared to provide it or skip these techniques entirely.

Last, be prepared to go above and beyond your usual game time to make these techniques work. Most of these ideas require that you spend some time away from your regular game session moderating a scene. It really helps if you have some assistance in this work. These scenes are meant to be a break from the ordinary, so a few changes to your regular routine can make a big difference. In particular, a few helpful assistants to play Narrator characters, a few props or a few costumes can have a big impact.



Still ready to give a whirl? Great. Let's see what these tricks will do for your chronicle.

FLASHBACKS

A vampire story is as much about the past as it is the present. Vampires are creatures that have had centuries to grow, learn, and change. The person a Kindred was years ago makes him who he is today. Most vampire fiction spends a great deal of time on those past experiences. Often the audience watches the past and the present side by side, so that they can see just why the vampire acts the way he does. Your chronicle might have just as much history as any vampire novel, but that history rarely gets much examination in play. Players will generate characters that were born centuries ago, but somehow, that history rarely has any relevance to what happens tonight.

Flashbacks are one method of bringing that history to life. In a flashback scene, you take a moment from a character's history and put it on its feet. This can really flesh out a character's roleplaying experience. It's one thing to know why a Kindred still seeks vengeance for his lover's death centuries ago; it's another to hold her mangled body in your arms and know she's gone forever. A player's character can become far deeper for this experience. If you choose the right history, and the right time, this can take your whole chronicle to a new level.

The trick is picking the right character and the right time. When you select a player to do a small scene like this, you're devoting an awful lot of time and attention to her. Is that the best thing for your game, or should you spread your time more evenly across your entire player base? Ultimately, only you can answer that question. As a rule of thumb, you'll probably want do small scenes like this outside of your main gaming session. Your first instincts will draw you to the characters that gave you detailed backgrounds that catch your attention, or the characters that are driving the plot right now. However, eventually someone is going to grumble "favoritism" if you spend too much time with any one group of players. While it can be easy to focus continually on the good roleplayers who always give you great backstories, look at those players who perhaps need a small kick in their metaphysical pants to move from merely meandering through the game to being an active part of it.

A quick dip into a character' past is a big boost to any player's roleplaying skills. Most Storytellers like to talk new players through the events of their characters' lives well before the Embrace just to establish the character in the player's mind before real play begins. With a group of willing volunteers, the Storyteller might be able to take these initial roleplay notes into a bona fide scene, providing a miniature "boot camp" to get fresh players accustomed to their new characters and to live-action roleplaying in general. This sort of technique is only practical for smaller games, however, and it requires a lot of supervision on your part. You may want to talk a trustworthy assistant into making this a full-time project if possible. It may take time, but eventually, everyone can get a chance to sample their character's pasts as they see fit.



There's no hard and fast rule about what bit of history makes a good scene. Your own judgment and sense of style as a Storyteller is your best guide. Keep an eye out for high stakes moments in a character's background, those times when everything a character had was on the line. The character's Embrace is a solid choice, but almost anything goes. Also, you want to pick something that has relevance to your current plot line. If the scene you're creating never has any impact on your main chronicle, it may as well have never happened at all. If the modern-day lover of a Kindred is threatened, it might be worthwhile to detail with a player how his character lost a lover centuries ago. In the end, though, the game that you're creating will determine what sort of history you need to show.

Previously written history needs to happen in a certain way, not necessarily rigid because that's no fun to play, but with the understanding that you have a goal to get to. Make sure you know exactly what's supposed to happen in a flashback scene. How does it begin? What actions have to occur? When does it end? You will probably what to keep the flashback scene a "soft" roleplay event with no challenges. If you let the players play rock-paper-scissors to determine your chronicle's past, you could end up in serious trouble. After all, if that tragic death of a lover in the 17th century never happened because your player gets lucky... well, it's back to drawing board for that character history. You can patch over the situation — maybe she just died later — but overall, you just want to prevent those situations in the first place. Let the players determine how they react to events, but keep the action under your control. Encourage gut instinct and emotional response rather than too much decision-making.

The resources you throw into a small scene like this can enhance the experience tremendously. A few helpful assistants to play Narrator characters are always a great benefit. Likewise, a few small costumes or props can give a lot of life to a scene. At a minimum, give yourself enough time to play the scene fully and enough space to put the scene on its feet. Avoid merely sitting down and talking things out if you can help it. *Mind's Eye Theatre* is a game that's meant to be played on its feet. Show your players the past; don't just tell them.

The most important thing about any flashback is tying it into current events. History without a context is meaningless to the game. A flashback is a great way of illustrating how history repeats itself. Do your best to make that history repeat and watch the recognition in your player's eyes. If you went the extra mile and got an assistant for a Narrator character, make sure you use the same assistant when you're bringing the past into the modern nights. Maybe that lounge singer is a distant ancestor of your Kindred's old lover.... In the same way, a prop from the past can take on a lot of value if it shows up unexpectedly in these final nights. A little touch like this is all you need to tie the past and present together at times and bring depth to the game as whole.

FLASH-FORWARDS

Just as modern vampire stories revolve around the past, the World of Darkness is obsessed with the future — what little of it remains, anyway.



Gehenna is coming with all the speed and fury of a runaway train, and no one quite knows what's going to happen or when or what will result. Sometimes, it pays to remind players of this little fact.

Flash-forwards serve as foreshadowing to events in a chronicle. Just as a flashback shows players events of what came before, a flash-forward gives them an opportunity learn what the Final Nights are all about. Sometimes they can be signs of smaller events that are coming up, like a Sabbat invasion or the death of a prince. Alternately, you can get really ambitious and stage the opening salvos of Gehenna. In either event, your goal is to heighten the sense of dread and urgency that should be present in any Kindred game. The World of Darkness is coming to an end; players shouldn't feel like they can dawdle.

A flash-forward is a terrific way to start a new chronicle. Imagine what happens when you show your players what will happen to them before the game even begins. If you tell your players, "This is the story of how the Camarilla fell in this city. This is how Gehenna came," then they *will* pay attention. Every action that they take becomes important. Every choice becomes a dangerous one. The stakes are just a little bit higher than if they were playing for their own characters' amusement — and the higher the stakes, the more your players will want to play.

When you're producing a scene that predicts events in the future, you need to be extremely careful. Players can and will do their best to get out of awful predicaments, and their methods will surprise you. You want to get your point across while giving away a minimum amount of information. If you don't, someone will inevitably find a way to make your foreshadowing invalid. Don't be afraid to include a disclaimer before any flash-forward scene: "This scene shows events that *may* happen." As a wise sage noted, the future is always in motion, and what was true when you opened events may not be after three sessions.

Generally speaking, you want to show the distant future, not the events happening next week. The further ahead in time your scene is set, the less likely it is that your players can change it. You'll also want to keep things as vague as possible. If too many details are set in stone, you'll have to scramble keep things happening according to schedule, which may devolve into a run-on-rails game.

You'll probably want to keep a tight rein on the action a flash-forward scene, just like a flashback. In a flash-forward, you'll probably be using characters that currently exist in your chronicle. Players get very unhappy when they feel that they're powerless to affect events. You want to keep things lax enough that the players feel that they have some control over the situation, even if that's not the case. These scenes are about flavor, not combat. As with any of these techniques, roleplaying is the biggest concern. Encourage your players to pay attention to how they react to what happens, not what they do themselves.

Of course, if you really are serious about throwing Gehenna at your players, you may just want to hose them with ridiculous odds. A glimpse of the end times should be terrifying for characters. It doesn't hurt to



rattle the players a bit as well. In your main story line, it would terrible form to give the characters no chance of survival at all, but this isn't your main story line. You don't have to worry about whether all your characters will survive. Feel free to draw up Methusalahs, battalions of Sabbat or whatever else your fiendish mind can produce. You don't need to be "fair" when the end result isn't going to have an impact on the chronicle. Just remember that you're not in this for sadism. You're here to make a point for the players. Admittedly, the point might be that their characters aren't really as tough as they think they are, but you should be aiming higher than that.

A little mystery in a flash-forward can create a great deal of suspense in your main chronicle. If you keep some of the details obscure in your scene, you can keep the players guessing anxiously about the chronicle's plot for some time. Maybe there's a mysterious hooded figure commanding the Sabbat legions in your home city. The conversations in the flash-forward make it clear that this figure was once a loyal Camarilla member. So who's the traitor? Players will become a great deal more paranoid after something like this is shown to them. The characters may not have any reason to be more suspicious, but you can bet that the players will start jumping at shadows. You may very well not know who that hooded figure is yourself at this point — just creating that sense of urgency and dread is often enough to drive events forward. Eventually, the chronicle will present its own answer, and you can reveal that hooded figure in a later scene. In a sense, the actual events in a flash-forward aren't all that important. It's how the chronicle gets to the future that matters. The details of the flash-forward can remain obscure, as long as the end results are interesting.

Make absolutely certain that your players understand that the flash-forward is not in-game information. Anyone who acts on the information you give in a scene like this is cheating. If a player can't respect this, he shouldn't be a part of the scene. At the same time, you need to make sure you don't give players information that they'll have a hard time suppressing. If you reveal one of the main characters in the game is a traitor, players *will* react differently to the character, no matter how hard they might try otherwise. Again, keeping your flash-forward vague and distant in time helps.

DREAM SEQUENCES

In a chronicle, a dream sequence is a great way to lend an air of mystery and surrealism to a game. You can use dreams to liberally drop hints about a plot to a specific character, to make a graphic statement about a theme in your chronicle or even to make the loss of Humanity in a character an event instead of a statistic. Dreams are extremely liberating in their freedom as Storytelling devices. Dreams and visions are disjoined, illogical scenes where emotions are more important than the laws of nature. This sort of fractured vision can provide a great mechanism for giving your players clues, or insights as to their own inner natures... or even just frightening them as you hit the characters in their sleep.



As with all these Storytelling techniques, you want to pick and choose whom you're going to give a dream sequence to. Unless the situation is extremely odd, only one character will have an active role in the dream. Perhaps she frequently has nightmares or the dream is one those strange flashes of insight that crop up with *Auspex* or *Dementation*. There's nothing keeping you from hitting any player at any time with an interesting dream, though. After all, everyone dreams. The final decision, as always, is up to you. If you feel something interesting will come from taking a character through the Twilight Zone, don't hesitate to go down that road.

It's critical to have a complete background for a character before you create any dream sequence. Dreams tend to pull images from our past experiences and everyday lives. You need to know what the events in a character's past mean before you can truly begin. If you put a father figure into a dream, you need to make sure that the character in question didn't kill his father in a rage. Likewise, little details like a favorite toy or an old phobia can help to give a dream context and texture. Dreams are intensely personal; you have use symbols that mean something for the character in order to make a truly personal experience.

A dream sequence probably has the most opportunity for Storyteller control out of any Storytelling technique. You can turn the dreaming character into a little girl, an old woman or anything in between. Strange things happen in dreams, and often, the dreamer can feel powerless in the dream's wake. It's highly recommended that you avoid using any sort of challenges in a dream sequence outright. Most dreams only give someone a few options on how to cope with a situation. When you encounter a fork in the road in a dream, you rarely have the option of turning around and going back home. As long as your player is comfortable with the idea of losing this much control of their character, things should go smoothly. As always, the player you choose to work with in a special scene like this makes all the difference.

Bear in mind that when it comes to surrealism and dream imagery, a little goes a long way. You might want to compose a dream sequence where the player flies into orbit and takes tea with dragons, but such wild things are generally hard to roleplay. Small, subtle changes are more likely to unnerve your players rather than big special effects. Something as small as meeting a familiar friend who treats her like a stranger can rattle a character a lot more than meeting a large horned demon in a dark alley. The familiar gone very wrong always has more potential for terror than the alien.

It's a good idea if you touch on a several different themes in the course of a dream. Use dream imagery to hit upon problems that a character is having in his modern life; show him a prophetic event; toss in a few meaningless images. To a certain degree, you want to be as obscure as possible in a dream sequence. Your own vision as Storyteller should tell you where to go with any dream, but as a rule of thumb, never be completely straightforward. If you follow the psychology that says humans



dream in an effort to deal with issues that their waking minds can't or won't tackle, then the subconscious probably will find a back-door route to accomplishing what it needs.

Also keep in mind that most dreams are very disjointed in structure. Feel free to jump around in time and place as your plans dictate, ending scenes and starting new ones whenever the mood strikes you. Rapid jumps in time and space can help to give players the surreal experience you're looking for. Your only goal in a dream sequence is to give a player information or to set a mood; stop the session once those goals are achieved, even if it cuts a scene in half. Dreams are all about images, not conclusions, and a good dream sequence should always leave a player with unanswered questions.

After a dream sequence, your player may well approach you looking for some insight as to what they went through. While the use of some Abilities like *Enigmas* or *Occult* might help out, there is no hard and fast rule as to how to use game mechanics to interpret a dream. You definitely want to avoid simply handing the players a dream's meaning. As a rule of thumb, limit questions to specific objects in the dream and avoid answering questions about the dream as a whole. *Enigmas* might tell you what the one-armed man represented in a dream, but it won't tell you the dream's story from beginning to end. Make the players work to reason things out; don't hand them the answers on a platter.

BLUEBOOKS AND DOWNTIMES

Often there just isn't enough time to get everything done in a game. Players may want to conduct detailed investigations, pursue a stakeout or even just socialize over a long period of time. Events like this can't be covered in just one evening, no matter how much work you do. As a Storyteller, it's sometimes in your benefit to gloss over these things and compress time so that the players can get back to the central plot of the evening. However, you can take another approach. If all the players involved are mature enough to roleplay on their own, you may want to allow them to create the details on their own time and let you become aware of the results. A process like this is called blue booking, and in the hands of strong roleplayers, it can help you flesh out the daily life of your game considerably.

A bluebook is not the same thing as a downtime. Downtimes are another common tool used by Storytellers, usually when several weeks pass between game sessions. Generally, Storytellers will ask that players let them know how their characters spend those intervening weeks. A good downtime report can provide a lot of detail on a character's actions and may provide a wealth on a character's motives. However, most downtimes are a solo effort, and as such don't quite qualify as roleplaying. A character's downtime doesn't involve anything but the player's own imagination; other players rarely have any input into events, nor can the Storyteller change things as they occur. Without reactions from other people, there's very little roleplaying that can go on.



A bluebook, on the other hand, involves both Storyteller and player interaction. In a sense, it's more like a group writing effort than a true Mind's Eye Theatre session. If two or more players let you know that they'd like to build a scene together, you may want to have them write down the details of what happened and convey the events to you. The exact process is up to you and your players, but generally, it's best to work in a round-robin format. You build the initial setting for the players; then one player puts down his actions and reactions. The next player edits events as he sees fit, adds some more details and returns them to the original player. When all parties are satisfied, they can return the project to you, and you can then incorporate events into the game.

There are certain criteria for a bluebook scene that have to be met before you can use this method. Obviously, a bluebook has to be a no-challenge event; if things come to blows, it's time to move things off of the paper on onto their feet, with you present in the flesh. Generally, a bluebook is useful for filling in the quiet times between games. It's far more useful to describe coffee between friends than a showdown between enemies. If there's ever a doubt as to whether a set of roleplayers can build a bluebook together effectively, get things back onto their feet and supervise things in person.

E-mail is a fantastic way of building a good bluebook with your players. Ideas can flow back and forth very quickly. A scene can take shape practically in real time if you let it. However, it's better to resist this temptation and put detail into your blue book techniques whenever possible. Bear in mind that you're using a bluebook because your players wanted to take the time to do a scene right. Just because you can compose something in a matter of moments doesn't mean that you should. While it's very useful for you as a Storyteller to monitor the crafting of a bluebook as it happens, you'll want to remind the players that it's the final draft that matters most, not the e-mails that fly in between players as they go.

How you use a finished bluebook is up to you. Often, players create bluebook scenes simply to fulfill the personal needs of their characters. In a case like this, you may need to do nothing more than moderate the scene to make sure that nothing happens that might disrupt the game as a whole. Hold on to that finished work, however. Generally, players will give you a lot of information on how their characters think through bluebooks scenes such as this. That information can only benefit you later in the chronicle.

A bluebook scene will generally require almost no moderation on your part. There's no reason for you to step in when a scene changes direction; if the players find themselves leaving the coffee house to go hunting in a back alley, let them. A bluebook is as much for the players' benefit as yours; as long as none of their actions harm the chronicle, you might as well let them roam as freely as possible.

Most importantly, bear in mind that **Mind's Eye Theatre** is a game that's meant to be played on its feet. Bluebooks in particular, and e-mail in general, can take up a lot of the slack in between game sessions. But they're no substitute



for interacting with another player in the flesh and on the scene. As soon as is convenient, encourage your players to break away from the bluebooks and into real time again. While a bluebook can be a solid tool for creating a character, it is a tool, and not an end in and of itself.

In the end, there are many more techniques than this available to you. People have been telling stories for as long as they have been able to speak, and the styles they've used to do so are varied in the extreme. Any of those techniques can be applied to your chronicle, as long as you're willing to apply time and effort to the problem. The tools given here may help when trying something new; if they don't, feel free to make up your own. In the end, any new style of Storytelling is going to be daring and experimental. If that worries you, than don't risk it. If it excites you, try it and see what happens. In the end, that process of discovery may prove as exciting as the game itself.

HISTORICAL SETTINGS

So you want to run a new chronicle, but the idea of dragging out the same old sort of setting (Yourcity, USA, current year) makes you gag. Sounds like it's time to go traveling. Vampires have been stalking the shadows since Biblical times and have always been active in human history. What better way to explore history than through the eyes of the Kindred?

BUNNING WITH HISTORY

Historical chronicles have particular needs that are often vastly different from modern chronicles. They require attention to detail, intensive research and considerations of what you want to accomplish with your chronicle.

Historical chronicles can easily fall down when slapdash research catches up with you. If you're going to run a chronicle set in Victorian England, then you'd best know something about Victorian England. What's given here should help you choose what time period you'd like to play with and some ideas for Kindred involvement, but to make the setting come more fully alive, you'll need more background. Historical resources can be found in a number of easily digestible formats, from movies to documentaries to references for writers (found in the reference section of the bookstore) or even other games (such as *Call of Cthulhu*). Don't focus on solely on an endless series of political events — look at what literature was being read, what was causing scandal, what unexplainable events were stirring up people, what exciting new inventions were improving life. No matter how small a Kindred's world, things like the banning of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or the invention of the cotton gin can create ripples that eventually run up against him.

It's been said the devil's in the details, and in a historical game, details can mean the difference between an adequate chronicle and something spectacular. Anything from the hat a character wears to how she addresses someone can help it come to life. Details are also frequently what can trip you, especially if you have a history buff whose pet project just happens to be the era your chronicle is set in. If you can work with the player to share



his vast store of knowledge, you may find yourself with a fine Assistant Storyteller who can catch those little details you missed the first time around (how to address a duke, how many calling cards to leave) and infuse the game with a sense of the times. If your history buff proves to be more of a nut and nitpick, you can always point out that it's the World of Darkness and your chronicle, and this is the setting you're working with.

While we've given you a lot of broad swathes in mortal and Cainite history to work with, this is by no means all that is going on. A single book could be written on running a chronicle in Victorian England or Renaissance Italy alone. Don't get bogged down by *everything* that's happening in a single time period — chances are, you don't need to be; you only need to know how the era's events will affect your own chronicle's setting. In some periods (especially the pre-industrial world), a vampire's world is likely to be the city he lives in or around, and maybe the city he fled from, which makes your setting conveniently smaller. How easily a vampire can communicate with a neighboring city or even another country is up to you — there's a great deal of difference between trying to send a messenger through the Lupine-haunted Schwarzwald and sending a telegram. As communication becomes easier and the news becomes more accessible (through the telegraph, telephone, radio, television), the world grows correspondingly, at which time you'll need to decide how much of that great big world to include. Travel does not become feasibly safe for many Cainites until the advent of the steam train, which means most folks will stick close to their home cities. The wild places in between mean Lupines and other terrors, another good reason to stay home. Close to home does not always mean safer, though: Which is worse, a city that hosts a center of the Inquisition, or a city where a vampire story has swept up dozens of excited youth (both living and dead)?

