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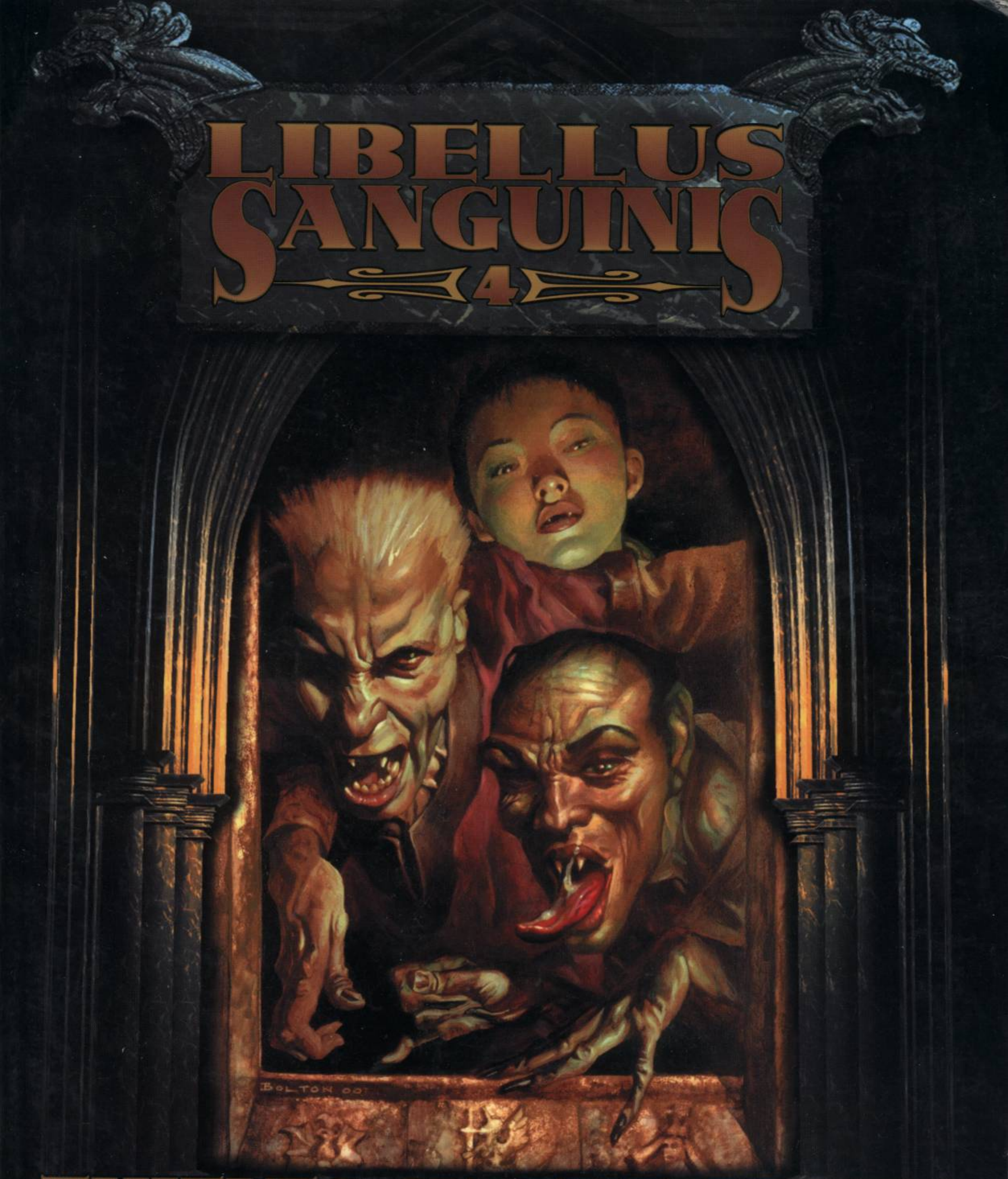

THIEVES IN THE NIGHT

A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES®

LIBELLUS SANGUINIS™ 4

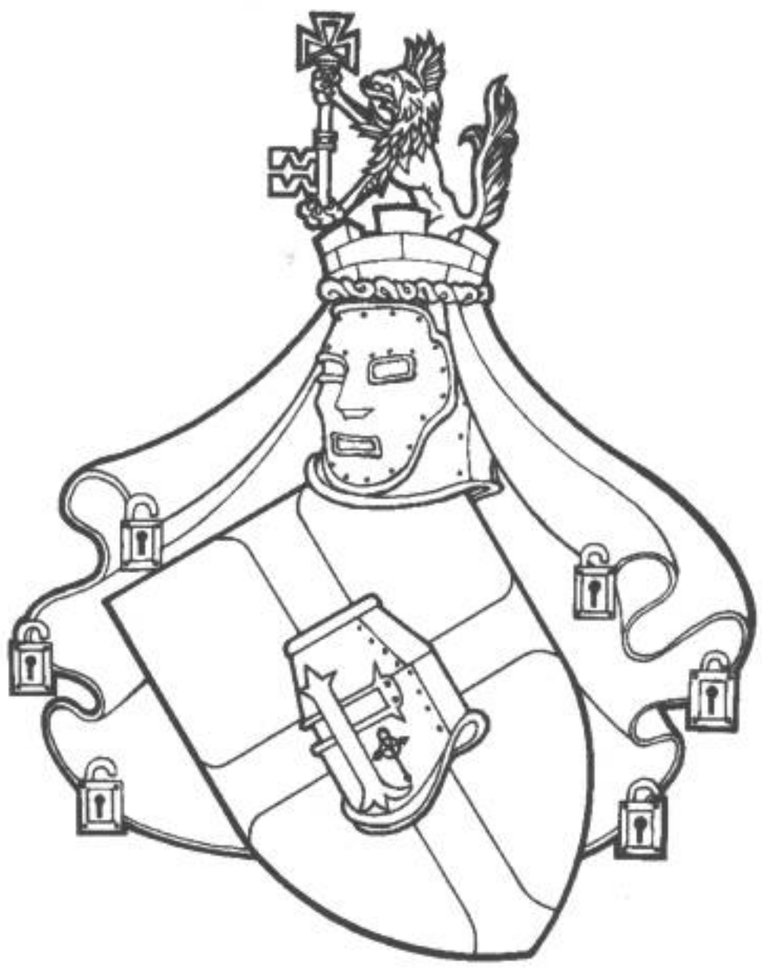

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Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Book One: Charlatans 6

Book Two: Lepers 46

Book Three: Madmen 84

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This is the fourth and last in the series of Dark Ages Clanbooks, **Libellus Sanguinis 4: Thieves in the Night**. This book deals with three so-called low-born clans, who generally don't fit in to the formal courts and noble libraries of the Ventrue, Toreador or Brujah. These supposed wretches thrive in the shadows of society, among the sick and the dispossessed. If the high clans want to discount them, they say, so much the better.

The Ravnos, called Charlatans by the high clans, find doors closed to them at every turn. The princes of Europe call them thieves and trouble-makers, foreign wretches without any respect for the established ways. These critics glaze over the strong differences between different lines of Ravnos. While a growing number come from the East among the Roma (sometimes called Gypsies), few of these have made it to Europe. The Ravnos of France, Italy and Spain have been in the West for centuries and are at odds with their Indian kin. Beneath the notice of princes, masked by the intoxicating wisps of Chimerstry, a reckoning is coming among the Charlatans.

The Nosferatu, Lepers of the unliving world, play at being the dirty little secrets of the high clans. Many of them have established a reputation as spies and informants, selling their revelations to the Magisters and Patricians who protect them. But their twisted features still speak of a terrible damnation, a rot that gnaws away at the soul. In these dark nights, many turn to God and the Church or become penitent wanderers. Others embrace the darkness within and become the most terrible monsters in a truly monstrous time.

The Malkavians were once the oracles and mystics of Europe's unliving. They hid in the shadows of Greek mysteries and shepherded the grand folly of Rome. The mighty have fallen, however, and those nights of glory are long gone. For most Cainites, the Malkavians are now a terrifying plague on the unliving — Madmen who bring lunacy into their immortal hearts. Less a clan than an affliction, they are tolerated only because they are naught but a collection of individuals — or so it would seem. But behind the veneer of madness lies vision and enlightenment. Away from their "betters," the Madmen gather and understand the true mysteries of Malkav.

Format

The material in this book follows a rough format designed for ease of use. Each section begins with a short introduction intended to give the reader a sense of how the clan thinks. Next comes information on the clan's organization and dealings with the rest of the Dark Medieval world. Don't expect a simple rehash of what you might find in the modern day, however — the Charlatans, Lepers and Madmen of this time are not who you might think.

Third is the explicitly "game" material — Merits, Flaws, Backgrounds, new Discipline powers and so on. All of the gamespeak is contained in these portions of the book, including some expanded advice for playing a clan member. Finally, there are a few brace of templates for each clan, and a particularly revealing slice of that clan's history. What role did the Ravnos play in the Salubri's destruction? What are the Nictuku? Why was Malkav cursed by Caine?

New Traits

There are any number of new rules-bangles for players to adorn their characters with, some of which might not make a good fit with your current chronicle. At the same time, a Storyteller may wish to hold the more advanced or unique powers detailed within for a time when their application is most useful in creating mood or advancing the plot. With that in mind, players should check with their Storytellers before diving head-first into the pile of goodies contained herein. It's always worse to have something you have your heart set on taken away, than never to have seen it at all.

Book One: Charlatans

Hector pulled his horse to a stop and watched his companion howl. The shout echoed across the river and through the valley. Wolves answered, as expected. Javed turned to Hector, grinning. His white teeth contrasted vividly with his skin, dark for a Cainite. "The Ahuri Dae will send an escort so we may enter safely."

Hector was alone with this clanmate from the east – if these new arrivals could truly could be said to be of his own blood – waiting on the edge of a Hungarian forest. News had come of strange Cainites traveling in caravans, claiming to be Ravnos. He liked to keep track of the lineages' movements and a new and unknown family was

a reason for concern. Hector didn't care for surprises, not when he was a mortal knight, and not when he swore fealty to his sire after the Embrace.

Hector found Javed in Constantinople with the help of another Ravnos of western descent named Gregory, one who claimed lineage from the Egyptian Alexandrite family. Hector's dealings with Gregory had always been wary, but easier than with Cainites of other clans. Javed, on the other hand, simply did not want to speak with Hector about anything.

Javed at first refused to believe Hector was Ravnos. Once convinced, he was alternately incredulous and mortified. "You are *gaje*!" the easterner repeatedly proclaimed in his heavy accent. When Hector pressed, Javed admitted the word meant he was not "of the blood." This didn't make sense to Hector, at least not at first.

After three full nights of negotiations, Javed agreed to take Hector to see his *jati*, or his family, if only to explain how two vampires so alien from one another could call themselves Ravnos. Even then, Javed's eventual acquiescence was given grudgingly. So, for another two weeks the two traveled with Javed's mortal servants. He insisted that Hector leave his coterie and servants behind. When Hector hesitated, Javed solemnly swore an oath that Hector would be safe, but that if too many others came, he would not be allowed to approach the caravan, or *kumpaniya* as Javed called it.

Hector was startled to learn that Javed claimed blood kinship with the mortals. Whenever Javed or Hector came near them, the mortals would make signs in the air or spit at the ground. They clearly did not like the Cainites, but did not take any action against them during the journey. When Hector asked if they could be trusted, Javed laughed for several minutes.

All these events brought Hector to this place, waiting to meet the *Phuri Dae*, a term that must be a word in Javed's peculiar tongue for "elder" or perhaps "prince."

A pack of wolves came out of the trees, their coats almost shimmering in the darkness. One, probably the leader from the way the others deferred to it, approached Javed and whined briefly. Javed procured a knife from one of his sleeves, efficiently slashed his wrist open, and let his vitae drip into the wolf's mouth. The wolf, for his part, lapped it up. "It keeps them obedient," he said to Hector.

Hector nodded and waited.

"We follow them," Javed continued. "They know the way." And so they did. For an hour or more the two Cainites followed the wolves deeper into the forest. Javed explained, "The local people — mortals and drinkers of blood — do not care for us. We find safe places to stay."

Hector said, "What about Lupines?"

"We avoid them."

Hector nodded again. To one accustomed to travel, it is not so difficult to avoid the savage man-wolves. Still, he watched the forest carefully for signs of an ambush.

After the moon had passed its zenith, they came to a small encampment set in a cramped valley. The surrounding trees and mountains even gave it the illusion of peace. Javed grinned at Hector, shouted something in his own language, and that peace shattered.

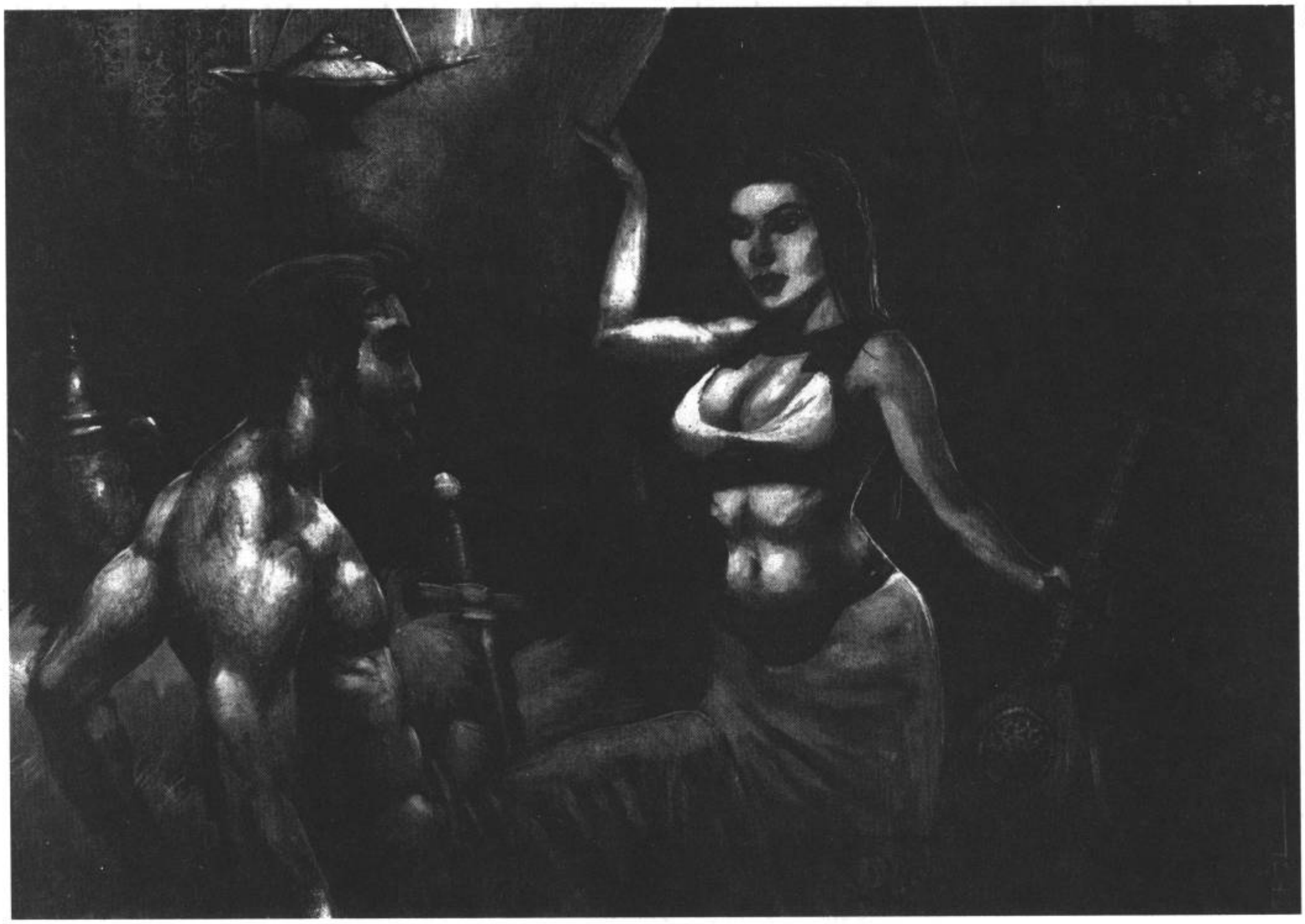
A warning flashed through Hector's mind. The knight drew his sword and prepared to do battle. Unfortunately he was not prepared for the literal cacophony of demons and spirits that descended upon him, tearing at his flesh. For a few minutes, he struggled to maintain his composure against the onslaught, but pain and panic overwhelmed him. The Beast, always strong in his blood, reared its ugly head in a wave of uncontrollable rage.

Hector could not recall how long the frenzy had claimed his wits. When his thoughts returned to reason, he found himself on his back and a wooden shaft in his heart. He could not move. The stars above winked at him through the smoke from the fires of a camp. A woman's voice, speaking in Javed's tongue, chimed nearby. Javed answered and Hector could hear footsteps approach. "I am so sorry, cousin, we had to do this for your own good. You live a degenerate life here, led astray from your true path."

Hector tried to drill a hole into Javed's forehead with his gaze, but failed miserably.

Not at all perturbed, Javed continued. "You see, the Ravnos here, in Europe, you are all astray. Some say you cannot be shown the proper way, that you are savages and worse. I think they are wrong and I shall prove so with you."

Javed moved Hector to a sitting position, but the wooden shaft through the knight's heart made it more of a chore than it should have been. "Now the grandmother shall divine your heart's weakness. That is the



way to its purpose." The woman looked nothing at all like a grandmother, but such appearances are meaningless among the Cainites.

For a few moments, nothing happened. Then the woman drove into Hector's thoughts with incredible force. His existence passed before his eyes as she sifted through his memories. It was all he could do to pull her name from the maelstrom — *Amaravati* — then, he was gone....

...Hector stood before the baron. He had trained his entire life for this moment. He was disappointed to see that his lord did not share his enthusiasm and treated the ritual as if it were a simple mundane task...

...The woman who had stolen Hector's heart, Marcia, stood before him. Her classical Latin features softly illuminated by torchlight as she waited for his answer. A troubadour, she came only at night and sang the most beautiful of songs. Tonight, she said, he could join her. Smitten with what he believed to be love, he accepted. When she bit him, he was helpless to resist...

...Hector had come to a church to confess his sins, of drinking human blood and becoming a demon of the night. When he saw the crucifix, Christ with his crown of thorns and nails through his hands, rage filled him. Rage at a God who would allow something such as him to live. He drove the priests out and set the church ablaze. Deep in him burned a dark rage that whispered of God's betrayal...

Hector spent night after night in Amaravati's care. She fed him mortal blood every night, had Javed place him in a box to rest every morning and taught him the ways of Paradox, how he did have a purpose. At first, he refused to accept it or believe it, but she knew his secrets, his weaknesses and the dark parts of his soul. He had no answer for her arguments and no armor against her conviction. Slowly but surely, she eroded his commitment to chivalry and the warrior's honor and replaced it with a devotion to the Road of Paradox, to a philosophy that proclaimed his purpose and his existence, taught him of gods that gave him meaning.

Marcia came for him months later. She found him in some city on the Mediterranean coast — he couldn't recall which one, only that even the nights were warm and the sand everywhere. Where he was no longer

mattered so much as what he was doing, and at the moment he was trying to find something to do. Marcia called to him, and when he ignored her call, she compelled him to answer with the power of her vitae. "Hector, come to me. We need to talk."

He came, having no real choice in the matter. Hector was tired of having no choices, of accepting duty as he had for so long. He'd had no choice in receiving the Embrace nor in accepting Amaravati's tutelage, at least he could travel where he wished and find his purpose? No, even in that he was thwarted. "What, Marcia? What would you have of me now?"

Marcia looked Hector over, stepped away and tried to meet his eyes. "You... have changed. I cannot tell what, but... you're not the Hector I knew."

Hector laughed at her then, laughed as Javed had laughed at him. "No. I'm no longer yours, *sire*." He bit off the final word with as much loathing as he could. "It is only because you too are Ravnos that I do not try to strike you down here."

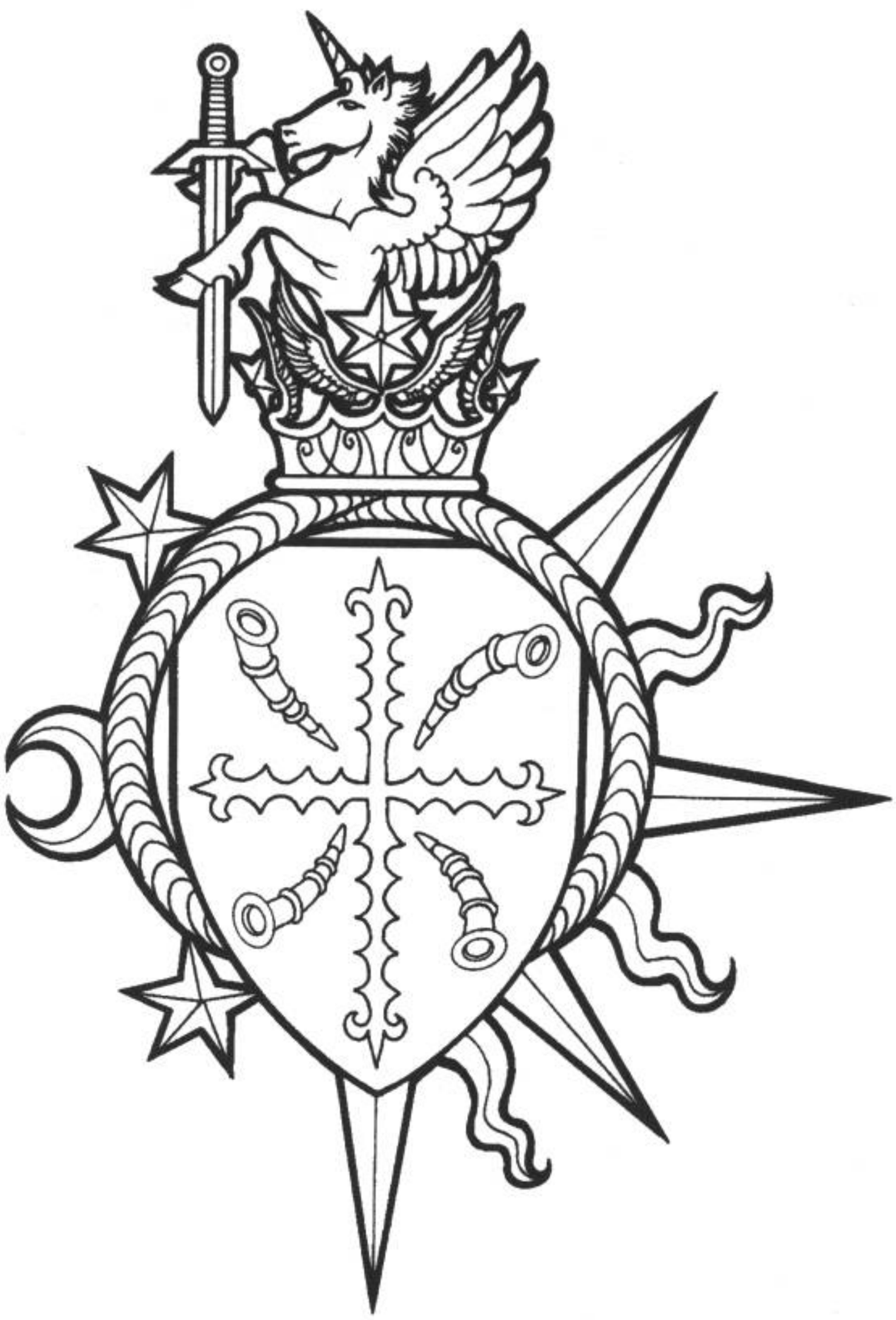
Marcia's eyes turned colder than the northern winter. "You turn on me, *childe*? I gave you this life."

"I didn't want it."

Marcia slapped him hard enough to break a mortal man's jawbone. Hector's teeth rattled, but he was otherwise unharmed. He stared at her a moment, then looked away. "Go. Please. Leave me. Your way is not mine."

He watched her slowly, deliberately, turn her back on him. "Do not return to me," she said as she walked away. "You are no longer welcome among the Phaedymites." He could not see her face, and thus could not see what that sentence had cost her.

Family loyalty was quite strong among the Ravnos, after all.



Fellow Travelers

Phaedyme,

I started this project to find my childe Hector, gone missing in Byzantium, where he had gone to meet with a Ravnos newly arrived from the east. In my travels, I learned much more about our clan than I think any of us has gathered into one place in the past. I offer this as a gift and a warning.

I choose to present this material as to one who knows nothing of our clan. Partly, I wish to make no assumptions about what you already knew. I also wish to use this to educate any childe I Embrace before I release him. Hector was caught unawares, and I refuse to have that happen again.

Ravnos are reputed as liars, thieves, tricksters and worse. We are unwelcome in over half the cities I visited during my journeys through Europe, and I can't imagine that changing. Some of the eastern newcomers do misbehave terribly upon visiting western fiefs, believing themselves immune to retribution (or perhaps not caring). I traveled beyond the European fiefs, to the eastern cities and found some clanmates of great age — although none equal to your own.

In exchange for my own observations on Europe and our experiences within, these elder Ravnos have given me some of the knowledge you seek. I'm most impressed with fragments of an epic poem I've read, The Wounds of the Night's Sword, *that sheds further light not only on our own origins, but the origins of all "Cainites." More on that later.*

I shall discuss the Phuri Dae family shortly, but I should note first that one of their number, Harasvarupa Nishiitharudhira Amaravati, has been most gracious in supplying knowledge of the past and present, most especially regarding the younger Ravnos who only now come to Europe. Things certainly are not as they seem.