Lastly, what do you want to accomplish with your chronicle? Foremost, of course, is telling a good story and having fun at it, but sometimes a different setting can bring out aspects of the story in new ways. For example, you decide you'd like one of the major themes to be paranoia — who can be trusted, who is an enemy, who has fallen? While a contemporary chronicle can certainly fill the bill, consider times when paranoia was even more poisonous — the Anarch Revolt, the Reformation, the McCarthy hearings. What do you see now? What about a chronicle that emphasizes humanity? The era of Carthage and the formation of the Camarilla both find vampires with great Humanitas either struggling to maintain what they have or using it as a means of survival. In other time periods, rehashed themes can take on new meaning, and have far more serious consequences to really shake up players.

THE SECOND CITY

The Second City arises after the Great Flood recedes. The Flood has wiped out Enoch, destroyed most of humanity and left only some of the Third Generation to start again after the world's near-destruction. No Cainites weaker than the Third Generation survive the Deluge, and they seek to rebuild what was lost. The mortals build another city on or near the



WHEN NOT IN ROME...

Western history is not the only place to set a chronicle. Intrepid explorers have crossed desert wastes and ventured into foreign lands to seek out new opportunities for diplomacy, trade or other, less pleasant matters. Where new doors were opened, the Camarilla was there to seek the opportunities that came with them. If you're feeling really adventuresome, a chronicle set in the Middle East, Africa or Asia can be very exciting. The players might be native vampires trying to deal with the foreign devils who invaded their lands, trying to drive out the white missionaries before they turn the people against the old ways, or they may have a wayward youth who fell into the clutches of the foreigners. Perhaps they're an enclave of Camarilla vampires trying to stick together for survival in the midst of the strange new world, one that is alien to both their normal means of dealing with mortals, their Masquerade and their Kindred senses, particularly when they encounter native-born vampires who are nothing like the legends they know.

site of Enoch, and the Antediluvians (those Cainites who survived the Flood) claim the rulership of it. They have, however, not learned the lessons of Enoch prior to its loss.

The Third Generation sires many childer, seeking servants and pawns, against the dictates of Caine. The vampire population rises to such a pitch that the mortals can barely support it, and bloody feuds rack the streets as coteries compete for dwindling resources. This is the era that sees the beginnings of the different clans and the end of bloodlines so rare that they do not survive the end of the Second City.

Finally, Caine becomes so enraged at the hubris of the Antediluvians, for their rebellion against their sires, for their wasteful fighting, for the destruction of the Second Generation, that he curses each one in turn according to his or her crimes. It is believed that from these curses spring what will become the weaknesses of the new clans. Here will come Nosferatu's hideous appearance, Brujah's uncontrollable rage and Gangrel's bestial nature, among others. Having cursed his grandchilder for their ways, Caine vanishes soon after. None know where he has departed to, why he has gone or when (if ever) he will return. Confusion reigns: Some celebrate their overbearing grandsire's departure while others believe themselves lost. In the confusion, fighting again breaks out as the new clans scramble for his chair.

Soon, the Third Generation realizes that their childer may well prove as great a danger to them as they were to the Second Generation. This realization drives them into the shadows where they continue their fighting, now called the Jihad. The move changes the nature of the war as well — Jihad is now conducted in secret, using more visible creatures as pawns to protect themselves from discovery.

A chronicle of the Second City has remarkable story potential. The vampires do not observe the Masquerade — indeed, they are often worshipped and revered as gods or divine servants of such. The clans are altered considerably — the Tremere have not yet appeared, the



Cappadocians have never heard of the Giovanni, and the Salubri flourish as healers and teachers. There is no thought of sects, only alliances between coteries and broods, making for strange bedfellows indeed. It is during this time that the infernalist Baali arise in the East and war with the Second City, destroying many on both sides. There is no agreement on what brought the Third Generation to their gestalt about their childer and grandchilder — could it have been a coterie attacking an Antediluvian, or the growing rumbles of rebellion across the Fourth Generation? Did the mortals lose patience with their endlessly warring “gods” and aid the Fourth Generation in rebellion? And what of the Canaille in this time? How did they live and work in the shadow of seemingly immortal blood-drinkers who could kill them with but a thought? What happened when one of their own was Embraced? So much history is shrouded in myth or lost to modern eyes that your chronicle could go in many directions. It can be immensely entertaining to create history (or myth, in this case).

Chronicles that involve such aged characters like Methuselahs can be a temptation to abuse character power. Even in this age, when the Masquerade is observed more in the breach than the practice, Cainites wage their wars against each other in stealth (with the exception of the brutal Baali war). Antediluvians and Methuselahs don’t stalk each other in the streets or have showdowns at midnight. Whether it is to keep the mortals from rising in rebellion against their not-so-immortal gods (for if a god dies, surely the rest must be equally breakable), or to make their moves less obvious to their foes, the Cainites practice the early beginnings of what will become the shadow war of the modern nights.

THE CLASSICAL WORLD

With the fall of the Second City, the Cainites scatter across the known world (and perhaps a few into the unknown). The Fourth Generation sires the Fifth Generation to serve them — creating the makings of yet another revolt. Gatherings are often difficult due to travel, but when they do occur, they can create true marvels, like Carthage.

The Classical World includes the eras of Babylon, Phoenicia, the Egyptian dynasties, Hellenic Greece, the Roman Republic and Empire, the kingdom of Israel, Carthage and many other cultures and cities. Many Cainites use the time to set themselves up as priests to benefit from sacrifice (for several gods did demand blood sacrifice), and some go farther, setting themselves up as dark gods who lead from the shadows. Many tales tell of the ancient gods having human-seeming flaws and making titanic struggle over petty matters — could it be that the Cainite Jihad made its way into mortal tales? The Masquerade exists as a Tradition, but it is honored in passing (more often in the breach than the observance) and in many places (especially where Cainites wish to flaunt supposed divinity) ignored altogether.

While mystery cults are found in nearly every time, they have their true start in the Classical World. These are where citizens come to worship



older gods supplanted by the new pantheons, the forbidden gods whose worship is banned by the government or even some deities created by "priests" hungry for offerings of any kind. Some worshippers are wealthy citizens bored with earthly pleasures and seeking decadence (which many cults offer in abundance). Others are poor, believing that these cults can offer them something that the "accepted" gods and priests do not. As the cults and their practices are often banned by the local governments as destructive (with excellent reason — tales of sexual orgies, blood-drinking and human sacrifice abound), their activities take place in secret, under cover of darkness and the protection afforded by the social standing of the wealthy. In all, the cults prove a windfall for Cainites to feed and build contacts. Perhaps a Cainite even finds such a cult for himself as a place to feed, or to relive older days of glory in Enoch.

GREECE

Greece is considered the cradle of much of Western civilization's ideals, from poetry and drama to statecraft and philosophy. Numerous luminaries, such as Plato, Aeschylus, Sappho and Draco, may have Cainite followers or companions. Nights mean debating in the philosophers' schools, listening to the sublime poetry of Homer or training with the Spartans in the arts of war. The historic rivalry between Athens and Sparta may well have roots in a Cainite quarrel or another move in the Jyhad. Many Brujah trace their lineages to this golden age, when they were debating philosophy or training warriors.

This time gives rise to the idea of Elysium, a safe place where Cainites might meet and interact without fearing attack from each other. Those who violate the sanctity of Elysium are destroyed, establishing precedent for millenia to come. There is little describing those first tense nights when Cainites entered Elysia and wondered who they could trust — an invitation to the first Elysium might make a fine start to a Classical chronicle.

PAX ROMANA

The rise of the Eternal City sees Cainites in its midst. At its height, the Roman Empire's borders span from Great Britain to the Middle East, from Germany to northern Africa. The Romans borrow much from their neighbors and subjects — language, religion, customs, adornment — and are great patrons of their own enterprises. Cosmopolitan, wealthy, mighty, respected, Rome is both prize and opportunity for Cainites. Many cluster in Rome, warring with each other and their mortal neighbors for the prizes to be won in struggles both open and secret. Rome is the pride of the Ventre, and the clan maintains a great presence here. Nosferatu find the phrase "All roads lead to Rome" to be an apt one, and many settle in to reap the information that flows through the city on its way to other destinations. As a center of religion (of many religions), Rome is also a city of Faith. True Faith is not found merely with Christianity but with any religion, and in an era when gods sit in household shrines and the sacred sits publicly beside the secular, Cainites tread carefully among the temples.



Across the Mediterranean in Phoenicia, Carthage is the Brujah's attempt to re-create the glories of Enoch. For over a thousand years, the Brujah and other Cainite inhabitants of the city explore new depths of the Blood in Disciplines, magic or the power of the Beast. Carthage, however, is nothing like the dream that will be spoken of in later centuries — Cainites openly rule the mortal population and demand blood sacrifice from the people while darker rumors of infernal ties divide the city's inhabitants. Some Cainites are appalled by what their self-styled "divine" brethren have done, and attempt to turn the city to a more Utopian ideal, a place where mortals and Cainites live openly and harmoniously together. Others drive it even further into iniquity. Cainites outside Carthage often see the city for what it truly is — a nightmare waiting to breed further nightmares. Such conditions make the place ripe for a revolt by the mortals against the vampires, and possibly open the door to similar revolts everywhere else. Several vampires work against Carthage, starting rumors, infiltrating the city and even undermining it from the inside. Roman vampires aid this by encouraging the Punic Wars. When Carthage finally falls, gnawed from the inside by Cainite infiltrators and crushed from the outside by Scipio, it is no wonder that no stone is left standing and the earth is salted. Over the years, Carthage fuels many speculations, sends out Cainite recruiters and hosts vampires of nearly every clan. Who would listen to such tales? Would characters enjoy the depravity of Carthage, seek its profit or work against it?

Not everyone is so pleased with the "Eternal City" or her grasp. The Fertile Crescent is a scene of uneasy peace or violent bloodshed as Jews struggle against the Roman occupation of their homeland. Rome appoints native govenors in an attempt to quell some of the demands, then removes those govenors when the expected tax revenues don't flow, or an Emperor perceives some action as being suggestive of weakness. It is entirely possible that Cainites could be on either side of the conflict — those who maintain lands where Enoch once stood (or so they believe), and those who serve the Roman eagle (and Ventrué overlords). The Holy Lands are also considered the historical lairs of the Baali. Most Cainites believe them destroyed with the great wars, but Salubri warriors and other demon-hunters still find evidence of their tracks. Across the continent in what will become Germany, Cainites entering with Roman forces may likely tangle with angry Lupines, who rage against Man's grasping ways. In Albion, Cainites are likely to find even more surprising challenges — native vampires like the Lhiannan bloodline or even the Fair Folk, the Wild Ones that Caine warned his children about, maintain England's green hills as their own, and they are unlikely to welcome Roman Cainites with open arms.

The era of the emperors sends the glory of Rome crashing into decadence and decay. The succeeding horrors of Tiberius, Caligula and Nero steadily whittle away the Roman Empire into nothingness. Those outside the palaces see how their-once proud world is collapsing into bread and circuses (but may not care) while those within struggle to maneuver the mazes of intrigue and avoid fatal notice. Even Cainites may



be hard-pressed to keep up with the intrigue and might well wonder who is manipulating whom. It is during this time in the Holy Land that Jesus teaches and is crucified. Many converts to Christianity are martyred for their faith by the Roman Empire while others huddle in catacombs, unwilling to risk their lives or give up their faith. While perhaps there is no blood sacrifice or infernal ties (to most Cainites' knowledge, at any rate), those who despised Carthage's depravity surely swallow hard at the sight of Caligula's madness or Nero's circuses.

THE DARK AGES

The Roman Empire collapses under its own weight, inept leaders and wave upon wave of barbarian invasions. Many Gangrel claim to have ridden with the hordes that sacked Roman outposts and the Eternal City itself. Here follows an era commonly called the Dark Ages, so called because it was believed that Europe stagnated in a period completely lacking in art, culture or philosophy. In fact, the perceived lack is false — the Catholic Church sets down its roots, patronizing arts that benefit its young power, and legendries such as King Arthur spring out of this era.

Cainite sects begin to emerge during this confused time. A number of Roman Cainites, tired of the nightly games and ceaseless Jyhad, seek to remove themselves entirely from their brethren's blighted sport; they become known as the Inconnu. The *Manus Nigrum* begins its secret crusade to pave the way for the return of the Antediluvians (although its roots are in fact much older). Most vampires during this time are more centered on those around them rather than far-flung groups; after all, the Blood is more important than some half-formed ideal. This era also sees the institution of a Cainite idea called the Law of 1001 Nights (one vampire per 1001 mortals) in an effort to check overpopulation, which often leads to bloody clashes. In many places, Cainites follow the example of mortals in establishing minor fiefs for themselves, barely bothering to conceal their supernatural natures (especially where paganism still reigns). It is a choice they will come to regret in later centuries.

The Catholic Church's continuing rise of power results in a change to Rome's atmosphere. Some Cainites in the Holy City experience strange visions and dreams, others suffer discomfort from the new aura of Faith, and a few even meet with mysterious destruction. Not all suffer in the same way — not a few vampires choose to convert to Christianity and others see the nascent Church as a new resource of power. Christianity introduces new concepts to Cainite thinking, such as their place under the hierarchy of God and the notion of damnation. Perhaps sires and childer clash over conversion, or new converts must struggle with questions of doctrine versus their own existence.

Early in 1000 and continuing through the Middle Ages, the Church seeks to reclaim holy sites in the Middle East from the "heathen" Muslims. It sponsors Crusades, great battles against the Muslim forces led by secular kings and calling up armies from across Europe. Christian Cainites may take up the banner of Holy Mother Church and venture into the Holy



Lands, only to encounter Assamites and Setites, who are not interested in entertaining Canaille claims to their lands or the Cainites who back them. Some knights may ride out on Crusade and return as Cainites after being Embraced in the ranks. A Crusades chronicle can be very exciting as Christian vampires encounter brethren inclined to Muslim or Jewish faiths in the Middle East — which battle is more important: Cainite versus Cainite, or faith versus faith? What happens when a promising mortal receives a battlefield Embrace?

The recent surge of “millennium fever” that heralded the year 2000 is not as new a phenomenon as the pundits would make it to be. In fact, the first round of millennial fervor struck as 1000 CE approached. Some feared that this was the year that the Biblical Apocalypse would strike, and clergy took the opportunity to impress on the pagan populations that disaster was imminent. In many places there were mass conversions to Christianity (perhaps from those thinking to stave off whatever punishment was muttered by the priests), followed with millennium cults and mass suicides. Accounts of the times speak of prophecies and omens. In the midst of all this, it’s doubtful that the Cainites were able to completely ignore the mortal panic. Indeed, some were likely swept up by the fear and fever, perhaps believing that the Biblical Apocalypse would also herald Gehenna. An interesting short-term chronicle might deal with how the Cainites faced the coming millennium and the resulting mortal terror — did they accept a conversion to Christianity (the pain of Faith be damned), did they support cults that promised protection from the coming storm or that vowed to celebrate unto destruction, or did they simply hide and hope that there would be a world to return to?

THE MIDDLE AGES

From the Dark Ages rises the medieval period, a complex time of openly ruling Cainite lords, neonates chafing under the iron rule of their elders, mortal faith and fears, and strange things to be found in the untamed woods between cities. This is a time best described in *Vampire: The Dark Ages* and its MET companion *The Long Night*.

In 1022, a cabal of Hermetic wizards steals the secret of vampirism in their search for immortality. They pay a heavy price for their knowledge: Their magical powers vanish, and their presence in Cainite society is very much unwelcome. Seeking to legitimize his line, their leader hunts down and diablerizes the Antediluvian of the Salubri clan. Fortified on stolen vitae, the new clan begins a systematic purge of the Salubri, to the revilement of many Cainites. Clan Tremere’s temerity in seizing vampiric power upsets vampiric society, and many vampires do not know what to do with these “Usurpers.” Clans Nosferatu, Gangrel and Tzimisce, alongside several Hermetic cabals, wage shadow wars with the blood magicians in retribution for clanmates used in Tremere experiments. A chronicle of bloody nights in Eastern Europe as the young Tremere clan struggles against their many enemies can be laden with conflict, but not always — the Tremere utilize powers never seen before among vampires, the Tzimisce call upon their own blood magic steeped in the crags of the Carpathians,



and the Nosferatu put their spying powers to the test to gather information on their enemies.

Within the Church arises a new faction, one dedicated to the eradication of heretics, witches and monsters. While elements inside and outside the Church often use it as a tool to seize money or land, or for one enemy to denounce another, too often the Inquisition serves its purpose admirably. For many elders, the Inquisition is a wake-up call that their openly supernatural ways point the Inquisitors to their doors. To buy time for themselves, the elders hurl their children at the flames; scores of vampires of all generations and ages fall in the fires. The Cainite population is left a shadow of its former numbers, but deeper wounds are dealt. The betrayal of the elders enrages many neonates and sows the seeds for greater rage to come.

In the mid-14th century, flea-ridden rats arrive in Italy, riding in bales of silk from Asia Minor. The fleas bear the bubonic plague, which sweeps across Europe in two years. The resultant pandemic kills over one-quarter of Europe's population, wiping whole villages from the face of the world. Uncommon numbers of the clergy die as they care for the sick or administer last rites to the dying. The fear of this time is unparalleled — who will sicken next? where is God during this time? is the world ending? Feeding becomes difficult for many Cainites, and questions over the Cainites' role in the Black Death go unanswered. While it's well-known that vampires can carry disease from those they feed on, did the Cainites carry the Black Death as much as the rats? How would a blood-borne disease react to Cainite blood? How will Cainites feed as their neighbors around them drop from the plague? Could a Cainite be insane enough to carry and spread the disease deliberately?

The Black Death has far-reaching consequences. The population loss results in labor shortages, which leads in turn to traditional feudal relationships crashing from lack of support. This leads feudal lords to crack down on peasant wages and mobility in an effort to stabilize matters, making them worse. The peasants respond with some of the largest revolts ever seen in medieval Europe. The violence stirs many neonates into open warfare against their murderous sires in what will be known as the Anarch Revolt.

THE RENAISSANCE

The dark, cold times cannot last forever. Slowly, Europe begins to thaw itself out, both physically and spiritually. However, the emerging warmth of rebirth becomes the heat of passion and where new ideas clash with an old order reluctant, fires often result.

In the warm hills and cities of Italy, this "renaissance," or rebirth, first takes hold. Ancient Greek and Roman texts (some no doubt sheltered in vampire libraries for centuries), with their ideas of a world that is based on humanity's worth, provide much of the impetus for the changes in thought that subsequently lead to changes in culture and society. The world is no longer centered solely on the attainment of Heaven — this is a world of humans, where things should be created for the benefit of humanity. The wellspring of changes and new ideals are almost impossible to catalogue as



every aspect of life is touched by this new notion of human worth. Impressive strides are made in art, literature and the sciences — from da Vinci to Michelangelo, from Dante to Shakespeare, from Gutenberg's press to Galileo's astronomy.

All is not necessarily well, however. The Renaissance also sees a rise in absolutism, the divine right of kings and totalitarianism. The Church has lost some of the power it wielded over secular life, but that increases its grip more strenuously over the sacred. Where the Church and state meet, their hands clamp with deadly force. After many prosperous years in Spain, Moors and Jews are thrown out during the Reconquista, a joint venture by King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile. Even as Isabella is bankrolling Christopher Columbus' voyage to seek new routes to India, she is enthusiastically leading the Spanish Inquisition to seek out not only potential heretics but also those Jews and Muslims who converted to Catholicism to avoid persecution and who practice their religions in private. Some escape early on; others are not so fortunate. Across Europe, Muslims, Jews and pagans become scapegoats for Holy Mother Church, and publicly professing one's faith can be tantamount to a death sentence in some places. Obviously, few Kindred with the right inclination will waste the opportunity to put enemies squarely in the sights of Torquemada and his crew. Who will profit when an enemy burns in the public square? The Lasombra who support Isabella are likely to put Brujah, Assamites and other "undesirables" to the torch with enthusiasm.

The Anarch Revolt continues to rage in the shadows, and the pursuit of the mortal Inquisition doesn't help matters. Two Antediluvians fall against the onslaught. The first is Tzimisce himself, when anarchs and clanmate Lugoj successfully attack and supposedly diablerize him, which follows close on the heels of Assamites and anarchs claiming to have destroyed Lasombra. Neither Antediluvian seems to be around to deny the charges. Suddenly, the Anarch Revolt is being taken very, very seriously by the elders — after all, if the Antediluvians (who are nigh unto gods) fall before these mongrels, what hope can there be? Rumors that a group of Tzimisce youth have discovered a way to break the shackles of the blood bond only fuels the terror. Assamites follow the anarchs across Europe, supping on the blood of fallen elders.

The scions of a merchant family in Venice become bored with the earthly privileges that wealth and power can bring and start casting about for more unearthly delights. Incest and other perversities bring some diversion, but then some of the family discovers *nigrimancy*. The family finds it has a talent for this type of magic, particularly when it allows them to indulge their dark tastes. Such talent does not go unnoticed, and when Cappadocian clan comes to offer patronage, *la famiglia* Giovanni does not squander the opportunity. Greed, however, is strong, and in 1444, the family head, Augustus Giovanni, seeks ultimate power by diablerizing the clan's founder, Cappadocius. In a grim replay of the hunt against the Salubri, the Cappodocians are put to the sword by the new clan and believed hunted to extinction.



In October 1493, the Camarilla is officially founded at the Convention of Thorns to put an end to the hostilities of the Anarch Revolt. A heavy curse is levied to punish the Assamites for their involvement, making them unable to commit diablerie. Those anarchs who wish to return to the fold may do so, but many refuse the offer of their treacherous elders, turning their backs on the Camarilla; these die-hard rebels will form the core of the early Sabbat. The convention also sees a new, stringent policy of the Masquerade come into effect: It is not enough to hide from humanity; the vampires (or "Kindred") must make humanity forget they ever existed. For some that means avoiding older ways and practices, including the old *Viae* (medieval precursors to Paths of Enlightenment). Those who cannot or will not change are often stamped out as threats by the newly created archons and justicars.

REFORMATION AND RESTORATION

The Reformation is a dangerous time, whether one is dead or alive: One can easily be killed on a spurious accusation of witchcraft or heresy. The *Malleus Maleficarum* (or, The Hammer of Witches), authored by two fanatical clergymen, adds fuel to the hunts by making a case against witches and women. The witch-hunts last from the early 1500s until the early 1700s, and while the fires burn the fiercest in the German states, the rest of Europe is not unfamiliar with the grip of the witch-craze. In some towns, the hysteria reaches such a pitch that their populations are devastated. Torture is considered perfectly appropriate to elicit confessions from those who are reluctant to confess or who recant on the stand. Documents of the time reveal that not a few "witches" or "heretics" were also wealthy or prominent citizens or that interrogators would force confessions regarding particular names. Were the witch-hunters making examples of their high-born prisoners, or was someone cashing in on the wealth that often reverted to town treasuries? Only the wiliest of vampires could remain unscathed in this time, perhaps guiding the hunters to the doorstep of his rivals and enemies, but there is always the chance that the hunters may suddenly question how their source knows so much.

Martin Luther's Reformation brings many changes for German Christians: In their split with the Catholic Church, they were no longer subject to its laws. Many read the Bible for the first time after it is published in German. The split does not bode well for everyone, though; many Protestants are as intolerant or more so than the Catholics. Luther supports pogroms against the Jews while Calvinist tolerance is equally lacking. Those Kindred living in Calvinist communities find they must be extremely careful as their neighbors are ever watchful for "sinful" activity, which is quite broadly defined. Worse, many Calvinists are witch-hunters even more fanatical than the Romans.

The Restoration of the English monarchy marks the time of the cavaliers as the English king Charles II restores English society to a more relaxed state after Oliver Cromwell's bloody reign. Across the channel, the French king's private bodyguard, the Musketeers, fuel stories for years. In response to years of tight restrictions, closed theatres, guarded words and fiery deaths, Europe in many places enjoys many newly loosened strictures, from the arts to bodices



to expectations, although the Inquisition continues to remain a shadow in many Catholic countries. The Camarilla's continued efforts to enforce the Masquerade begin to pay off at last: The vampire-hunters, finding few monsters to slay, turn their attention to more human causes. As part of the Masquerade, Kindred encourage mortal sciences and explorations grounded firmly in "reality," encouraging worldviews that do not allow for such superstitions as vampires.

The exploration and colonization of the New World sends both Sabbat and Camarilla across the sea, seeking new opportunities. The Sabbat seeks a world where they can gain a foothold against the Camarilla while Camarilla neonates and ancillae hope to expand beyond the smothering grasp of the European elders. Both sects find what they hoped for, and neither is willing to share with the other.

ENLIGHTENMENT AND REVOLUTION

The 18th century is marked by a time called the Enlightenment, so called because it introduced many new ways of thinking: Advances in the sciences as well as new philosophies and thoughts on religion and spirituality. Religion is no longer considered a source of explanations, but science hasn't taken its place yet. Philosophy describes the world in terms of reason, not faith and superstition (hallmarks of ignorance). Individual thought and identity gain ground while monarchies and divine right slip further from power, but not everywhere. Indeed, neonates who enter into Kindred society with such views may be quickly disavowed of them after seeing princes at work.

Revolution rocks both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1700s as the French and American populaces revolt against their monarchies and form new governments. For Kindred, revolution means violence, an overthrowing of all things old and a risk of the Final Death (all of which elders are notoriously intolerant of), but it also means opportunities for those who avoid the swing of the axe. Quite often, conflict means new blood (both of Embraces and in positions of power).

The American Revolution sees the Colonies refuse to bow to an increasingly overbearing English monarchy and turn against England to win their freedom. American Kindred (ancillae who came with the original colonists, neonates born in the Colonies or Sabbat riding the violence) occasionally lend aid, seeing this as their chance to separate their fates from the European elders.

The French Revolution is far more bloodthirsty than the American. During the Reign of Terror, mob rule takes over, and the monarchy and its supports die in wholesale slaughter. Not a few Kindred (who may well be responsible for the misery that incites the mobs) die at their hands — after all, Madame Guillotine never sleeps. Thousands die before the violence begins to gnaw on itself. Robespierre, architect of the Revolution, dies at the hands of a madness he helped to create. While mortals see the French Revolution as a great triumph of reason over superstition and privilege, the Kindred often find it a different story. Many Kindred flee France entirely or go into hiding to avoid the mobs. Anarchs and



Sabbat find the violence to be excellent cover for their own activities. Could neonates make a similar discovery when it comes to dealing with a hated sire?

THE ROMANTICS

This is considered an age of gentility and grace, or at least if one is living the country life. This is the era of Jane Austen and Emily Bronte, of the Romantics and the original Gothic period. This is also the beginning of the end of the pastoral life of much of the western world as industrialization begins.

The Romantic sensibility so prevalent in this time sees the new changes of industrialization and technology to be the road to disaster: Technology will separate man from nature, bringing prosperity to a few but overall misery for the greater population. The writings of this era (reflected in the work of Coleridge, Blake, Shelley and Burns, among others) speak of both the vanishing country world and the growing oppression that progress sows. For vampires, such changes are not unwelcome: The industrial revolution means many neonates and ancillae who invested in the new (which elders often avoid) profit from their risks.

Industrialism rapidly turns into a curse for the lower classes, worked as slave-labor in the factories. A select few profit while many suffer. The urbanization of the working class, often living in desperation, means new prey, minions and allies for Kindred. Some Kindred find it filthy living and hunting, while others who are city-born and bred (or who have moved there out of circumstances) grow influence and learn secrets that the "high-born" rarely encounter.

The French Empire (under Sicilian-born Napoleon Bonaparte) and the English Regency periods coincide during the early part of this era. This marks a period of great gentility and grace, the time of the country gentlemen with their estates, of "the season" in London, or holidays to "take the waters." The novels of Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell describe this time of manners and mores. Shortly after follows Gothic sensibility, described by the Bronte sisters and Anne Radcliffe — a time of gloomy days and dark nights, of crumbling castles and madwomen left in attics. Elysia of this time, therefore, have a much different timbre, one that elders and ancillae might enjoy, and the neonates find at once familiar and utterly confusing. How do the newly Embraced young women of the day understand how Cainite women seize power, hold office or otherwise act "unladylike?" What measures would a Cainite sire take to make his sheltered childe understand that Regency manners no longer apply?

THE CIVIL WAR

Palatial mansions and textile factories, slavery and suffrage: The United States during the antebellum era is a bundle of contradictions. In the South, it is the time of plantations, exquisite Southern gentility and the dark misery of slavery. In the North, it is a time of wild growth, from the factories to groups agitating for causes ranging from women's rights to the abolition of slavery.



Industrialism reaches the United States, but the country is sharply divided by economic and ideological differences.

The fight is one of the bitterest, often dividing families (and perhaps coteries or bloodlines) along ideological fronts, or between ancestral lands and modern circumstances. The physical cost is terrible: thousands dead, the South reduced to rubble, a country gnawing on itself. But America does survive in one piece. Sabbat see the time as a chance to attack elders esconced in their mansions while neonates in the North get in on the ground floor of industries that most elders have previously dismissed.

The antebellum period is considered by many vampires to be some of their palmiest days. Elders find it reminiscent of the glories of older times when they had legions of servants to administer their lands and wait upon their command. Not a few Kindred of the modern nights can trace their histories back to a pedigreed birth and pampered upbringing as the offspring of wealthy plantations owners, or perhaps even owners in their own right. Some vampires use their plantations as feeding grounds, although at their own peri: Such abuse can result in slave uprisings, or a cunning wise-woman turning the tables on her family's oppressor. Not a few Kindred borne of the conflict (whether it was the War Against Northern Aggression, the War Between the States or some other title) still have strained relations with brethren who were on the opposite side, even in the modern nights.

THE VICTORIAN ERA

This era finds England at her summit, as a cultural and political capital, and as an imperial nation. By the end of the 19th century, London is the political and economic capital of the world. Her holdings spread from Australia, India, China, Canada and nearly every corner of the globe, giving rise to the phrase "The sun never sets on the British Empire." Of course, where the mortals go, the Kindred often follow, attempting to expand their own holdings and the Camarilla's (usually in that order). But where the mortals might plow through the natives with the Bible, the railway and the gun, Kindred often encountered supernatural creatures the likes of which they had never seen. Many of the first encounters with the Cathayan vampires are reported during this time. Not every Kindred departing Europe was heading for the Dark Continent or the mysterious East for reasons of power, though—after all, few elders are likely to pursue troublesome neonates or ancillae into such dangerous places, which often means coteries involved in quarrels may choose to flee together to avoid powerful enemies.

While it is hardly a time of kings and courts of two centuries past, there is certainly a "proper" way to do things, from dressing to manners to conducting business, and from this propriety arises the notorious prudishness and strictures that mark the time period. In Kindred society, which has such ideals already inculcated, courts and Elysiums practically calcify under the press of custom and manners. In some cases, neonates might find it comforting to discover that things are not so different after death while others nearly go mad to find themselves reduced to lower straits upon their Embraces.



Among the most shocking developments to the Kindred world is the appearance of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, along with stories like "Carmilla" and Polidori's "The Vampyre." The sudden pictures of vampires moving through modern society as predators stirs up panic as the Camarilla hunts for the Kindred responsible for the breach of the Masquerade. Is it truly the Masquerade faltering, or perhaps a brilliant attempt to further display vampires as fancies and fictions rather than true predators? Even the Sabbat are in awe of this monumental risk to vampiric existence. Whatever it truly is, vampire fiction becomes something of a novelty in the Elysiums and spawns dozens of mortal fans enticed by the barely concealed sexual metaphors and elegant predation.

America during this era busily plows through one turbulent time after another — the westward expansion, the Civil War, the Age of Innocence — but always with an eye on Europe's fashion and culture. The new millionaires head for Europe to purchase whatever trappings their wealth can bring them, from mansions to furnishings to pedigrees. Young American women of the "right" standing become some of the most expensive bartered brides of the century as the tottering European nobility infuses its stock with American blood and money, perhaps literally in some cases. This time can make for an intriguing chronicle of American-born neonates being Embraced by European ancillae — and the resulting culture clash.

THE GREAT WAR

The invention of the automobile brings about a new mobility, and Kindred find the idea of picking up and moving a little less traumatic than before. Women agitate for the right to vote on both sides of the ocean — the movement is hardly a new one, but it gains strength during this era, finally culminating in America with the passage of the 19th Amendment. Strangely, for Kindred, this is not necessarily anything new — not a few of the most adept princes or archons are women.

Prior to and after the Great War, empires around Europe totter and crumble. In some places, the monarchy simply and quietly fades from view. The most violent of these quakes occurs in Russia, as the Bolsheviks force Czar Nicholas II to abdicate. The subsequent execution of the Romanov royal family not only frightens many European monarchs (most of whom were related to the Romanovs), but also shocks many Kindred elders, who recall the horrors of the Anarch Revolt. The complacency they have slid into over the past centuries regarding the "proper way" to do things is rudely shattered, and marks the beginning of the modern era for them. The ensuing years see elders keeping an exceptionally close eye on their childer.

Nineteen-year-old Gavrillo Princip assassinates Archduke Ferdinand and his wife the Duchess Sophie, and the simmering tensions in Europe erupt into full-scale conflict. For the first time, the world is engaged in war on a global scale. In the past, wars had been between leaders or principalities, but now entire countries under a single dictum engage each other. Worse yet is the apparent abandonment of "civilized" forms of war: Poison gas, machine guns, primitive tanks and other weapons allow soldiers to cut broad swaths across their enemies, horrifying politicians and civilians



alike. When the war is finally ended, 64 nations band together to sign the Kellogg-Briand Pact, an attempt to make war illegal. Meanwhile, at Versailles, several European nations and the United States put together a treaty to officially end the Great War; among its statements is a "war-guilt clause," forcing Germany to accept responsibility for the destruction that has just been wrought. It is an act that many will regret, for in that are sown the seeds of worse to come.

The full horror of the conflict catches some Kindred by surprise. Those unprepared are swept away by anarchs and Sabbat seeking to capitalize on the chaos or by misguided mortals. In Russia, the Soviet Revolution rips up Kindred society as Brujah attempt to ride the coattails of the people's revolution against the Ventre. Some conspiracy theorists among Kindred point to the fact that Gavrillo Princip was part of a group called the Black Hand (another name for the Sabbat), and speak of the war being started by the Sabbat to cover for other violence.

THE ROARING '20S AND GREAT DEPRESSION

The 1920s roar for a reason — for many, it means celebrating war's end and new prosperity. This time is popping with all manner of exciting developments — from radio to post-Soviet revolution to the flappers and rumrunners. The last of Victorian strictures collapse by the wayside, reduced to ridiculousness or left outdated by the past decades' changes. While American Kindred enjoy new prosperity, the European Kindred often struggle to rebuild their resources from the tatters left after the Great War. Not a few are reduced to nothing when the dust settles.

In 1919, the United States outlaws alcohol, a culmination of years of temperance protests to the evils of drink. Instead of preventing alcohol consumption, Prohibition only encourages people to find ways around it. Organized crime grows exponentially from early gangs of rumrunners. Some Kindred on the fringes take the advantage to enter into the business, become involved with the gangs or even use the speakeasies as feeding-grounds. Those with ties to the police may either aid and abet allies in the mob or use the police raids to move against competition. The growth of organized crime occasionally conflicts with vampiric power-bases, leading to shadowy wars against enemies that many mobsters can barely believe in. The cauldron of Chicago's organized criminals versus the Cainites versus Elliot Ness and his Untouchables might make for a chronicle of both tommy-guns and shadowy predation.

In Oct. 1929, the Stock Market crashes, ruining lives and fortunes across the US. Germany's economy has collapsed two years prior in response to the Great War. Several banks fail, trade drops and investments sink. The world is truly in the grip of misery. Many Kindred prefer not to speculate in risky ventures, but some seeking opportunity get a rude awakening. What happens when a Kindred loses everything or when his best mortal allies hurl themselves from the roofs after their fortunes collapse?

The new film industry spurs great interest among many young Toreador, while their elders decry it as "vulgar." With the arrival of the first films,



Kindred adventurous enough to enter a movie house see the sun rise and other daylight activities they can barely remember. It also has its risks, as Obfuscated vampires discover how their Discipline fails them under the camera. Radio also becomes a popular medium, especially for those wanting a crack at stardom without the risk of being seen by too many. No doubt a few Nosferatu find this an excellent way to exercise talents that the Toreador disdain. How many neonates skip Elysium or arrive late because they were listening to their favorite radio show (to the dismay of their elders, of course)? The arrival of the silent film "Nosferatu" with its mysterious leading man (a little-known actor by the name of Max Shreck) surely provokes panic for the Masquerade. Florence Stoker, widow of Bram Stoker, launches a successful suit against the filmmakers, and every print of the film is destroyed... or is it?

The relative silence of the Sabbat during this time ensures brisk activity among Camarilla Kindred, although the silence is not from lack of interest on the part of the Sabbat. The Sabbat is engaged in the second of its destructive civil wars, brought about by fighting over the opportunities of the Great War and the early Depression. The Code of Milan, created in 1933, finally puts an end to the fighting, at least for the moment. Like the mortals, they attempt to outlaw war between themselves. Like the mortals, they are unsuccessful.

WORLD WAR II

The seeds sown at the table in Versailles bear bitter fruit in Germany. Adolph Hitler rises to the Chancellorship, claiming that he will restore Germany's dignity and pride in itself. Even as he encourages pride in the Teutonic past, Hitler lays the blame for Germany's misery squarely at the feet of "undesirables," especially Jews. Little by little, Jewish freedom is whittled away. The beginning of open hostility arrives with Kristallnacht in November 1938.

Hitler enters Austria without incident in March of 1938, and Poland in September of 1939. France and England, fearing Hitler's ambition, declare war too late. For its defiance, Britain suffers through a campaign of nightly air attacks called the Blitzkrieg ("lightning war"). Many Britons spend their nights huddling in the subway tunnels below London or hiding in backyard bomb shelters. Some brave souls stand watch on the roofs of historical buildings like St. Paul's Cathedral, ready with buckets of water to douse any blaze and are often thanked generously (if covertly) by Kindred who would prefer not to see London in flames again (the Great Fire of 1666 was enough for them). Children are evacuated across the sea from besieged London (perhaps along with precious childder) until the u-boats target the vessels, then to the English countryside. Meanwhile, France endures Nazi occupation, and worse, the personal betrayal of the Vichy government as their own countrymen work with the invaders. Everywhere the Nazis go, the Jews are deported and put on trains of cattle cars, bound for the work camps or gas chambers.

America's situation on the homefront was one of readiness and sacrifice for the war effort. Women gave up their silk hose for parachutes and went to work in the factories, families grew victory gardens and lived



on rations of butter, sugar and meat. Having witnessed how the British were faring, their attitude was to be prepared for anything that came their way. It didn't help that America had two fronts to watch — those on the East Coast feared the Germans, but those on the West Coast feared the Japanese, especially after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Thinking to avert a potential crisis of Japanese spies in their midst, the government orders all Japanese-Americans into internment camps. Such a "solution" could surely bring out Cathayan vampires, enraged at the treatment of their relatives. It is also not unlikely that some unscrupulous Kindred haunt the barracks of Topaz and other camps for feeding grounds, or suddenly find certain contacts have been shipped off.