Marcia Licinia Felicia

Scribe to Phaedyme,
Childe of Phaedyme
Childe of Marizhavashti
Childe of Zapathasura

Glossary

Throughout my text, words gleaned from conversations with the eastern Ravnos pepper the discussion. To prevent confusion, here are their definitions as best as I can divine. I apologize for any inaccuracies in advance. I have not yet learned their language fully.

***asuratizayya*:** A name for members of another Eastern bloodline. They are probably Baali or of some other corrupt line. The word means "demonic horde" or something akin to that.

***gaje*:** A word for "outsider" or "foreigner."

***jati*:** A caste, or family group. In the east, this represents the social stratum the Ravnos was Embraced into. In the west, it simply represents lines of descent.

***Karavalanisha Vrana*:** "*The Wounds of the Night's Sword.*" This is an epic poem that describes the eastern perspective on the Ravnos' creation. It does not agree in any way with the story of Caine.

***Mayaparisatya*:** The Eastern Road of Paradox. Where the road practiced in Europe stresses self-indulgence and the erosion of society, *Mayaparisatya* stresses understanding of *svadharma* and commitment to fulfill the purpose the gods have given Ravnos to follow.

Roma: The eastern people the Ravnos newcomers have arrived with. They are nomadic and sometimes called "Gypsies."

***siddhitizayya*:** According to legend, what the *asuratizayya* were before they were cursed with a thirst for blood. They protected humanity from demons and other monsters. It means something like "The Divine Chosen" or something similar.

***svadharma*:** According to the eastern Ravnos philosophy, this is the purpose that guides all things living on Earth. Each thing has its own purpose and is only worthwhile in so much as it fulfills that purpose.

Zapathasura: One of the names for the Ravnos progenitor. It means "accursed demon."

As other terms come up in the text, I shall explain them as well as I can.

Castes

To truly understand the sections following, it's necessary to establish the social framework under which we operate.

We Ravnos are a diverse and often unruly lot, but one trait many of us share is a strong sense of family. For a large portion of the clan, this means that vampires of a same lineage maintain relatively strong ties among themselves. Among the Ravnos of far off India, as well as the new arrivals, these families are much more rigidly defined. They're called *jati*, which is simply a word for "caste." To avoid confusion in this document, I have elected to exclusively use *jati* in reference to familial lineages. Not all Ravnos — especially those of us in Europe — use this word, or have even heard it. I do this only to give it the attention it deserves.

The following *jati* are western in nature and range from Europe to Africa to Arabia. This is a rather broad definition of "western," but it will have to suffice for now and stand in opposition to the Ravnos of distant India.

Alexandrites

The Alexandrites are one of the two oldest *jati* in the Western world and the larger of those two as well. It is also possibly the most widely traveled and eclectic of all lineages. The heart of the lineage's power lies in the great Egyptian city of Alexandria, but its members traverse (so they claim) the breadth and depth of Africa, Europe and the Levant. In truth, they do carry some startling stories about civilizations far to the south of the great Sahara desert and their eldest recalls the pharaohs of Egypt before Ptolemy.

The Alexandrites do not welcome the newcomers and interactions with them are cold at best. One particular point of contention is the fact that the Alexandrite Ravnos have taken to traveling with the mortal Gypsies. This lends a false credence to the rumors of the Roma's Egyptian origins. The eastern Ravnos see this as poaching their herds and react poorly. Already, a few feuds have started over this very issue.

The Alexandrites are much given to formal etiquette, rarely putting forth the vagabond image that's recently come into popular opinion among the other clans. Primarily, the elders show their Egyptian roots, and only some of the ancillae and neonates follow suit.

Ramessu refuses to describe his sire. He lays claims to the ancestry of pharaohs and gods and insists upon

very antiquated protocol when dealing with others. He doesn't actually order the Alexandrites around, but when he speaks, they pay attention and most follow his advice. I can attest that in his domain, the world takes on an ancient veneer — he rules from a throne room that beggars the descriptions of pharaonic courts, with cloth of gold and enameled jewelry dripping from everyone and everything. The walls are covered in the picture-writing common in Egyptian ruins, only the glyphs *move*. I think if I had watched the pictures long enough, I would have seen one or more stories unfold before my eyes. As it was, I found them a terrible distraction during my audience.

Bashirites

The Bashirites of Damascus, an apocalyptic Christian lineage, comprise one of the older Western *jati*. All are descended from the Methuselah Bashir, who preaches that the end is coming and the Antediluvians will awaken very soon. He Embraces rarely and when he does, he always chooses a Christian.

Some believe the Bashirites follow a variant of Via Paradocis. This belief arises mainly due to the perception of Bashirites as Ravnos, and Paradox as the "Ravnos road." The truth is actually a bit more complex. Some, like Varsik of Jerusalem, *do* follow a warped version of Via Paradocis that includes Bashir's apocalyptic vision. Many others instead follow the Road of Heaven, as it's closer to their needs than the heretical views Varsik and others like him espouse. I expect this split in doctrine to lead to a schism and ultimately open conflict between both factions.

Bashir himself is something of a mystery. The Bashirites I've met make a great show of "following Bashir's teachings" and most even have parables to tell describing those teachings. A few claim that Bashir met Christ himself and was charged to prepare the world for His Second Coming. I was unable to locate Bashir or in fact any signs of his whereabouts.

The eldest of the Bashirites I could find was the aforementioned Varsik, who resides primarily in Jerusalem. I must admit that I found his preference to meet near holy ground to be quite disturbing. As he explained his lineage's history to me, we followed the Stations of the Cross. Varsik, apparently Bashir's childe, is the source of many of the stories about the *jati*'s founder. He explained that after Bashir's meeting with Christ, he was taken with visions instructing him to bring the apocalypse and the Second Coming closer. Other Bashirites claim similar gifts and act upon these visions for similar reasons. The end result is naught but more chaos amidst the Crusades as Bashirite betrays Christian to Moslem and Moslem to Jew and Jew to Christian. So the cycle goes and the bloodshed steadily mounts.

According to Varsik, Bashir teaches that Christ shall return when mankind has reached the greatest point of strife possible. So he tries to create that strife. He tried to convert me to his ways and beliefs, and I promised to consider the offer. I think that Varsik is quite dangerous, but I suspect his schemes will get the better of him.

Phaedymites

This, of course, is my lineage, named for my sire. We bear her name and follow her path. While much smaller and spread across less territory than our Alexandrite cousins, we have been in Europe for nearly as long as them. I've found no more than 30 Ravnos of my lineage throughout Spain, France and Germany. All espouse the Road of Chivalry and most serve Cainite lords as messengers or traveling troubadours. I've found several Phaedyme probably was not yet aware of and expressed to them her preference to keep abreast of her descendents' movements.

The other clans claim that Ravnos know nothing of honor, obligations or honesty. Our *jati* puts a lie to that. Princes who know our reputation cautiously welcome us into their domains — and hope that we quickly move on — or charge us to chase off or destroy our more ill-behaved cousins. Unfortunately, our presence is no longer as welcomed as it once was. Often, we're treated as spies or thieves, seeking only ruin for the Ventrue and Toreador courts.

I've traced Phaedyme's travels through Europe and found a few elders willing to speak of their acquaintance with her. It has been centuries since I've spoken directly to Montano of the Lasombra, and he was quite hospitable and willing to discuss the past. He's interested in hearing more about the influx, but I leave the decision to elaborate to my sire.

We Phaedymites are, after the Alexandrites, the oldest lineage in Europe, but the least known to other Ravnos. Aside from Ramessu, I can find no evidence of Ravnos who arrived before my sire's return from the Indian hinterland. Of her own sire, I've discovered very little.

The Ancient Speaks

I am Phaedyme, childe of Marizhavashti the Ghost, and known as the valorous one. I traveled with Alexander's army in the guise of a man — not out of any love for battle, but out of disdain for the life expected of my sex. I followed the army all the way into far-off India, where Marizhavashti Embraced me, telling me only, "go west." I did, and have spent the centuries since mastering warfare. My associations (some might say "peers") include Mithras of the Ventrue and Montano of the Lasombra. I stand now at the heart of this new belief called chivalry by some, and I try to understand its nuances and meanings. Surely it will wither from mortal hearts in but a few blinks of my ancient eyes — I am determined to comprehend it before it does.

I speak to you, young Ravnos, from the depths of my torpor. Listen to Marcia, eldest of my childer, as if you listened to me. Know that I watch from the skies and remember slights to her until the Earth burns to ash. Our blood burns with sin, neonate, and my sin is wrath.

The Sybarites

I have not sought out this *jati's* founder, nor do I want to meet him. The Sybarites have been mainly centered in Italy for several centuries but are found wandering the Mediterranean and engaging in all sorts of unsavory practices. If you need something surreptitiously delivered, they can do it. If you need someone abducted, they can do it. The Sybarites have no concern for life or existence outside their own, but have a strong loyalty to each other.

A few daring Ravnos practice piracy on the seas at night — I strongly suspect that they operate out of Sicily and have an arrangement of some kind with the Lasombra in the area. They fall upon unfortunate ships and small ports, taking what they wish and leaving carnage in their wake. I had the dubious pleasure of seeing their savagery at work several years ago, and rarely have I seen a group so willing to give in to base temptation and act as the Beast wills. I only hope that my own vigilance will keep me from falling to their level of degeneracy.

Not all Sybarites restrict their activities to the Mediterranean or to the sea. I've heard of their activities from Novgorod to London, and of them acting as bandits and slavers. It is my feeling that they engage in many unsavory occupations for the sake of exploring the depths of indulgence. They do so with a flair, a certain dashing carelessness, that makes them seductive. On the other hand, their adoption of a moral code that allows the Beast free reign and often serves as an excuse to murder, plunder and thieve repels me. The eldest of their line created the Via Paradocis in Rome centuries ago and it has spread altogether too far among our clan. I hear that it even coils its way through the founders' hearts in far-off India.

Other Sybarites practice the Via Bestiae, as it grants them no responsibility to control themselves. They rampage in a manner befitting the most uncivilized Gangrel and gorge themselves on blood simply for the joy of the experience. I've heard rumors of those who practice Via Diabolis and enact bloody rituals on the darkest of nights to contact the infernal hordes. Finally, some Sybarites eschew their cousins' monstrous ways and embrace Via Humanitatis, or in more extreme cases, Via Caeli. The latter, especially, are quite devout and mainly keep to themselves. Outside rumors, I found a single Franciscan monastery where three Ravnos on the Road of Heaven resided. I suspect they may hold to heretical beliefs, but I did not wish to abuse their hospitality at that time.

The founder, according to various stories I've heard, was anyone from Julius Caesar to Romulus himself. The most reliable accounts I've come across indicate that he was a high-ranking leader in Caligula's Rome and that he may have been one of the emperor's confidants. Upon his Embrace and learning of the Path of Paradox, he adapted the tenets to continue the degenerate behavior he'd embraced in his mortal life. The story goes on to claim that he committed Amaranth upon his sire within the first decades of his unlife and that he encourages the practice among his descendents. I can only assume he encourages diablerie of the unworthy others and doesn't encourage his own progeny to hunger after his heart-blood. I don't have any idea as to what his mortal name was, and I suspect he prefers it that way.

Yoryari

This *jati* is a splinter from the Sybarites. As the Sybarites continued down their path of excess and decadence, the elder Karmenita Yoryari parted ways

with them. She moved on to Iberia, where she has built a modest *jati* with a more spiritual focus on the Via Paradocis. The Yoryari are more focused on the reasons why Paradox calls for certain behaviors, rather than the opportunity to indulge in excess.

The Yoryari version of Paradox teaches that adherents must do everything for a reason. The Road's teachings also go on to indicate that power structures must be worn down and powerful people and items must be destroyed to make way for newer things. It's more of a duty than an indulgence for them, although many do enjoy their work. They are aware that such practices draw danger to them, so they do not advertise their presence.

In my discussions with Karmenita she stated that the older an institution is, the more stagnant and entrenched it becomes, and the more difficult it is to step outside its aegis and find something new or different. To this end, she feels that the old must be broken down and destroyed to avoid calcification. Taken to the logical extreme, she would break society itself down so it would rebuild and take a new form, but I think this is an ultimately futile endeavor. I expect at least a few of the Yoryari to try to shatter the Cainite status quo in some way, perhaps among one Furore band or another. Watch them carefully.

Karmenita maintains a lavish estate near Lisbon. Her eldest childe, known only as Iago Castille, practices piracy across the Mediterranean and around Iberia, France and Britain as far north as the North Sea. Many of this lineage travel as pilgrims or merchants, moving among mortals by preference. Karmenita claims the founder of the Sybarites as her sire, but never speaks of him in any but the most hateful terms. If half of what she says about her time in his tutelage is accurate, I do not blame her. She consciously seeks a different way to achieve what she wants than simple and pointless immediate self-gratification. I gather that she's still searching for a guiding purpose and has discarded several otherwise promising directions over the centuries since her falling out with the Sybarites. I wish her the best in finding her own way.

Migrations

Every time Europeans have been to India or Indians have come west, Ravnos have slipped into Europe. Our clan traveled to the Mediterranean basin in the days of Phoenicia and Rome and even thereafter. The

latest migration from the East seems to be the largest, however. Most of these newcomers, who travel with the people called Roma or Gypsies, are unaware that any Ravnos preceded them. In that, they are much like many European Cainites, who see all Ravnos as newcomers.

Despite overall ignorance of our ways, certain history-conscious Ventrue and Brujah revealed to me accounts of Ravnos appearances in Rome, Carthage, Jerusalem, Byzantium and other great cities long before the supposed "Ravnos arrival." In truth, earlier Ravnos were few enough and well behaved enough that many modern Cainites consider us to be practically a different clan than the eastern *jati*.

The Ancient World

Ravnos follow commerce. Where money and goods flow — along with trickery and shady dealings — Ravnos blood flows with them. In the time of Phoenicia and Rome, merchants traveled the known world and drew our clan's attention. We followed the merchants, often to see what lands they came from and to profit from their misfortune or gullibility. To say our numbers were great would be an unwarranted boast, but few of the great ports of the day did not have one of us stalking its docks.

Rome's Fall

In Rome's final years, a moral and ethical decay set into society. This affected even Cainites. Among our own clan, a group of Alexandrites, along with Indian arrivals who came to Rome during its height, took the Road of Paradox and corrupted it into a different, even more lawless form. These were the first Sybarites and did not acknowledge *jati* or *svadharma* and looked to Paradox only as an excuse to murder freely, commit Amaranth without care and throw all meaning to the winds. I believe at least a portion of this degenerate blood cult traveled back to India and spread its debased belief among the less principled of the Ravnos in those lands.

Recent Arrivals

Ravnos, neonate and elder alike, now flow into Europe from India and they come from several *jati* — which in their homeland are more akin to castes than families. Many migrants subscribe to the Sybarite blood cult and spread their degeneracy throughout the lands they travel and destroy whatever welcome Ravnos have in civilized fiefs. When banned from a fiefdom, it is said that these Ravnos gather in large groups, sometimes up to several dozen, and strike against the mortal and Cainite population — murder, burglary, banditry, you name the crime — until the victimized prince lifts the ban.

The greater numbers of newly arriving Ravnos travel with mortal relatives — nomads from the northern plains of India — and arrive more slowly. They are as far as Arabia and do not range far from their families. They prefer to use the mortals as cover for their unscrupulous activities, choosing to indulge their favored vices. Naturally, the mortals get blamed for Ravnos deceit.

Where Our Feet Have Tread

Ravnos travel: often because we want to and more often because we are forced to leave wherever we are due to accusations, merited or not. We have been everywhere from England to the Sahara, from Russia to India. Ravnos do not simply migrate to a place and remain. Most choose to travel from city to city, town to town. This lifestyle helps guarantee our survival, given the unsavory habits we nurture.

Europe

Europe is home to two distinct Ravnos populations. The first is made up of the various *jati* I have already mentioned, the Alexandrites, Phaedymites and others. They travel, but are not explicitly nomadic, and they are well established in those places where they are welcome. The recent arrivals from India have appeared in the last few centuries and so far number at most several dozen, with more every decade. They've not made a warm welcome for themselves because they have little respect for the established power structures. Incidents of theft and disrespect become the basis of wide scale persecution as the lords of Europe hear stories of more and more of these "Gypsies" coming west.

Most Ravnos understand the nature of hospitality and try to conceal their sinful activities. Unfortunately, the flamboyant indulgences of some have spoiled the welcome for the rest of us. I like to think these transgressors are few, but I suspect the number is greater than I would prefer. The Toreador princes despise our ways and chase us out of their fiefs whenever discovered. Lords of other clans vary greatly. A Ventrue prince is as likely to find a use for a newly arrived Ravnos — an

unknown quantity to his rivals, after all — as he is to send the Charlatan on his way before he causes too much damage.

Known Ravnos sometimes have more leeway. I do not know how long this will last with the newcomers, but I recommend we curb the more enthusiastic examples before they wear out our welcome. Our stronghold in southern France continues to serve us and I would hate to see us lose this asset over the actions of the uncultured young. Unfortunately, even while the Ravnos migrants from the East are very few in number now, rumors and stories of their arrival have already spread throughout the western courts. No few Ravnos knights have been turned out for fear they might betray their lieges. The princes fear the Ravnos trickle will become an invading tide. Even worse, the troubadours are simply turned away rather than allowed entrance into a domain and thus an opportunity to "spread chaos" into other fiefs.

To avoid the inevitable problems that come with our presence, many Ravnos have taken to the practice of masquerading as members of other clans. This is not always as easy as it might look on the surface — such a deception requires time and effort to arrange. Corroboration is the most difficult aspect of clan impersonation. It is hard to claim lineage when your supposed grandsire is in the same fief. Some Cainites are willing to assist us in building such a cover, but many more are mortally offended at the possibility (usually because they learn after the fact and hate to look like fools).

France

France is the heart of chivalry and the bastion of my Phaedymite lineage. Even here, however, we are not welcomed with kindness and cheer. The Toreador are happy to see us long enough to hear what news we bring and then it's off to the next fief. I don't really mind, honestly. I don't like the haughty Artisans, either. Paris is probably the worst, ruled by Alexander of the Ventrue. He's quite concerned with appearances, and in his words, "vagabond charlatans have no business taking time from important affairs." With the winds blowing as they are now, I expect we may have to move to a friendlier climate before too long.

Of southern France, all I will say is that the Sybarites of Marseilles do nothing for that port's reputation. Or our own.

Iberia

The peninsula is largely the province of the Yoryari and the Phaedymites, although the two lineages don't associate closely. The Yoryari are careful to stay away from established fiefdoms, choosing to exist in the countryside where they're less likely to encounter difficulties with the more established clans. At least a few are spread throughout the Iberian courts, posing as other clans and serving as Karmenita's eyes and ears. Bashirites sometimes also travel to Iberia on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and look to clanmates for assistance and shelter along the way.

Egypt

Egypt has long been a comfortable home to us. Ravnos have dwelt within this ancient land for centuries, coming and going as they please. Alexandria, with its bustling trade-driven economy and cosmopolitan population, serves as a breeding ground for our clan. A few Ravnos who live in Alexandria claim a lineage that extends into Egypt's ancient past, a time when the cyclopean monuments were built. It's an interesting story, at least, and I can't find anything that contradicts it. They say that many unsavory things lie concealed beneath the shifting sands of Egypt. Poetic, to say the least.

Africa

I haven't traveled more deeply than Egypt, but no few of the Ravnos who travel through Alexandria have fantastic tales to tell about the depths of this continent. They describe several empires fully a match for any kingdom in Europe and depths of jungle where only the maddest Gangrel go. Not surprisingly, I found no one for confirmation. In any event, if I understand correctly, Ravnos have been over and through Africa for as long as we've been anywhere else. I met three who hailed from a nation known as Timbuktu.

The Sybarite degenerates maintain havens along the northern African coast, where they can safely spend weeks at a time without drawing undue attention. Many of these havens serve as more general havens for mortal pirates of all sorts. About the only constant you can rely on is that they grant other Ravnos hospitality without threat of open hostility. They try their best to convert their brethren to the Road of Paradox, however.

Arabia and Persia

The eastern Mediterranean and the lands east of that are where we are strongest. Bashir, the Methuselah who supposedly spent time with Christ the Son, is said to lie in torpor somewhere in this area. Of course, that story comes from Bashirites who claim he visits them in visions or even in unliving flesh — I have found no other sources on Bashir. Damascus is the Bashirite center of influence, but members of the *jati* are spread throughout the region.

Of particular note is Etienne de Fauberge, a Bashirite and one of the men who arrived with the First Crusade. After the crusaders captured Antioch in 1099, the Bashirite elder Varsik took one of the knights aside and Embraced him. Varsik wanted a childe who showed virtue. Where the others raped and pillaged, Etienne stood back in horror. He was on a crusade for the Lord, not seeking an opportunity for easy loot. Varsik hoped that Etienne's piety would enable him to enter Acre, the city that reputedly holds the True Cross and is barred to Cainites by its holy influence. Unfortunately, with Ravnos blood in his veins, even Etienne could not enter that city, although he quickly became obsessed with it. He walked towards it, venturing further than any other Cainite, unnatural flames licking his very flesh before he had to turn back. He returned again and again, seeing the agony as holy atonement for the sins of his Cainite nature. Varsik, ever the holy power-broker, convinced Etienne to claim the city as his own fief, in order to stave off any others who might lay claim to it.

Power has apparently eroded Etienne's faith somewhat. He set up his haven outside Acre's walls, walking among the merchants and other residents, and always feeling the holy pain. He offered sanctuary to Cainites who needed it in exchange for information or services and over time became an information broker rather than a holy defender. His domain has but one major rule: no violence within a mile of Acre. Etienne's mortal servants carry those who break that rule or who violate the traditions — especially tactlessly — into the city proper, with tragically fatal results. Otherwise, Cainites of all clans come to Acre in search of information, difficult to obtain items and just about anything else that passes through the city. I have heard that he even deals with the usurping Tremere.

My dear Etienne,

I am concerned with your recent activities in Acre. You have made no progress in locating the True Cross, and I hear many rumors of dealings with all manner of pagans and heathens. I wonder if you truly follow the word of our Lord, or if you have strayed from the true path into the temptation the dark voice within offers so cheaply.

I would come to see personally, but business in Jerusalem detains me at this time. This grants you the opportunity to set your house in order, sever your unsavory associations and return to your duty to God. Armageddon comes soon. Do not let yourself get caught unaware.

— Varsik

Jerusalem

Jerusalem and the surrounding cities are primarily the Bashirites' territory. They're quite strong throughout the Holy Land and maintain their presence with a death grip. Their conviction that Armageddon is almost upon us lends a certain ferocity to their determination to remain close to the Holy City and prepare for the fulfillment of St. John's revelation. The Bashirites do travel extensively and nearly all go on at least one pilgrimage after the Embrace. That given, at least six can usually be found within Jerusalem's walls at any time. Varsik maintains havens all over Jerusalem for Bashirite use.

Byzantium

Bashirite, Eastern and Alexandrite Ravnos mix here with an almost constant friction. The Eastern Ravnos have only arrived in the past two centuries and travel all over the Byzantine Empire with their mortal families. Initial contacts between the newcomers and their Alexandrite cousins have been chilly at best. The Eastern Ravnos have very strict ideas as to who should receive the Embrace and who should not. The Alexandrites do not hold so closely to this, choosing instead promising candidates who catch their attention and can be of use to them. I've heard of at least two occasions where one caravan has engineered the complete destruction of another.

Byzantine prelates grow weary of both the Ravnos presence and the feuds that presence brings to their fiefs, and many have closed their domains to what they see as marauding, uncontrolled childer. This encourages them to move farther west, where I expect the cycle to continue. The Bashirites are especially offended by the lack of piety among those who claim a greater right to Ravnos lineage. The large numbers of fiery-tempered crusaders in that lineage leads all too often to violence.

Travel

Travel is a dangerous calling for those who fear the sunlit sky. Lacking the ability to sleep within the earth, we have to find other accommodations. I address these comments to any neonate who may read them — learn.

The most common strategy is to find mortal travelers and make them into ghouls. These lackeys range from crusaders to merchants to pilgrims and even to traveling performers. The ghouls travel by day, as it's safer, carrying us in sealed boxes and shaded wagons. This actually grants us much time to work at night, presuming our transportation has chosen a city or town of decent size to stop in. These wagons and crates must be secure. Thick, stout construction is a necessity, and at least a barrel of water should be on hand at all times. The risk of fire isn't great, but it can happen without warning. It's simply best to be prepared. Ideally, the wagon should have a bar you can work from the inside. One must be careful not to build the wagon too heavy, or the axles won't support it and the horses won't be able to pull it.

It's not exactly the height of comfort to sleep in a box, but it's certainly a better option than sleeping in the open where you can be seen. The box should fit, but need not be lengthwise. I would recommend against anything with the dimensions of a coffin or sarcophagus, as those are often a giveaway to curious strangers. A wagon with two or three boxes and barrels is unremarkable. A wagon with two or three coffins asks for trouble.

The people you travel with should be your ghouls. As ghouls, they're subject to the blood oath and will act in your best interests at all times. You should communicate your wishes as clearly as possible before embarking on any journeys, as they are unable to divine your will on more esoteric matters, such as opening the boxes and exposing you to the sun while checking on you to make sure you're fine at midday.

You can't make everyone you travel with into ghouls, unfortunately. A large pilgrimage or caravan means you need to select someone close to the top. Do not select the leader, since a drastic change in his behavior will be noticed. Select someone indispensable to the leader and a few followers to ease your time on the road. Do not grow too attached to these ghouls. You must be prepared to abandon them at a moment's notice.