Rumors occasionally circulate regarding how the Tremere's Vienna stronghold survived the Anschloss when Hitler's army entered Austria, and none speak well of the Tremere. European Kindred either find new places to hide or flee the violence by sailing for America. Trans-Atlantic crossings grow increasingly dangerous as the war progresses, risking the various blockades and military vessels prowling the waters. Should Kindred survive the passage, there's not necessarily going to be room in the city when they arrive — many cities strain to the breaking point as balances of power teeter with the arrival of Old-World newcomers. The American Kindred are not always glad to see their European relatives (particularly when Old World demands for power and respect are made), and the risks to the Masquerade skyrocket when a dozen more mouths to feed show up. A "homefront" chronicle can be an excellent choice for those wishing to run a story during wartime with a large range of characters or without getting into theatres of war.

THE HOLOCAUST

While many Kindred brag about their body counts, or how one more massacre is hardly different from the rest, the Holocaust strikes a dissonant chord throughout the World of Darkness. The numbers stagger — countless "undesirables" from homosexuals to political dissidents to Jehovah's Witnesses, thousands of Rrom and six million Jews. Rarely has genocide been practiced on such a massive scale, with such methodical precision or with such complete cooperation.

For all their bragging about their close ties to the Rrom, neither the Gangrel nor the Ravnos do much to help their "favored" Herds' suffering. Dark rumors still circulate that unscrupulous Tremere and Tzimisce used camp victims as subjects for unsavory experiments, while opportunistic vampires of the Camarilla and Sabbat haunted the barracks as feeding grounds.

Several international organizations make it their business to track those Nazis who escaped justice following the war, and most keep detailed files of officers and camp officials, including photographs. A Kindred who appears no different from his 1939 photos is going to attract immediate attention from Nazi-hunters. Agencies like Mossad or Interpol often have international cooperation, and even the Inquisition is hard-pressed to keep up with these zealous hunters. Very few princes are likely to be pleased when a former war criminal Kindred brings such hunters to his door.



THE '50S

The years following the end of World War II and the atomic bomb on Hiroshima find Kindred young and old reconsidering the mortal world with frightened eyes. Humanity finally has the power to wipe the planet clean of all life for centuries with the atomic bomb. What would these people do if they encounter vampires in their midst? The Masquerade takes on paramount importance: Even the youngest neonates are impressed with the seriousness of the situation in a way that elders' droning tales of the Burning Times never reached them. Across Europe, the Iron Curtain drops across countries under the shadow of communism, along with a concomitant Shadow Curtain that traps many supernaturals behind barbed wire and stranger barriers.

The McCarthy hearings and the hunt for Communists spur many elders to dive for cover as they begin to emerge from the nights of WWII. As names are blacklisted, and people are called up to explain their "un-American" activities or hounded out of town for being too different, many elder Kindred are uncomfortably reminded of the witch-hunts of centuries previous. While elders might prefer to lay low and wait for more hospitable times, neonates and ancillae who can adapt to change (and stay out of McCarthy's searchlights) are likely to find this time ripe with potential. There is a great deal of rebuilding going on, and for some, this is an unparalleled opportunity to get in on the ground floor when someone abruptly disappears. Likewise, some Kindred lose valuable mortal allies when they are called before the Senate committees and lose the jobs that made them so valuable.

Clashes between counter-culture versus the mainstream start to erupt, and in some cases, it's hard to tell which side is which. Rock-n-roll, with its mongrel musical pedigree, starts out as rebellion, but the end of the decade sees Elvis, Buddy Holly, the Beatles and similar stars rocketing into the mainstream. Is television tripe, or a new medium? Surely there are neonates and ancillae finding excuses to skip Elysium when it conflicts with "The Honeymooners." What of the Beat writers? Some elders may simply smile away most of the changes as the energy of youth is funneled into "acceptable" channels while others may fret about the potential rebellion that rock music may be breeding. The Toreador surely have much fuel for debate in the Elysia over the decade.

A third civil war erupts among the Sabbat in 1957, lasting only about 100 nights. Disease from careless feeding and Embraces racks the rank-and-file. Joseph Pander leads the Caitiff against the Sabbat leadership to demand more than simply the right to exist. The treaty results in the creation of the Panders, a "clan" of the Clanless. It is generally viewed by the Caitiff leadership and older members as a bone thrown, but it does keep the rabble quiet.

THE '60S

The '60s are a time of violent social change. Many youth rebel against the strictures of the '50s, raging against social norms, what they perceive as a wasteful conflict in Vietnam and the very real potential of the world going up in flames. Minorities agitate for long-overdue change, demand-



ing the right to be treated as human beings. Artists stretch their boundaries and push the envelope in every medium. Everywhere, it's about going against the "Establishment," against a grain too staid for its own good. How are newly Embraced Kindred youth likely to view elders and princes? Coming in from the Cold War, where the young mortals don't trust their elders not to push the button that starts Armageddon for personal gain, neonates perceive vampiric elders as even less trustworthy. This time sees massive defections to the anarch cause and even open rebellion against older Kindred.

Counterculture of this time includes music even wilder than the previous decade, with the Doors, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. Neonates may be found down at Whiskey-A-Go-Go in Los Angeles or in the Haight neighborhood of San Francisco seeking new excitement. Depending on where Kindred feed, there's every chance that they may encounter a drug-using vessel, and psychotropic drugs can induce all sorts of interesting effects. The darker side includes personality cults, such as Charlie Manson, drawing the disaffected to their banners. With so many mortal gurus, who would notice the few vampires who gather similar herds for blood or money?

The struggle for civil rights for African-Americans culminates during this time, with marches, lunch counter sit-ins, boycotts and rallies by leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Further north, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam seek similar goals but with far different means and words. Kindred with any interest in the mortal world cannot help but become enveloped by the conflict. Blacks in any clan are likely stirred by events in the mortal world, while some elders see the makings of another Anarch Revolt (after all, it was peasants agitating for rights from their lords that was the cover for the original). Elysia may find their claims of non-violence within their walls hard to maintain when racist Kindred clash with their black or more civil-minded brethren. The race riots that rock many cities following the assassination of Dr. King leave them in flames, with vampires scrambling to get out of the way of rioting mobs.

THE MODERN NIGHTS

The modern nights are all about change, usually swift and often violent. This is where most chronicles are set, and where many neonates knew their breathing days, starting from the '70s. A leader assassinated, a fashion trend begun or ended, a hiccup in the stock market, and the world will know in the blink of an eye via television or the Internet. Even some neonates are occasionally rushing to keep up with changes, while their elders are nearly paralyzed with fright by the wild, headlong rush of progress. Many fear the imminent approach of Gehenna nightly, and as the world hurtles into the 21st century, perhaps they are not so wrong.

The Gothic-Punk sensibility that so characterizes the World of Darkness originates from the twin movements of punk and Goth, two musical waves spawned by popular culture. Lyrics turn to disturbing subject matter, such as war, drugs, insanity or murder. The musical



extreme first evolves to punk, which boils out of London and spills over to the United States. The lyrics revolve around violent material, the music is equally so. Punk seems to be all about violence, speed, hard edges and garish colors, and it is the pierced flesh, angry rebellion and clenched fists that it lends to the World of Darkness. Bands like the Sex Pistols and the Ramones characterize the music, while metal spikes, brightly dyed hair, combat boots and battered leather characterize the look. The hedonism of punk bands often draws neonates to their banners, and many young vampires find the music an excellent way to irritate their elders. The Goth movement grows out of punk, a shift from the garish to shadowy, from the wild to the eerie. Goth bands include Siouxsie and the Banshees, Bauhaus and Sisters of Mercy, and the range of music runs broader, from ethereal haunting tunes to rapid beats backed with a clashing guitar. The movement emphasizes the darker side of life, whether that be in desperation or violence, and offers Gothic-Punk flowing black, morbid outlooks, ornate architecture and the unrelenting despair found in the cities.

The modern nights also see a new trend toward vampires as "fashionable." From bands that describe romantic death to sub-culture practices of blood-drinking and biting during sex to popular novels and film, vampires are suddenly "in." While in many ways the excitement resembles the flap over *Dracula* all over again, some Kindred worry that this time, there are more potential ways to break the Masquerade: Ignorant mortal youths pretending to be vampires may bring harder scrutiny from mortal authorities (and who knows when one of those scrutinizing might be someone who knows the truth?). Neonates more often see it as excellent cover for their own activities, and occasionally some Caitiff hide themselves among the pretenders, using the mortal wannabes for their own protection.

WHEN YOU HAVE TO SAY NO

Recall how often in *Laws of the Night* we said, "Try to avoid saying 'no' outright" or something similar? Well, we lied. Sometimes, someone comes to you with a character concept, a story idea or a character action that you find unacceptable. Could it be the player who can barely fake being sick who wants to create an elder? Maybe it's the Nosferatu whose information continually skirts into meta-gaming territory, or the Tremere who insists that he can create nuclear material with *Alchemy*. Whatever it is, you have trouble in the works, and it comes in the form of a player looking at you with soulful eyes. And here's one of the most onerous tasks of the Storyteller — denying a request.

Many times, certain requests can be dismissed with the wave of a hand: "Can I buy *Garou Lore*, 'cause my Gangrel ran with a pack and got made an honorary Garou?" Other times, it takes a bit more planning: "Hey, can my Toreador buy Health Influence?"(when you've capped the Influence). Whatever sort of denial it must be, here's some ways to get to it.

Let's say Joe Player made a request that made your hair curl, mostly because he apparently pulled it out of his butt without any thyme or reasons



("Hey, I want my character to learn Swahili!"). There's nothing wrong with asking him to explain the what and wherefore of this new enterprise ("So why do you want to learn this, and how are you going to go about doing it?"). After all, nothing exists in a vacuum — even the character wanting to improve his culture can be a good enough reason. Sometimes, a subtle reminder to the player to think before asking can save a great deal of grief and give you some insight into where your players are going (not to mention considering some story seeds for later). If Joe still can't come up with a decent reason why his character should have Swahili, hasn't got a clue where his character is going to learn this and can't give you a single reason in the world why he should have it, then the answer can be no. This same approach can be used for someone who comes up with a character concept that just looks like a bunch of neat tricks held together with safety pins and baling wire — the sample character creations in the main rulebooks should give you some ideas about how a Storyteller sits down with a player and says, in the nicest, most sincere tone she can muster: "What were you thinking?"

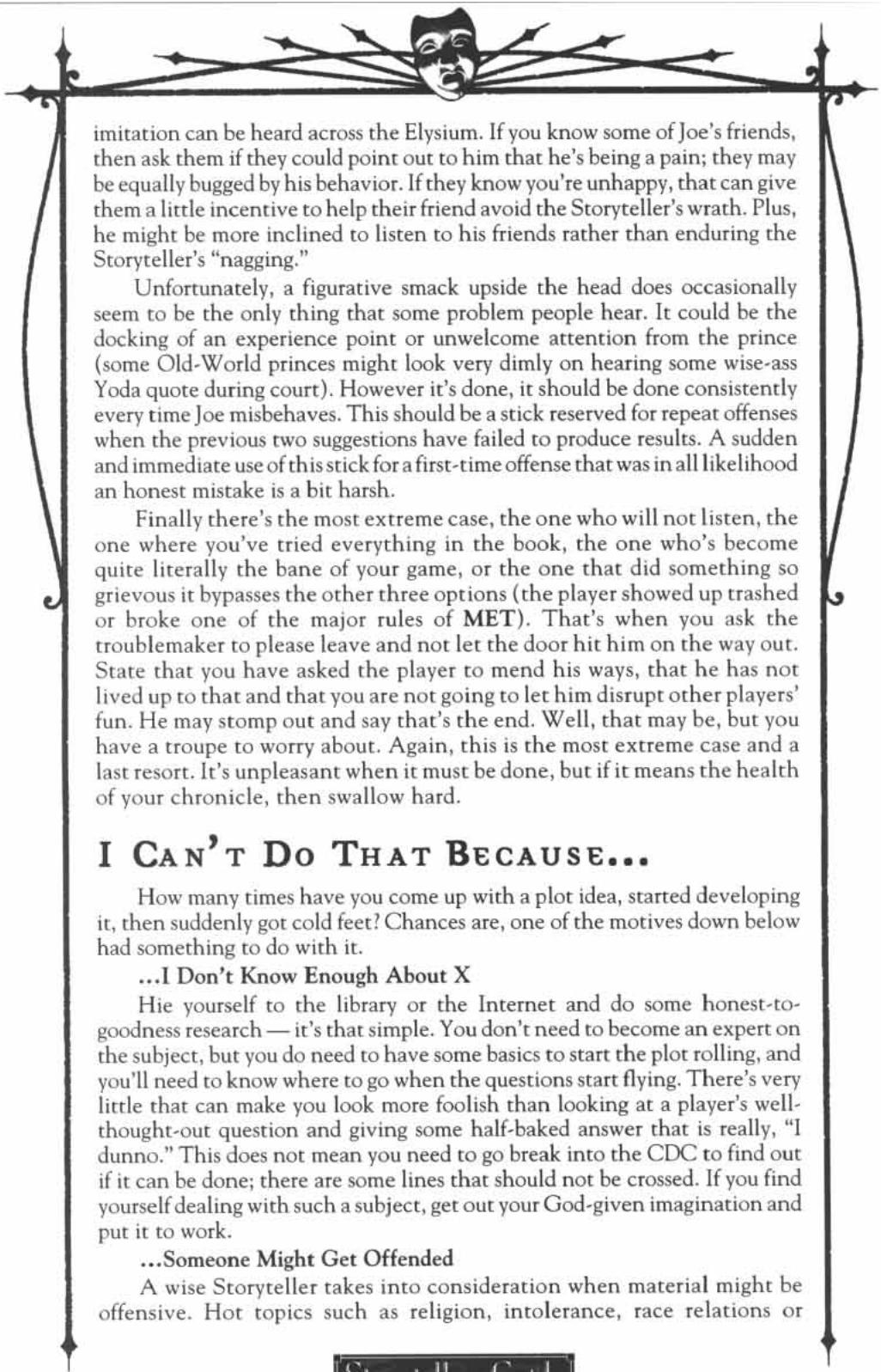
So you said "no," because it needed saying — great. Then comes the dreaded "But why?" So, why did you do it? If you can't come up with a reason beyond, "'Cause it was stupid," you're going to look a little foolish yourself. When choosing to deny something, remember why you're doing it. Is it because the player didn't think enough about the concept? Point it out to her — she may not realize she did something less than stellar. What about someone who's attempting to buy more Influence in a category that's become saturated? Perhaps show her in downtime that all her efforts just aren't panning out. The flat-out "No" with no further discussion behind it whatsoever should be used only in extreme cases, like the Bastet Abomination with Numina and Spheres. Once you come up with a reason, make it sound, stick to it and remember it. It looks very fishy when you deny something to one player then give it to another.

LAYING THE GREAT SMACKDOWN

These are the days when you have great sympathy and respect for parents everywhere: You've got to discipline someone who's being a problem. The girl who keeps showing up late and disrupting the action in a major way when she does make her grand entrance. The guy who likes showing off his cast of cartoon-voice imitations. Whatever they're doing, they're being a problem, and it's yours to solve, 'cause you're the Storyteller.

Many times, the player isn't aware he's being problematic. Snag him when he comes in the door or at a time outside the game and sit him down for a private chat. Lay out your grievance clearly ("Joe, I really wish you would quit breaking character to quote *Star Wars*, because it's disruptive to the mood.") and what you would like to see done about it ("Could you save your repertoire for another time?"). Don't leave the table until you have something settled. Be clear in what the problem is and what you want to see done about it so there's no confusion over what's at stake.

Okay, you had your private talk with Joe Player about his inappropriate behavior, and you thought he'd listened. Nope — next week, his Jar-Jar Binks



imitation can be heard across the Elysium. If you know some of Joe's friends, then ask them if they could point out to him that he's being a pain; they may be equally bugged by his behavior. If they know you're unhappy, that can give them a little incentive to help their friend avoid the Storyteller's wrath. Plus, he might be more inclined to listen to his friends rather than enduring the Storyteller's "nagging."

Unfortunately, a figurative smack upside the head does occasionally seem to be the only thing that some problem people hear. It could be the docking of an experience point or unwelcome attention from the prince (some Old-World princes might look very dimly on hearing some wise-ass Yoda quote during court). However it's done, it should be done consistently every time Joe misbehaves. This should be a stick reserved for repeat offenses when the previous two suggestions have failed to produce results. A sudden and immediate use of this stick for a first-time offense that was in all likelihood an honest mistake is a bit harsh.

Finally there's the most extreme case, the one who will not listen, the one where you've tried everything in the book, the one who's become quite literally the bane of your game, or the one that did something so grievous it bypasses the other three options (the player showed up trashed or broke one of the major rules of MET). That's when you ask the troublemaker to please leave and not let the door hit him on the way out. State that you have asked the player to mend his ways, that he has not lived up to that and that you are not going to let him disrupt other players' fun. He may stomp out and say that's the end. Well, that may be, but you have a troupe to worry about. Again, this is the most extreme case and a last resort. It's unpleasant when it must be done, but if it means the health of your chronicle, then swallow hard.

I CAN'T DO THAT BECAUSE...

How many times have you come up with a plot idea, started developing it, then suddenly got cold feet? Chances are, one of the motives down below had something to do with it.

...I Don't Know Enough About X

Hie yourself to the library or the Internet and do some honest-to-goodness research — it's that simple. You don't need to become an expert on the subject, but you do need to have some basics to start the plot rolling, and you'll need to know where to go when the questions start flying. There's very little that can make you look more foolish than looking at a player's well-thought-out question and giving some half-baked answer that is really, "I dunno." This does not mean you need to go break into the CDC to find out if it can be done; there are some lines that should not be crossed. If you find yourself dealing with such a subject, get out your God-given imagination and put it to work.

...Someone Might Get Offended

A wise Storyteller takes into consideration when material might be offensive. Hot topics such as religion, intolerance, race relations or



sexuality can result in hurt feelings out of game if they're handled inappropriately. If you're thinking about taking the game in a new direction that includes such material, send out a feeler or two to see if the topic pushes the wrong buttons or if your troupe is ready to handle a challenge. Keep a weather eye out for players who are suddenly reluctant to come to the game or who are being unusually combative. This assumes, of course, that you're treating the material with respect and dignity. If you're throwing in rape, domestic violence, child abuse or other touchy topics without thought or for shock value, don't look surprised when folks get mad enough to walk.

...So-and-So Threatened to Walk Because She Said the Story Would Wreck Her Character

Never allow a player to hold the game hostage to her whims. Just because someone's a prince/elder/big cheese does not make her the be-all end-all. If she did something foolish in character (such as break the Masquerade on national television), then she deserves what comes next. Call her bluff. If she does decide to walk, then let her. You don't need such aggravation.

...It's Too Big/Complicated

Don't automatically discard an idea because you think it's too big—dreaming big comes naturally with Storytelling. Better to think realistically, such as whether you have adequate resources to Storytell such a plotline in its entirety. Will you have enough Narrators to assist you? Will the plotline as it stands snag player interest? Sometimes things that look too large can be broken down into parts that are easier to swallow: You may find that you have several (smaller) plotlines that could eventually lead back to your original idea. You may also find that out of these broken-up parts, you have a plot thread that's more clearly defined than the first.

...It's a Dumb Idea

Three film students get lost in the woods making a movie. A bunch of girls start having seizures and blame it on witchcraft. Dinosaurs are re-created with DNA found in old mosquitoes. The only dumb idea is one that hasn't been tried. Presentation is what makes or breaks an idea. If you're psyched about the idea and let the players know you're psyched by how you present the idea (news stories, richly descriptive scenes), that will get them interested. Players can sense when you're not giving a scene your all, and if you think that something's corny, they will pick up on that and find it difficult to follow the material too.

...The Material Is Too Mature

This can go a number of directions. Stop and look at the whole equation. Does your player base consist of mostly young players? Do you find yourself running a chronicle for a bunch of gun bunnies who prefer to shoot first and think later? Do you have some players who have some personal, out-of-game stake in the material you're about to present or who are shy about getting involved?