Traveling Alone

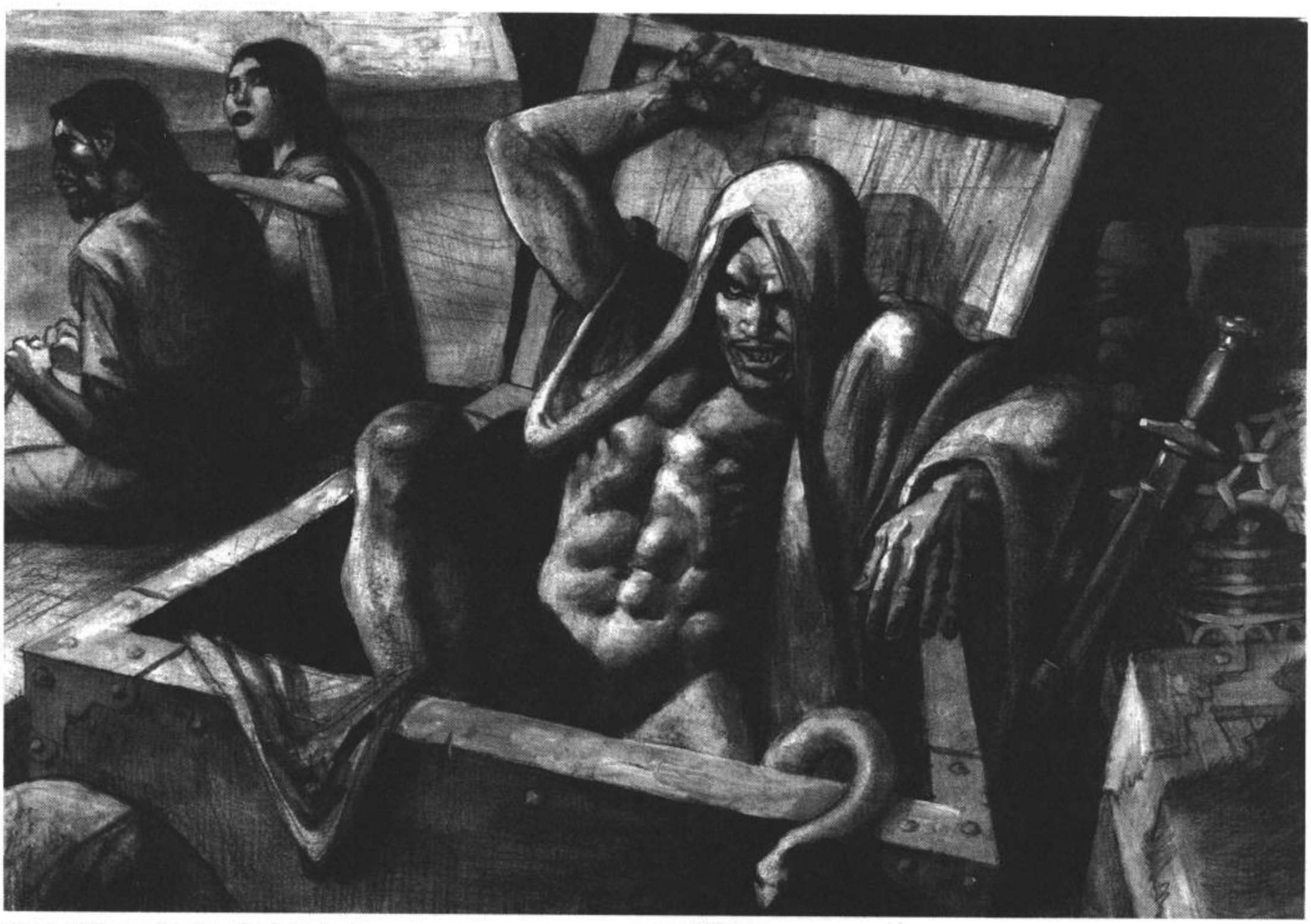
It's sometimes necessary to travel alone, without assistance from the kine or your chosen servants. This is risky, but hardly suicidal. The woods and wilds are dangerous, but there are not Lupines and Gangrel behind every tree.

The best travelers among us cultivate the gift to summon and speak with beasts. Many city-dwellers dismiss this as useless — what good is a gift to talk to bears, they ask. When one walks between cities, the answer is obvious. If you intend to travel alone, do not neglect this faculty. It is natural to us and is so for a reason.

First, when setting out, call an animal to you. Wolves are preferable, but can arouse Gangrel or Lupine ire if you're caught. They are, however, reasonably intelligent and aware of things that happen within their territory. You can learn from a wolf whether humans lie in wait, whether Lupines frequent the area, and even what sort of other wild animals could be a danger to you. Be certain to phrase your questions carefully — wolves are not incredibly sophisticated beasts, but their senses are second to none. Yes, it may be necessary to feed the beast your vitae to secure its loyalty. Other good animals to call to your service are crows, ravens and owls. Crows and ravens primarily come out by day, but they're quite intelligent and very perceptive. Owls are even better as they are nocturnal. In any case, you can send them ahead to scout the road and surrounding countryside before risking your skin in a strange area.

The danger of summoning a beast already in service to a Gangrel exists, and that Gangrel is only too happy to rip your entrails out for the sake of entertainment. Fortunately, Noah's Call rarely works on another's ghouls — if the Gangrel has made slaves of animals, they simply won't answer your call. Still, to be safe, it's best to get the animal to tell you if he serves another Cainite. As I noted, they aren't sophisticated, and most are easily tricked.

Calling upon more timid creatures, such as deer or elk, can also work. You can be certain they know where danger lies as their lives depend upon it. They will know if any dangerous animals are about and



where they're likely to be. They'll most certainly know of Lupines or humans.

Travel with Other Cainites

Cainite traveling companions are not easy to come by, but are extremely valuable. Some of us travel with childer and clanmates, but the luckiest gather in coteries. These small groups of vampires from many clans cooperate, usually for a handful of years. In that time, travel becomes much easier because of the variety of skills and contacts such a group can gather. While you appease the beasts of the woods, a young Ventrue lord can protect you in a city and a Leper can show you secret passages. If you can trust your traveling companions, this is probably the best choice.

I strongly suggest you do not travel with a large group of Cainites. They will cut a swath through the countryside, leaving peasants, clergymen and nobles alike either drained of blood or in an outrage and ready to find the devils rampaging across their lands. A small number can conceal depredations far more easily than a large one and is less likely to draw a prince's ire for entering his fief.

Banishment and Its Consequences

It's common knowledge among the high clans that Ravnos react poorly to banishment. As the story goes, if a prince refuses to allow Ravnos to enter his fief, then all other Ravnos from the surrounding area come to test the prince's mettle and capability to enforce his ban against the Charlatans.

Typically, princes choose to avoid this fate and simply allow Ravnos to come for a short time and encourage them to move on before they make a nuisance of themselves. Clever princes even give the Ravnos something to do — deliver a message to another Cainite in a distant fief, transport an item of importance, or even spread news. Princes who have previously suffered a bad experience at the hands of Ravnos visitors are less inclined to work in such a way and may use threats or simple force to move them along.

Ravnos, like anyone else, hate to be punished for crimes they haven't committed — or haven't *yet* committed, at least. Most take it very poorly and may swear vengeance upon the prince unfortunate enough to do such a thing. The result is a vendetta that can persist for years, depending upon the severity of the accusation and the wounded party's pride.

What happens is not a matter of crowds of Ravnos converging on the helpless fiefdom, each announcing himself to the prince and challenging the Cainites to throw him out. Rather, many come under stealth — claiming to be of other clans or simply not announcing their presence at all. They seek out Cainites who are disgruntled with the prince's rule and gather information on the inhabitants — both mortal and Cainite. Ideally, they locate the havens and resting places of as many important Cainites as possible to maximize the shock value when the time comes to deliver vengeance.

When the action begins, anything can happen. A favorite tactic of the most vicious of our blood is to get word to local knights and churchmen of the monsters living in their midst. These Cainites are then dragged from their havens to burn in the sun. Such gruesome stories circulate throughout Europe. Most of the false rumors about the tactics used in such situations are actually spread by Ravnos. Few Cainites are personally aware of a fief or a prince who has suffered such treatment at the hands of our clan, and do not know how it usually works. When a prince does bar Ravnos from entry, he expects something entirely different from the reality that strikes — sometimes *years* after he gives this unforgivable insult.

Ravnos Honor

In a world where nearly everyone hates and distrusts you, it's often necessary to have a reliable constant. For many Ravnos, this is the clan. We're a fractious, feuding lot and you'll rarely find the Bashirite who will acknowledge a Sybarite beyond the minimum courtesy customary among us. Despite this, when the time comes, Ravnos often stand with other Ravnos. The reasons vary from *jati* to *jati* and from Ravnos to Ravnos, but all too often we find ourselves in the same boat. Both the Eastern and Western Roads of Paradox teach that other Ravnos are "family" and must be respected, but how often this is honored varies wildly.

Among the other clans, it's widely believed that if we spit into our palm and shake hands with another, we will *never* break our word. This is true among the Sybarites and the Yoryari, who developed the custom so they could deal with each other without fear of betrayal. The practice has spread to the other *jati* simply because it is advantageous to have a practice to insure honesty. What the other clans rarely consider is that such a bond is always reciprocal. We pledge to do something in exchange for another act — it is an

exchange. Those who think they can use this tradition to enslave a Ravnos rarely consider that they too become enslaved. And for those so crass as to break an oath once given in this manner, the Sybarites and others apply lethal punishment.

Chimerstry

To many, this mercurial power defines us. When a Cainite sees a Ravnos, she expects us to try to fool her with illusions and is likely to double-check everything we put in her hands. It is infuriating. You can see it in their eyes when you hand over a message or a gift or even exchange goods or money. "Is this real?" Even as renowned as I am for my adherence to chivalric virtues, few princes are willing to give me the degree of trust they would a lying childe of Lasombra.

I despise this power, even — especially — when I have no other recourse but to use it. It pollutes my own soul as much as it does those who suffer the experience. It's not simply enough to decide I want the illusion, I have to *experience* my creation as it forms. This is not only exhausting but leaves a stain upon the soul. Spending too much time imagining unpleasantness into existence can leave us depleted for nights, sometimes even weeks. Sometimes, the illusions summoned can haunt us in our daily rest. Called upon too often and they can take on an existence all their own. I have heard stories of Ravnos who accidentally created an image that harried them from one end of Europe to another.

Chimerstry is not a toy for amusement or a means to pass the time. It is the unholy power to corrupt the mind and senses of others. Overuse can backlash in unpleasant ways.

A Thirst for Vice

All Cainites suffer the Beast as a part of their existence. The Embrace grants great power at great cost — overwhelming hunger, uncontrollable rage — but only our Beast speaks to us. For each of us, these whispers are different. We each have a vice, a dirty secret, something that we always wanted to indulge in life. With the Embrace, the Beast stokes that ember of sin into a fire. For some Cainites, the Beast may only be a savage blood-hungry rage; for our kind, it is a crafty devil who would lead us to sin and sin and sin.

I truly believe the Beast within us is aware and insidiously directs our actions even when we are not in frenzy. Often, the Beast's urgings are easily mistaken for our own, to the point that many Ravnos simply fulfill its urges, thinking them their own ideas. This attitude does not survive long, as even the thickest of neonates eventually realizes that she cannot control her urge to steal, vandalize or murder.

Many Ravnos merit the Embrace for a talent at dishonest business. Merchants who cheat their clientele, nobles who quietly abduct and torture innocents, brigands who violently rob travelers — all are good candidates for the Embrace, at least to those like the Sybarites who cultivate their vices as a dutiful priest does his flock. In most cases, the Sybarite simply seeks someone who shares her penchant for self-indulgence to serve as a companion through eternity. Not all Ravnos are inveterate sinners before the Embrace, however, and occasionally a candidate is chosen for her piety and righteousness. After all, if she has never known true temptation how is it that she can be truly pious? Some fight their blood-inflicted desires with all their strength and others succumb to the immediate temptation. A sinner's taste may change after the Embrace — if a petty thief is made Ravnos, he may find that burglary no longer holds much attraction for him. Instead, he finds pleasure in murder or adulterous liaisons.

In truth, many Ravnos do not think it truly sinful to engage in our blood-vice in some moderation. According to Amaravati, it is part of our purpose in the world to do these things, and so we must. If we take joy in it, that is fine. That too is *svadharma*. I disagree with Amaravati on this matter. Sin is sin, and it's very convenient to claim God's mandate to sin when you have no other choice. Virtue, however, lies in resistance to temptation.

The Eastern Ravnos

Like us, the Ravnos arriving from the East have their own *jati*, customs and beliefs. I start with their creation story. I was surprised to learn they do not believe that Ravnos are descended from Caine. I nearly came to blows with one of Amaravati's childer when I referred to our clan as "Cainites."

Our Blood's Origins

I base the following tale directly upon a story Amaravati related to me in the time she tried to convert me to her version of the Road of Paradox. Amaravati

What's Your Sin?

The stereotypical Ravnos is a thief and a liar who steals with a smile and a sly wink. This is a very limited portrayal and doesn't lend itself to great variety (or playability). The Ravnos clan weakness does mean you have to choose a sin or crime; your character must indulge in that vice whenever possible, or try to resist it if she can. But not all Ravnos are guilty of the *same* sin and not all Ravnos want to commit outright crimes. Ravnos also hold very different attitudes toward their sins of choice. One Ravnos may revel in his compulsion to seduce noblewomen and murder them in their sleep without drinking their blood while another resists his urge to steal valuables with all his strength, and goes to confession when the spirit is weak. The compulsion to sin doesn't define your character's morality — her reaction to that compulsion does.

Ravnos sins are unusually sophisticated expressions of the Beast within each Cainite. Other vampires have only to worry about bloody rages and all-consuming hunger; Ravnos deal with whispering urges that erode their will and humanity. Ravnos sins should thus not be simple things like "Gregori likes to steal" or "Katya cheats the wealthy with false fortunes." Gregori may steal, but what he steals is important. Does he take heirlooms of great sentimental value or money? Is it only jewelry? Must it be heavily guarded? Katya may tell false fortunes, but what if she takes the time to learn about the people she reads and gives them tailored fortunes intended to lead them to utter ruin? Crimes need motive, opportunity and method. In the above example, Katya's motive may be that she hates the wealthy because a landed noble evicted her family from his fief for no good reason. Her opportunity comes to her, seeking signs of the future. Her method is fortune telling, which she uses as a means to get an angle on her marks' hopes and dreams before betraying them when they are weakest.

Before you decide upon your character's sin of choice, consider his life before the Embrace, the manner of the Embrace and how his sire schooled him as a childer. The Beast is wily and the Ravnos' compulsion invariably ties into desires and urges that have been there all along. The chosen crime could be what he did in life, what he always wanted to do but couldn't or the act he despises most. Decide how he indulges in it and his attitude toward his compulsions.

The seven deadly sins can serve as inspiration for Ravnos crimes. Although many Ravnos do not come from Christian — or even Western — backgrounds, most in Europe do. They are general guidelines and serve as a starting point, not a definition. Many of these sins can lead to similar crimes. For example, pride, envy and avarice can all lead to theft, but for different reasons. It is critical to examine both the character's sin (the cause) and the transgression it leads to (the effects). The Storyteller is free to judge that the compulsive transgressions are too easy to deal with to qualify (simply discounting others' views is not enough for a prideful Ravnos).

- **Avarice** — Motivations for greed can run from selfishness to literal fear. For whatever reason, the Ravnos needs power or wealth. Nothing is enough for this Ravnos, he takes and takes and takes and still wants more — whether it's the Lasombra elder's prized collection of relics or the potent blood in her veins, the Ravnos feels it's his proper due to take it, that it's owed to him.
- **Envy** — Envy is a desire to have what others possess. This can be reputation, status, wealth, lovers — it doesn't matter. Someone has something better than the Ravnos, so she must get it. The Ravnos may seduce a favored ghoul, steal an attractive piece of jewelry or simply destroy the coveted item.
- **Gluttony** — The gluttonous Ravnos engages in needless, wasteful and hedonistic behavior, often at the expense of those around her. She feeds to excess, simply for the pleasure of the Kiss. She wants more than anyone or anything around her can give and won't stop until she has it. A gluttonous Ravnos often becomes a jaded creature and engages in ever more depraved excesses to slake her unquenchable thirst for pleasure and indulgence.
- **Lust** — Lust is an overwhelming desire for experiences or material things. A Ravnos afflicted with lust impulsively or meticulously takes possession of anyone and anything that strikes his fancy. "It's not the having, it's the *getting*" is his creed. That is, once he has it, it's no longer as important as when it was an object of his desire. Lust is unlike avarice in that objects of attention are often abandoned in favor of newer attractions, and it is unlike gluttony in that the Ravnos rarely indulges to excess.
- **Pride** — A Ravnos whose Beast goads him to sins of pride is vain, arrogant and overbearing. His desire for recognition and respect drives him to acts that gain him fame or infamy. He brooks no challenges to himself or his reputation and seeks vengeance for even the mildest of slights.
- **Sloth** — Slothful Ravnos aren't particularly common, as the Beast drives them to active acts of vice. Still, the Ravnos afflicted with sloth is likely to take the course of least resistance — if she needs money, she simply robs a merchant. If she needs to feed, she kills her neighbors rather than looking for more suitable prey. In other cases, it may manifest as a need to get others to do her work for her. Such a creature might have several ghouls who do her hunting, bringing the victim to her haven for feeding. Of course, she'll also need them to clean up afterward.
- **Wrath** — A wrathful Ravnos is quick to anger and often acts impulsively in the grip of his emotions. He is often driven to quick violence over real or imagined slights and is always on the lookout for either. A Ravnos inclined to more ornate and complex revenge schemes is also possible, although in the grip of his anger, he's likely to openly and publicly swear undying vengeance upon his foe.

also discussed a longer epic poem, *The Wounds of the Night's Sword*, which goes into greater detail about the latter two "ages" or "days of Brahma." I should also preface this entire tale by warning that our Eastern kin are decidedly pagan. They know neither Caine nor Christ and speak of a multitude of gods.

In brief, they believe that the world has four ages, or "four days of Brahma." I'm not sure what the latter means. The first, the Age of Gold, is called the *Satya Yuga*, and was the time before death and sin, before demons walked the Earth. I would assume that our correlation is the time of the Garden of Eden. When the *Satya Yuga* ended, the *Treta Yuga* began. This is the Age of Silver. At this time, sin and death become real. Evil things enter the world, and the gods appoint protectors to keep them away from humanity. Next is the *Dvapara Yuga*, the Age of Bronze. This is the age when the demons turn the protectors away from their duties and tempt them to become demons themselves. The final age — in which we live — is the Age of Iron, the *Kali Yuga*. We are 4,397 years into the *Kali Yuga* now. Strife and destruction mark the fourth age.

In the Age of Bronze, the guardians — known as the *siddhitizayya* to our Eastern relations — abandoned duties the gods appointed for them. They were to protect mankind from the demons who constantly strove to devour and destroy the fabric of all things. At first, they fulfilled their duties, but over time became drunk with the power granted them. They turned upon their charges and ate their flesh, drank their blood and sated their lusts on those they were to protect. Men instead called them *asuratizayya*. As near as I can tell, *asuratizayya* means "multitude of evils," or perhaps "infernal hordes."

The gods saw the crimes this infernal horde committed against humanity and cursed them. Where before they simply lusted for flesh and blood, the curse forced them to find sustenance only *from* flesh and blood. Where before they could walk in the sun, now the sun's light burned them cruelly to remind the accursed of their crimes. The *asuratizayya* did not understand the punishments leveled upon them. They reveled in the curses inflicted upon them and maintained the dominion they claimed over men.

The gods decided to take further steps against the *asuratizayya*. Together, this multitude of deities created a monster worse than the *asuratizayya*. First, Yama, god of the dead, sought among the dead a man whom the monsters had wronged the most. Kali — who seems to be a goddess of warfare, destruction or the end of the world — imbued the dead man with a passion for vengeance on behalf of all those who had suffered and died at the hands of *asuratizayya*. Indra, perhaps a god of the crops, granted the dead man fertility, that he might create others to fight the *asuratizayya* on his behalf. The Earth itself restored the dead man's body and Varuna, god of strength, restored the dead man's blood, imbuing it with potency beyond that of the *asuratizayya*. The Devi — I think this is another name for Kali, and I do not understand why she appears in two guises — granted him power over *maya*, or "deception." Himavat, god of the mountains, granted the dead man the durability of the peaks. Hanuman, the king of monkeys, granted the dead man a voice that could speak to animals, and ears that could hear them. When the dead man stood before them, the power of his blood boiling throughout his veins and the strength of the hills surging through his limbs, another powerful god named Shiva commanded him to destroy the *asuratizayya*.

I want to take a moment to note that I am positively certain that I misunderstood the translations of what each god's duties are, and I am convinced that several duplicate each other's duties. Any attempt to delve further into these religious beliefs led to more confusion than I had time for. I hope to expand my understanding, but this is the best I can do for now.

Three gods chose to curse the new creation. Surya, the god of the sun, and Agni, the god of fire, refused to give aid to a dead thing and said that the new creature would cause a scourge worse than that he'd been created to destroy. "Fire will ever hunger for him," Agni said. "My face, the sun, will one day devour him," Surya said. Brahma — the creator god, and apparently also Shiva — turned all four heads (yes, four heads) away from the demon. This denied the demon natural sustenance and cursed him to an eternity of starvation and lust for unnatural vices. Brahma then named the creature Zapathasura — this translation was very clear: it means "accursed demon." This is the creature we call the Antediluvian Ravnos.

The story indicates that despite the curses laid upon him, Zapathasura sought to fulfill his role in the world, and that role was the destruction of the infernal horde that plagued mankind. I find it difficult to believe that the progenitor of our line could be so selfless, given the nature of our existence.

That is where the story ends, but Amaravati offers more insights on the time since Zapathasura's creation. Also, the *Karavalanisha Vrana*, or *The Wounds of the*

Night's Sword, purportedly offers further insights into our history.

It is interesting that these Cainites have chosen to give themselves a context and a purpose that is lacking in so many European Cainites. From the Embrace onward, they're taught to fight a holy war against others simply on the basis of lineage. On second thought, perhaps they're not so different after all.

The elements of Brahma, Agni and Surya's curse match closely what little I've heard of Caine's origins. I would hesitate to describe our founder as Caine himself. I wonder if this is a distorted history carried from Enoch to India as our founder traveled east? Another aspect that interests me is the implication that other Cainites existed in India before Zapathasura's arrival, and that their presence offended him in some way. Or perhaps he simply wanted the land for his own. I do not wish to speculate too lightly on an Antediluvian's motives, especially with a story so tangled up in a heathen religion.

The Wounds of the Night's Sword

This epic poem relates the history of the Ravnos from their creation by the Indian gods, through some of their most spectacular battles with the *asuratizayya*. Followers of the Eastern Road of Paradox, called *Mayaparisatya*, see it as a religious text that lays out lessons and spiritual guidance for the road's followers. It is not a work of prophecy, nor is it as fabled as the Book of Nod. It is, however, incomplete. The complete poem, supposedly penned by Zapathasura himself, is said to be in his haven. Speculation as to what the missing parts of the poem relate runs wild through the ranks of the Indian Ravnos. Rumors about the content range from forbidden secrets of Golconda to instructions Zapathasura saves for the end of the world.

The most ancient among the Brahmin *jati* whisper that the missing conclusion holds a curse so terrible it would drive the entire Ravnos clan into a cannibalistic frenzy to reveal even a portion of it and that Zapathasura hid it away to protect his descendents. In truth, none know if there even *is* a conclusion, or if Zapathasura simply left off and never finished the work.

The New Arrivals

We may have forgotten many of the ways of the East, but Amaravati and the rest of the newcomers to Europe and the Levant have not. Are they childer tired of the strict rules of their homeland? Are they Ravnos whose wanderlust drove them over the mountains? I do not know. As has happened at least four other times in the past happens again and more Ravnos come to Europe. Few realize that Ravnos have been in Europe for at least 2000 years, and even fewer seem to care. A large number follow an ethos similar to the Via Paradocis of the Sybarites. I believe some have come here following tales a Sybarite coterie told their sires centuries ago. Many others travel with them who follow *Mayaparisatya*, the older and (they say) purer Road of Paradox.

I would not say that, as a group, the new arrivals form a separate *jati*. It may be more accurate to say that each group related through both mortal and Ravnos blood considers itself a separate *jati*, with a strong taboo against Embracing outside that mortal line. The newcomers, no matter their ethical ground, travel with caravans of mortal relatives. They create ghouls and Embrace solely from these relatives, eschewing outsiders, or "*gaje*" as they call them. My best guess on what the word means is somewhere between "uncivilized" and "animal." This is pure conjecture from context, and it may not have such an offensive literal meaning. Those I asked refused to explain its meaning.

Of greater concern, a large number consider Ravnos who are not of their mortal bloodlines, together called the Roma, as aberrations that must be put down. This is not universal, and few are potent enough to destroy any and every unsatisfactory Ravnos they meet. Also, the Via Paradocis is much given to rationalizing the Amaranth. The Sybarites don't commit diablerie on Ravnos, but I do not know about the newcomers.

Phuri Dae

A small *jati* travels with the newcomers. Called the Phuri Dae, they have insight much akin to the Brahmin, a high caste among the Eastern Ravnos whom I will discuss in a moment. It is my belief that they were cast out along with the other migrants and have chosen a new identity for themselves. The other newcomers look to the Phuri Dae for advice and guidance — where to go, where to feed, when to travel, when to rest. For their part, the Phuri Dae are probably the most trustworthy of the new arrivals and

least likely to abuse their own herds in the process. They try to remain aloof from the earthier aspects of Ravnos behavior, but their own blood betrays them often enough.

Harasvarupa Nishiitharudhira Amaravati, my guide among the newcomers, is of the Phuri Dae and freely admits to her past as one of the Brahmin. Her sire's sire rejected her and tried to banish her to the lower Chandalas caste, since he believed it wrong to Embrace women. Thankfully, she was willing to speak to me of the newcomers and of history as our Indian cousins tell it. Amaravati is vehement that she still follows a Road she calls *Mayaparisatya* and rejects the "false" Road of Paradox.