With younger players, you may have players who are not socially or emotionally ready for what you're planning, and your game is probably not the place for them to learn about it. Redirect such



material away from them entirely or replace it. If there's discomfort or anger from folks, stop immediately. If you learn someone has an out-of-character tie to the issue, ask him how he'd like to handle it, and be open to what he has to say, including, "Um, could I just not follow this anymore?" It's a lot less headache to adjust a plotline than to lose a player to bad feelings. In the case of the gun bunnies, a mature topic might be a good addition to the game to subtly (or not so subtly) prod the players into improving their roleplaying.

...People will think I'm a (Fill in the Blank)

Pervert — Racist — Homophobe — Anti-Semitic — whatever.

One of the most delicate areas to walk through as a Storyteller is when the story calls for a character to behave in a hateful way, one that may hurt feelings out of game. In simple, make it clear to folks that you the person do not believe in what this character is saying. Even a quick, "Hey, just wanted to say, I'm not this sort of asshole in real life," at the end or beginning of the scene can be all it takes. Treat the material with dignity, which sounds odd, but translates to, "Don't be gratuitous. Unless it serves a purpose, don't use it."

...Something Just Doesn't Feel Right

We all have a gut feeling left over from the human race's early days of hunting and gathering — that little voice in the ear or the metaphysical tap on the shoulder that tells us when something might not be kosher. It's better known as instinct. If your instinct is sending off alarm bells, tapping your shoulder or otherwise alerting you, stop a moment and try to pin down what the problem is. Is it the subject or theme of a new plotline? Is it a player who's being unusually canny about avoiding certain perils? Is it the sudden decrease in Tremere characters? Did a normally outgoing player suddenly get very quiet when you introduced a plotline that included rape or a stalker?

Instinct isn't usually one for false alarms. We have that little feeling for a reason, whether it was to warn us about walking into a cave that might be a bear's den or to point out a game problem we've been rationalizing away. If it's a player, find her out of game and have a talk or make a discreet inquiry among people you trust. If there's a genuine problem, then get busy with it.

T H E S M A R T P L A Y E R

You spent months plotting out this puzzler, convinced that most of your players would spend the next year working on it. It was full of pitfalls, from Influence traps to red-herring research. You released it into the chronicle on Saturday. Two months later, you realize that one player, through her character's savvy research and detective work, is about to crack the whole thing wide open. Influence traps? She avoided them by her own regular actions of networking and cover-up. Pitfalls? A couple of them slowed her down, but not for long. Congratulations — you have a smart player!

Smart players can be as much burden as they are boon. It can be very helpful to have go-get-'em folks who love to worry at a puzzle like a dog with a bone. These folks can please themselves for hours on end while



they hunt for clues and come up with some surprising finds, and often without much help from you. They are often proactive people in the chronicle who are good at making their own fun and at involving other characters to assist their research. On the other hand, it can drag down things tremendously to have a player who nitpicks every detail and demands that every inquiry be answered encyclopedically, not to mention a player whose entertainment needs exceed what the average player base wants. At worst, such players can easily get bored and act up in ways that can rip a chronicle apart, just so they can have a challenge (not unlike gifted students in a "normal" class).

Don't punish a smart player whose character is a good research hound or who manages to avoid the pitfalls that other players seem to walk into. You're wasting a potentially valuable resource, not to mention that it sends the message that you punish players who "ruin" your clever plotting. Instead, think about what you can do to prolong her run enough to get things caught up, or how you can utilize this underestimated resource.

Never underestimate the value of the red herring. Even Jung and Einstein followed wild tangents or lines of research that never panned out and gone some interesting places in the process. The red herring is a fine way to buy some time should a plot be in danger of getting busted open too soon. However, don't get dependent on them — there's a point where it's going to look painfully obvious. Remember what you threw out in this go-around, because a red herring for this plotline may be a signpost to something else.

Some smart players enjoy being smart by themselves, i.e., they hoard their hard-won information, gloat over their hoard like a miser with his gold, and don't share well. Consider throwing a nugget into another player's possession through his downtime or another line of research he's working on. Eventually the hunter's going to have to come out and socialize for that clue and will hopefully do so well. Done properly, this can slow down your target for a couple months, particularly if the other character has all the recalcitrance of a snapping turtle. A few such redirections can keep the player going without being aware of getting slowed down.

Players who are heavily into researching and hunting for clues eat up things like history and background. Most Storytellers create large histories for their chronicles to explain how their cities and Kindred relations got to their current state. How much of that ever gets seen by the players? Probably not a lot, and that can be a little discouraging to think that all that work is going to go unseen. If you have a player who loves to research and piece things together from the past, consider mining some tidbits from your back story and seeding them into her downtime results (if they're relevant). It can be a great way to get some of that grunt work you did into play. And you never know if the seed you planted early on will blossom into a full-fledged plot down the road.

On the flip side, there's covering the bases, and then there's just plain ridiculous. For example, the player of a Salubri is researching a disease that's recently cropped up among Kindred. The player also just read *The Hot Zone*



(which details the discovery of the ebola virus) and has more than a passing interest in diseases like ebola, so she asks some pretty penetrating questions of the Storyteller — she's asking if she can use *Obeah* even when she's in an isolation suit, trying to determine what type of virus it is, plotting out five different courses of research (and has given you outlines of everything). The Storyteller also read *The Hot Zone* and some articles on the Web, but hasn't done nearly the same amount of research as the player. Now what? On one hand, it's cool to see that the player is getting so much enjoyment out of the plot; on the other hand, trying to follow five courses of research is a tad much. Your best bet is to acknowledge (however briefly) the work that the player put in to her downtime before you determine if she's spent enough time and resources to get certain answers. If nothing else, the player is reassured that you are at least looking at the downtime and not tossing answers off the top of your head. Here's a good place to point out that sometimes you may dig your own hole with this problem. If you're the sort of Storyteller who likes to emphasize that the devil's in the details (and the most crucial ones always seem to be in the questions a player doesn't ask), you don't have much room to gripe when your players start pulling 20 Questions in their downtimes in an effort to cover their bases.

Someone can demolish puzzles without a thought, and now, bored, sets out to chase Praxis or primogen, or simply to wreak havoc. And all because he's bored. If he's got that much extra energy, find out if he'd be good to put on detail as an Assistant Storyteller, perhaps doing research for you or writing in-character news articles. It works out some of the boundless creativity and will either shut him up when he starts griping about some problem in the game, or he'll learn to put his money where his mouth is.

Some players find it irritating that they must have a particular knowledge or Ability to even attempt to learn something — after all, their characters have gone to high school (or college) and learned the basics, and now they can't even tell a da Vinci from a Monet? There are cases where it's entirely necessary to demand specialized skills for research. Someone with *Science: Entomology* should have a better chance at identifying a weird little moth than someone who's simply using *Academics* or even *Science: Biology*. On the other hand, demanding that someone have *Art History* to do any sort of research on, say, the *Mona Lisa*, is frankly ridiculous. You may choose to ask them what Abilities, Backgrounds, Influences and other relevant material they're bringing to the table when they're doing their research if there's a particular point that you feel should go to someone who has a better toehold on the material (specialized study may allow someone to skip the basics that someone without that knowledge will have to wade through).

Obviously, there's a fine line between a player who makes a logical leap and one who metagames, and that line makes all the difference. If you're concerned that someone is metagaming rather than puzzle-solving, it's not out of line to ask her to show her paper trail. If something still looks fishy, have her work at it a little more, but don't just toss her off. Something concrete like, "Most of your contacts have told you everything they can think of and probably some stuff they've made up, and they've run out of things to tell you



on this particular topic that you don't already know..." has a lot more meaning (not to mention story value) than "You come to a dead end."

THE INFORMATION AGE

The Internet and e-mail are here and have settled in for what looks like a very long stay. Further, your savvy players have commandeered the Internet and e-mail as part and parcel of the game. Bad news? Only if you look at it that way. E-mail and the Internet can be one of your chronicle's best friends if properly harnessed. For all the good it can do, the Web can also be a thorn in your metaphysical side. That big ol' Internet can be a mighty scary place, and unfortunately, sometimes what you put in isn't always what you get back.

THE WEB AS YOUR FRIEND

If you work odd hours or have players that do, e-mail can be a very helpful way to keep up communications instead of wasting a couple hours playing phone tag. It allows you to think about your answers and can provide a handy paper trail if things are disputed, or you have a less-than-perfect memory. E-mail lists can take care of a number of matters, from announcements from the prince to news regarding the game's more mundane aspects. Some games use them to put out news stories of events that are taking place in their city, from conventions to strange murders.

A Website can be a fine place to throw lots of hard facts about the game, both story and mundane — venue descriptions, dates and times, directions, character creation limits. A single URL at the bottom of your flyer can direct potential new players to all the neat stuff you'd tell them about if you could stand at that flyer 24 hours a day. For players, this can be a spot to find out about an out-of-character social, get those last-minute directions or learn about the venue before bringing in an inappropriate character. If anyone is feeling really adventurous, e-mail links to characters and Storytellers, game pictures, rogue's galleries of characters, PDF files of character sheets and links to the coffeehouse the troupe patronizes can add pizzazz to something straightforward.

The Web can be an invaluable research tool for digging up answers on a subject you barely know. A simple query in a search engine can return many places to research to your heart's content; no matter how exotic the subject, chances are *someone* out there knows about it. E-commerce and search engines are useful for hunting up the existence of an object or service whose legitimacy is questionable ("So you want a million-candlepower hand-held spotlight? If you can find it, I'll consider it."). It can also put you in touch with other games that might be interested in linking plots or allowing players to travel.

THE WEB AS YOUR FOE

Many times, players get into blue-booking online, whether by chat or e-mail, working out scenes and coming into play with all manner of new connections, Status and whatever, that you've never seen before. While there's nothing wrong with this — most often it's simple conversation or exchanges that don't need a Storyteller's eye — it can be baffling or even



damaging to a plot to suddenly find out that the prince decided to *Summon* his favorite anarch scapegoat to his office for the purposes of killing him without so much as a by-your-leave from you. Suggest that those who want to do more than talk take up the situation with a Narrator. If challenges start flying or things get complicated, that should automatically put it in the province of Storyteller staff. Even the most trustworthy players can get bogged down in who said what away from the eyes of authority.

For good or ill, just about *anything* can be found on the Web now, from the latest headlines to catalogue shopping to hate speech or worse. A simple search on bomb-making can snag an enterprising soul dozens of links. You're going to have to consider how to answer the player who claims that his anarch character has been downloading information on making pipe-bombs and now wants to use that information for fun and profit. Just because someone can dig it up does not mean you have to let him have it, and there are several ways you can deal with the issue. Perhaps the anarch has been unwittingly chatting with an undercover federal agent (which will bring a whole new set of problems — *Masquerade* breach, perhaps?) or forgot to turn off the cookies during his last excursion. An e-mail program like Carnivore — which was designed to find and read the e-mails of terrorists or other users who've been flagged for various reasons — could take untoward interest in said anarch (or any other Kindred's mail for that matter). The "disruption of service" hacking of Yahoo!, Amazon.com and other Web giants may make some Net-savvy Kindred tremble — if a couple of kids with too much time and RAM could bring these sites to their knees, what happens if they turn their attention on a Kindred site, or if they get Embraced by the enemy? And even if you don't make use of those stumbling blocks, who's to say that the information your anarch got was correct? ("Was that 50 blasting caps or 500?")

On a more serious note, in this age of school shootings and domestic terrorism, there are real-life people and groups who take an interest in those who do nightly searches in hate-speech sites or other dangerous places, or who post to these sites. Watch your step and be very careful who you start chatting with. An over-enthusiastic agent might be hard-pressed to figure out what's the more interesting threat — someone researching bomb-making, or someone who pretends to be a vampire that's researching bomb-making.

THE WIRED AND THE UNHOOKED

Strange as some people might think it, not everyone is wired for the Web, or has only sporadic access at best. It could be the computer is in the dumps, they can't afford computer access, or they must rely on someone else's charity. In which case, if your group has become very Web-dependent, you may have a minority group that is constantly in the dark about last-minute changes or other important matters. It only takes one sudden change of location to piss off a lot of uninformed people. There are few clearer illustrations of haves versus have-nots than the matter of Internet access.

If your group is in the habit of meeting between games, use that time to catch up non-Webby folks on anything important that went out over the wire or list. While many character announcements have a way of filtering back to the necessary folks, game announcements have a similar way of getting lost.



A "newspaper" with the week's news articles and Storyteller news can be an excellent way of keeping the non-wired folks in touch. It doesn't have to look fancy, so long as it's functional.

Folks who like to stay in touch via cell phones and pagers (but don't have computers) may also bring back that relic of elementary school and scout troop — the phone tree. The gist of it (for those who don't recall) is that one person is responsible for calling two other people, and those two people each call two people and so on. While some might mumble about it being primitive, it may be helpful to the Storyteller and allows folks to stay in touch. Besides, if there's a server or router problem, what happens then?

SCENE DESCRIPTION — MORE BANG FOR THE BUCK

You've got your three players arrayed before you. They're getting ready for you to narrate a scene where the three of them will work on patching up a Masquerade breach at a night club. You say, "You come in and see the following: a bar to the left, an open DJ booth to the right, about 50 people on the dance floor and two dozen more around the three pool tables in the back. What do you do?" You can't understand why they're looking at you a little vacantly.

A description like that is right up there with the infamous, "You enter a 10 by 10 room with four orcs and a box of unidentified treasure." Players will find it hard to get excited (much less interested) about the scene if they don't know what's going on. They rely on you to set the stage that their characters will strut and fret upon. You know what the place looks like in your head (don't you?), but the players can't see through your skull into that place you're thinking of. So how do you go about getting a little more bang for the buck?

When setting a stage, remember that we don't merely look at what's happening before us and call it a scene. Humans (and Kindred) rely on their entire range of sensory input to give them information about what's happening around them, what might have happened in the past and what might happen in the future. A complete scene involves all five senses. So when describing a location for your players, give thought not only to what the place looks like visually, but what it sounds like, smells like, tastes like and feels like. To return to our earlier attempt at the night club: "The nightclub is a little hole-in-the-wall dive that probably only operates a few times a week in what used to be a dry cleaning shop. Several people in the latest bondage and Goth gear stand outside smoking — the smoke rising from one young man smells strangely sweet, almost like cherries. Inside, the thunderous industrial music is rattling anything not nailed down, including the bottles behind the bar. The DJ booth perches over the crowd against one wall. The walls are cinderblock, painted black, and the black-and-white linoleum dance floor is surrounded by enormous woofers and tweeters. About 50 young people are out on the floor, thrashing and swaying with the music. You inhale, and the combined smells of cigarettes, sweat, cheap fragrances and leather all rush down your nostrils and over your palate. The place is crowded, and a rail-thin girl with white-blonde hair wearing scarlet velvet brushes past you, glancing back for half a second to apologize. As you turn to speak, you catch a whiff of vitae on the passing girl."



Sensory input is even more important to those using *Auspex*, who are roleplaying a physically impaired sense or who have derangements related to the senses. The absence, impairment or overstimulation of any particular sense can provoke amazing reactions; torturers the world over understand this very well. In the case of someone playing a character who is deaf, blind or missing another sense like smell or taste, she'll look to you for vivid descriptions that her other senses will use to fill in the gap in her understanding. Someone who can hear but has a derangement that makes him nervous of certain sounds will want to know if his particular madness is throbbing in response to stimuli. The *Heightened Senses* of *Auspex* in particular need a great deal of detail — reading a letter by touch, smelling a perfume to pull apart its components or focusing the sight to study the very brushstrokes made by Rembrandt when he painted “The Night Watch” will all require you to delve a little deeper into the logistics of sensory perception. That said, imagine what happens when that sense is overloaded — the sensitized fingers get slammed with a hammer or the sharply focused eyes get struck with a camera flash. No wonder vampires with overloaded *Heightened Senses* spend time stunned and dazed!

Action is what makes things happen — seriously! When you’re describing a scene, evocative words can go a long way to really nailing down how something looks to you and your players. Consider the following example: “As you pass the alley, a miasma of piss, sweat and vitae wafts over you” versus “You smell urine, sweat and Kindred blood when you walk by the alley.” Which one paints the more detailed picture? Boning up on your vocabulary will do wonders for scene description, as you pull out such lovely mouthfuls as “baroque,” “pandemic,” “untoward.”

All of us have “that song,” the one that we first kissed to, that we broke up to or that we’ve designated as our personal theme song. Movie music does this in particular, leading viewers to understand subtext or emotional themes in a scene without necessarily stating them outright. The occasional piece of music can be crucial in helping your players think about the scene their characters are going through. A complex harpsichord piece can be indicative of an elder’s equally complex plots and older manners, while the quiet sound of a single *koto* invokes the tranquility of a formal Japanese garden. Music can help define the space that you’re setting aside for your players to create this scene; this isn’t the corner of the recreation basement or even the second room of the Elysium. While the music plays, you’re in a Zen garden, an elder’s parlor or with a lovestruck ghoul.

Not every Storyteller character must hinge on the plot, appear there solely to deliver a line like the cauldron ghosts of *Macbeth* and then depart. Sometimes, the best roleplaying can come from a chance encounter, something unexpected (just like real life) that must be dealt with and might even be a foreshadowing of things to come (the first encounter with an *Ally*). If you’re short on time or have a particularly garrulous player, obviously you can adjust this. Still, chance encounters can make a scene sparkle — the Indian man behind the gas station counter who’s nervous of certain people, the child who sees through the Nosferatu’s Mask while he’s hunting, the elderly



woman who asks for help carrying a bag of groceries. From small things do bigger things grow....

ASSISTANT STORYTELLERS AND NARRATORS

Ever have a night where you wished you could clone yourself? Ever see the warning, "If you're struggling, go find some help"? Well, the cavalry is here! Here's the different types and what you can do with them.

Narrators are those folks who are in amongst the players, usually with their own characters, but who are available as necessary for challenges (such as Simple Tests, Virtue Challenges) or as an extra set of eyes when combat hits. Typically, Narrators are more rules-oriented, and the best seem to have encyclopedic memories regarding where every rule can be found and where are the three instances that contradict said rule. Still, they know when a challenge needs to be seen by a Storyteller and when to let the Storyteller do the talking.

Assistant Storytellers do just that, assist the Storyteller with keeping the chronicle on track. Often, an assistant is in charge of a particular aspect of the game that needs watching, but the Storyteller is about to drown in watching everything *else* — this could be Influences and Backgrounds, or maybe keeping a weather eye out for in-game Masquerade breaches. Assistant Storytellers may or may not maintain their own characters, according to Storyteller needs for the game. They may play for stints, then take a shift at the Storyteller desk for those little emergencies like watching a ritual be performed or running a minor scene while the Storyteller deals with something bigger. Some assistants even run their own subplots after getting permission from the Storyteller. It's often from among these folks that the chronicle's next Storyteller can be found.

You yourself know best how much help you need (and you're never beyond help) and where it should go. If your game is small, you may need only one or two Narrators and a single Assistant Storyteller to run some subplots for players to chew on each session. On the other hand, if you have a large chronicle or some details that necessitate more attention (a number of inexperienced players, heavy use of Influences, a location that seems to generate a lot of character interest), then you'll probably want more Narrators and at least two assistants to oversee the details that you've forgotten because you're writing plot. Again, you know what will make your game run better.

It's a given that people will always find something to disagree about — it's life. When you disagree with your Narrator or an Assistant Storyteller, it's still life, but you don't want to have it out right there. Take it elsewhere. Unless the matter is so heinous that you can't possibly let it go, take it elsewhere. Don't scream at each other in public — it's not nice to each other or to the players. If you disagree on a ruling, unless it's so gross that you can't let it slide (or it means a character could live or die), let it roll for now. By constantly overseeing and correcting their work, you indicate to your assistants that you don't trust them fully, and if you show the players you don't trust your assistant's rulings, they won't trust them either.



Sean Carter (order #19521)



CHAPTER SIX:

UNDER ONE

DARK SKY

THOSE WHO HUNT THE NIGHT

Take a moment and think about the phrase “World of Darkness.” The first word says it all: It is a big world, and Kindred share its eternal night with many other creatures. Some of the other denizens of the Gothic-Punk world are as indifferent to Kindred as the ghost of a long-dead centurion, while some are as hostile as a Lupine with a hangnail and a religious conviction that she should slay all Kindred and let Gaia sort them out. You, as the Storyteller, help paint the backdrop that is this world.

A crossover is a story or scene where one supernatural creature encounters another supernatural creature. Why allow crossovers? This is one of the first things that you must ask yourself as a Storyteller. After all, crossovers have a potential for disaster. Imagine a mixed **Masquerade** and **Apocalypse** live-action game where the werewolf players are convinced that they should know where all the Kindred Elysia are, but that the Kindred should have no idea where the Garou caerns are. Here's a crossover that could have led to dead characters and unhappy players when the Kindred decide to enforce the sacredness of their own Elysium against the Lupine visitors; few things disrupt a quiet art gallery gathering more than an attack by a pack of nine-foot tall, hairy, unwashed killing-machines-for-Gaia.

And yet crossover scenes can be very important in maintaining the feel of the World of Darkness. Where would the Giovanni be without their allies



(or foes) among the Restless Dead? What wielder of *Spirit Thaumaturgy* is not afraid of hostile spirits and Lupines? Caine didn't issue the warnings against the Wild Ones and moonbeasts just to take up space in the *Book of Nod*. The important thing is to keep your crossover experience from degenerating into an everyday experience, where the most exotic creatures are met with yawns and boredom.

WHY CROSSOVERS HAPPEN

Crossovers can happen for many reasons, but common themes include vying for resources or dominance, and the search for forgotten lore or legends. Supernatural creatures that are hostile to each other sometimes have common enemies — after all: "The enemy of my enemy is my ally." And there's nothing like the confusion that reigns when one group discovers its favorite hang-out has been staked as sacred by some band of ill-tempered (and powerful) thugs.

Crossovers can easily happen when a Cainite with a high Humanity score tries to clean up the city and starts encountering Wyrm-tainted fomori or other fell creatures who normally battle Lupines. Will the Lupines start wondering who's doing their work, and how will they reward their "helper" when they do learn? What of a Giovanni who temporarily devotes her efforts to fighting a particularly nasty Spectre who also preys on a local Circle of Renegade wraiths? Will the Circle continue to ally with her, or is she merely taking care of the Spectre because he's muscling in on her turf? While the status quo antagonism will return when the threat is gone, these crossovers can lead to mutual respect and common ground.

Crossovers can also happen when one type of supernatural denizen attempts to play King of the Hill. Consider the frustration of the Nosferatu who tries to boot a slaugh from "his" sewers and later discovers that someone is mysteriously and repeatedly draining his spawning pool, yet does not show up on cameras in and out of the area (nasty little chimera!). What of the Tremere regent who finds herself racing with a local Uktena Theurge and mortal Ancient Order of the Aeon Rites coven to recover a lost talisman of sorcerous power? These crossovers can lead to double-crosses and outright hostility, so manage them carefully.

Finally, sometimes a Cainite's search for hidden and forgotten lore can lead him to consult with strange creatures; a Kiasyd might contact the local Kithain (who have heard of such creatures in the vaguest of legends, if at all), or a Gangrel unraveling a mystery might be directed to a local Bone Gnawer by Kinfolk. All of these crossovers can be rewarding or disastrous depending upon how you the Storyteller manage them.

WORLD OF DARKNESS

How much information can Kindred gain from crossovers? That depends. The Gothic-Punk world is a dark and mysterious place. Its inhabitants do not have books like the *Laws of the Night* or *The Camarilla Guide* at their elbows to flip through when they first meet an eight-foot-tall blue-skinned Viking. Most werewolves have never met a



IT HAPPENS FOR A REASON

Few things can quite squash a crossover like the collective whining of several vampire players who don't like the idea that anything could potentially wreck their characters. They reason that Kindred should be able to take on anything in the World of Darkness and make it cry for its mommy. The very idea that their characters could be less than Number One is inconceivable.

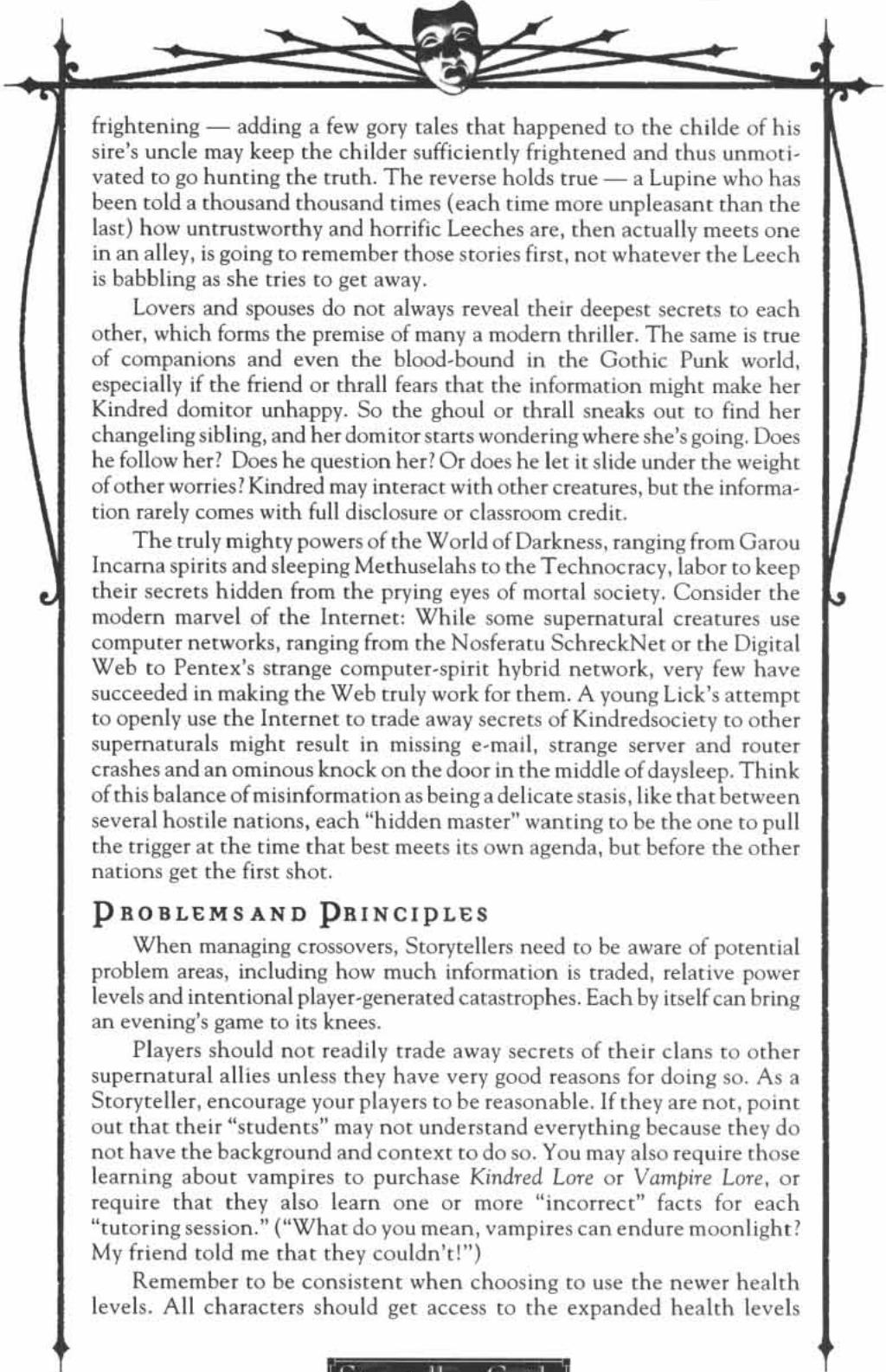
This seems as good a place as any to point out that there's a reason why the Kindred are in fact not on top (despite their ideas to the contrary), and most of these have to do with why the Kindred don't interact with other supernaturals. There are reasons why the Kindred don't go antagonizing the Lupines that could make hamburger of them with a single swipe. There are reasons why the Kindred fear the completely alien Cathayan threat that is pouring in on the West Coast. There are reasons why the presence of wraiths sends many Kindred scurrying, including the wraiths' so-called "masters." Taking away those reasons solely to appease the gripe of a player with an unhealthy attachment to a piece of paper with some stats on it is to rob the World of Darkness of some of its teeth. In the end, doing so may keep one player quiet, but it dampens the power of the story.

There will always be something bigger, something nastier, than any snot-nosed anarch wannabe with too much attitude for his own good. Crossovers may be the perfect place to inform both players and characters of that.

vampire, and a Cainite's first encounter with the Lupine threat is likely to end in Final Death.

Remember to use Abilities and *Lores* to help keep the night mysterious, and remember that different *Lore* Abilities may be more or less accurate. For example, a Cainite with four levels in *Occult* might suspect that lycanthropes are real and that garlic and silver affect them. One with three levels in *Lupine Lore* might know what Kindred have learned over the last three millennia — and about half of it may be more or less false. Finally, a Cainite with *Garou Lore* has an inkling of the "right stuff," knows the name of a tribe or two, the real story behind silver and perhaps even a little about the Triat ("What's a Wyrm?") and spirits. *Lore* shouldn't be free, though: A Kindred with *Garou Lore* probably has the scars to prove it, is not spreading around how she acquired it, and is likely to have an Ahroun hunting her or a Glass Walker Ragabash preparing to blackmail her three ways from Sunday unless she helps him steal the Influences he wants.

The different denizens of the World of Darkness have different agendas and different cultures; it's not out of line to compare the biases between groups to the sort of inculcated prejudice found in South Africa's apartheid days. After all, it may serve Kindred elders to claim that the Wild Ones are



frightening — adding a few gory tales that happened to the childe of his sire's uncle may keep the childer sufficiently frightened and thus unmotivated to go hunting the truth. The reverse holds true — a Lupine who has been told a thousand thousand times (each time more unpleasant than the last) how untrustworthy and horrific Leeches are, then actually meets one in an alley, is going to remember those stories first, not whatever the Leech is babbling as she tries to get away.

Lovers and spouses do not always reveal their deepest secrets to each other, which forms the premise of many a modern thriller. The same is true of companions and even the blood-bound in the Gothic Punk world, especially if the friend or thrall fears that the information might make her Kindred domitor unhappy. So the ghoul or thrall sneaks out to find her changeling sibling, and her domitor starts wondering where she's going. Does he follow her? Does he question her? Or does he let it slide under the weight of other worries? Kindred may interact with other creatures, but the information rarely comes with full disclosure or classroom credit.

The truly mighty powers of the World of Darkness, ranging from Garou Incarna spirits and sleeping Methuselahs to the Technocracy, labor to keep their secrets hidden from the prying eyes of mortal society. Consider the modern marvel of the Internet: While some supernatural creatures use computer networks, ranging from the Nosferatu SchreckNet or the Digital Web to Pentex's strange computer-spirit hybrid network, very few have succeeded in making the Web truly work for them. A young Lick's attempt to openly use the Internet to trade away secrets of Kindred society to other supernaturals might result in missing e-mail, strange server and router crashes and an ominous knock on the door in the middle of daysleep. Think of this balance of misinformation as being a delicate stasis, like that between several hostile nations, each "hidden master" wanting to be the one to pull the trigger at the time that best meets its own agenda, but before the other nations get the first shot.

PROBLEMS AND PRINCIPLES

When managing crossovers, Storytellers need to be aware of potential problem areas, including how much information is traded, relative power levels and intentional player-generated catastrophes. Each by itself can bring an evening's game to its knees.

Players should not readily trade away secrets of their clans to other supernatural allies unless they have very good reasons for doing so. As a Storyteller, encourage your players to be reasonable. If they are not, point out that their "students" may not understand everything because they do not have the background and context to do so. You may also require those learning about vampires to purchase *Kindred Lore* or *Vampire Lore*, or require that they also learn one or more "incorrect" facts for each "tutoring session." ("What do you mean, vampires can endure moonlight? My friend told me that they couldn't!")

Remember to be consistent when choosing to use the newer health levels. All characters should get access to the expanded health levels



presented in *Laws of the Night* unless you choose to use the compressed health levels from earlier *Mind's Eye Theatre* games. You must also moderate power levels: Few solitary Kindred can stand up to a raging Garou war-pack or a Renegade wraith with *Stonehand Punch*, while solitary Garou or Wraith players should feel understandably nervous about entering a Kindred Elysium. Work with your players in establishing guidelines for power levels as discussed below.

Finally, Storytellers must moderate the actions of "Apocalypse Now!" players, such as the disgruntled Caitiff who published maps of the next Elysium and mailed them to every Lupine in a four-state area. Beyond dealing with the carnage wrought by this wild-eyed fruitcake, you need a way to keep the story rolling without pulling out an unrealistic *deux ex machinae*. Perhaps locations change at the last minute, strategic car trouble strands the war party on the highway, or someone at Elysium gets a tip-off (perhaps one of those strange flashes that occur with *Auspex* or *Dementation*) that something is approaching. As a Storyteller, you have a responsibility to create a sense of verisimilitude, of authenticity. Allowing a single player to blow up the city (and the game) singlehandedly does not help in creating this atmosphere.

STORYTELLER CHARACTER CROSSES

You have the most control over crossover Storyteller characters, including their statistics, personalities, roles and what they actually do for the players in your game. They should be doing more than simply handing out plot — consider that these are more of the World of Darkness (remember that first word), and people aren't there solely to dish out tasty clues and gracefully exit stage left.

When creating Storyteller characters, avoid the temptation to create "über-NPCs," the mighty monsters that can squish any annoying player character like a grape. Many times you won't need them, especially not for simple interaction. One rule of thumb is to ensure that these characters don't have too many more Traits than the most powerful player character that they may oppose. You may even want weaker, more numerous opponents: Even a powerful elder with *Fleetness* and *Puissance* may run out of Traits when faced with a mob of angry vampire-hunters with just a smattering of *True Faith*.

Balance what the Storyteller characters can do against what the players can do. If Lupine Storyteller characters can find the characters' Elysium easily, consider letting the characters occasionally disturb a late-night moot at a smaller caern. Do not let your players cultivate the belief that your crossover Storyteller characters are more important than the player characters themselves; that leads to players feeling powerless. On that same note, letting the characters run roughshod without too much interference will make them cocksure that they can take down anything. Sure, that Kinfolk girl who wouldn't answer the coterie's questions went down pretty easily, but it's a certain bet that her angry Garou mate and his pack aren't going to be quite such a pushover.



Statistics do not make up a Storyteller character's personality, especially for crossover characters. For many Storyteller characters you may not even have well-developed sheets, but may instead rely upon a line or two jotted down in a notebook or on index cards: "The Quick Corner clerk is a punkish, tattooed older teen with a shock of red hair. She seems confident and self-assured, with a steely gleam in her jaded but young eyes. She is actually a changeling, an Unseelie redcap wilder, with Basic-level Arts." You can often make simple characters seem more real when you focus on mannerisms, styles of dress and speech habits. Maybe our above example redcap clerk has a habit leaving her hightops untied, or drops an automatic (not necessarily sincere) apology when she curses. If the character is interesting to interact with, no one's going to much care how butch her sheet is.

When you do decide to give statistics to your crossover Storyteller characters, go sparingly on *Lores* and special Abilities. Most Garou do not realize that the Kindred's fabled weakness to wooden stakes is real, and noble sidhe changelings who knew the Prodigal races of the Dark Ages will be at a loss to understand the Giovanni or modern anarchs. To avoid spoiling the mood of mystery and danger, you should generally try to avoid mixed-genre "killer combinations," such as the angry Black Fury war-machine who has both the *Luna's Armor* Gift and the changeling *Oakenshield* and *Quicksilver* cantrips cast on her, or the Risen who has more sorcerous enchantments and wards than a bad Aleister Crowley imitation. These latter start looking like the Uber-NPCs we warned you about earlier.

It's easy to focus on the full-blooded supernaturals as being a worthy challenge, but the mortal relatives of these creatures can prove even more interesting for crossover use. Werewolf Kinfolk and changeling kinain are often more common than their full-powered relatives, and Consorts of wraiths are certainly more accessible than their ghostly associates. Often these people make useful "nice old man down the street" crossovers, which are more roleplaying-oriented than the usual clash-of-titans encounters, because they have limited but useful knowledge and because player characters are more likely to see them as a resource or ally instead of as competition. Should the players mistreat these "weak" ones, though, the supernatural kin of the oppressed are certain to come looking for the player characters.

You may also want to use Storyteller characters drawn from the psychics, sorcerers, shamans and priests described in *Laws of the Hunt* and *Laws of the Hunt Players' Guide*. Want to up the ante for your Tremere who have been less than helpful regarding mortal activities? Let them uncover a coven of mortal sorcerers who are now using Kindred as sacrifices to summon infernal help with the *Daimonis* Praxis. Want your Gangrel to find an unusual *voudoun*-like rural cult as the start of a larger plot? Use a shamanistic Uzoma *babalawo* or sorcerous Uzoma *bokor*. Want to create a rival for a particularly seductive Toreador? Consider a Fenian sorceress with the *Fascination* Praxis. These sorts of characters have an edge that will be unexpected, particularly if your targets have usually looked down on mortals before.



Kindred will occasionally have allies and retainers who are supernatural creatures themselves. Ghouls are described in *Liber des Goules*. You may use *Oblivion* for wraiths for the Spirit Mentor Merit or as servitors of Giovanni or Harbingers of Skulls. Be careful to limit chronicle-bending Arcanoi like *Obliviate* or *Cupitatis*, and remember that a Cainite can force a wraith to become Incorporeal and unable to affect the real world by simply waving her arms and running through the wraith. If you have a Kiasyd in your Sabbat chronicle, it makes sense that Unseelie changelings (maybe even the Shadow Court) make an appearance at some point. Remember, though, that Kindred have a high Banality and any changeling who drinks Cainite vitae gains Banality and is well on the way to becoming a Typhoid Dauntain. While even Gangrel are unlikely to have Garou allies or retainers, they might occasionally have Kinfolk in those roles, which puts the Kinfolk in an uneasy balancing act between the Leech who's her brother and the Garou who demand her loyalties. Mortal psychic and sorcerers will also occasionally serve Kindred, though the Tremere chantry that attempts to totally control a dozen mortal sorcerers in an Ancient Order of the Aeon Rite coven is asking for repeat of the drama whereby Tremere himself became a vampire, with the Tremere as the main course.

When creating a retainer or ally, use the description under the *Allies* Background: The ally or retainer has as many Abilities as the player character has Traits in the *Allies* Background. For other Storyteller characters, you might be a little more generous, depending on how mature your chronicle has grown. For a competent Storyteller character foe or independent plot character, start by assigning three to six Attribute Traits to the two Attributes that are not primary (e.g., Physical traits for a Tremere or a mortal psychic), one to four levels for appropriate Abilities and about the same level of special powers like Gifts, Arts, Arcanoi or Numina; base special abilities on the player characters' average, comparing spent experience. If the Storyteller character is very competent, consider adding a few more Attribute Traits to her primary Attribute. For maximum traits for mortals, you can use either 10 Traits (*The Camarilla Guide*) or eight Traits (*Laws of the Hunt*, *Laws of the Hunt Players' Guide*), based on what sort of competency you want the players to encounter. For other supernatural creatures, adjust accordingly, based on how much experience the player characters have: Unless it's going to serve the needs of the story, a character that is too weak may not last long. If time is short, you can always simply modify an existing template, such as those in the Portrait Gallery from *The Camarilla Guide* or the Rogues' Gallery in *The Sabbat Guide*.