The Roma

The Roma are mortal relatives to the newly arriving Ravnos. They travel almost constantly in caravans that mainly consist of family groups. Like our own mortal broods, they suffer from the reputation their blood-drinking cousins bring upon them. Only a relative few seem aware of the Ravnos presence in their midst — more fortunate for them.

These "Gypsies" are an almost perfect camouflage for the Ravnos, as they serve as perfect scapegoats for whatever the Ravnos choose to do and it's very difficult to ascertain just *which* family groups, or *kumpaniya*, conceal Ravnos travelers.

The Indian Jati

I cannot claim to know very much of distant India. It is a land of legend and mystery, full of strange gods and savage demons, if even a fraction of the stories I have heard are to be believed. Amaravati has told me much, but she speaks in metaphor and legend and I find it difficult trying to distill facts from her fanciful ways. It seems clear that Ravnos exist throughout India and have for at least as long as Tzimisce have lurked in their lands. Many rule as princes over cities — openly over the mortals or quietly and behind the scenes. According to Amaravati, the *asuratizayya* demons contest Ravnos rulership over most of these domains and warfare sweeps across India in waves — a city may be peaceful one week and under siege the next. It's difficult to say.

Where are the Gypsies?

Marcia actually traveled to the Roma, who are still working their way into the Byzantine Empire. Very few have actually come into Europe as of 1197. In fact, Roma don't really arrive in Europe proper in large numbers until approximately 1300. Even then, it's another two centuries before they're widely spread throughout Europe.

On a related note, the Ravnos clan is much older than the Roma as a distinct culture. Some Ravnos legends claim a much more ancient and profound history for the Roma, but all evidence indicates they originated in northern India sometime during the first half of the first millennium AD. Ravnos older than this are not, in fact, of Roma descent (although some claim it to avoid strife with the more conservative Roma Ravnos). In truth, Europe hosts a respectable Ravnos population long before the Roma people arrive. Even so, there are not nearly so many Ravnos as there are members of the other clans.

As the Roma and the Ravnos who travel with them arrive in Europe, the common perception of the Ravnos is gradually overtaken by the more flamboyant and audacious new arrivals. Within a few centuries, many Cainites assume the newcomers overwhelmed and destroyed the Europeans. Many of the pre-Roma Ravnos prefer it this way. Rather than risk association with their less temperate cousins, many choose to present themselves as members of other clans. Some Ravnos do not choose this deception, preferring to maintain an open existence. Phaedymites persist in France for centuries and maintain relations with the local Cainite courts throughout that period.

The Ravnos of India continue to hold to more traditional lineages. They seem to only Embrace from within their own castes, social divisions as ironclad as those between noble and peasant. Each caste or Ravnos *jati* has duties to perform as per the *Mayaparisatya*. This same traditionalism leaves me unconvinced, based on the attitude most of the newcomers show toward those who are not of their mortal bloodlines, that the Eastern Ravnos would welcome our arrival with even a pretense of good will. As I understand it, they would sooner destroy many of us than allow our existence to blight their pure blood.

Brahmin

The Brahmin are renowned for their insight and their knowledge of Zapathasura's desires. The first of the Brahmin *jati* was reputedly the first of Zapathasura's childer, and served for millennia as the Antediluvian's seer and prophet. His childer follow in his footsteps and have insight beyond that of other Ravnos.

Kshatriya

The Kshatriya are known as great leaders and warriors, and this caste apparently outlines the overall strategy to be taken against the *asuratizayya*. Kshatriya warriors seem to either serve as bodyguards to elders and Brahmin or to lead war coteries against the demons.

Vaisyas

The Vaisyas watch over cities. They look for signs of *asuratizayya* activity as well as manage herds for the Brahmin and Kshatriya. This merchant caste also seeks influence within the mortal realm, to gather resources for the Ravnos and manage information.

Sudras

Sudras are not a vampiric caste at all. The Sudras are ghouls, chosen for their competence and discretion. They maintain the households for the three true *jati* and handle daylight affairs. It is considered unseemly among Indian Ravnos to make a ghoul of anyone not of the Sudra caste.

Chandalas

The Ravnos would very much rather that Chandalas did not exist. They form a caste of untouchables who are not even considered members of the clan and draw their unlucky members from a variety of sources. Some are Embraced Sudras, others are Ravnos cast out for Embracing out of caste or committing offense against an elder. From Amaravati's description, many of the Chandalas would be what we call Caitiff, and some might even be lost members of other clans.

Although despised, the Chandalas are given ritual duties to perform in exchange for continued existence. Amaravati says they seek out and destroy certain corpses in an effort to stop them from becoming tools of the *asuratizayya*, which leads me to wonder if there is not Cappadocian blood in their number. Those who fail or refuse these duties are simply destroyed, and even those who accept face other restrictions. They are forbidden to feed upon the healthy — Chandalas may only feed on the ill, the infirm and the mortal untouchables. The only healthy vessel an untouchable may drink from is a widow, and only if he drinks her unto death.

Jati and Disciplines

Despite the wide variety of distinctions drawn among Ravnos due to mortal birth and Embrace lineage, only two *jati* actually qualify as Cainite bloodlines, and they're both the same bloodline, at that. The Phuri Dae among the new arrivals and the Brahmin of India have Auspex and not Fortitude as a clan Discipline.

Jati are social boundaries, and in Europe, they simply serve as a mark of lineage, occasionally of ideology or religion, and often of both. None develop a different set of clan Disciplines.

The New Breed

A bit over centuries ago, a large number of Ravnos and their mortal Roma relatives chose *en masse* to abandon the caste system, the war and their homeland. They joined with an even larger group of nomads in a migration from Northern India, headed for Europe. Within a few decades, the first of these nomads arrived in the Byzantine Empire, and they've been trickling into Europe through Greece and Turkey ever since.

Others

The following is distilled from my observations and travels as well as from Amaravati's impressions. From her own words, it seems that many other clans have been to India in the past. She calls them the "false blooded." Her reaction to the story of the Curse of Caine was the statement that Caine had stolen the secret from Zapathasura.

I present Amaravati's views first in each case. My own observations follow.

Assamites

Avoid those who crave blood — they won't think twice before taking yours. The others are more interesting, scholars and sorcerers both. They have much to offer in the way of information about the West and know better than many how appearances can deceive. They do not know svadharma, *yet they accomplish some of our work for us.*

We maintain a mutual distance with the Assamites. They are wary of a careless thief while we don't want to deal with a vitae-maddened thug. Once any concerns are acknowledged and alleviated, we rarely have problems in our dealings. I should note that any Assamite you meet is as likely to be a vitae-maddened thug as any Ravnos is a careless thief. Tales being what they are, most Assamites are as civilized as a Cainite can be.

Brujah

They are violent and stubborn. Many take the airs of scholarship, but don't show nearly the depth they want you to believe, and the elders are lost in the dreams of a dead "paradise." If you meet one, tell him how you respect his honor and seek to understand and adopt his ways. With such blandishments, the proud are easily swayed.

Many Ravnos regard Brujah with a mixture of contempt, fear and opportunism. The Zealots are so devoted to their causes and their scholarship that they often forget just what they truly are. They seek out honor in others so desperately that it is childishly simple to convince them that you think as they do. Brujah are often so taken with appearances that I suspect that it would take little effort for a Ravnos to claim Brujah lineage and gain acceptance in the clan.

Cappadocians

They spend so much time scrutinizing the dead, I wonder why they don't simply destroy themselves and join them. Still, they do have secrets and their knowledge of death gives them some degree of power over it.

Cappadocians are of a very serious, studious ilk. True, their chosen study is repugnant and often filthy, but it can have its uses. Even for those of us with the blood of Caine, death is a constant companion. We see the world decaying around us and those who pierce the secrets of that process may well touch upon some great secrets.

Followers of Set

How tiresome. Blood drinking degenerates who peddle some tepid form of self-proclaimed "'enlightenment" and worship a snake god? Fools.

It's entertaining to note that while the Followers of Set publicly decry our existence and our crimes, they privately deal with us just as with anyone else. They deny our presence in Egypt yet Ravnos have traveled the Nile for centuries — never mind how many reside in Alexandria. In public, avoid the Serpents. In private, exchange information on your mutual enemies. They can make valuable allies — if only temporarily.

Gangrel

Oh, yes. I know of these Animals. The Karavalanisha Vrana *tells of Zapathasura's sister, a woman raised alongside him for the same reason. Where Zapathasura stood and accepted his charge, his sister turned her back upon the gods and sought her own road. The gods cursed her to live as an*

animal and to wander ceaselessly without rest for her sin. Some believe her children can be taught the svadharma *their sire rejected. Sometimes, they are right. More often, the coward's children react with murderous rage.*

The Gangrel disgust me. They root about in the wilderness and praise their bestial nature as something admirable. It does not help that they seem to think we committed some mortal offense against them in the past and that even their neonates are indoctrinated in the idea that we must be eradicated. I do not even pretend to understand the reason for this, and I recommend avoidance and pre-emptive destruction.

Lasombra

Where Brujah batten on pride, these dark ones feed on vanity. A Lasombra must be in control at all times, must know what's going on around her and cannot afford to let that façade slip in front of anyone. To stay on her good side, help her maintain the appearance of control. When it comes time, you can slip her entire empire of delusions out from underneath her and she will be left powerless, with slighted rivals waiting for the first sign of weakness.

I shall add to Amaravati's point here. We Ravnos don't have a large number of friends. If you can get on a Lasombra's good side, you can probably get a lot of protection from that association, even if not directly from the Lasombra. Never betray or destroy an association before its usefulness is over. The Sybarite *jati* have had dealings with the Lasombra since before Rome's fall, and they continue to do so.

Malkavians

The Malkavians are truly the most peculiar of all these "Cainites." They are, one and all, mad, but they have a clarity of perception that leads many of them straight to their svadharma *without any prompting. They are dervishes of chaos and no eye sits at the center of the storm. Even those Malkavians who adopt* Mayaparisatya *may decide that you need to be shown your* svadharma, *one way or another.*

With the way some of our neonates act, it's a wonder anyone can tell the difference between our clans. Fortunately, we're not given to divine fits and sudden visions. The best course of action around the Malkavians is maximum caution. The Madmen vacillate between inspiration and rage — one is valuable, the other deadly.

Nosferatu

They show on their face that which whispers to us in our hearts. For that alone, we have a common ground. Do not assume any friendship or kindness from them, however, as many take offense at our very existence. Do not treat them with disdain or pity, and you may learn something from their forbearance.

Don't let the filthy exterior fool you — the Nosferatu are sharp and careful. They know entirely too much about many topics that may surprise you. Some are given to piety and others to monstrous indulgence and it is often difficult to discern the difference. Treat them with caution at all times and never let your guard down when they're around, and they're *always* around.

Toreador

Eternal distractions. What a waste of immortality it is, whiling away the hours pretending to create something purely the province of mortals. Dead things cannot create, only destroy. Artisans are dangerous because they do not understand this basic truth of their existence. They deny their nature, their urges and their hungers. Only when they truly understand that they may bring only pain and misery will they have worth.

Much of our ill-repute stems from the Toreador. Not only are they tempting targets for the larcenous among us, but they delight in spreading stories of our devious ways. Where Toreador gather, we are not welcome. Most Ravnos are not thieves, but most who are flock to the Artisans like flies to honey. Predictably, the Artisans screech with great vigor when wronged.

Tremere

I had heard that they destroyed the Salubri, an action that I cannot applaud enough. Unfortunately, despite the service they've done the world, I suspect they have the potential to become a much greater nuisance than any of Saulot's brood ever was.

If a clan exists that has a worst reputation than we do, that clan would be the Tremere. This, along with the fact that they're at war makes a wonderful opportunity for any Ravnos who cares to think long enough. No, don't try to get their magical knowledge from them, or betray them. Cultivate them — Ravnos wander everywhere, even places Tremere are not yet welcome. A clever Ravnos can take advantage of this and cultivate allies in the most useful locations. Besides, they hate the Tzimisce and that should always be encouraged.

Tzimisce

How rank untouchables could become lords of any land is not something I wish to know. Svadharma *is lost on these pathetic animals — destroy them out of mercy, if nothing else.*

The Tzimisce loathe us in a way even the Toreador do not — but they hate the Tremere even more. I can understand their hatred for us, given their strong sense of territory and the lack of respect some of us show for it. Why they loathe the Tremere so, I am uncertain. Their hatred probably relates to the fact that both clans' power structures are centered in Transylvania. The trick with the Tzimisce is to avoid their notice. If they catch you anyway, try to get away as quickly as possible and try to make it look like someone else — like the Gangrel — was at fault.

Ventrue

Yes, I know the upstart lords. They came to our lands long ago and tried to claim them for their own, but the asuratizayya *made short work of most of them. Those who remain know their role. They coexist with us — if not peacefully, at least with respect.*

The Ventrue are not amused. That is, I think, the best way to characterize their relations with much of our clan. Your relationship with luminaries such as Mithras is more of the exception than the rule, I'm afraid. Most Patricians are quite happy to have their ghouls burn us by day if they know where we sleep. The solution is, I think, to look respectable at all times and take an eye for an eye when they strike against our own.

Baali

Where the so-called "Children of Caine" are misguided and arrogant, the Baali actively serve a multitude of asura *lords unknown to us. They inflict their curse without care or discipline and must be destroyed whenever found. The Baali have rejected their* svadharma. *If you can enlighten one, do so, but destruction is the better course.*

Few topics draw nearly universal agreement among Cainites. One such topic is the Baali — the pagan Followers of Set and Gangrel, the devout Lasombra and Nosferatu and the militant Brujah and Tzimisce often agree that Baali must be destroyed root and branch. This is why I suggest a slightly divergent course — offer shelter and protection in exchange for their knowledge. Once you know what the Baali has to offer, *then* destroy him. Let him believe he leads you on and never let him realize just how short his leash truly is.

Salubri

Saulot and his children deserve nothing better than destruction. Those who preach the Golconda lie claim that the vampire can overcome her nature and gain balance and control over the Beast. This is wrong! We exist in balance! It is our svadharma *to rage in battle and lust for blood. To do otherwise is to lose the precarious path between what is true and what is real.*

The Salubri sometimes travel with Ravnos for protection or companionship, and who can blame them? This does create a bit of friction when Tremere catch them out, but it also serves as a handy disguise. Who'd expect a healer to live among thieves and cutthroats? As far as relations with them go, I wouldn't expect them to survive much longer. Cut your losses when you have to, give them aid when you can, take anything they have to offer and move on.

The End of the Road

Thus ends my first chronicle of my encounters with other Ravnos. The newcomers worry me, perhaps beyond what should be apparent. Some show the signs of true fanaticism, and their beliefs are dangerously alien. A few indicated to me that they would be happy to wipe the "impure blood" from the clan and start fresh.

I did find Hector. He was with a group of the newcomers and has abandoned the Road of Chivalry to pursue the tenets of Eastern Paradox. He tells me he is content with this decision, but something about his manner gives me pause. I do not believe the newcomers all wish us ill, but I do not think they intend any good, either. I see the look in Hector's eyes and I wonder what is in store for the rest of us. Only the rare newcomer is older than two centuries and those are invariably polite — *too* polite, I think — when dealing with me. I worry that their elders will follow behind them, and if they should come with the secret arts Amaravati hinted at, I worry for our own future.

Tricks of the Trade

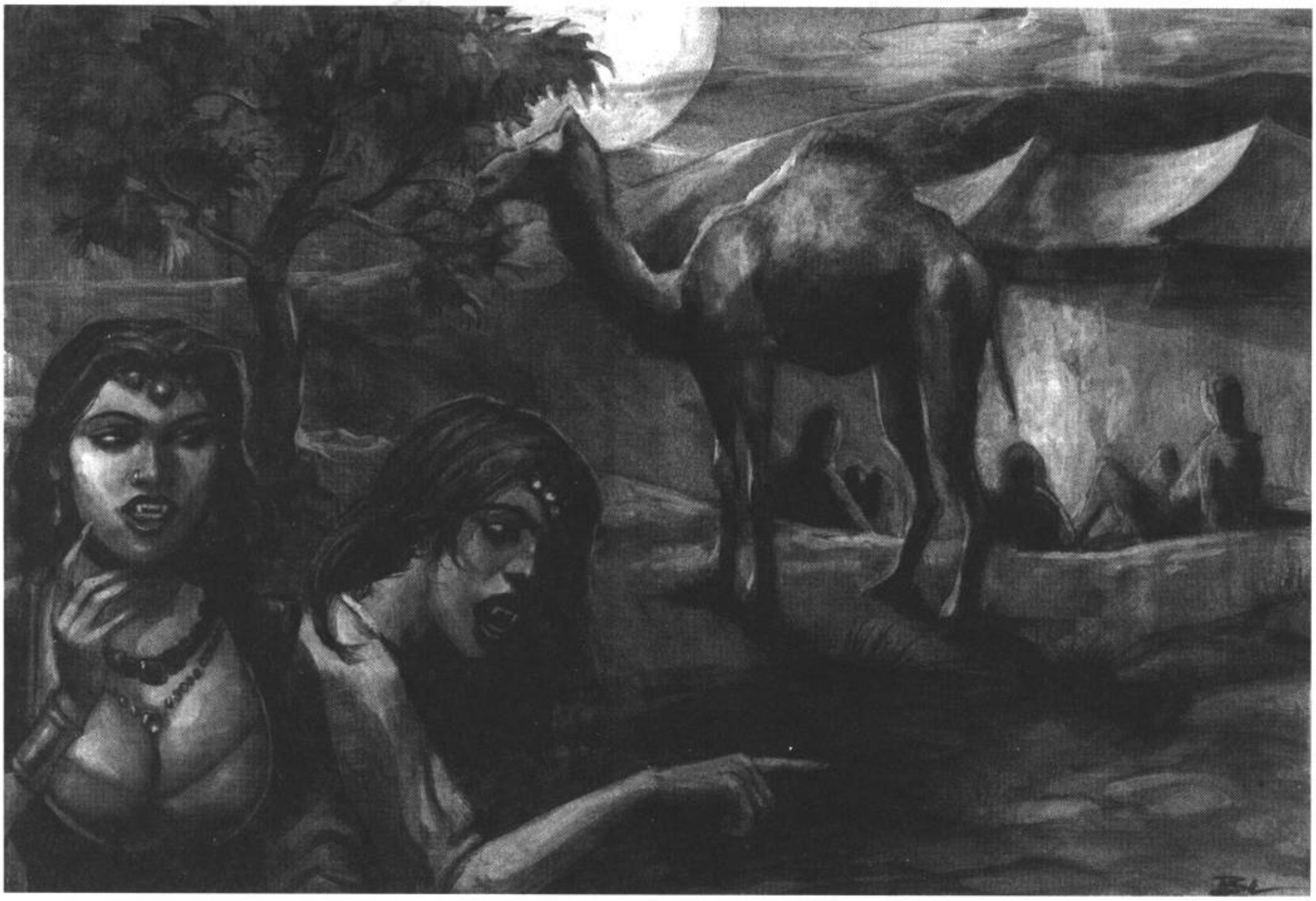
A Look at Chimerstry

Chimerstry is not what it seems. All too often, a neonate gets his first taste of illusion and goes off on a rampage of implausible tricks that can only be described as "clever" if one ignores that word's true definition. For that reason, a wise Ravnos waits to teach her childe the tricks of blood.

For most Ravnos, Chimerstry isn't so much a gift as a burden — or even a curse. One unwise usage can lead to decades or centuries of trouble. Even more so, other Cainites who have felt the sting of Chimerstry are loathe to ever trust a Ravnos again. The simple fact that they know they cannot trust their senses around a Charlatan does the Ravnos more damage than the Discipline can easily make up for. Isolation and exile are the cost of illusion.

Chimerstry curdles the senses, inflicting a supernatural myopia that can't be easily avoided. Even a Cainite who's aware of a Ravnos' powers cannot exactly dismiss everything he sees, no matter how suspicious he is. In fact, he's possibly even less likely to be able to distinguish between what's real and what is not. If the Ravnos draws a sword, does he ignore it or react? Is it real or illusion? This alone can create indecision in even the most decisive Cainites.

Chimerstry is best used for subtle or plausible effects — it's much easier to accept the aforementioned illusionary sword or stake than it is a flaming sword screaming with the sound of a thousand damned souls. The mix of superstition and magic in Dark Medieval Europe does broaden the possibilities, but one must be aware of one's audience.



The Uses

A Ravnos does not so much trick a victim with Chimerstry as externalize something she herself experiences. A Charlatan must assemble the illusion in her mind, and then force those images and sensations upon those around her. For a lowly power such as Ignis Fatuus, this is as simple as imagining a wall into the world, or a knife. But the wall does not truly block passage, nor does the knife cut. Ignis Fatuus is a simplistic power and requires very little attention to manifest. Dweomer-level illusions are more complex and more useful. The knife has an edge to the touch and the wall blocks passage to those who accept its reality. No matter how sharp it feels, however, the knife does not actually cut.

Apparition allows the Ravnos to put some of her own will into an illusion, thus adding motion. To use Apparition, the Ravnos must not only visualize how an illusion looks, feels, sounds, smells and possibly tastes, but must also apply an element of independent motion — a man's image can walk and talk so long as the Ravnos focuses the totality of his will upon it. If he allows his concentration to lapse, the image simply repeats the same motion over and over again, or says the same words. This is useful if it's a wolf prowling slowly just out of the range of firelight, but can be awkward if it's the local lord greeting his sworn knight.

Permanency requires the Ravnos to take a portion of herself and use it to give an illusion more "reality." It becomes a part of her, connected through her vitae. The image endures as she does. It vanishes if the Ravnos wishes it, or if circumstances require it. Otherwise, it can endure for centuries.

Horrid Reality is where Chimerstry truly comes into its own, but it's difficult to use. A Ravnos must vividly imagine painful and horrific fates and impose them upon others. The very need to envision the experience of "burning alive" or "staking through the heart" to the degree necessary to inflict such pain on others is a harrowing act of will. Every time a Ravnos creates a Horrid Reality, she creates a personal hell and imposes it upon another thinking person. She must understand it, visualize it, internalize it and *know* it in a way that almost requires her to experience it firsthand. As devastatingly effective as Horrid Reality can be, few Ravnos can bear to use it more than a few times before exhausting their own inner strength.

Chimerstry and the Fae

It's a common misconception among the other clans that Chimerstry comes from the Faerie folk, but this is far from the truth. Chimerstry itself has nothing to do with the Fae or anything like them — some Ravnos believe that it derives from *Mayaparisatya* , the Eastern Road of Paradox. The doctrine states that Chimerstry is the worldly expression of the Road, with the capacity to conceal or reveal the truth with the wave of a hand.

Despite statements elsewhere, Ravnos do not need to drink faerie blood to improve Chimerstry. Some do pursue this practice, but it is very dangerous. Cruel sires have been known to tell their childer such things to discourage them from learning Chimerstry at all. Those Ravnos who are resourceful enough to find those Fae who still lurk in the wild corners of Europe and then cruel enough to drink their blood are in for a rude surprise. Faerie blood — which can appear to be wine, vinegar or even fresh water — is nourishing, but has many unpredictable effects. The Ravnos may lose track of time, experience traumatic illusions, or simply wander until dawn.

New Discipline Powers

Spread across many different lands and the products of several different cultures, Ravnos have developed many unique uses for their Disciplines. Many of these concern Chimerstry and the application of illusions, but not all. In particular, Animalism is much more useful to the Ravnos than might appear at first glance. Ravnos find it extremely helpful for traveling, spying and supplying guardians and allies when needed. Other Cainites expect Ravnos to use illusions all out of proportion to how often they actually *do*, and Animalism provides a nice counterpoint to that. There is no greater satisfaction for a Charlatan than watching a pack of wolves tear a rival limb from limb as he desperately tries to disbelieve the "obvious Ravnos deception."

The Beast's Vigor (Animalism Level Three, Fortitude Level Three)

Tapping into the bond between regnant and thrall, a Ravnos knowing the Beast's Vigor may call upon a nearby animal ghoul's vitality to absorb injuries that could otherwise incapacitate him. The wounds appear

Haunting of the Blood

Chimerstry can be a double-edged sword. To project a convincing glamour, a Ravnos must actually experience the trickery herself. Under most circumstances, a Charlatan is able to deal with this self-trickery and remains aware of what is real and what is not. But every once in a while, the Beast's rage and frustration fires the phantoms of Chimerstry and they haunt the Ravnos herself. Few Ravnos have not seen unexpected shapes crawling about the periphery of their vision, but the unlucky few are haunted by horrors summoned from their own souls.

System: When a player botches a Chimerstry roll, the Ravnos comes to be haunted by one of her own illusions. The nature and power of this ephemera depends on the circumstances of the level of Chimerstry involved. A botch using Ignis Fatuus creates indeterminate shapes that pop up in the corner of the vampire's eye, distracting her but doing little else. A botch using Horrid Reality would summon up a convincing manifestation of the vampire's Beast, willing and able to pursue its creator to the ends of creation. The details are up to the Storyteller, but the illusory stalker is unable to destroy its creator, although it can hurt her if it is powerful enough. The haunting lasts for roughly one month per level of Chimerstry.

This system is optional. Storytellers with their own ideas of what dark fates result from Chimerstry botches shouldn't hesitate to go their own route.

on the animal's body, seemingly without cause. If the animal survives, healing leaves scars and any fur that grows back is white.

System: If the Ravnos has any animal ghouls within sight, he may elect to use this power. The player spends one blood point and rolls Stamina + Animal Ken (difficulty 8). Each success transfers one Health Level of damage (any type) to the animal. The Beast's Vigor can only be used immediately after the vampire is wounded (after the soak roll) and counts as a reflexive action.

The Beast's Vigor costs 10 experience points to learn.

Mind of the Wilds (Animalism Level Two, Auspex Level Four)

This power is known solely to a few Phuri Dae, who use it to find safe routes of travel and camp sites. A vampire with this power spreads her awareness through the local wildlife to get a general sense of conditions nearby —the presence or absence of danger, safe places and humans. It's impossible to determine number or type of dangerous creatures; the vampire just gets an overall impression. For more specifics, the Phuri Dae must either summon an animal to ask or scout the area directly.

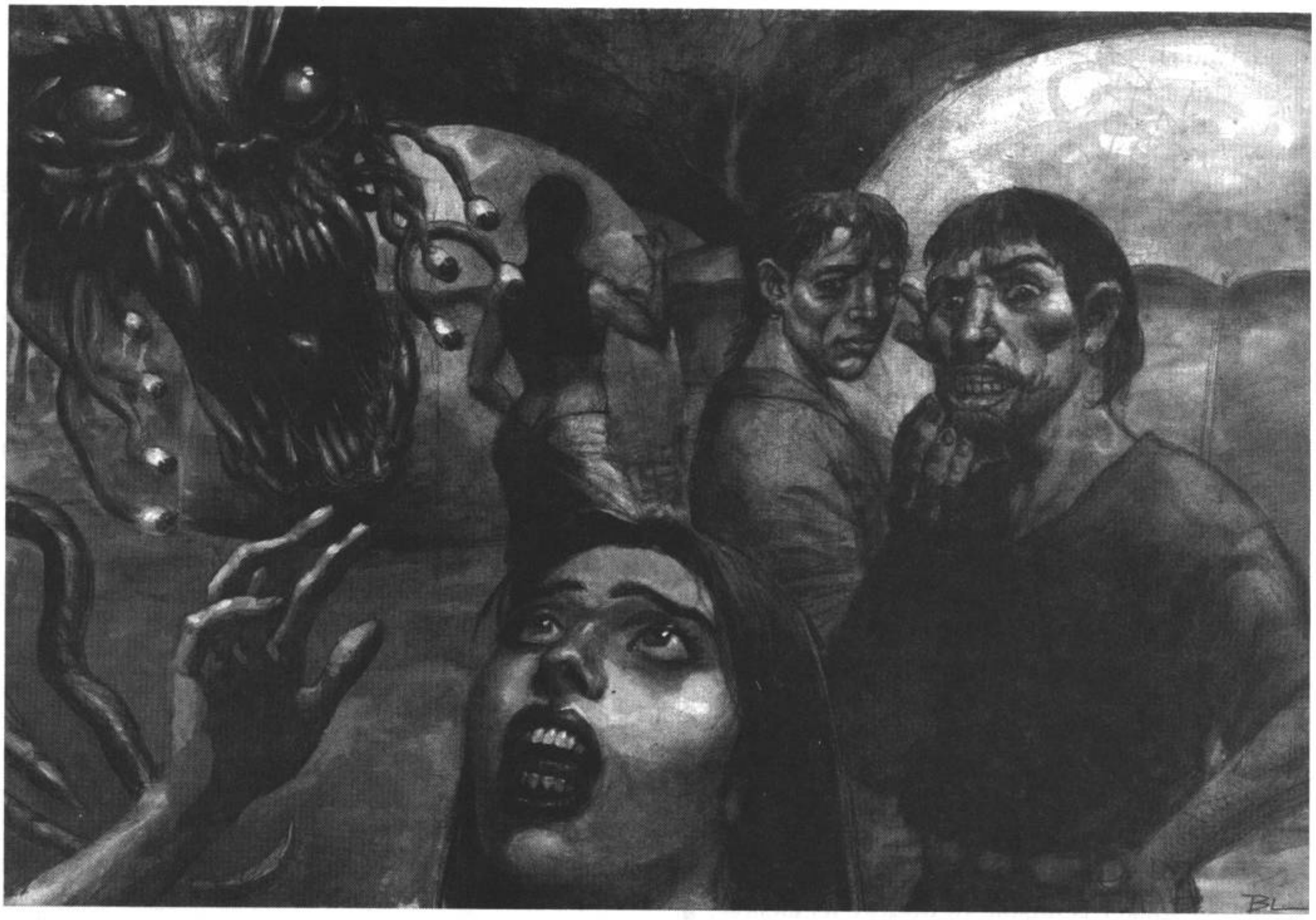
System: The player rolls Perception + Animal Ken (difficulty 8) while the vampire concentrates for a full turn. Each success grants more information over a larger area. One success might grant very general knowledge about an acre or less, while five successes could cover a mountain pass or a small forest and locate the most dangerous (and safest) areas therein. A botch results in false or misleading information. The Storyteller should be careful to avoid giving away too much information with Mind of the Wilds. It's intended to help a character scout an area, rather than serve in place of such reconnaissance.

Mind of the Wilds costs 15 experience points to learn.

Nightmare Curse (Auspex Level Four, Chimerstry Level Five)

This power comes from the Indian Brahmin *jati* and through them to the Phuri Dae. It's used as a punishment upon those who deserve worse than mere destruction. The Ravnos draws his victim's greatest fear forth to plague her night and day. This nightmare creature is only perceptible to the victim, but it can occasionally make its presence known in small ways to others. It always takes a form relevant to the victim's fears — a neonate who fears the vengeance of God will be plagued by wrathful angels or the priest from his home village.

System: The player spends one point of Willpower (two for Cainite targets) and rolls Perception + Intimidation (difficulty equal to target's Willpower). The Ravnos concentrates for a full turn to draw forth the victim's greatest fear and give it life for one night per success. Traditionally, the Ravnos makes eye contact with the victim (who may be tied or held down by her tormentor's clanmates), but that isn't necessary. If the victim is within sight but does not make eye contact, the Ravnos player suffers a +1 difficulty penalty; if the



victim is within a mile of the Ravnos but not within sight, and the Ravnos has a personal item of the victim's on which to focus, the player suffers a +2 difficulty penalty. If the victim is further away than a few miles or the Ravnos has no item on which to concentrate, Nightmare's Curse cannot be used.

The player can choose to extend the curse's duration by spending blood when the curse is first summoned; each point adds a full night to the curse. It vanishes at sunrise after its final night. During that time, the victim suffers the effects of the Haunted and Nightmare Flaws, as per **Vampire: The Dark Ages**.

Nightmare's Curse costs 20 experience points to learn.

Horrid Blade (Chimerstry Level Six)

Horrid Blade was originally a secret of the Indian warriors of the Kshatriya *jati* and was used in their ceaseless and savage battles with the *asuratizayya* demons, but knowledge of this power came to Europe with the first Ravnos who arrived in pre-Roman times. With this power, a Ravnos can summon weapons with physical substance. She simply wills the weapon into existence and it appears as a normal blade to others. Although a Horrid Blade is a Chimerstry creation with tenuous physical reality, while it exists it can inflict grievous injuries.

System: The player spends two Willpower points, as well as one blood point per damage die the weapon inflicts over Strength (e.g. a Horrid Knife would cost one blood point for Strength + 1 damage). She may purchase an additional die beyond the normal damage for the weapon for an additional blood point. The conjured weapon appears in the Ravnos' hand the moment she activates the power and remains for a full scene. If she's disarmed, she may summon it back to her hand if the player spends another blood point. The Horrid Blade inflicts aggravated damage, and unlike that caused by Horrid Reality, it does not fade once the effect ends.

Truth's Essence (Chimerstry Level Six)

Unlike other powers developed for Chimerstry, this ability reveals the truth to observers. It dispels weaker uses of Chimerstry or Obfuscate of which the

user is aware or has reason to suspect. A Ravnos can turn it on a Nosferatu and reveal his true form to all who watch, or he can banish an irritating illusion his childe has conjured. The power has no other effects and so appears as a failure of the targeted illusion rather than a manifestation of the Ravnos' power. Those few who know this power do not advertise it, as the ability to reveal the hidden is just as dangerous as the power to conceal the obvious.

System: If the Ravnos is aware of (or has good reason to suspect) a use of Chimerstry or Obfuscate, he may use Truth's Embrace by concentrating for a turn. The player spends two blood points and rolls Wits + Subterfuge against a difficulty equal to the target's Manipulation + Subterfuge. If he rolls one or more successes, the power is dispelled for the scene. Truth's Essence only works on targets who have no more dots in Obfuscate than the Ravnos has in Chimerstry than the user has in Chimerstry. It is unaffected by generation, however. The Storyteller is the final judge of whether the Ravnos has "good reason" to suspect illusions, but entering a supposedly abandoned Nosferatu haven or the sudden appearance of flames from thin air both qualify.

A Forked Road

Much of the ill will directed toward Ravnos in Europe stems from the practices (or reputed practices) of the followers of the Road of Paradox. The lords and ladies of Europe's Cainite courts believe that most, if not all, Ravnos follow this debauched philosophy that promotes power without responsibility and existence without meaning. A follower of Paradox in their midst certainly works to undermine their court, wishes to diablerize their childer and sows destruction in his wake.

There is, unfortunately, some truth to these fears. But few realize that not all Charlatans follow so debauched a Road or that the Western Road of Paradox ultimately derives from a much older and much more complete Cainite belief system. Indeed, among the Ravnos, the Via Paradocis is more akin to a heresy against the ancient way of *Mayaparisatya* — the Eastern Road of Paradox — than a universal principal.

Mayaparisatya: Paradox Redux

The older, Eastern Road of Paradox, is properly known as *Mayaparisatya* and refers to the Ravnos practice of "truth through deception," or enlightenment through falsehood. In its purest form, it's used to guide Cainites to understand the truth of what they are before destroying them. Only with understanding of their *svadharma* can they move beyond their illusory and meaningless existence and return to *samsara*, or the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Its adherents believe *Mayaparisatya* to be Zapathasura's creation, to better aid his childer and their childer in understanding their role in living death. It exhorts the Ravnos to show the demons of India — the *asuratizayya* — the falsehood of their life-in-death existence and release them from that prison once they understand. Cainite contact as early as Alexander's conquests led many to apply the philosophy to the Cainites.

I Disbelieve

All too often, players respond to what they're convinced are Chimerstry-driven illusions with "I disbelieve that image/trick/illusion." This is not so straightforward as simply declaring "I do not believe this is real." Even if a character has a strong suspicion that Chimerstry's been used, lacking empirical proof that it is an illusion (and no way to test it), it's difficult to demonstrate how one can simply will a false image away.

Consider a Cainite faced with fire he is certain must be illusory. The fire burns, gives off smoke, heat and light. If he approaches it, he can *feel* it. Would he put his hand in it? As easily as he would put his hand into a real flame. Once he did steel himself sufficiently to do so, he'd quickly prove to himself that it's not a real flame and the illusion would be undone. He could more easily put something flammable in the flame without touching it to get the same result. Of course, if the Ravnos is nearby, he could (with Apparition) create the impression that the object *had* burned in the flame. With Horrid Reality, the Ravnos could even inflict the impression upon the doubting Cainite that the fire burned his hand — reinforcing the illusion for the victim and any onlookers.

Dispelling or disbelieving an illusion should rarely come down to rolling dice or spending a Willpower point to negate it. Roleplaying and logical action should take precedence over game mechanics.

The ideal of *Mayaparisatya* is that all Ravnos are Embraced as a sacrifice to, and to become a servant of, the gods (that ideal is not always followed, of course). As servants, Ravnos must fulfill the task Shiva set before Zapathasura — to destroy the *asuratizayya*. Deception and trickery are tools, to show the transitory nature of other concerns, and weapons with which to fight the demons. Self-indulgence is anathema to the followers of Eastern Paradox, although the *appearance* of self-indulgence can be a useful mask. Some would call this hypocrisy, but it is a useful deception in the unending wars that rage in the Indian nights. Those who stand up to announce their purity rarely survive long against the *asuratizayya*.

Devotees of *Mayaparisatya* choose their childer very carefully, sometimes taking years to select one for criteria proper for a direct servant of the gods. The teachings of the Road include several criteria that limit who can receive the Embrace and when. The stronger prohibition requires that a Ravnos never Embrace outside his mortal *jati* and those Embraced out-of-*jati* usually become untouchables as do their sires. If Embracing outside one's *jati* is grounds for exile, then Embracing foreigners is seen as worthy of execution or worse punishments.

Another prohibition, enforced only by the most dogmatic followers of Eastern Paradox, is against Embracing women. According to the Road's orthodoxy, women are not proper sacrifices to the gods. Others differ on the reasoning, and one story in the *Karavalanisha Vrana* relates how Zapathasura's unnamed sister betrayed the purpose she was created for, and this betrayal makes women unsuitable. Another story from the epic describes how Zapathasura Embraced another woman out of love, who supposedly surpassed his own martial prowess. He tried to enforce the prohibition against Embracing women so that they would not overshadow his chosen. Most Ravnos pay only lip service to this tradition, giving men greater ritual value but Embracing from both sexes.

Very few followers of Eastern Paradox have come to Europe, as faithful adherence requires them to remain in India where they can fulfill their *svadharma*. Those who have come west see lands dominated by

Mayaparisatya (Eastern Paradox) Hierarchy of Sins

Road Score	Minimum Wrongdoing for Conviction Roll	Rationale
10	Embracing a Woman	Males traditionally make better offerings to the gods.
9	Embracing outside the *jati*	All things have their place; do not violate the order established by Heaven.
8	Destroying another Ravnos	Only the most drastic of crimes demand the ending of a Ravnos.
7	Killing a mortal for simple sustenance	All mortals must have their chance to fulfill their *svadharma*.
6	Failing to destroy another vampire who repeatedly refuses to acknowledge his *svadharma*	Those who cannot comprehend truth need another try to get it right.
5	Killing a mortal for reasons other than survival	Denying a mortal his right to achieve his *svadharma* is the greatest of crimes against the gods.
4	Failure to aid another's *svadharma*	This is the Ravnos' purpose; to fail at it is to lose one's *svadharma*.
3	Allowing Cainite or *asuratizayya* affairs to precede one's *svadharma*	Allegiance is to the gods, not to degenerates.
2	Accepting the blood oath	Never enslave your will to another. It prevents you from following your *svadharma* and clouds your judgment.
1	Embracing needlessly or out of personal desire	Embrace only he who can fulfill his duties for the gods.

Cainites (surely relatives of the *asuratizayya*), where none of the Ravnos *jati* have kept to their duties. Many Western Ravnos even believe themselves to be descended from Caine.

The Eastern Road of Paradox teaches Conviction and Self-Control.

The Western Road of Paradox

Those European and other Western Ravnos who still adhere to their clan's unique belief structure actually follow a path derived, but much separated, from *Mayaparisatya*. The "Via Paradocis" known in Europe pays little or no heed to the idea of direct sacrifice and service to any gods. What remains is a central belief in the primacy of personal destiny — only rarely called *svadharma*. Any challenge to personal freedom is an attack on that destiny and so must be destroyed, and all forms of social control are seen as such challenges. Deception and illusion are the only guarantees of freedom — what others do not know, they cannot control.

Adherents are known for their clever and diabolical schemes, their complex deceptions and their lack of regard for social mores. In truth, not all of the followers are quite this extreme — only the most dedicated and dangerous of Ravnos pursue this philosophy to its logical and nihilistic conclusion: the destruction of all social bonds.

Rumors abound regarding what the Road of Paradox requires of its followers — that they must commit diablerie on any elder they find, that they seek the violent end of all things. The truth is not completely far from the mark. It is all too easy for Ravnos to use Paradox as a justification for their depraved acts. It does not require constant, unendingly chaotic, senseless, antisocial behavior, however. The Road stipulates that its followers seek ways to harm society, whether by killing a village full of humans or slowly bringing about the collapse of a powerful prince's court. It does *not* require that the Ravnos do this at the expense of her own survival, nor does she need to act in a random, unfocused manner.

The Via Paradocis is often a convoluted justification for the Ravnos to indulge in her own weakness — the need to sin against God and man. According to its strictures, Ravnos must not allow others to learn their true motivations and beliefs, since such knowledge would routinely lead to their destruction. This is why European Cainites hold such contradictory (and often incorrect) views about Ravnos beliefs, behavior and motives — the Ravnos deliberately conceal the truth about their dealings under a deceptive veil. Road followers strongly value their personal freedom to act as they wish.

Western Paradox teaches that the urge to sin inherent in every Ravnos is natural, and must be heeded whenever possible — but, since none must know of her sin, she must never allow anyone to observe it and survive (or remember it, or realize what he witnessed). The adherent must also obey her desires — if she wants something, she should get it. This does not mean that she must *steal* it. She may get it honestly or dishonestly or however she chooses. If it is something that would increase her own personal power, she *must* get it at all costs. Not to do so is to reject the primacy of her own destiny.

Road adherents must also work against Cainite courts, which are by definition corrupt. This does not necessarily require an open and obvious attack upon a prince, but rather an insidious assault upon the very fabric of Cainite society. If the vampires in a city are busily feuding against one another, the enterprising Ravnos can take the opportunity to work with one or more sides and eventually topple the court.

The most dedicated followers of Via Paradocis actually work their tactics upon mortal society as well as Cainite. They also seek out Cainites who would be open to the Road and try to bring them onto it. For the truly devoted, it is not simply enough to tear down Cainite courts and fiefs, it is necessary to remove the pillars of those courts — the elders. A Ravnos might choose an elder (preferably one who's wronged him in the past) and spend years or decades destroying that elder's unlife, one piece at a time. A murdered retainer here, a burned-out haven there. Eventually, when the Ravnos takes everything from the elder, all that remains is her existence.

The Western Road of Paradox teaches Conviction and Self-Control.

Revised (Western) Road of Paradox Hierarchy of Sins

Road Score	Minimum Wrongdoing for Conviction Roll	Rationale
10	Avoiding slowly taking an elder's unlife — his allies, his power, his existence — apart piece by piece (preferably ending in diablerie)	Elders of other clans have great power. Take it as your own.
9	Refusing to turn a promising candidate to Paradox	Some Cainites can understand the way. Teach them if they will learn.
8	Failing to attempt to undermine mortal society	Mortals create laws to prohibit us from fulfilling our needs. We must break their society down to remove those barriers to our needs.
7	Failing to gratify desires — for knowledge, items, people or anything else.	The vampiric form grants us hungers and desires so that we may know what experiences to seek out. To avoid those experiences is to truly die.
6	Failing to indulge urge to sin (the clan weakness)	The Embrace frees us to indulge our darkest whims. To deny those whims is to deny yourself.
5	Getting caught at indulging sin (the clan weakness)	Both mortal and Cainite society frown upon many of our activities. Do not allow them to see us, or if they see us, do not allow them to act on that knowledge.
4	Failing to get items or knowledge that will increase personal power, or if it can't be taken, failing to destroy it.	Greater power is greater freedom.
3	Failing to attempt to erode a Cainite power structure	Even more than mortals, Cainites would limit our actions and deny us our needs. To destroy a prince's fief is to leave it open for us to do as we please.
2	Allowing others to learn too much about you	What they do not know about you, they cannot use against you. The balance of knowledge should always be in your favor
1	Accepting the blood oath	To accept the blood oath is to cease to be an individual and become an extension of another's will.

Deception and Stealth

Ravnos who wish to travel Dark Medieval Europe unmolested adopt alternate guises. They learn how to carry themselves as members of other clans so they may actually enter fiefs without a great fear of expulsion or execution, or simply to avoid Gangrel. Some Ravnos even create one or more alternate personas over a long period of time to avoid persecution or consequences.

Clan Impersonation

Ravnos occasionally choose to assume alternate identities in other clans. This works best with good Manipulation and Subterfuge ratings, in addition to the Alternate Identity Background described below. To establish an identity, the Ravnos should spend time researching the clan she wishes to infiltrate, construct a plausible identity and find a means to establish it. This is not always so easy as it looks. Many Cainites in the Dark Medieval world keep records of the various lines within their clans and can often uncover an imposter with only a little research.

It's generally much easier to impersonate a neonate than an ancilla or elder. If care and time are taken, within a matter of decades, a careful Ravnos could establish herself as a member of any clan she cares to. Even the most obsessive Cainite genealogists aren't likely to get all of the younger ranks into their

records. The chaos of the Crusades and other wars has also seen to the displacement, disappearance and destruction of many Cainites, making false identities easier to establish.

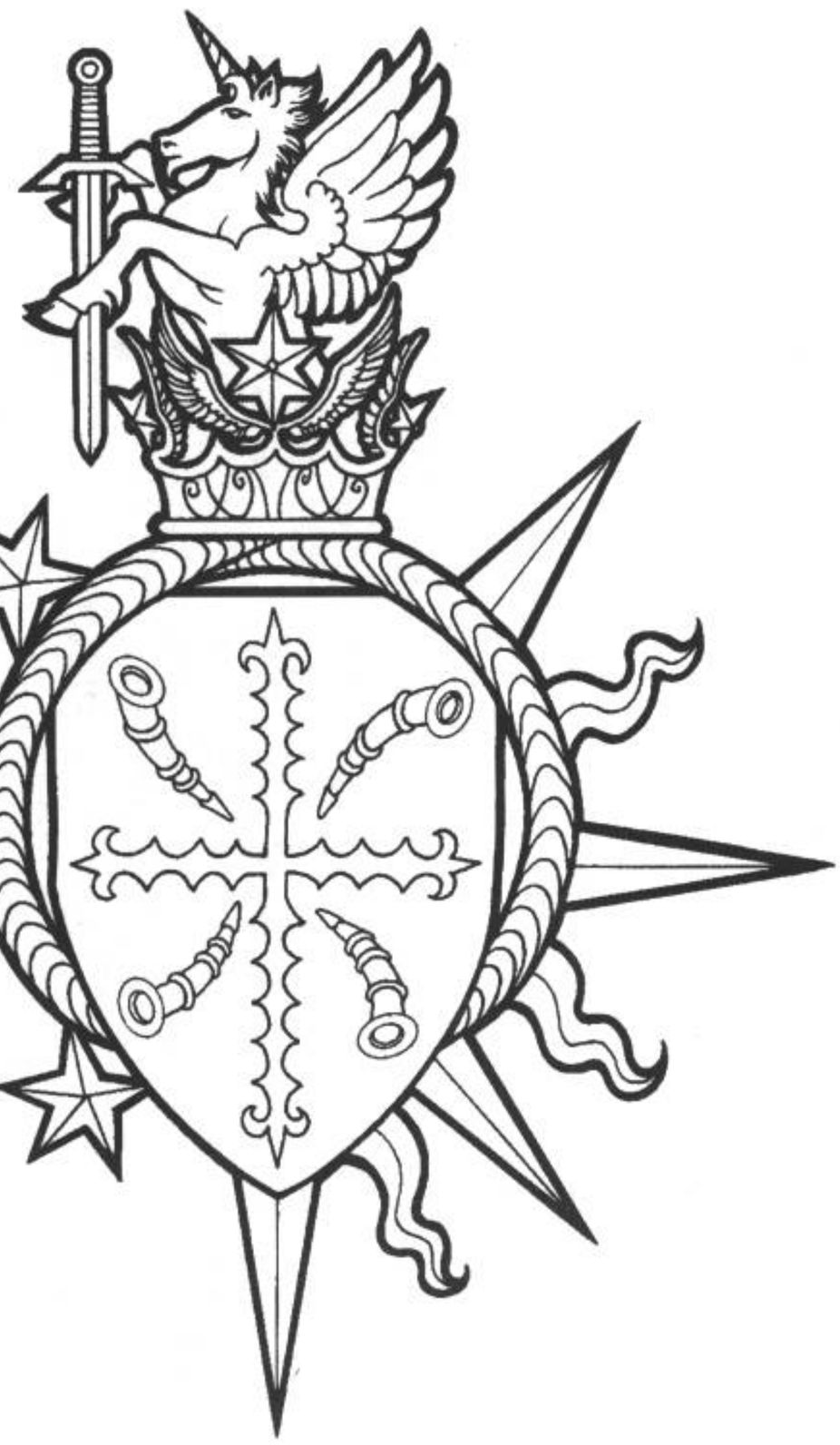
New Background

Alternate Identity

In Dark Medieval Europe, it is not very difficult to simply assume another name and identity. Communications do not move swiftly and if one knows everything she must to pass as her assumed persona, she can claim whatever anyone will believe. Such quick identities rarely stand up to concerted scrutiny, however. Especially in Cainite circles, where records of lineage and age-old allegiances make backgrounds easier to verify, a well-established identity takes years — often decades — to create and build. The Ravnos needs a plausible cover story that will stand up to investigation should it come under suspicion. This Background represents that time and effort and thus how difficult it is for others to find inconsistencies in a Charlatan's false persona (and how much status that persona can confer). Storytellers can use 5 + Alternate Identity as the difficulty on extended investigative actions undertaken to find the truth behind the cover identity. The actual ability to act as a member of another clan, however, falls under Subterfuge.

Players can take this Background multiple times at multiple levels for multiple identities. Storytellers are free to limit the use of this Background and demand detailed explanations. False identities often require the help of allies to establish, for example.

- • Your identity is new and won't stand much scrutiny. It's fine for casual inter actions, but if anyone decides to investigate your background, he's likely to discover the truth.
- •• Your identity can stand up to investigation under most conditions. If someone is determined to find the truth about your background, he will likely succeed with effort.
- ••• Your identity is known to a few fiefs and you actually have name recognition in those cities.
- •••• You are not only known, you have a strong reputation across several fiefs.
- ••••• Your identity is impeccable and you are a respected member of your chosen clan. Should the truth about your persona come to light, even an elder or two will vouch for you.