PLAYER CHARACTER CROSSOVERS

When you allow players to mix Kindred and other types of creatures in a game, you will find that you have a whole new set of concerns to address, including balancing power levels, maintaining novelty and creating new external threats. For example, allowing combat-oriented Garou Ahrouns into a salon-style game set in an Elysium may quickly reduce both your in-



game Kindred population and your out-of-game number of players. On the other hand, bringing in three weak Rank One Garou into an elder game may prove futile for your werewolf players. Search to find both a balance point and a reason why the two disparate cultures are working together, and work to keep your game from becoming a hunting expedition for other player characters. You will also find that you need to work harder to keep a sense of mystery; Kindred shouldn't be able to name every changeling kith, Garou tribe or network of psychics and sorcerers on a whim. Enlist the aid of your more experienced players in this; they may help you in spreading strategic disinformation ("Of course Bone Gnawers and Glass Walkers are the same tribe; so are the Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords").

Finally, do not forget to include the genre-specific threats that each crossover character may face. If your Garou characters start talking about how to wipe out the Camarilla court without breaking a sweat, consider throwing a major Pentex plot at them so that the Garou need Cainite help. If your changelings plan to re-write everyone's perceptions in a Sabbat game, you might introduce a Black Magician Dauntain who is ghoulded to the Tzimisce ductus who leads a rival pack. If your wraiths are so proud that no one in the local Camarilla court can touch them while they use *Stonehand Punch* across the Shroud, a cabal of mortal necromancers or a few Giovanni should knock them off their high horse.

THE MANY WORLDS

There are many layers to the spirit worlds, as described in *Laws of the Wild*, *Laws of the Hunt* and *Laws of the Hunt Players' Guide*. One rough way of classifying these worlds is to call the lands of the dead the "Low Umbra," the realms of elementals and nature spirits the "Middle Umbra" and rarefied heights of abstract concepts the "High Umbra," as described in *The Book of Worlds*. The closest parts of each of these Umbrae are called the "Periphery." Wraiths normally interact with the living world from the Shadowlands, which are the Periphery of the Low Umbra. Lupines, nature spirits and elementals often use the Penumbra, which is the periphery of the Middle Umbra. Kindred, mortal sorcerers and mages occasionally use the periphery of the High Umbra, which Kindred and sorcerers often call the astral plane and Awakened willworkers call the Vulgate.

A vampire using *Psychic Projection* normally enters the astral plane or Vulgate. If he wanders too far or his silver cord is broken, however, he may become lost and find himself in the Penumbra or Shadowlands. Conflict in either can be disastrous, as a Cainite uses Mental Traits in lieu of Physical Traits, but wraiths and Garou use Physical Traits for "physical" combat. A strong Lupine or Spectre may rend the Cainite's psyche into small pieces, trapping the Cainite in torpor indefinitely.

WOLVES AT THE DOOR

Ancient and embittered enemies, vampires and werewolves have long fought for control of their respective territories. Werewolves, known as Garou to themselves and Lupines to Kindred, believe that Kindred are the embodiment



ment of a destructive and malignant evil known as the Wyrm. Despite this animosity, Kindred and Garou occasionally work together in secret for common goals or against common enemies.

Because of their knowledge of the wild and animal ways, Gangrel are the most likely Kindred to interact with the Garou and their Kinfolk without conflict, though Nosferatu occasionally encounter Bone Gnawers and their Kinfolk without (much) bloodshed. In the city, a Cainite is most likely to encounter the urban poor of the Bone Gnawer tribe and its Kinfolk or the techno-savvy Glass Walker tribe. If a Cainite is lucky, he might interact without excessive hostility with a peace-loving Child of Gaia, a contemplative Stargazer or a Native American-influenced Uktene who is more interested in magical knowledge than in slaying the hated ancestral foe personified by the Cainite. All bets are off with the other tribes. And Gaia help the Gangrel who crashes the sacred Garou gathering known as a moot — *Earth Meld* only helps a little when being chased by 20 nine-foot-tall killing-machines who want your blasphemous undead hide!

Part of this ancient animosity is the taint of death and destruction laid on every Cainite's soul by the Beast. Kindred and ghouls with three or fewer Humanity Traits smell of the Wyrm to Garou attempting to sense Wyrm-taint. Vampires on Paths of Enlightenment automatically stink of Wyrm-taint, regardless of the rating. The exception to this is *Path of the Feral Heart*, which is treated like Humanity for purposes of Wyrm detection.

Vampires who drink Lupine vitae are in for an unpleasant surprise. Each Blood Trait counts as two, but the Cainite suffers from the Negative Mental Trait *Impatient* until the blood is used (and should roleplay the restless, verge-of-frenzy tension that's rolling through him in the meanwhile) and gets one Trait added to the difficulty of any tests for frenzy. Blood cycles through, so the last blood in (the most recently drunk) becomes the last blood out. A number of vampires even hunt Lupines for their blood as some have claimed that Lupine blood grants speed and strength no different than that granted by *Celerity* or *Potence*. In truth — and no Kindred should know this — the effect is based on the werewolf's *Pure Breed* Background. On the turn after the Kindred spends the Lupine blood that came from a werewolf with Pure Breed, she gains extra actions and Strength-related Traits, as below:

Pure Breed	Effect
1	One additional action
2	1 additional action, 1 Strength Trait
3	2 additional actions, 1 Strength Trait
4	2 additional actions, 2 Strength Traits
5	3 additional actions, 3 Strength Traits



These effects will add to existing *Celerity* and *Potence*, but aren't cumulative: If a Kindred spends a Blood Trait from a werewolf with *Pure Breed* 1 and another from one with *Pure Breed* 3 in the same turn, the only first blood to be spent adds effects. Any effects from Garou blood last only for the first turn following the expenditure.

Garou who imbibe Cainite blood aren't in much better shape. A Lupine can be ghouled (and gains one level of Potence like any other ghoul). He can also be blood bound, although getting a Garou to sit still long enough to drink vampire blood and keep it in his system is a feat indeed. Most Garou would rather force themselves to vomit the noxious fluid up than swallow it: The blood of the undead is a mockery of all things natural. A Garou who drinks Cainite vitae or has it forced into her body becomes Wyrm-tainted. Fortunately, a *Rite of Cleansing* is usually sufficient to remove the blood and the Wyrm-taint.

In the spirit world known as the Umbra or Middle Umbra, the Garou classify spirits who are influenced by the Wyrm as "Banes." When Kindred indulge in the Beast through violence, bloodshed or corruption, their activities often attract Banes. Banes normally do not affect Kindred — attempts by Banes to possess Kindred usually result in trapped Banes — but will instead hang out to wait for the spiritual fallout of Kindred lusts and desires.

Because of their supernatural heritage, Kindred may find that their Disciplines interact differently with Lupines and other shapeshifters than with mortals or other Kindred.

Disciplines from *Laws of the Night*:

- **Animalism:** Kindred with *Feral Whispers* will not understand the Garou tongue, although they can communicate as wolves. No power that specifically affects animals will affect a Garou or other Changing Breed, not even *Lupus* or animal breed forms. Garou have Beasts (expressed in their Rage Traits) and may be affected by powers that draw on the Beast.
- **Celerity:** Lupines can use Rage to match the extra actions that a Cainite can gain from *Celerity*.
- **Dementation: Voice of Madness:** A Cainite using *Voice of Madness* can force a Lupine to test for fox frenzy; the Lupine tests its Willpower against its Rage.
- **Obfuscate:** *Obfuscate* works like it does against other creatures. Enhanced-senses Gifts can attempt to pierce it in the same manner that *Auspex* does (use the Garou's rank in place of the *Auspex* rating, but the challenge remains the same).
- **Protean:** Kindred in wolf form via *Shape of the Beast* cannot understand the Garou tongue and will not smell quite right to a Garou's senses.

Garou Gifts

- **Healing:** Garou healing Gifts like *Mother's Touch* are meant to work on living creatures, which a Kindred assuredly is not. Gifts that mend inanimate things also cannot heal a vampire.
- **Heightened Senses:** Garou may use the *Heightened Senses* Gift to pierce Kindred powers of *Chimerstry* or *Obfuscate*; treat these instances



according to the "Case Law" or "Relative Power Level" crossover rules in *Laws of the Night*.

- **Resist Toxin:** While it won't keep a Garou from being ghoulded or blood bound, it does give the werewolf the opportunity to make a soak attempt against *Quietus*, *Thanatosis* and other Disciplines that work through blood contact, disease or decay.
- **Scent of Running Water:** This Gift can be broken with *Auspex* if the vampire attempts to track the Garou by scent (use the *Auspex* versus *Obfuscate* challenge mechanic — the Garou's Rank replaces the Discipline rating).
- **Scent of the True Form:** On a win (but not a tie), a Garou can sense a Kindred who has used *Possession* or *Subsume the Spirit* to possess a mortal or animal vessel.
- **Sense Magic:** *Sense Magic* will detect the presence of blood magics like *Thaumaturgy* and *Dark Thaumaturgy*, but not the use of other Cainite Disciplines.

ABOMINATIONS — THE BLIGHTED ONES

Most attempts to Embrace werewolves end in failure — the werewolf usually dies, grateful that her mother-goddess preserved her from a fate truly worse than death. Unfortunately, sometimes the Embrace takes hold in a Lupine. The result is rightly referred to as an Abomination.

Vampire werewolves are truly things that should not be. The Embrace cuts a werewolf's spirit away from the world's soul, literally ripping her out of the great cycle of life and denying her the very reason for which she lives. Despair usually sets in at some point, and suicide carries off more of these creatures than anything.

Abominations are created no differently than other Kindred, but the victim can make a last Gnosis Challenge in an attempt to avoid her fate. On a win, the victim dies quietly in the attempt and her spirit travels on. Should she tie, the Garou's spirit will still pass on, but it will be bloody and agonizing. On a loss, the Garou becomes an Abomination. No power short of divine intervention can affect this challenge.

Like any other vampire, an Abomination learns three levels of Disciplines and has the weakness of whatever clan Embraced her (or she could be Caitiff). Like any other vampire, she can heal herself or boost her Attributes with blood. That's where the benefits end.

An Abomination's spirit connections begin to wither almost immediately upon the Embrace. She cannot increase her Gnosis, nor can she heal herself like a werewolf — she must spend blood to do so. While she may remember the rites and Gifts she used before her change, she won't get the same results if she attempts to use them now. Her Gifts now only attract the attention of Wyrm-spirits due to her own state as an unclean thing. If she attempts to learn more Gifts or rites, she must learn them from Wyrm-spirits or Banes, and these are foul spirits who have no interest in dealing truthfully with an Abomination. Even the mightiest, most honored Garou elder becomes a pariah when she's Embraced and may well have some wrathful Garou after her to return her to the cycle.



COUNTING COUP — BLOOD POOLS

When vampires drink from sources other than the usual, they find themselves plagued with all manner of strange effects. What happens next is detailed with each particular creature, but in the mean time, the player needs to keep track of what blood is coming from where.

Let's say that a Gangrel named Odian got in a tussle with a local Glass Walker, and in the course of the fight, Odian sips one blood Trait from the Lupine to fuel his own flagging strength. When things have cooled slightly, Odian's player Mike takes a moment to chart out what his current blood pool looks like. At 11th generation, Odian has a pool of 12 and he drank one Trait of Lupine blood during the fight. After the fight, his pool looks like:

() () () () (L) (L) (X) (X) (X) (X)

The L's indicate the Lupine blood. You can mark it however you like, but the point is to indicate what's the stuff to watch and why. Until the blood cycles out, Odian feels like a tiger in a cage that's too small, having tapped into a little of the rage of the Lupines.

Later, Odian is at the Rack and finds a nice young lady to "cheer him up." He takes two Traits from her. His pool now looks like:

() () (X) (X) (L) (L) (X) (X) (X) (X)

About an hour later, Odian runs into the same Glass Walker, still spoiling for a fight. He uses four Blood Traits in the course of events. Here's the pool now:

() () () () () () (X) (X) (L) (L) (X)

If Odian finds another source of blood for the night, those Traits will go "on top." Odian is still feeling fidgety and will continue to do so until the Lupine blood finally cycles out. This process works for any sort of "odd" blood.

Abominations may not spend blood in the same turn that they spend Gnosis or Rage or make Rage or Gnosis Challenges. The mystical qualities of the three pools interfere with each other drastically. An Abomination has a blood pool commensurate with her generation.

Abominations have been rightly called the most miserable of creatures — they live with a permanent, debilitating depression that cannot be lifted by Willpower or other means. They may never expend Willpower for retests. Their Humanity Traits often plummet fairly quickly, consigning them to death or the Beast. They may never buy further Humanity, Willpower or Virtue Traits with experience — their psyches are considered to be constantly eroding, and maintaining status quo is about all they can manage. Where an Abomination goes after death, no one is certain. Does Gaia accept them back after their time in Hell, or are they cut out of the great cycle forever? The answer may be forever a mystery.

These monsters are considered vicious, powerful and, above all, rare foes. The appearance of one should send shockwaves, not bored yawns.



DREAMS IN DARKNESS

Though the fae spirits of old now walk the streets clad in mortal flesh as changelings, they still remember Kindred as one of their "Prodigal" races. Even though changelings can sometimes be detected by *Aura Perception*, fewer Kindred know of the Kithain; the exceptions are normally Malkavians and the Kiasyd of the Sabbat. While most of this can be attributed to simple, "I don't believe in faeries," there are magical causes as well. This forgetfulness is partly because a Cainite must be "enchanted" in order to even see the Kithain fully, and partly because after an enchantment fades the Mists of the Dreaming erase the memories of what happened while enchanted from mortals, Kindred and others, the Kindred of Malkavian blood as the sole exception.

Changelings can enchant Kindred in several different ways. Kiasyd with *Fae Sight* are always enchanted. A Cainite can be enchanted if a changeling convinces her to freely accept a token of enchantment. Feeding from a changeling can also enchant a Cainite (if the changeling made the offer and the Kindred accepted), and at Storyteller discretion may induce any number of weird effects, from hallucinations to derangements. Malkavians who feed on changelings are freed from the effects of one derangement but must win or tie a Simple Test with a Narrator to avoid developing an addiction to the heady vitae — and a Cainite with a craving for Kithain blood is rarely welcome in changeling freeholds. A Cainite normally stays enchanted for one day per Glamour Trait invested in a token of enchantment or one day per blood trait ingested; Staying in a changeling glade or freehold can prolong this. As long as the vampire has one Trait of changeling blood in her system, she can see chimerical reality.

When a Cainite passes from enchantment to mundane reality; or when he is slain by chimerical monsters, weapons or magic; he normally falls into a torpor with the duration based upon his Banality. For most Kindred this can last up to two months. A Cainite may avoid falling into this torpor when enchantment slips away by spending a Willpower Trait (Malkavians need not spend this trait — they automatically avoid this torpor). If slain chimerically, though, a Cainite is "out for the count," as described in *The Shining Host*.

Kindred are undead creatures with an unnatural, rigid stasis; they do not grow and live. Because of this, many Kindred harbor high levels of the Banality that can be so lethal to changelings. As described in *The Shining Host*, Malkavian and Ravnos Kindred normally have six Traits of Banality, mortals have six or seven Banality Traits, and other Kindred, including Kiasyd, have eight or nine Traits of Banality. You may choose to adjust the amount of Banality for factors such as high Humanity, Path ratings or youth.

Banality can prove dangerous to changelings and deadly to chimerical companions. By her sheer unmoving presence, a stodgy and unbelieving Ventrite elder may dissipate a changeling's chimerical arms and armor and slay the changeling's chimerical companions. If a change-



ling is foolish or unlucky enough to drink Cainite vitae, she can become a ghoul (or even blood bound) and also gains one Trait of temporary Banality for every Cainite blood trait ingested. If you want to further emphasize the cold and unnatural presence of Kindred, you might grant one Trait of temporary Banality every hour that a changeling spends in the company of 10 or more Kindred.

Though the powers of the blood of Caine and the cantrips of the faerie Dreaming are different, several Disciplines may interact with the chimera reality of changelings:

- As described under *Mytherceria*, *Fae Sight* allows Kiasyd to see and interact with changelings.
- The illusions created by *Chimerstry* remain as incidental chimera even after they fade to mundane perception. Sluagh may use their Sharpened Senses (and a Mental Challenge) to attempt to pierce *Chimerstry* illusions.
- A Cainite attempting to use *Aura Perception* on a changeling may perceive what he's seeing by the changeling's particular aura—it shows itself as bright, flickering colors. High *Auspex* can also counter *Chicanery* in the same way that *Auspex* and *Obfuscate* can counter each other.
- Most changelings are affected by *Obfuscate* no differently than any other creature. Sluagh may attempt to pierce these with their Sharpened Senses and a Mental Challenge.
- Kindred claws and teeth inflict aggravated damage on changelings. However, changelings can inflict aggravated damage with any cantrip that inflicts direct damage on their targets, such as *Holly Strike*. This damage works no differently than any other aggravated damage.

THE DEAD AND THE DAMNED

Death is not always final in the Gothic-Punk world. Those dead who are bound by their passions and remorse can become wraiths, condemned to spend eternity fighting against entropy and the forces of Oblivion. Others become Spectres, the servants of Oblivion. As walking undead who may exist for centuries, Kindred frequently become allies and pawns in the games that the Restless Dead play.

Oblivion-serving Spectres cannot easily see the Skinlands, the lands of the living. Wraiths belonging to the Hierarchy are theoretically prohibited from contacting mortals (although Charon's prohibition is honored more in the breach than practice). The wraiths of the illicit Guilds, the rebellious Renegades and fanatical Heretics may be the ones Kindred encounter most. With the advent of the storm winds of the Sixth Great Maelstrom, many of these wraiths cannot easily approach Kindred unless the Kindred venture into a place in the lands of the living that correspond to a safe haven from the storms in the Shadowlands, such as a cemetery that corresponds to a Hierarchy Necropolis or an abandoned house that serves as the Haunt belonging to a Circle of Renegades. Wraiths are separated from mortals by a barrier of emotion and mortal disbelief in ghosts called the Shroud. It is this barrier that wraiths and



vampires must pierce if they wish to interact with each other. The Shroud thins in places where mortal belief encourages the idea of ghosts: graveyards, foggy roads, old attics, certain nights of the year — and thickens where it does not: parking lots, shopping malls. Many Kindred havens and hangouts often have moderate Shroud ratings.

Of the forbidden Guilds, the four Guilds teaching the Arcanoi of *Embody*, *Outrage*, *Pandemonium* and *Puppetry* are the most likely to interact with Kindred, though many wraiths using these Arcanoi on Kindred belong to no Guild. With *Embody*, wraiths may manifest to Kindred; given the long undead "life" of most Kindred, they are a perfect consort for attunement for *Embody*. Spooks and Haunters using *Outrage* and *Pandemonium* often haunt Kindred because of the Pathos they gain from tormenting vampires. Kindred are particularly vulnerable to frenzies induced by illusions of blood created with *Foul Humor* or windows opened in a haven by *Death's Touch*. Finally, practitioners of the *Puppetry* Arcanos find that attuning a Cainite results in a wonderfully long-lasting Consort for possession.

Wraiths may use their powers of Deathsight, Lifesight and Sharpened Senses to examine Kindred; Spectres normally cannot, unless they have the Arcanoi known as *Shroud Rending*. When looking for a Cainite who has hidden herself in a crowd of mortals, a wraith can easily spot her by her signs of arrested death using the wraith's own Deathsight. A wraith may also use Lifesight to perform a form of *Aura Perception*; the paler aura of most Kindred usually reveals them for what they are. Finally, a wraith may use Sharpened Senses to pierce Cainite *Chimerstry* or *Obfuscate* as if the wraith had the basic levels of *Auspex*.