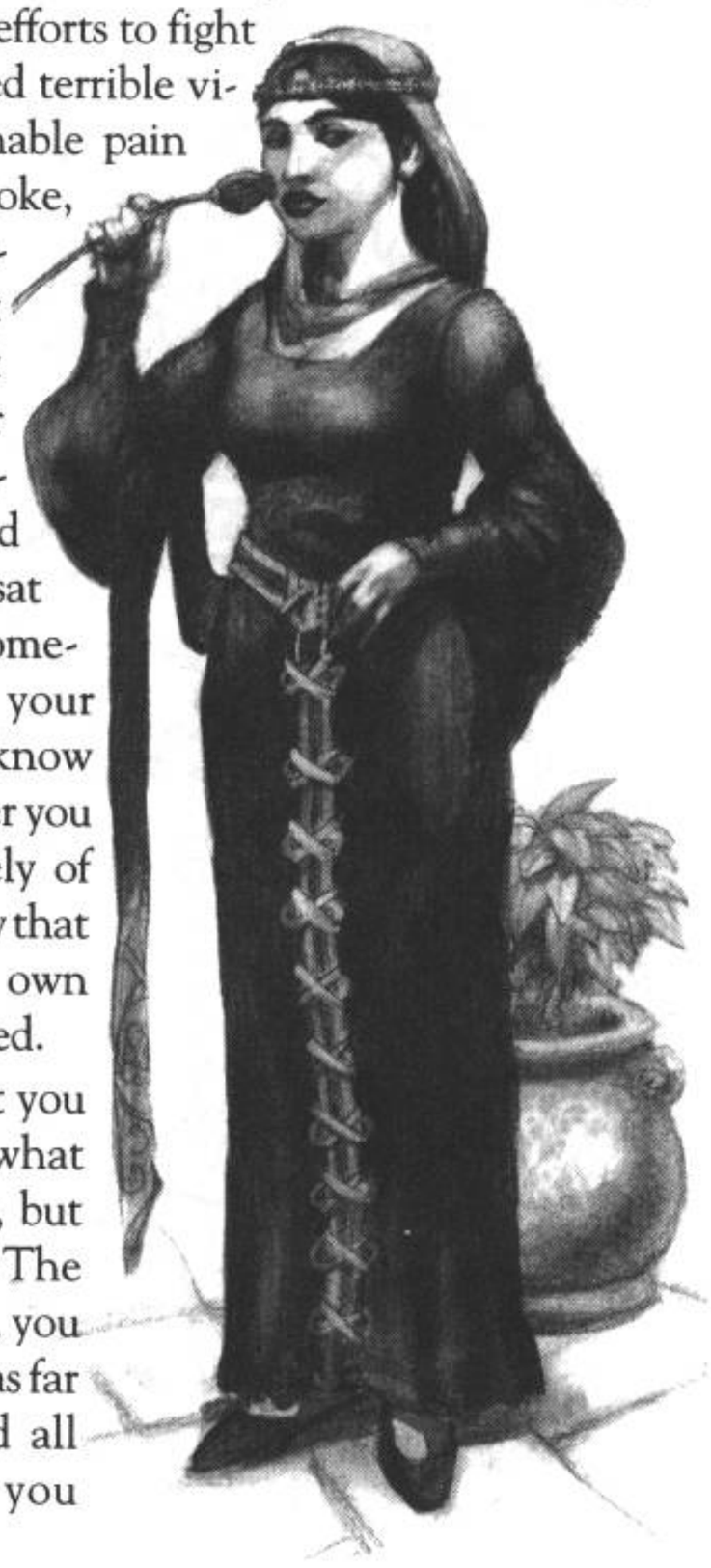
Sinners All

Clan Impersonator

Quote: *I understand perfectly, my prince. Yes, the Charlatans* are *a terrible nuisance, aren't they? It is fortunate that our blood is not so flawed.*

Prelude: You were 16 before you learned of the night-creatures who had traveled with your family since before your grandparents left the East — terrible monsters that fed on the blood of the living. The very idea made your skin crawl. You awoke early one morning and saw one returning to his wagon to rest for the day. Despite the escort of armed guards, you watched that wagon. At night, you watched the monster come and go and drink your family's blood. First your sister fell ill, then your father, then your uncles.

The night you decided to strike, the beast struck first. He laughed at your efforts to fight him off, and inflicted terrible visions and unimaginable pain upon you. You awoke, surprised to find yourself unhurt, but *changed*. A thirst burned you to your very bones. The monster sat nearby and laughed when you sat up then shoved something heavy into your arms. You didn't know what it was until after you drained it completely of blood. When you saw that you had slain your own mother, you screamed.

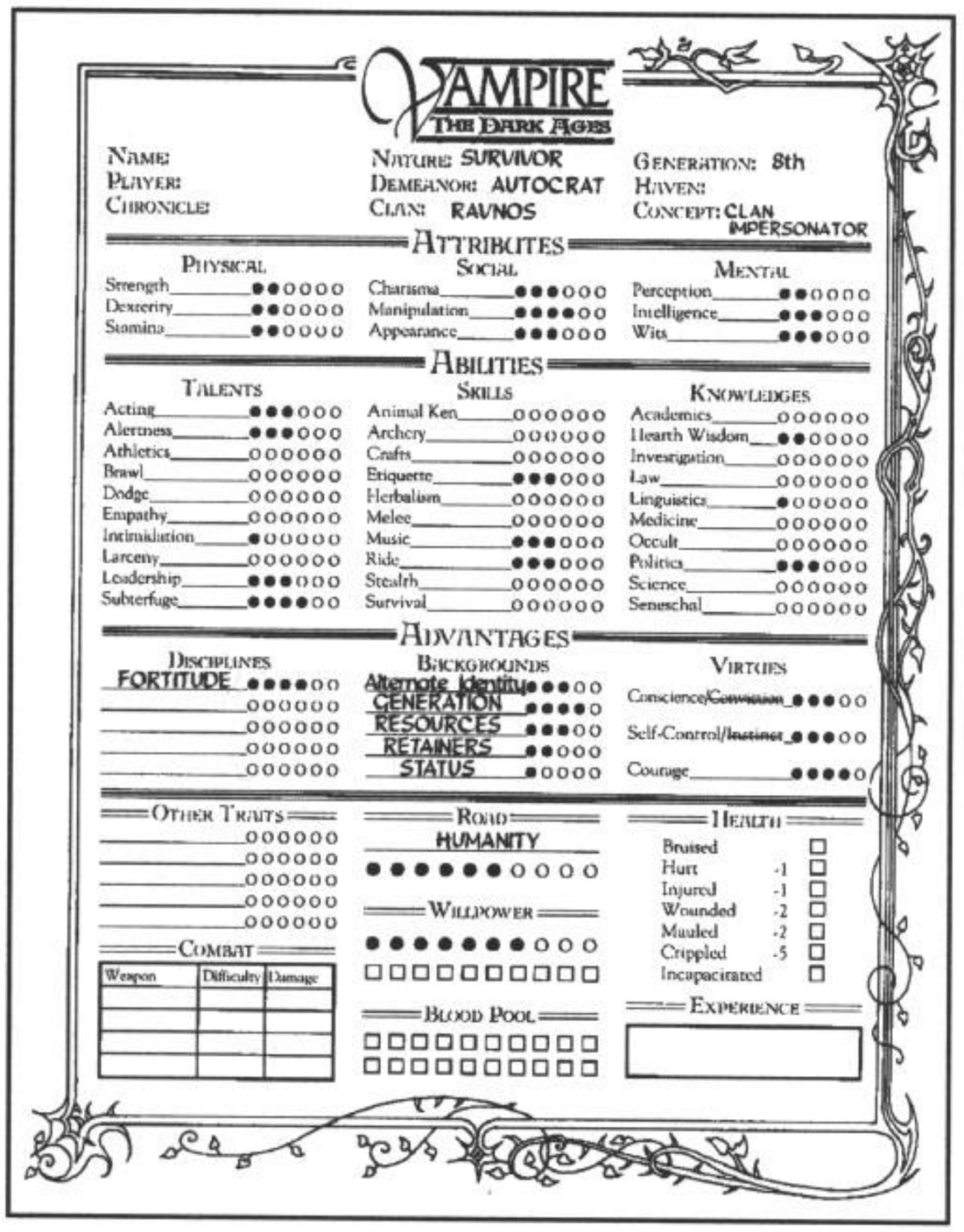


Your sire taught you what you were and what you should become, but you rejected all that. The first chance you got, you left to roam Europe as far away from him and all other Ravnos as you could get.

Concept: When you first came to Europe, you heard stories of the cold reception Ravnos receive in Cainite courts. Rather than face such indignities, you've adopted the persona of a Ventrue Embraced in Outremer. The deception has worked beyond your wildest dreams and you're accepted in several courts across Europe at face value. You've managed to build yourself a tidy fortune through business dealings and less savory pursuits, and travel with a small entourage, as befits a Patrician.

Roleplaying Hints: You're on guard at all times and trust no one. At any moment someone might accidentally or intentionally pierce your deception and reveal your true identity to all, and your existence is forfeit if that happens. Outwardly, you're polite and mannered, but inwardly you cringe every time you speak to a new Ventrue.

Equipment: Fine clothing, a wagon and team of horses



VAMPIRE — THE DARK AGES

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:
Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Autocrat
Clan: Ravnos
Generation: 8th
Haven:
Concept: Clan Impersonator

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○○	Charisma	●●●○○○	Perception	●●○○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○○	Appearance	●●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	●●●○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○○	Academics	○○○○○○
Alertness	●●●○○○	Archery	○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	●●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○○	Law	○○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○○	Music	●●●○○○	Occult	○○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○○	Ride	●●●○○○	Politics	●●●○○○
Leadership	●●●○○○	Stealth	○○○○○○	Science	○○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●●○○	Survival	○○○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Fortitude	●●●●○○	Alternate Identity	●●○○○	Conscience/Conviction	●●●○○
	○○○○○○	Generation	●●●●○	Self-Control/Instinct	●●●○○
	○○○○○○	Resources	●●●○○		
	○○○○○○	Retainers	●●○○○	Courage	●●●●○
	○○○○○○	Status	●○○○○		

Other Traits
○○○○○○
○○○○○○
○○○○○○
○○○○○○
○○○○○○

Road: Humanity ●●●●●●○○○○

Willpower ●●●●●●○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Blood Pool □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Experience

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Court Messenger

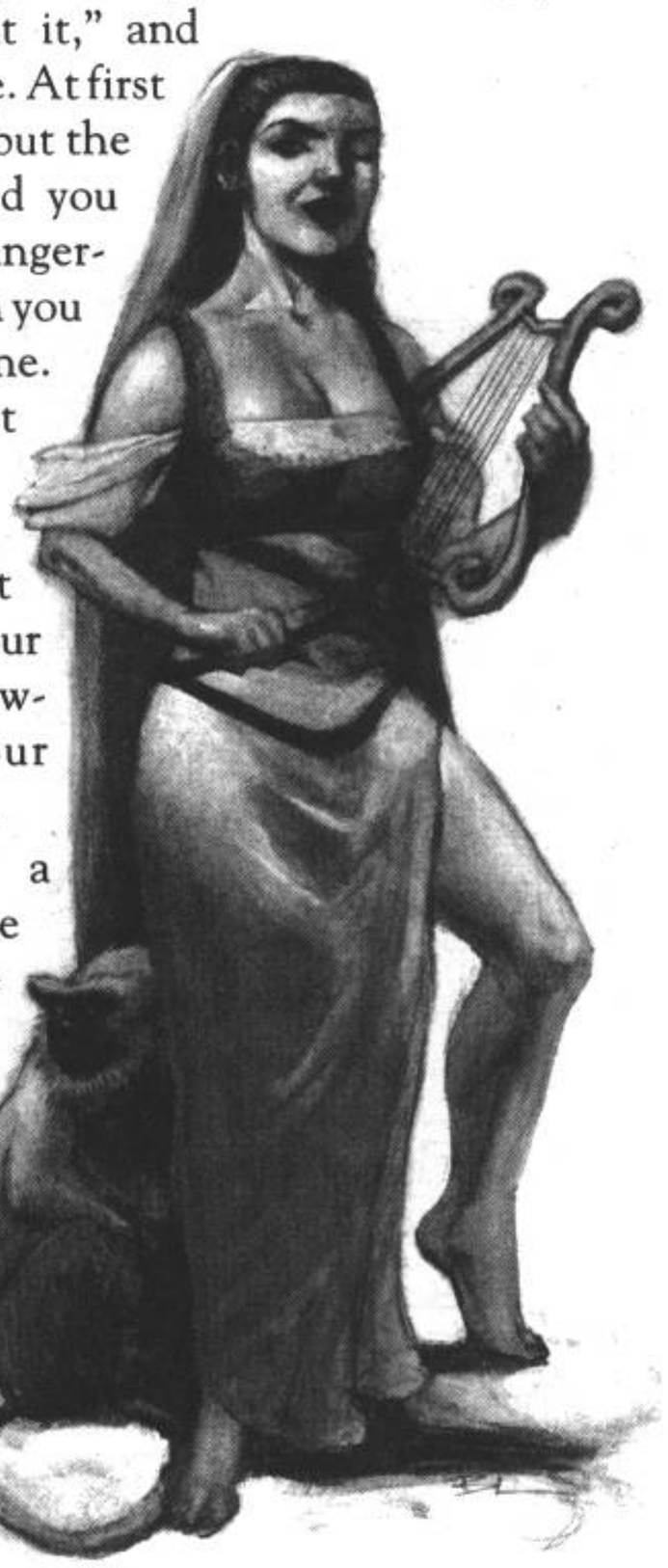
Quote: *My lord, I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but your childe has plans for you. Terrible plans.*

Prelude: As a child, the trappings of chivalry — knights, courtly love and adventure, entranced you. You wanted that excitement to be a part of your life. As you grew older, your family indulged your desires, but expected to marry you off to the first eligible suitor.

One winter, a troubadour came to your family's estate and stayed for the season. You only saw her at night, after supper, when she would sing of Crusades and love and tragedies. One night, you caught up with her and asked if she would take you when she left. She said that she could not. Every night after, you asked her again, and every night, she said no.

Soon, spring came, and it was time for her to leave. You followed her, in defiance of your family and your upbringing. It was a long night's chase, but when you caught up with the woman, she laughed at you and vanished into the night.

The next evening, she reappeared, said simply "if that's how you want it," and gave you the Embrace. At first it was quite a shock, but the world she introduced you into was far more dangerous and exciting than you could possibly imagine. You later figured out that your sire intended to Embrace you all along, and that she had come to your family's estate following tales of your hoydenish behavior.



Concept: As a Phaedymite, you were Embraced into the chivalric tradition, and as a woman, you chose to become a troubadour. You travel France regularly, visiting the Toreador and Ventrue courts and passing news from fief to fief. You're quite proud of your standing and refuse to allow anything to damage that.

Roleplaying Hints: You glory in the attention you receive. The fact that you are Ravnos and accepted in even Toreador courts is something you lord over any "common" Ravnos of other lineage. You try not to think too much about what you've become and strong reminders make you extremely uncomfortable and withdrawn, often for nights at a time.

Equipment: Horse, sword, lute, letters from Cainites, gifts from admirers, fine clothing for travel and court

Vampire: The Dark Ages

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:
Nature: Gallant
Demeanor: Celebrant
Clan: Ravnos
Generation: 12th
Haven:
Concept: Court Messenger

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●●●●○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	●●○○○	Animal Ken	●○○○○	Academics	●●○○○
Alertness	●●●○○	Archery	○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Empathy	●●○○○	Melee	●●○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Music	●●●●○	Occult	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Ride	●●○○○	Politics	●○○○○
Leadership	●○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	●●○○○	Seneschal	●○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Animalism	●○○○○	Contacts	●●●●○	Conscience/~~Conviction~~	●●●○○
Chimerstry	●●○○○	Herd	●●○○○	Self-Control/~~Instinct~~	●●●●○
Fortitude	●○○○○	Influence	●●●○○	Courage	●●●○○
	○○○○○	Mentor	●○○○○		
	○○○○○	Resources	●●○○○		

Other Traits: Status ●○○○○

Road: Chivalry ●●●●●●●○○○

Willpower: ●●●●●●○○○○

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Blood Pool: □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

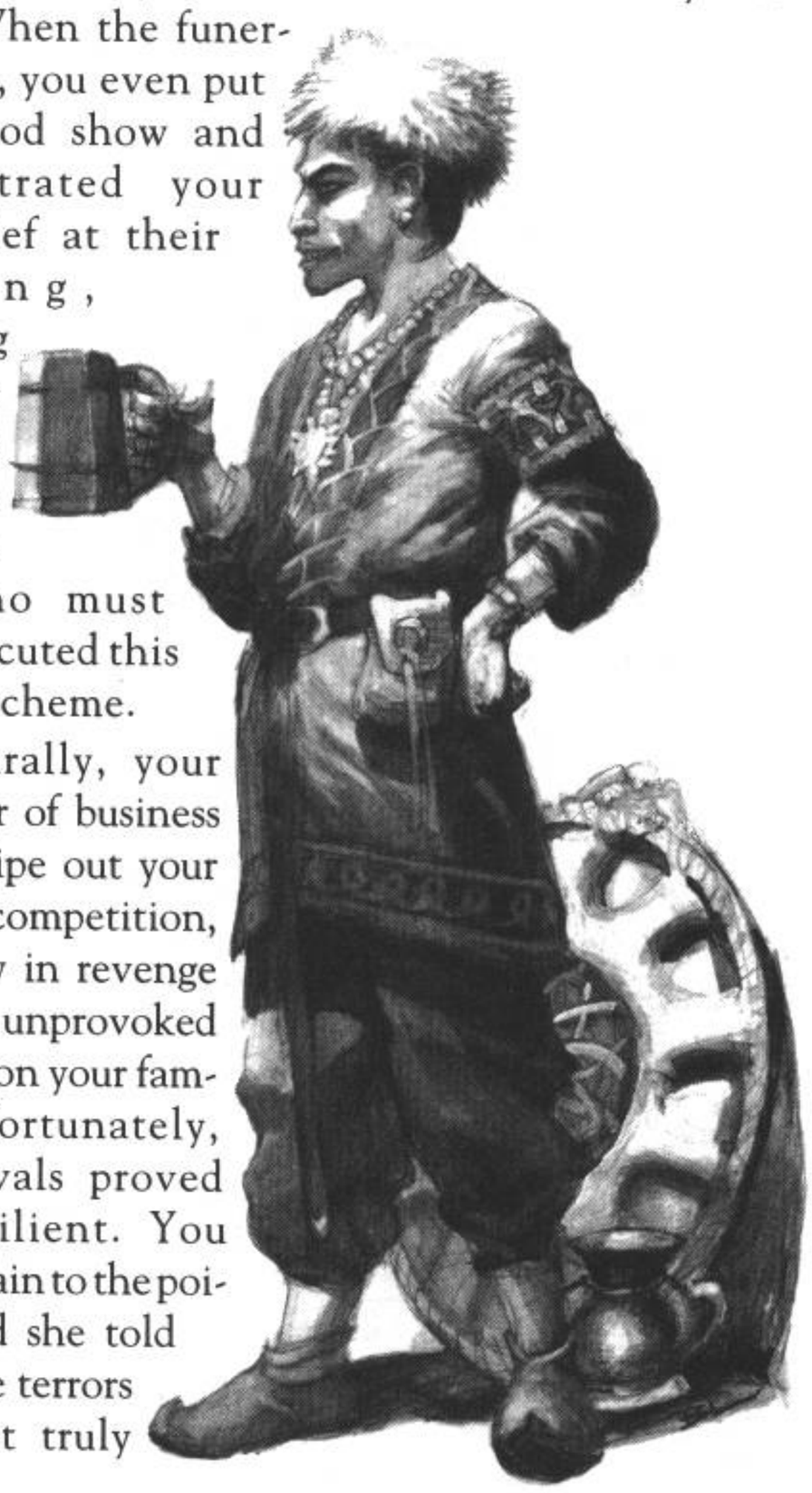
Experience

Merchant Prince

Quote: *Surely negotiations cannot break down over a mere bauble; perhaps this is more to your liking.*

Prelude: You were the firstborn in a powerful merchant house, but you were also very sickly. Often bedridden, you could not participate in — or expect to inherit — the family business. At first embittered, you eventually realized that your family's quiet disdain left you with the time to do whatever you wanted. So, you studied. Your father provided you a tutor so that you would at least be educated and you knew what you wanted to learn: How to remove the obstacles to your inheritance. You found the lives of the later Roman emperors very inspirational. You decided to kill your brothers and your father, so you could have the business. Your health would not be an obstacle — your will could overcome anything.

Through surreptitious inquiry, you learned of the identity of a skilled poisoner and had her brought to you one night. She helped you do away with your family and the household staff loyal to them. When the funerals came, you even put on a good show and demonstrated your deep grief at their passing, swearing vengeance upon the foul rivals who must have executed this terrible scheme.



Naturally, your first order of business was to wipe out your primary competition, ostensibly in revenge for their unprovoked attack upon your family. Unfortunately, those rivals proved very resilient. You turned again to the poisoner and she told you of the terrors the night truly holds, of the beasts who protected your rivals. That very night, she subjected you to the Embrace.

Concept: Your primary goal in your existence is to satisfy your every whim, and you're proud of it. You lack illusions about the world and how it works. Ever since your Embrace, you've understood that your own satisfaction is the greatest banner under which to serve.

Roleplaying Hints: You're imperious and self-centered, but you are not stupid. Flatter those who have power and oppress those who do not. If you want something, *take it*. Only your jaded perspective matches your lust for new experiences.

Equipment: Fine clothing, jewelry, a selection of exotic poisons, your brothers' boiled skulls, a mistress.

VAMPIRE — THE DARK AGES

Name: | Player: | Chronicle: | Nature: Tyrant | Demeanor: Gallant | Clan: Ravnos | Generation: 11th | Haven: | Concept: Merchant Prince

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○○	Charisma	●●○○○○	Perception	●●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○○	Manipulation	●●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○○	Appearance	●●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	●●○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○○	Academics	●●○○○○
Alertness	●●●○○○	Archery	○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○	Investigation	●●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○○	Law	●●○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○○	Herbalism	●●○○○○	Linguistics	●●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○○	Music	○○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○○
Larceny	●●●○○○	Ride	○○○○○○	Politics	●●○○○○
Leadership	●●●○○○	Stealth	○○○○○○	Science	○○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●○○○	Survival	○○○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Chimerstry	●●○○○○	Contacts	●●○○○	~~Conscience~~/Conviction	●●●●●
Fortitude	●●○○○○	Generation	●○○○○	Self-Control/~~Instinct~~	●●○○○
	○○○○○○	Influence	●●●●○	Courage	●●●○○
	○○○○○○	Resources	●●●●○		
	○○○○○○	Retainers	●○○○○		

Other Traits: ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○

Road: Paradox ●●●●●●●○○○

Willpower: ●●●○○○○○○○

Blood Pool: □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

Health: Bruised □ | Hurt -1 □ | Injured -1 □ | Wounded -2 □ | Mauled -2 □ | Crippled -5 □ | Incapacitated □

Experience:

Combat

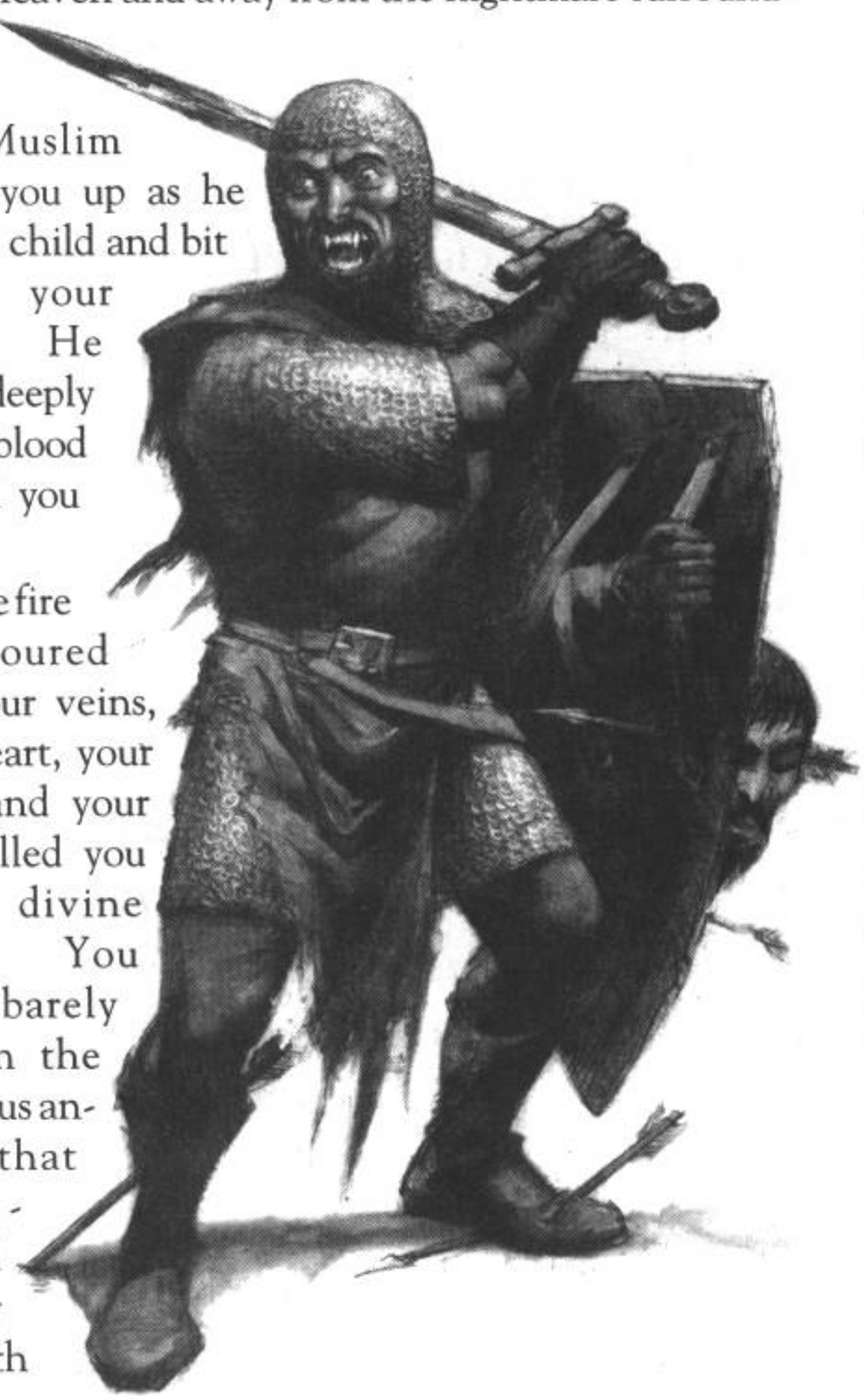
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Wrathful Angel

Quote: *Before the sun rises I shall feast upon your blood, infidel.*

Prelude: You and your younger brother traveled with thousands of others to fight and die to bring Jerusalem into Christian hands. You stood with the army of crusaders and held Jerusalem under siege. You entered Jerusalem on a summer day in 1099 and lost control — a righteous, divine anger filled you at the thought of Jerusalem's defilement at the hands of the infidels and you killed and killed. You do not clearly remember what you did that day. Only flashes and occasional recollections come to you. Walking over piled bodies of the dead, wading through blood.

When you returned to your senses, it was the middle of the night and before you lay severed limbs and heads. You knew that they had died at your hand, and that some were women and children. If suicide were not a mortal sin, you would have killed yourself right then in remorse. Your salvation arrived in the form of a Muslim soldier. You waited for him to strike the blow that would release you to Heaven and away from the nightmare surrounding you. Instead, the Muslim picked you up as he would a child and bit into your throat. He drank deeply of your blood and fed you his.



The fire that poured into your veins, your heart, your mind and your body filled you with divine wrath. You could barely contain the righteous anger that consumed your soul with the need to punish the infidels. The Muslim, you learned, was truly a Christian in disguise under the occupation. He watched the fury with which you struck down those before you and taught you about your role in the coming Armageddon.

Concept: You were chosen on the battlefield, literally at death's door. Your sire stole you from the very gates of Heaven with the promise that you would fight in the final battle — Armageddon. You have accepted your assigned duty and wish to live according to God's will, but your nature as a vampire makes it very difficult.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the Wrath of God embodied. You exist to execute His will and punish the wicked. Unfortunately, you are slave to your own wrath and it is not always righteous. Your tendency to inflict violence disturbs you greatly and you seek to expiate the sins you commit while driven by the inner demons your Embrace inflicted upon you.

Equipment: Traveling clothes, horse, armor, sword, bow, crucifix

Vampire: The Dark Ages

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:
Nature: Penitent
Demeanor: Fanatic
Clan: Ravnos
Generation: 10th
Haven:
Concept: Wrathful Angel

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○○	Charisma	●●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○○
Dexterity	●●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○○	Wits	●●○○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	○○○○○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○○	Academics	●●○○○○
Alertness	●●○○○○	Archery	●●●○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○○	Law	○○○○○○
Dodge	●●●○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○○	Linguistics	●●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○	Melee	●●●●○○	Medicine	○○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○○	Music	○○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○○	Ride	●●●○○○	Politics	●○○○○○
Leadership	●●○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○○	Science	○○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Animalism	●○○○○○	Generation	●●○○○	Conscience/~~Conviction~~	●●●●○
Fortitude	●●●○○○	Mentor	●○○○○	Self-Control/~~Instinct~~	●●○○○
	○○○○○○	Resources	●●●○○	Courage	●●●●○
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		

Other Traits		Road		Health	
	○○○○○○	Heaven		Bruised	□
	○○○○○○	●●●●●●●●○○		Hurt	-1 □
	○○○○○○			Injured	-1 □
	○○○○○○	Willpower		Wounded	-2 □
	○○○○○○	●●●●●○○○○		Mauled	-2 □
Combat		□□□□□□□□□□		Crippled	-5 □
Weapon / Difficulty / Damage		Blood Pool		Incapacitated	□
		□□□□□□□□□□		Experience	
		□□□□□□□□□□			

Of Historical Note: Lambs to the Slaughter

Letter found in the haven of Ludovico Renaldi, Charlatan impersonator of noble Magister blood, after his flight from Genoa in 1411:

Ludovico,

I must apologize for my imminent tardiness in returning to homeport. I've come across a rare find and must take a detour from Alexandria to deliver this cargo to Buda-Pest.

As you suggested, we traveled to Marseilles and there picked up several devout and worthy passengers seeking to rejoin the crusade. I must say I admire their commitment to God and His wishes, and I have no doubt that had they actually been able to go to their destination, they would have given the infidels better than they got.

Each and every one of these young men is an impressive specimen of vigorous health, and each and every one drew an envious price. We left Alexandria loaded down with gold and commodities. This trip has so far been the most profitable I've made yet. But, I digress.

While the Tempest was in port in Marseilles, a nun approached me. She introduced herself as "Sister Sarah" and asked for passage on my ship. According to her, she had seen us arrive and seen my departure. She identified me as Cainite and hoped she could count on me to understand the special needs she and her companions required.

She and her five companions wished passage to the Levant along with our hopeful crusaders. I can certainly understand the necessity to leave in a hurry from a city that's withdrawn its welcome, so I consented to negotiate passage for her and her companions. After we'd settled on a price, I decided to ask around and see who might be trying to skip out of town and why. I'm known to the Cainites in Marseilles, so this was not difficult. As it turns out, the city was astir with rumors of the "Salubri infernalists" sighted only two nights before.

I sent a messenger ahead to some Tremere and the reply reached us in port at Alexandria. So, in exchange for negotiated prices, we're going to take the now staked Salubri to Tremere agents in Pest. I really do like the Danube at this time of year and don't get to see it as often as I would prefer.

In any event, this looks to be far more lucrative to us in the long term than the slaves.

Yours,

Tibaldo

Book Two:

Lepers

Rasalon knew the fortress of Herodium had been a great feat of engineering in the days of biblical record; now, however, other accomplishments dwarfed this fortress that was Christ's brother in age. Circular Herodium sat atop a great mound, a near-then-one-hundred feet high. Its perfect symmetry betrayed its artifice. The once grand tower and walls lay bare to the elements now – more equal to a ruin of rocks than a fortress. Beneath the mound, however, lay basement chambers, descending four and five stories in depth. The succession of Romans, crusaders and Saracens who eventually laid her low all overlooked these hidden passages and catacombs. In them, the Nosferatu thrived.

Rasalon made his way down the decaying steps of Herodium's cellars, far beneath the remains of the fortress above. He shared much in common with these ruins, for his Embrace had made his body a mockery of beauty. "In the realm of Cainites," he reflected to the stagnant air, "the Nosferatu are the aged and venerable ruins littering the landscape. Everyone wants their secrets; no one wishes to live among them."

"And like these ruins," came an ancient voice, "I fear we shall one night be naught but dust."

Rasalon focused on the withered reply and was shocked to find Androvikus, his mentor and sire, to be its source. The once powerful elder was corpse-ashen, with fragments of skull showing through the deepest crevices of his cracked flesh. Funeral wrappings scripted with ancient Enochian scrawl and Chaldean blessings covered and bound him from his stick-like neck down to his clawed feet. Only his arms remained free. His eyes, dead to sight, had receded deeper into their sockets.

"I am dying," said the ancient in answer to his childe's unspoken question. "Poisoned and doomed."

"The Saracens?" Rasalon knew the Children of Haqim sometimes used poisoned blood to fell unliving targets. Some of the more predatory of them could well have a grudge against his sire. Vengeance would be difficult, but necessary—

"Shhh," Androvikus cautioned softly, "careful Rasalon. The world seeks you out."

Rasalon nodded and forced his own blood closer to the black furnace of his heart. The soft aroma of spent vitae escaped his lips and he pressed his mouth flush with Androvikus' maw, torn ragged by his own jagged teeth. There was no sensuality to the brush of split lips, simply the secrecy of speaking in the Blood Apocrypha. Androvikus and Rasalon communicated thusly, through the smell and taste of rich blood, a subtle code few could fathom and none could spy upon.

"I am your servant," Rasalon spoke through his blood vapors.

"The Assamites had nothing to do with my fate, childe," Androvikus returned. "I am a victim of a far more familiar danger. But that is not yet your concern, young crusader. I have one last task for you."

"Anything, my sire."

"Do not mock me with platitudes, boy!" The angry wisps of brackish blood swelled through the hellish kiss between Lepers. "There is no time for you to ape the motions of the loyal childe. You must act before we are all swept away."

"What could sweep us away? We have endured for countless nights."

"Do you not see it, Rasalon? The equilibrium among the get of Caine is shattering. Princes eye each other and crusaders burn havens along with infidels. In these times, the powerful seek to eliminate the weak and the frail. Such as us."

Rasalon waited for his sire to continue. "I'm sending the best of you across the known lands. Japheth will explore Africa and Detromius will venture east, to where the Sun is reborn. You, my prized Rasalon, are to return to the heart of the great betrayal, Europe, and petition our kind there. Of those who burrow deeper into the world, let them find their way to Hell. Magog take them for their cowardice. Acquire what knowledge they leave behind and bid them a merry journey. For those of us who brave no deeper than the catacombs and the *Cloaca Maxima*, bring them a message of solidarity."

"Solidarity?"

"If we play the game of kings vying for power, we are doomed to destruction in the coming storm. The high clans have their claws too deep in the reigns of power for us to face them prince to prince. Our only hope is to stand together, so that a strike against one Nosferatu deprives a Lasombra of the aid of all others. So that it simply is not viable to offend us all. Solidarity is our only salvation."

"Not everyone will listen master," Rasalon observed. "For some we are cursed and far from salvation. Others play at the monsters they appear to be. What if they refuse counsel?"

"You are a gifted speaker Rasalon. Ply your craft to its utmost. Whisper softly to some, barter with others and threaten the unreasonable with the Nictuku."

"The Methuselah Nictuku? Nosferatu's childer who seek our destruction? You would have me tempt fate by uttering their accursed name?" Rasalon asked, nearly breaking his lip seal. Androvikus, using the vestiges of his great strength, grabbed Rasalon's head and held him steady.

"What if I told you the Nictuku were no more real than shadows?" Androvikus asked.

"The Nictuku are… are false then?" Rasalon asked with a grain of doubt lodged in his heart.

"No, they are real. Real enough to have poisoned my blood and dragged me toward a long-delayed death." Androvikus did not allow his childe to respond, and instead continued, "But they are not what you would expect. The legends of Nosferatu's favored childer striking us down are used by the eldest among us to cement alliances, keep their secrets safe, bring our kind together, and to protect themselves, the greatest of our allies and charges. A child does right by his parents when frightened of monsters. The Nictuku exist when we need them to, and vanish when their presence renders no service. They are agents of the elders, stepping into the role of dark legends vanished long ago."

"But, sire, I have known those who have seen…"

"We all have, Rasalon. Everyone in the clan has heard of a distant brother who has faced the fearsome childer of Nosferatu. But is deception not our way? Is it always wise to trust what one sees? No the Nictuku are envoys. Some, like the beast who has felled me, are assassins. Others are messengers and ambassadors, like you."

"Me?" The blood-smoke carried all of Rasalon's doubts and fears.

"Yes, you. You shall be, and the others are, the Nictuku of our line. Working for solidarity while the others work for dominance. You are right that not all accept my message, Rasalon. Many of my fellow elders think this a time to purge our clan of divergent lines, to become the new masters of our filthy house."

"And what of my childe Sradish? Will I leave him to the wolves? Who will see to his tutelage?"

"Brother Asianin will see he follows you should you fail."

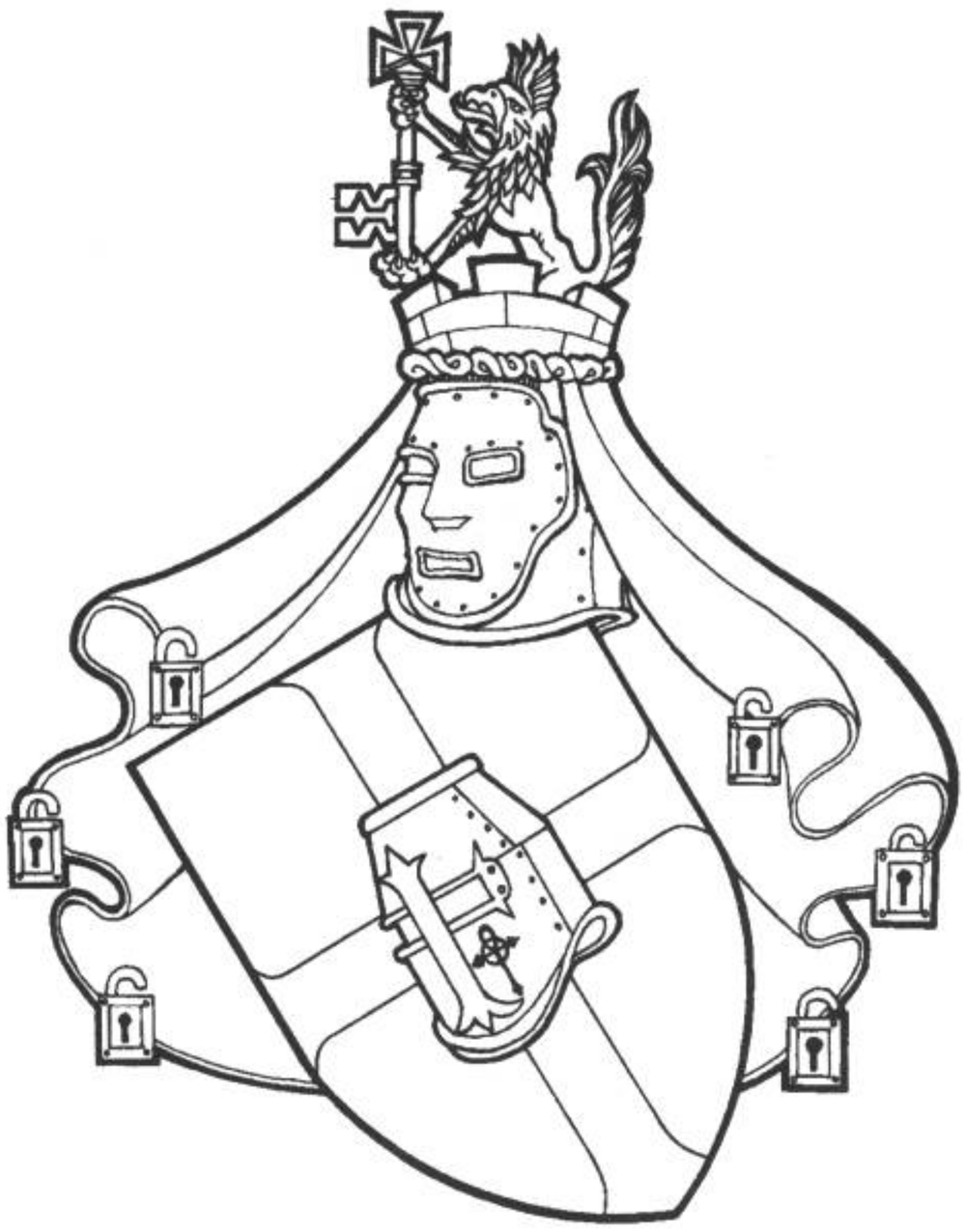
"But he is too young to this existence…" Rasalon blurted.

"Annotate your journey," Androvikus offered quietly, "and keep a log for Sradish and others to draw from your wisdom. Send whatever you write back so that your childe learns from you from afar. Remark everything, for there are those among our kind who have forgotten who they are. Even if you believe something obvious, write it down. Sradish will benefit from your words. We do not share all customs and outlooks, but even then, that is not our greatest barrier. Seek it out and understand its significance, but be wary Rasalon, your direst enemies are those you'd call brethren, who call themselves Nictuku as you now do. Watch your shadows, for with my death, they will hunt you. Treat each encounter as your last and bless the next one as good fortune."

With that, Androvikus retreated into silence and reflected on his fate. Rasalon, left alone to the darkness, suddenly felt as though the world was watching, and waiting. Dismissing the demons that plagued his heart, Rasalon kissed his master on his shattered forehead then retreated from the chamber. It was a quiet farewell for them both.

As Rasalon made his way up the stairs, Androvikus' blood still lingered in his mouth like a thick coat of cinnamon. It continued whispering its secrets like memories and echoes, invigorating each step he took. Rasalon finally emerged into the night, a crusader of the greatest order he'd known.

He was Nictuku, and he knew where his Jerusalem lay.



A Scattered Many

Brother Asianin,

God be praised. I've finally found Rasalon's journal, or at least a beggar's portion of it. It was in a market in Tunis with a book peddler who sold it for my blood. I reclaimed my investment with interest before leaving, so our tracks are well covered. I'm departing for London aboard a Venetian merchant vessel on the morrow, where an antiquities dealer may have some of the missing pages we seek; at least we can retrace those steps that the last four decades obscured. Unfortunately, even this journal is incomplete. I know you have some of his exploits in Kiev thanks to Sradish, but a good portion of Bulgaria, his return to Rome and all of Spain is gone. Something of importance was torn from those pages, and I fear it was information regarding the knight Mollundai and his brothers. They were our responsibility, Asianin, and I can only hope Rasalon destroyed those chapters to prevent others from uncovering their bodies.

This brings us to a greater dilemma. Others claiming Nictuku status hunt after the journal as well. Androvikus' quest was a threat to their masters, and I now fear they know of my discovery. My time is short. Wish me well.

The Leprous Legions: The Journey of Rasalon

My dear Sradish, first a warning for I will probably speak of things Asianin has already taught you. Forgive my father's pride for presuming to instruct you, but this journal is my legacy to you and I shall impart all that I know as though you are but a cub to this cursed existence. I intend no insult to your cunning, but I also assume nothing. Perhaps you shall eventually find wisdom from my travels and from the paths we both left behind.

I stand here upon Byzantine shores, staring at the dagger of land piercing the Marmora Sea. They call this blade Constantinople, but I call her wondrous. Within these walls lies a city bared upon the backs of three hills that are visible to my eyes, seven total by reputation. What intrigues me, however, is not this defender of Roman virtues, this lonely empire caught between the Saracen hammer and Frankish anvil. It is my kin who draw me here. Perhaps they shall also be my end as well.

Constantinople is a wayfarer port where Nosferatu of all persuasions lurk. Here, I'm told, are the best and worst of our clan. In this, it is a proper prelude to Europe itself, I expect. Constantinople is the funnel that shall spit me out upon that continent's shores and back into the lands where I was born. I do not relish the journey, for both noblemen and monsters await me here.

A History of Plague

"Tell me your lineage."

I must admit that the Byzantine Malachite was not what I expected of my Western clansmen. He stood proudly and wore his twisted visage like the greatest creation of a master sculptor. Malachite is among the few Nosferatu to hold any acknowledged power through the grace of Constantinople's patriarch Michael (a mighty Toreador, of all things). The alliance between these two families jarred me to the bone, but I complied with Malachite's request. He'd proven an exemplary host and I, as guest, could deny him no boon.

"I trace my blood," I began tentatively, "back to Caine himself, damned by the Lord's just hand to forever bathe in shadows. And Caine did pass his curse upon three childer, of whom the third, Zillah, took the great hunter Nosferatu as his own child."

In the earliest days of my Embrace, the legends of Caine, Zillah and Nosferatu were well known to

me. It wasn't until my final encounter with Androvikus that I learnt of new legends to challenge my clan's accepted truths. From Caine to Zillah, and from Zillah to Nosferatu himself, the tales held true. Zillah, struck by wanderlust not shared by either of her older brothers, stalked the world beyond Enoch's walls. Her forays brought her into conflict with a great mortal hunter we know as Nosferatu.

Nosferatu, whose powerful heart was said to be like a drum echoing across the distant lands, fought Zillah, but she cracked him like the prow of a storm-burdened boat against the rocks. She then took him as her own.

"Nosferatu begot powerful childer whom he named the Nictuku; they rested beneath his dominion save for the Matriarch, who escaped his sway. Thus was borne Nosferatu's dictate against the Matriarch and we, her childer. Thus we earned the hatred of the hunters Nictuku. Then came Caine's curse that twisted our bones and split our flesh like onionskin when Nosferatu rebelled against the First City and dared to strike Zillah, his mother."

This was accepted legend, but it was no longer a portion of my truths. Some tales speak of three progeny who escaped Nosferatu's clutches including the Matriarch, the Little Grandmother (a hag turned witch in the icy wastes north of lake *Pointus Eurinus*), and a secret third in this trinity who's remained hidden thus far. Given the already obvious references to the mother and crone figures, I wouldn't be surprised if this third was a female child and tied further into pagan influences of the three-fold divinity. This is only a parcel of a greater truth, however.

Nosferatu indeed imposed the Becoming upon the Matriarch, and she did escape into the wilds of Europe. What argument split them, I know not, but she fled till only the Western-most ocean barred her escape. The Nosferatu of these domains owe her their existence, but not I.

Androvikus' sire was Melachoate, who, in turn, was Nosferatu's childe. European clansmen may believe me Nictuku if they wish, but I'll tell you I'm no such beast save by title, and truer than that legend ever was. Whatever grievance Nosferatu and this Matriarch shared is not an obligation you and I carry. I could no more despise the Matriarch's childer than I could begrudge the Lord's edict over Caine.

Those Nosferatu who earned their birth in Europe call the Matriarch mother. Those born of the Fertile Crescent and Arabia Felix, however, know others to be their progenitors. Therein lies the trick of it all. We are all Nosferatu as birthed from a common and accursed Antediluvian. We share his blood and his condition. After him, our lines diverge within reason. We differ in our ailments and curse according to Nosferatu's immediate offspring. I've recently met others who claim Gayomart, Yima and even Illuyankas as their Methuselah ancestors. We carry a host of appearances, but the most common among us are the offspring of the Matriarch.

"From the Matriarch came my sire Androvikus. In his unfathomable wisdom, he begot me. Blessed be his memory."

A short history, admittedly, but lies are best kept simple, Sradish, and Malachite was too shrewd a host not to notice grand deceptions. He accepted my lineage gracefully and we set about negotiating.

Damn his eyes. How could he be so negligent as to write of the Nictuku so openly? No wonder the others feared Rasalon. He was too impetuous for our tastes. We are best served as whispers. Still, censure is now fruitless given that Androvikus' line perished with Sradish. There's a section missing here, Brother Asianin, but I can only assume age claimed this chapter and not sabotage. Still, the rendezvous with the Salubri, Achmet the Dreamer, is missing. Is this where it begins? Regardless, the meeting with Malachite went well, from our understanding, but the fall of Constantinople shattered any hope of an alliance. I believe Malachite still makes the city his home, but I have uncovered little evidence of his presence. Every turn I've made has seen shadows fall behind my steps. I must be careful, for I may very well lead the other Nictuku to the very information I seek to protect.

Families within Constantinople's Cloaca Maxima

Malachite himself could not — or perhaps would not — aid me in my journey west, but he advised I speak with Fra' Raymond, leader of the Nosferatu

The Fair Yima: The Nosferatu Grail

Yima, hailed as the first man and father of humanity in the Levant, is a clever fable concerning the Nosferatu. By common mortal knowledge, Yima possessed a life span of biblical stature. He carried out his reign for 700 years, subjugating demons and ensuring peace for his subjects; he was later told of an inevitable calamity bringing hail, rains and floods upon the world. Gathering the best, brightest and most beautiful of his kingdom in pairs, be they human, plant or animal, Yima retreated into his *vara* or subterranean sanctuary. The one caveat to the flood omens, however, was that he could take nothing misshapen or diseased with him. In the hollow of his *vara*, Yima sleeps and will return in later years to repopulate the world with his gifts.

According to Nosferatu scholars, Yima indeed existed, but fell to Nosferatu's Embrace well before Caine's curse against the clan. Unlike the great hunter, however, Yima occupied himself with scholarly pursuits and treated his mortal flock with fairness and compassion. Some scholars believe that even Caine favored his great-grandchilde as his own son, but this portion of the myth breaks down under conflicting theorems and arguments. It is generally accepted that Yima saw the forthcoming flood, and prepared for it just as the legends spoke. When he retreated from the world, Caine's denunciation of the Nosferatu was still years away.

The first of two popular opinions holds that the Nosferatu curse indeed struck Yima down. Because the visions of the flood warned Yima not to take anything disfigured or diseased into his *vara*, he himself inadvertently broke that law and doomed everything he tried to preserve. Acolytes of this version believe the subterranean cavern to be an abattoir ruled over by Yima himself, now twisted and mad, who maintains kennels of animals and humans for his feeding stock. The bones and remains from the hundred-fold generations of victims litter the *vara* floor like the sea of the dead, they claim, and whatever living creature exists down there is a twisted reflection of its former heritage.

The second faction argues that the disfiguring curse did not affect Yima because Caine remembered his great-grandchilde fondly and took pity upon him. If this is true, then somewhere beneath the Levant rests a Nosferatu Methuselah untouched by deformity and disease. As such, he represents the best of the clan, from his pure hunter blood to his statesmen's temperament. Several Nosferatu knights seek out Yima's sanctuary in the hopes of bringing respectability to their clan and an eventual cure to their condition. Indeed, some stories say that his blood is also a curative against malformation and decay. Thus he is to the Nosferatu what the Grail is to Christian knights.

living in the cisterns of Constantinople. There, I found nobility and squalor paired as nowhere else.