Wraiths usually associate with vampires as haunts or spirit mentors. Haunts may occasionally be extremely hostile and dedicated to a Cainite's destruction, but this is rare. Many haunts either have a Kindred as a Fetter or are using the Kindred as a source of Pathos. Vampires have a way of creating wraiths, and it only takes one careless feeding for a Kindred to have a companion that will never leave. As much as a wraith might hate the vampire who created her, she is unlikely to destroy that Fetter. Her Shadow, on the other hand, is not quite so particular. A wraith that uses Kindred as a source of Pathos, on the other hand, may not be as sentimental about keeping the Cainite around. If, however, she has put in the time and effort into attuning the Cainite for *Embody* or *Pandemonium*, she is unlikely to destroy the Cainite out-of-hand; instead she will focus on making the Cainite's life as miserable as her creativity allows (and with the right Arcanoi, she can make forever seem like a very long time indeed). In turn, a Cainite can cause problems for a wraith by the simple expedient of running through the location where the wraith is standing, temporarily disrupting the wraith and costing it a Corpus Trait as the wraith becomes incorporeal.

A wraith who aids a Cainite with the *Spirit Mentor* Merit is much more helpful. Though rarely possessing Arcanoi beyond the basics, wraithly mentors provide the Cainite with extra eyes and ears. In turn, the wraith probably



gains Pathos or other aid from the Cainite, or protects the Cainite as a Fetter. *Spirit Mentors* are almost always wraiths, though it is not unheard that the occasional Spectre might use *Shroud Rending* and manipulate a Cainite to tend to its Spectre cult.

When creating a haunt or a spirit mentor, remember that the wraith's personality is more important than his statistics. *Oblivion* is the obvious tool for building a wraith. For game balance, you probably do not want to assign the Storyteller character wraith more than Intermediate *Embody* (*Life-in-Death*) or Intermediate *Pandemonium* (*Foul Humor*), and you probably do not want to exceed Basic levels for other Arcanoi unless you have a high-powered game. Remember to determine why and how the wraith decided to associate with Kindred. If you're feeling sadistic, you might even assign a wraith's Psyche to help a Kindred and its Shadow to destroy her.

Some vampires will have more truck with the Shadowlands than others. Giovanni, Harbingers of Skulls and the rare Nagaraja all interact with the lands of the dead. Solitary Heretic and Renegade Wraiths tend to fear these Kindred because of the powers granted them by Necromancy. In turn, these Kindred are usually smart enough to avoid angering the Hierarchy leadership or powerful Circles of Renegades or Heretics. After all, no Cainite wants to wake up from daysleep in mid-afternoon as the local wraiths dismantle her haven board by board.

A few wraiths learn how to reanimate their bodies in the Skinlands, driven by a need or passion so fierce that they could literally not stay buried. These Risen often find it easy to hide among Kindred, as they exhibit many of the same outward signs as a vampire. Since Risen can learn the Disciplines of *Celerity*, *Potence*, *Fortitude* and *Obfuscate*, they are often remarkably successful at infiltrating Camarilla courts or anarch gangs; a few pass themselves off as Sabbat, taking advantage of the opportunity of random destruction to cover their own tracks. Many times, a Risen can hide successfully until someone tries to put the bite on her — the resultant mouthful of embalming fluids (or curdled blood and vinegar) is enough to sicken the unwary, not to mention enraging the Risen.

Kindred are not happy creatures. Wraiths who constantly follow Kindred through the night risk acquiring Angst and the rise of their darker side, the Shadow. If you want to further emphasize the taint of Oblivion on Kindred, you might grant one trait of temporary Angst for every hour that a wraith spends in the company of 10 or more Kindred.

Unless the vampire has met both Shadow and Psyche, or has appropriate knowledge (*Wraith Lore*), she is unlikely to know when the Shadow has come to visit as opposed to the wraith. Some Shadows do have obvious differences about them (a gray dove that accompanies them, cat-slit eyes), many times the changes between dark and light persona are so subtle that only a long-time associate might notice them — a sneer in place of a smile, humor with a hint of cruelty. It's in the Shadow's interest to string the vampire along and not let her in on the change, the better to make mischief. Indeed, some Shadows may live independently when their



wraiths fall into Slumber, sneaking out to make all sorts of associations that the wraith has no idea about.

Kindred who suffer Final Death occasionally become wraiths, though normally they do not return as Risen. Rising requires that the body be reasonably intact, and vampire bodies often crumble to dust from immense age. There are two glaring exceptions to this — Kindred who have reached Golconda or been diablerized never become wraiths. Of course, a Giovanni who wakes up as a newly unCauled wraith usually hightails it back to his old Cainite family post haste lest the news of his passing bring out some old enemies.

Lastly, wraiths cannot be fed from, ghouléd or Embraced, even if they are Embodied. *Nihilistics*, a strange Discipline used only by the rare Nagaraja bloodline, allows a vampire to feast on a wraith via *Soul Feasting*.

Kindred Disciplines

- *Ash Path Necromancy*: A vampire must have the first level of *Ash Path Necromancy* (*Shroudsight*) to see past the Shroud. A wraith attempting to hide in the Shadowlands through an Arcanos from an observer in the living world tests against either the vampire's *Auspex* or *Ash Path* rating, whichever is higher.
- *Auspex*: A wraith who is materialized or *Embody*ed can be read with *Aura Perception*. As wraiths are pure emotion, their auras do not halo around them — instead, their forms shimmer with color. Risen auras read no differently than other vampire's. Some claim that the Shadow can be seen as a muddy blot upon the aura of any wraith or Risen, but the claim remains unverified.
- *Obfuscate*: All wraiths may attempt to see through *Obfuscate*, using *Lifesight* and a Mental Challenge.

Arcanoi

- *Embody*: *Embody*ed wraiths are affected by all Disciplines that can affect ordinary mortals (*Dominate*, *Presence*). Arcanoi normally hampered by the Shroud work without interference.
- *Fatalism*: This Arcanos does not always work on those across the Shroud, especially Kindred (spend another Mental Trait in challenges). When it does work, though, the results can be very... interesting. *Fatal Vision* allows the wraith to witness the vampire's Embrace, the end of his mortal life.
- *Keening*: At Storyteller discretion, an *Embody*ed wraith may spend a Willpower (in addition to any other expenses) and perform *Requiem*, which may force a vampire into or out of frenzy.
- *Molate*: *Vicissitude* and *Molate* are nothing alike, although they are very similar in ideas. *Molate* works only on wraithly plasm while *Vicissitude* works only flesh (*Embody* doesn't count here). While an irritated Tzimisce may perform *Vicissitude* on the body a wraith happens to *Skinride*, it has no effect on the wraith.
- *Outrage*: *Death's Touch* may start fires that ignite clothing but not undead flesh. *Obliviate* works as usual on vampires and may be soaked with *Fortitude*.



- **Pandemonium:** Any blood created with this Arcanos is completely unusable to vampires and will even induce intense bouts of vomiting if consumed. A vampire targeted by *Tempus Fugit* cannot gain further extra actions with *Celerity*, but *Tempus Fugit* can negate additional *Celerity* actions.
- **Phantasm:** This Arcanos affects vampires no differently than mortals — they can be pulled into dreamscapes and acted on. While in dreamscape, Kindred may not spend blood or use Disciplines.
- **Puppetry:** If the Kindred is aware of its effects, she can make a Willpower Challenge, or spend two Willpower, to attempt to force the wraith out. If commands issued by Dominate and Puppetry conflict, the vampire issuing the command and the wraith go to a Willpower Challenge. The loser cannot attempt to override the winner's commands until the following night.
- **Usury:** This cannot be used to steal blood, or to steal or restore health levels from one Kindred to another.

BLOOD AND MAGIC

True willworkers, mages are rarer than their partially Awakened hedge wizard counterparts. This may be good for Cainite society; a confederacy of Technocratic willworkers was partly responsible for the destruction of the Ravnos Antediluvian. Several factions of mortal mages are aware of Kindred, and a few of these are openly hostile. The Order of Hermes, for example, still holds animosity toward the Kindred of Clan Tremere, and both the Verbena and the Euthanatos consider Kindred to be unnatural abominations. The Technocracy would gladly destroy any Cainite who exposes the truth of vampiric existence to the masses (so long as a few study subjects are saved for the Progenitors). The infernalist Nephandi have studied the undead as well, perhaps even occasionally sharing infernal tutors....

A few mages may still seek out Cainite company for a variety of reasons, and that is where tragedy usually begins. Kindred resonate strongly with entropic energy. Any mage who travels too often in the company of Kindred risks acquiring entropic Resonance Traits, especially the taint of Jhor. While these Traits may help in certain castings, they mark the mage and lead other mortals to feel uncomfortable around the mage, as described in *Laws of Ascension*.

Kindred often ghoul those who provide them with useful services. While all ghouls are forced to trade away some of their Humanity and freedom for a shadow of Cainite power, mages risk more. The Avatar of a ghoulled mage becomes addicted to relying on the power of vampire blood. Lulled into a stupor, it slowly drifts into Oblivion. In a real sense, becoming a ghoul is the opposite of striving toward Ascension. The Embrace is even worse — as the Tremere painfully discovered, the Embrace extinguishes an Awakened Avatar and causes the mage to lose her abilities. While she might be more receptive to learning Thaumaturgy,



blood magic is a poor substitute for the Spheres. Most mages who find themselves in such a condition commit suicide shortly thereafter.

Some Storytellers may be tempted to let mages do almost anything imagined — resist the temptation. Remember that each mage has a paradigm that she must follow. For example, let's say that you are considering having a Storyteller character mage who can turn Kindred into lawnchairs. What is her paradigm? Is she Verbena? A Verbena might turn someone into a toad, temporarily, but not lawn ornaments. Order of Hermes? She is more likely to transform someone into a mythical beast than something found in a garden shop. In short, it's unlikely.

Can a Kindred be restored to mortality? Entirely possible, say the legends, but this takes the powers of a Master or Oracle of Sphere magic, and they have fled this world, with most barred from re-entering by the Avatar storm that shrieks incessantly on the other side of the Gauntlet. Even if one of these mighty ones could be found, the Effect is highly vulgar and the Paradox risk catastrophic. Magic can also be used to break a blood bond, whether a mortal's or vampire's, although this too is a risky proposition, one whose difficulty increases for every decade the bond has been in effect.

It is possible for a mage call on her Spheres to combat certain Kindred Disciplines, most often *Animalism*, *Dominate*, *Presence* and *Thaumaturgy*, an effort called countermagic. At Storyteller discretion, a mage may be able to counter specific Discipline powers that target the mind or soul with appropriate Spheres. To counter *Animalism*, *Dominate* or *Presence*, a mage must have Basic Mind, spend a Willpower Trait and make an Arete Challenge. To counter *Thaumaturgy*, the mage spends the Willpower and makes the Arete Challenge. By expending a Mental Trait, she may either interrupt a *Thaumaturgy* ritual or negate its effects after its completion.

Vampiric blood magic is relatively simple, being powered by Kindred vitae. While not as versatile as the Spheres, blood magic's static effects do not incur Paradox, and blood magic may be used to counter a mage's Effects. Those using *Thaumaturgy*, blood magic of Assamites or Setites, or Tzimisce *kolduns* make a Willpower Challenge against the mage in a countermagic attempt. A number of Tremere practice a specific path called *Thaumaturgical Countermagic (The Camarilla Guide)*, said to be quite effective in dealing with mage Effects.

- In challenges between *Auspex* versus illusion or invisibility rotes — or *Obfuscate* or *Chimerstry* versus sensory Effects — use the *Auspex* versus *Obfuscate* rule in *Laws of the Night*. The level of Sphere in use (or highest Sphere for combined effects) and the level of the Discipline are compared.

- Life magic does not affect vampires. Most *Life* Effects that work on a mortal body can be performed on a vampire using *Matter*. To heal a vampire, the mage must use *Matter* and *Prime* in a conjunctival Effect. The same rules of coincedence for healing a mortal with *Life* are in effect. Healing aggravated wounds is *always* vulgar.



- Any damaging Effect powered by Prime (except Life Effects) inflicts aggravated damage. An attack with Intermediate Prime or fire- or electricity-based Forces will also cause aggravated damage. Intermediate Forces and Basic Prime is necessary to create sunlight for an attack. Creating sunlight at night or calling sunlight from somewhere else on the planet are both vulgar.
- Vampire blood is worth Tass — two Traits of vampire blood equals one Trait of Tass. If used for this, wise mages collect the blood in a container.

PSYCHICS AND SHAMANS AND SORCERERS, OH MY!

Kindred were once mortals, and most regularly interact with the mortal world, even if only to feed. The World of Darkness holds many unusual creatures in addition to Kindred, Garou, changelings and wraiths, and mortal humans are often among the most surprising. *Liber des Goules* describes the roles of ghouls in mortal society. *Laws of the Hunt* and *Laws of the Hunt Players' Guide* describe psychics, sorcerers and clergy who also people the World of Darkness. If you use these sources, remember that ordinary mortals aren't as robust as Kindred and have a maximum of eight Physical, Social or Mental Traits if they have no supernatural abilities or heritage, and a maximum of nine Physical, Social or Mental traits if they have a supernatural heritage (ghoul, Kinfolk, Kinain) or have Numina.

PSYCHIC FRIENDS NETWORK

As the Storyteller, you can use *Laws of the Hunt* to prepare Storyteller characters or Narrate for players who have psychic powers, called Numina. You may also choose to create hedge wizards and shamans from *Laws of the Hunt* as well instead of using the more complex systems in *Laws of the Hunt Players' Guide*. Players who portray psychics can add a mortal flavor to a vampire game with their ability to walk in the daylight and use special powers such as *Psychometry* or *Telepathy*. Keep in mind, though, that the Cainite Embrace destroys psychic Numina, and the player of a psychic character may be frustrated at losing the months of experience that she has invested in the psychic power. Also remember that mortal psychics cannot heal as fast as Kindred and are more vulnerable to many environmental concerns, such as lack of air or temperature extremes. You may even want to emphasize the fear and uncertainty faced by mortal friends and allies of Kindred through the experiences of a relatively defenseless psychic character.

Certain Cainite Disciplines may interact strangely with psychic Numina:

- At higher levels, *Psychometry* often yields more potent images than a Cainite using *Auspex*'s power of the *Spirit's Touch* and can overwhelm the psychic.



- Normally, a psychic can use only the *Psychometry* power of *Flashback* on fresh corpses to determine manner of death; with a Cainite, though, a psychic can engage in the normal Static Mental Challenge and receive visions of her Embrace, even if it was not recent.
- A mortal with the *Telepathy* Numina may intercept and be intercepted by a Cainite with the *Auspex* power of *Telepathy* with a Static Mental Challenge. This can occasionally be unsettling for the Cainite who "overhears" a mortal using *Telepathy* to read an animal or a subject in another room.

SORCERERS, PRIESTS AND SHAMANS

You may also wish to introduce sorcerers, priests and shaman from *Laws of the Hunt Players' Guide*. These hedge wizards are usually more powerful than their counterparts from *Laws of the Hunt*. With 23 different Praxes from which to choose, these hedge wizards can be enchanters, shapechangers or necromancers, and can imitate several of the powers that Kindred usually associate with certain clans, such as a Brujah or Toreador's *Presence* or a Lasombra's *Obtenebration*. Typically, a mortal hedge wizard's power is weaker than that of his Cainite counterparts in the Tremere and Tzimisce clans, and humans have fewer maximum Traits than Kindred, but mortals can often do what Kindred cannot easily do, such as summon spirits or angels and demons with Praxes like *Spirit Calling* or *Daimonis*. With their powers, numbers and mortal organizations, mortal sorcerers can often prove to be able-bodied assistants or harsh foes of the Tremere or Tzimisce *kolduns*.

Sorcerous Praxes occasionally interact with Cainite Disciplines:

- Demonic forces summoned with the *Dark Thaumaturgy* ritual of *Call Forth the Host* are very vulnerable to control by the mortal Praxis of *Daimonis*, especially powers such as *Dolor* and *Truce*.
- Obviously a mortal using *Hellfire* causes a Cainite witnessing its use to make a *Courage* test or enter *Rötschreck*. The difficulty of the test depends on how much fire the mortal creates.
- A Cainite with *Auspex* may see through the powers of the Praxis of *Illusion* as if he were attempting to pierce the phantasms of *Chimerstry*.
- A mortal with the *Mentalis* Praxis may intercept, and be intercepted by, a Cainite with the *Auspex* power of *Telepathy* with a Static Mental Challenge.

CROSSOVER LOCALES

You may decide to run a game mixing Kindred with other supernaturals. If you do decide to allow large-scale crossover, be careful and consistent when you choose where and when the crossover takes place. Some creatures are inherently antagonistic; Lupines and Kindred have long battled to destroy each other, so setting your scenes in someone's haven or Garou caern is asking for trouble. The same applies to changelings as well; few motleys or households will allow undead Prodigals to step into their freehold.

Kindred might rub shoulders with other supernaturals in many settings, such as an Elysium, the "Rack," a club or a place of mutual



interest, like an art gallery. Many troupes set crossover games in the Elysium for Camarilla-controlled cities. This may or may not be a good thing, as conflict often breaks out when Kindred and others mix. A more neutral or open location, where the Masquerade makes conflict a definite no-no might work better. The local Cainite feeding grounds may also be a good choice for crossovers, especially if the common feeding grounds, often called "the Rack," are not controlled by any one agency; a particular club or restaurant in the Rack might serve as a common place to find other supernaturals. In the case of wraiths, you'll need a place where the Shroud is thinner, or your players will spend the better part of the game trying to pierce the Shroud instead of interacting.

Wherever the setting happens to land, you'll need to work with your players in managing the "common ground." There's more to such a spot than merely walking in and ordering a Type O cocktail and elderberry wine on the rocks? Who's part of the nightly business of the place? What happens if someone tries to take over the place by using Influences, or trying to buy or bully it outright? Does the owner/operator realize that her place is becoming the hot spot for the local supernaturals? If yes, is she doing anything about it? If no, how is she being kept in ignorance? Most importantly, why should one group of supernaturals not gang up on the other group in the middle of this common spot? This last could go back to your plotline, it could be something settled by the setting, or even by how your critters interact.

CONCLUSION

Crossover events are one of the tools that you can use in painting the World of Darkness for your players. Use crossovers to increase the mystery and tension for your troupe, and work with them to keep things fresh. Be wary of too much knowledge — if you find the Ventrite and Toreador primogen discussing the Litany or Escheat, you know that you may have let things go too far (and it's pretty difficult to pull back when that's happened). Consider carefully how much crossover your game can take; dogs and cats living together (i.e., Kindred and Garou living in sin) is definitely a sign of too much. Remember that good drama changes the characters whom it touches, unlike melodrama, where characters return to the same setting the next game session as if it were a fanged sitcom — therefore, strive for good drama when bringing in new supernaturals, and avoid "monster of the week" plots. Use crossovers to emphasize the themes in your troupe's games. For example, emphasize the importance of Humanity and the inhumanity of Kindred when a sidhe of House Fiona falls in love with the Toreador primogen who feels the flickerings of love for the first time in years... and then accidentally frenzies on her lover in the throes of a passionate embrace. Perhaps a Risen seeks justice for the murder of his lover, but his justice requires the death of a particular Kindred.



Crossovers can mean a great deal of work and aggravation, and you don't need to take it on if you don't want to. Ignore player gripes if this goes outside the stories you want to tell — no one said you had to have a Bastet Abomination kept chained to the prince's throne on a velvet cushion. On the other hand, crossovers can mean opportunities to build stories rich with depth and complexity. This isn't about steel-cage matches between Brujah and Get of Fenris, although sometimes a good slug-fest can be therapeutic. Nor should the Nosferatu and sluagh regularly walk in and out of each other's warrens. It should be about how two very different worlds view each other, the tensions between them, and how mutual respect can eventually develop.

		ABILITIES
MERITS & FLAWS		
DISPILINES		
INFLUENCES		
BACKGROUND		HUMANITY/DATH
CONSCIENCE/CONVICTION		Mind's Eye Theatre
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>		VAMPIRE
SELF-CONTROL/INSTINCT		STORYTELLER'S GUIDE
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>		NAME: _____
COURAGE		CHARACTER: _____
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>		CHRONICLE: _____
BLOOD		CLAN: _____
<input type="radio"/>		GENERATION: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>		AGE: _____
WILLPOWER		NATURE: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>		DEMEANOR: _____