Raymond's brood, the St. Ladre Nosferatu, once numbered among the Knights of St. Ladre, an order of mortal lepers who'd vowed to swing their blades in the name of Christendom for as long as their arms remained stitched to their shoulders. Their Lazar Houses stretched from the Holy Land far into Europe with hospitals in Boigny, France and Leicestershire, England. In turn, Lazarene Nosferatu Embraced Leper knights who'd proven worthy in service to the Lord, and wished to further glorify His name; a worthy endeavor had Jerusalem remained a Latin domain. With its fall to Saladin in 1187, the Frankish Empires of Outremer fractured and collapsed along the Mediterranean coast until but a few cities remained under tenuous Christian rule. The Lazarene Nosferatu, in turn, fled towards Europe when the shrinking mortal realms that remained friendly to their mother tongue could no longer sustain their appetites. So they hide in Constantinople and direct stragglers through hidden and protected roads into France, the Western Empire and England.

"Hail brothers, I come to you as a supplicant and messenger. I need your wisdom in traversing the western wilds unmolested."

Those were my first words to Fra' Raymond when he and ten of his kinsmen rose from the cistern's waters like vapors. These Nosferatu embody our greatest strengths and weaknesses in one breath. They stand together as family. The leader speaks for them and is the strongest, eldest, wisest or the most ancient of blood. As such, common titles of leader-

ship also impart a familial intimacy. *Ima*, mother, mistress and *nonna* are common epithets for women, while men are *abu*, father, master or even *gedu*. Calling another Nosferatu "brother" or "sister" is commonplace, though *fra'* grows in popularity among the Latin lot. Perhaps it is our clan's romanticized view of the warrior monks that draws us to that religious term.

The head of a brood like the Lazars must divest some portion of himself and his existence to protecting the others, Sradish. By some measure, he's already proven himself capable; our kind rarely follows another Cainite simply because he demands it. The Ventrue and Lasombra expect this service, so perhaps this is our measure of rebellion. A Nosferatu leads by example and rarely requests what he himself would not commit. Accordingly, all others beneath him are equal in status and known by their abilities and crafts. Just who rises to leadership varies from brood to brood and region to region. Our rare kin along the North Sea are likelier to follow those who embody their Viking ancestry through strength and fierceness. The opposite holds true in more civilized domains like Paris or Rome, where the Nosferatu there prize cunning and ingenuity. In the Western Empire, where Catholicism's greatest champions rule, piety and devotion mark the Nosferatu leaders. In turn, London is home to our enterprising brethren that have earned reputations as spies and enigma-merchants. To each domain, Sradish, its own method of rule.

Returning to the question of leadership, perhaps this is also why the Nosferatu willingly invest their efforts within coteries. We never believed any one clan held predominance as rulers and leaders, and so gravitated towards those Cainites of strong virtues or purpose. When a Nosferatu counts himself a part of one's brood, it means he holds its members in some esteem. The other possibility is that the Nosferatu is on a personal quest, and the coterie happens to share his path for the interim. The reasoning does not matter. We encourage brotherhood across clan lines because it invariably serves us.

Yet it is easy to see why fellowships of Lepers also form. On the surface, we gather together for mutual benefit and shared resources; let it never be said we are not pragmatic. Of course other Cainites liken us to rat packs, seeing little nobility in skulking broods. But the truth behind our communal bond runs deeper than simple feral behavior. Unlike the great clans, there was never a time when we ruled over empires or held the great esteem of mortals. We have been outcasts from our final days in Enoch. We have no Carthage or Athens to speak of; for us, the glory of Rome never extended beyond her catacombs. The world has never been just to the Nosferatu. Each civilization casts us down as monsters. Because of this seclusion, we turned to the only source of companionship known to us. The earliest Nosferatu Embraced their parents, siblings, betrothed and children. We sought refuge within the arms of our mortal beloved and fostered alliances like a tribe born of a common matriarch. The familial Embrace is still well-known among our kind, but far from universal. Indeed, the more we discovered others like ourselves living at the feet of other Cainites, the less we took our loved ones into this barren existence. Still, this need for immediate bonding now extended to others, and we carry the ancient practice of patrimonial ties, close kinship and strong alliances into these new families.

But family can be a weakness as well. It took a prophet like Muhammad to unite the *bedu* of Arabia Felix and turn them into a nation of warriors. We have no such prophet, so we remain a clan of tribes. Most often we are independent, but still adhere to some code of civility mirroring the nomadic dictates of hospitality. We barter for information and treat guests with reverence. There are times we fight, however, an event unbeknownst to surface Cainites. The Roman catacombs are apparently a battleground between two tribes of Nosferatu. They clash over territory and religious differences, with Cappadocians playing each side against the other. I hope to speak with either faction on my journey through Italy.

The Embrace of Plagues

Call it the Embrace or the Becoming if you so wish, but neither summarizes the pure agony of our entry into unlife. The Latins have a term I believe more appropriate; they call their Embrace the Plagued Kiss or the Black Death. By appearances, the process of the Embrace is simple. The Nosferatu drains his childe of all mortal blood, then deposits a drop of his own noxious vitae into the almost-corpse. Over the next week, the newly Embraced Cainite undergoes painful transformations that eventually marks him as Nosferatu. Ponder this, however: isn't our Becoming more like the onset of plague in agony and virulence?

The Plagued Kiss is a disease that runs rampant through our body. The ichor that other Cainites innocently call vitae is boiling oil that scours our veins and arteries for seven nights and even longer. Fevers grip us and blood is the only taste we know on our lips. We can no longer stand the sight of food; the very thought sickens us to the pit of our stomach.

Meanwhile, our skin shrivels into hardened wrinkles and our hair falls away in fistful clumps. We decay and atrophy a day in a moment and a month by nightfall. Even our teeth hurt to the roots. Between bouts of agony, during which our muscles constrict almost to the point of snapping and our organs turn soft, we vomit food and excrete waste as though they were poisons. We urinate constantly, expunging almost all the watery humors from our body; perhaps this is why we appear desiccated and drawn. Any ailments that afflicted us before the Plagued Kiss become permanent scars on our already tortured frames.

We are a receptacle for indignities made worse by those noblemen who use our Becoming to punish others. Malachite of Constantinople was promised the Kiss of the Magisters, but his would-be sire forced a Nosferatu upon him for contradicting his masters. This is neither rare nor unusual. Balkan Tzimisce keep Nosferatu "pets" to Embrace victims for sport or research — the torturer's justification for reputability. Parisian Toreador punish wayward ghouls in this manner as well, believing our existence more wretched than death itself. I've also heard of Cainite lords in both Sicily and the Western Kingdom who use our Embrace as a method of torture. Truthfully I do not know which offends me more, the presumption that we are so cursed and reviled that death is preferred over our condition, or the Nosferatu Judases who administer the Becoming in service to others.

Sire and Child

"Tell me of your sire, Rasalon; why did he choose you for the Embrace?"

Fra' Raymond is blunt and enjoys unsettling his visitors with unexpected questions. I do not find his manner rude, though I could certainly see how other Nosferatu might believe him intrusive. The question does remind me of my sire, Androvikus, and the lessons he shared in the years after my own Plagued Kiss.

There is always a bond between sire and child, though with us, it can degenerate into an antagonistic relationship. After all, it was your sire who Embraced you and set this world upon your shoulders. You've become a monster thanks to his kiss, and unless your life was somehow worse as kine, then your sire has damned you forever. Even if you were afflicted with leprosy, the Embrace is still an unfathomable pain. That is why so many Nosferatu are "orphaned" upon the Becoming. Few want the responsibility of educating a childe while worrying about his capacity for vengeance. I remember feeling absolute hatred for Androvikus after he took me, and I remember reading it on your face as the fresh flesh of life peeled away before the curse I had given you. You, like me, learned to look

The Nosferatu Pathways

Fra' Raymond has given me a boon I cannot soon repay: a way through the Balkans. To be certain, the Nosferatu are not the Roman Empire; we've forged no obvious roads or footpaths to mark our routes in the world. Therein lies our cunning, for we've established trails that do not appear on maps, at least not as such.

Aside from journeying with trade caravans or on merchant boats for safety, many Nosferatu know of the hidden paths that bridge the gates of the East to the ocean-locked extremities of Western civilization. Nosferatu, either Samaritan or enterprising in nature, control these roads. Traversing through a family's territory often means negotiating for the right to use their secret routes. Some demand a simple tithe of mortal blood or even a service rendered, while others blindfold and escort you through the journey gratis. Practices and demands vary. The St. Ladre Nosferatu offer free passage for their own clan and for lepers through Bulgaria, with special care to avoid this Fiend's stronghold or that Usurper's haven. It is in this way that I shall make my way west from here.

The other clans, perhaps with the exception of the Gangrel, overlook the multitudes of rivers crisscrossing the land like cracks on the tablet of Europe. Humanity clusters around rivers and oceans to deposit her filth and maintain easier avenues of trade with other communities. It is a simple matter for us to walk the deep riverbeds, ride the currents, and emerge for a quick sup. Granted, moving through water is a slow method of travel and we can carry very little, but it's a necessity in bypassing dangerous regions.

Minor creeks and streams are useful only for a league's travel, but the great rivers can carry us far indeed. The Tagus and Duero nearly split the lower half of Spain and Portugal from the continent, while the combination Elbe, Oder, Rhine and Vistula neatly parcel the northern territories. The Danube winds a twisted path through the heart of the Western Empire back to the Black Sea — connecting to the Sava along the way. A Nosferatu could travel through Belgrade, Buda and Vienna without ever getting dry. The same holds true of using the Thames to enter London's rotten heart and the Seine to reach Paris.

The most ingenious of our trails, however, are the so-called living paths. These are not actual roads, but animals trained to guide us safely through the wilds. Like the Gangrel, we can talk to the creatures of the forest and some of us — including myself — can do more than exert simple dominion over them. We've discovered a method to discipline an animal and pass that conditioning on through her descendents. Our living paths are generations of beasts that recognize Nosferatu and are trained to lead them safely through dangerous territory. So, if you notice an animal that seems unabashed by your presence, and waits for you to follow, I suggest you spare its life and accompany it even into the thickest underbrush. It is your closest ally for that journey and knows where death treads.

beyond the surface and see the gifts of the blood, but many do not.

When Nosferatu inflict the Becoming upon others, they must be ready to play the role of tyrant father, but temper their austere manner with a modicum of mother's compassion. Regardless of how much you prepare kine for the Embrace, the scarring process leaves behind anger. Sires must be ready to establish their dominance lest their offspring exact revenge. We cannot apologize for our gifts because there is no returning them. What's done is done.

In the years following the Embrace, the sire often relinquishes dominance over his childer in small measures. While some are generous with the backs of their hands for decades and even centuries following the Becoming, there comes a point when the child will rebel. It has happened before that Nosferatu elders perished because they subjugated their progeny for too long. Tales from Rome's final days speak of a multitude of young kinsmen taking advantage of the invading Goth hordes to hide the murder of their sires.

The true master knows when to temper rule with compassion, and when a child is finally experienced enough to explore his existence alone. This is always a tricky time, for ambitions and hopes for revenge may still fill the young Nosferatu's heart. The sire can only hope he's instilled his childe with a good road to follow and a tempered demeanor — as I have hopefully done with you.

Nosferatu Ethics and Hospitality

I feel obliged to share some codes of Nosferatu conduct that I've discovered thus far. Although my kinsmen would deny such allegations, I find many emulate the customs of the tribal nomads of the Levant. To be certain, not all our clan brothers share these customs, but they are growing ever more prevalent. The Latins may attribute this to their own sense of civility, but the truth is that many of these customs pushed their way up through the now dwindling Islamic Empire of al-Andalus or trickled downward from the pagan north. As such, most of the Mediterranean cities and countries share one set of values, while those to the north share another. The only ones I'm leery of are those Nosferatu caught in the twisting shadows of the Carpathians. Only the Lord can fathom their agendas.

• **Hospitality:** Our key custom is hospitality. Call it what you wish, whether sharing of salt or of spit, but most Nosferatu extend some courtesy to visitors. This includes providing sanctuary for a length of three nights with no obligation on the guest's part. After this period of affability, a guest must either leave lest he overstay his welcome, or somehow provide for his host. Common methods for the latter includes contributing fresh blood of a victim, entertaining the host with tales and news of the outside world, or otherwise promising a boon of some mention. Those who bring danger and discord to their host's haven, however, may find their welcome eroding long before the third night.

• **Adoption:** We should not abandon our progeny but many do, especially in Europe. Bastard Nosferatu fill the world, but that is rarely a permanent condition. Samaritan Nosferatu are often more than happy to adopt orphaned clansmen. The rituals vary according to territory, but an exchange of blood is central to all. Portuguese Nosferatu, I'm told, drain their newest member to the drop, then fill him with a collection of their vitae in a ritualized Embrace. Others are more practical and simply enforce a blood oath upon the fledgling. The end result is that the adopted sire is now a "true" sire in all respects save one.

• **Truce:** When Nosferatu broods of northern Europe wish to establish a long-standing alliance, they exchange members. Each faction picks one or two of the best and brightest of their litter, and sends them to live with the other tribe. They are part ambassador and part hostage; mistakes are known to happen. Nosferatu of England and those of Denmark and Norway are particularly hostile towards one another given the Viking raids and occupation of England less than two centuries ago.

• **Alliance:** A cousin to this aforementioned practice occurred in Dobin, when two factions came together as one. They arranged a mock marriage between their two leaders, and joined two broods into one. Unfortunately, when the Second Crusade turned its siege machine against the pagan Wends and attacked Dobin in 1147, they destroyed these Nosferatu to the last.

Monsters of Bulgaria

I have arrived in Bulgaria, the darkest world I have ever seen. Here exists a madness that pervades

the soil. These lands were once Byzantine, but are now on the verge of freedom thanks to the wild tribes of humans. Bulgaria is also the Crusades' chamber pot. Three of the Pope's armies have trampled this soil, desecrating it on their way to the Holy Lands.

We have brethren within Sophia and further beyond into Hungary and Poland where Master Mason Zelios betters the clan's name with every castles or keep he erects. Like him, most of the Nosferatu here and into the Russian Principalities, bear the twisted mark of the Crone. His great works compensate for his curse, however. Unfortunately, the cities are not my destinations, for I did not partake of this journey for the comfort of Europe's settlements. There's enough of that to be had in London and Paris when the time comes.

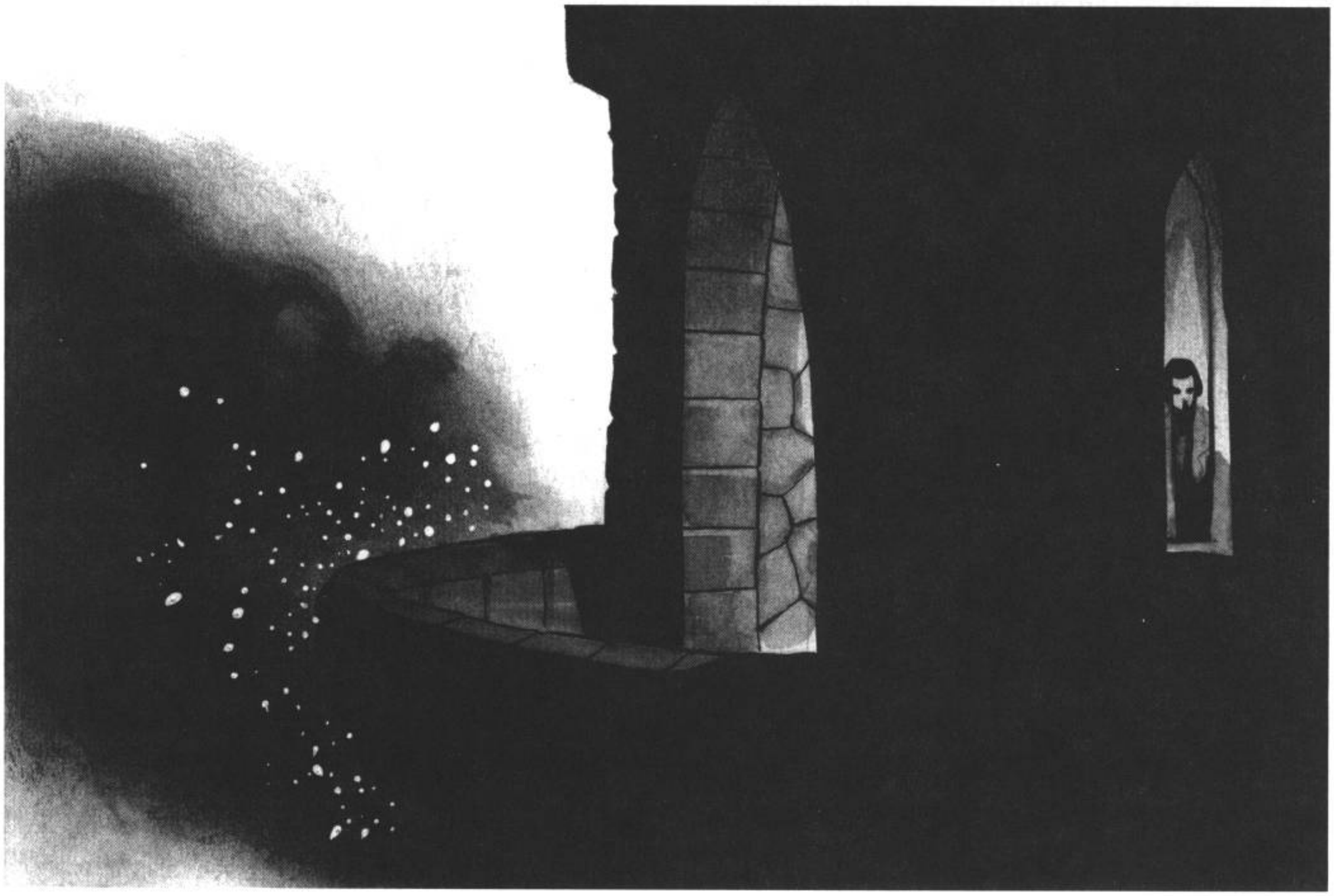
Bulgaria vacillates between raw mountains capped by thick forests and valleys of fertile lowlands. Proper civilization lies further to the north, in the cradle of the Danube and Siret. Here the Carpathians are a distant shadow, but the ancient Tzimisce rule these domains with cruel will. My benefactor Fra' Raymond warned me, though, that my chief adversaries were not other Cainites, but the Lupines who make their dens in the mountain forests. Therefore, I shall travel the lowlands between the Stara and Rhodopi mountain chains into Sophia. The numerous villages and farm settlements along the way can offer me daylight shelter and food for my hunger. Between Sophia and Philippopolis, my pilgrimage takes me into the southern lying Rhodopi Planina where I will make for the Rila Monastery, hidden high in the mountains.

Brother Nosferatu

The fires of Rila Monastery, a solitary Orthodox keep in these otherwise kine-barren mountains, have done much to push the chill from my bones. The Tzimisce do not set foot here, for a dual remedy of the monks' faith and their seclusion keeps them well protected. The former abbot Pasca is a pious Nosferatu who exists in meditative seclusion among the monks. He allowed me entry and a warm place to sleep. That offer extends to you as well Sradish.

"Too many of our kind falter..."

Pasca mumbled this phrase in regret before returning to my question. We spent the evening



debating many matters of faith and its significance to our kind. Then, we addressed our shame, the Beast within us all.

It is surprisingly easy for Cainites to succumb to the crimson surge of their power and become monsters. What happens to vampires such as ourselves who have no anchors or tethers to remind us of our mortality? There are the Roads to steer us through the Scylla and Charybdis of damnation, but even they are not enough when erosion and decay have claimed your identity. More so, perjurers can manipulate and twist their own Road to justify any action. I've met liars so skilled in their craft that they deceive themselves.

Pasca and I arrived at the inevitable conclusion that civilization is our bane, though I am less inclined to place sole blame upon that explanation. For Pasca, culture is a tool of the Adversary, a means of distracting kine through idle pursuits rather than allowing them to keep to the true path of toil and worship. While I appreciate knowledge and the exploration of intellectual endeavors, I am hard-pressed to disagree. When we lived in the wilds like our progenitor, we were hunters equal to the Gangrel in skill. Idle pastimes were irrelevant against the need for survival and the constant journey through the primordial and often dangerous wilderness. Like shepherds, we eventually staked out territory and farmed our mortal stock for food. We went from nomadic simplicity to a stagnant existence dependent on the local feeding stock. As humanity drifted into cities for mutual protection, we followed like dogs, taking counsel only from our hunger.

In truth, humanity's sexual and moral excesses coincided with the rise of civilizations. Every invention that lessened their struggle or grief also allowed them more time to ponder their vices. Can you deny the Greek or Roman hedonism at its height? Some elders claim they alone were responsible for such vices, but I believe kine are far more capable of these ills than we give them credit for. Unfortunately, while humanity fell into moral lethargy, the Nosferatu followed blindly. Living off the fat of our herds, we are at greater risk to pursue and indulge their fancies. After all, what is there to fear? The religious believe the Lord has condemned them, so why dread retribution when it has already inked your name? Those who sloughed off the Lord along with their humanity don't even fear Heaven's requitals; their sole concern is being caught.

The Loss of One

The most common Nosferatu monster is the solitary beast. He endures his shame alone and exists on society's borderlands. Sometimes he poses as the monarch's torturer, hiding behind a leather mask and administrating pain "in just cause." This is nothing more than undirected revenge, an ill-conceived outlet for the rage of suffering the Plagued Kiss. Oddly, many such creatures follow the Road of Chivalry and justify their actions as service to their lord. These Nosferatu are dangerous because their allegiances fall entirely outside the clan. They hate their form so much that they see validation only in service to the high clans.

Other nomads stalk the unlit alleys and ancient cisterns, snaring their prey like a troll beneath its bridge. These Nosferatu once held some belief that guided their mortal days. The Becoming shattered them like glass beneath a hammer, and they now exist solely to feed and hunt. The Road of the Beast is common with this lot, though I've heard of many that spiral too far into the abyss. These Nosferatu are swiftly hunted and killed for reasons of concern or simply for sport. Sometimes, circumstances force us to destroy our own errant kinsmen lest our tenuous court status suffer further. Don't be surprised if in the midst of your journey, the Nosferatu of Paris, London or Vienna ask your help in hunting a clan member. The only advice I can offer is to accept this difficult but necessary burden. Such sad events are common in the larger cities; better we deal with our own monsters than allow the other clans greater justification in hating us.

The beasts I fear most, however, are the pious Nosferatu, with their infinite capacity to justify cruelty. Religion affirms their existence as monsters or even adversaries. Some commit wanton murder for the sake of self-fulfilling prophecy; they look like fiends, therefore they must be fiends. The more surreptitious of our kind know to hide their evil behind an air of sanctity. I think in particular of one Nosferatu living in the city of Worms who answers to the title of Bishop Rolf, like a Magister might. Both the high clans and the regional Nosferatu have failed to uproot this devil, and his murders continue to weaken our clan's position in the Western Empire. From popular accounts, the bishop follows the Road

of Heaven, but perverts it to his cause. He murders infants prior to baptism, before they're cleansed of the original sin. By tempting the innocent or devoted to transgress, he gains the authority to punish them. He claims it mortification, but it is no less than torture and murder.

The Loss of Many

Oft-times, Nosferatu discover like-minded kinsmen and band together. When the rallying cry happens to be a heresy, however, then bloodshed is soon to follow. No religion born has ever escaped the curse of heresies and cults, and no faith has ever escaped our notice. Among the Latin Nosferatu of Europe, the Christian way is by far the strongest, however. We huddled alongside their numbers in the catacombs and sanctuaries of Rome. Certainly, the Cappadocians lay claim to fostering early Christendom, but we shared the tightest bonds as fellow refugees. We remember the sons of the Messiah when they were like us, living among the refuse and the dead of others.

"Know this," Pasca muttered in our discussion. "It is easier to pursue a belief that encourages the worst in you than one demanding your best."

We also noted Christianity's greatest hypocrisies when they stole titles and religious practices from the monotheistic Mithrites and trampled that same faith into the ground upon becoming Rome's official religion. We watched and celebrated alongside them, though, because given any opportunity for revenge, we would have acted no better. Still, many Nosferatu followed Christianity in the hopes that Jesus' message of forgiveness extended to us as well. When Christianity failed to change our condition, however, the cults proved worthwhile distractions. It is for this reason we enter, foster and even participate in hidden sects. If we cannot find a religion that embraces our existence, we either invent one or fall into a heresy. Among the wealth of Christian heresies, Nosferatu are drawn to those concerning either the duality of spirit and flesh, or *dulia*, the undue worship of angels and saints.

Nosferatu who question their twin existence as man and monster find comfort in the theorems that the material world is corrupt and evil. They see themselves as proof of this malignancy, but deal with this issue in differing ways. Those who believe in the ascendancy of the spirit and its supremacy over flesh draw towards the Manicheans, Albigenses and Waldenses. You have little to fear from this lot, unless they fail, for they often renounce their own bestial natures and seek to rise above temporal concerns. Those Nosferatu who revel in fleshly corruption rather than shunning it find comfort within the remaining Carpocratian circles or flourishing multitude of Lasombra blood cults. The Carpocratians, the most defiled revelers of sin, believe that to ascend, one must first fully experience the gamut of flesh-born vices. Sodomy, rape, murder and cannibalism are all accepted practices. Destroy this lot, for there is little that elevates them above the accursed Baali.

Any Cainite involved in cults of angelic or saintly worship is a devotee of power and influence. Sadly, a vice I ascribe to Ventrue and Lasombra also affects Nosferatu; we are not inured to the lure of rulership. In specific regard to saint worship, the possibilities are infinite given the brisk relics trade. Despite Charles the Great's efforts to regulate the worship of relics (optimistically called the "Renewal of the Romans"), cult leaders often built churches to legitimize the veneration of saints. Ambitious Nosferatu find easy entry into such organizations because the highest Christian See — the Vatican and its web of bishops — does not control them. Instead monastery abbots who normally escape Lasombra and Toreador influence are chief peddlers in this holy commerce.

This century has proven kind to the cult of saints. The greatest ones flourish in the southern French region of Aquitaine, where political forces are at their weakest and allow the local clergy unprecedented influence over the populace. Oddly, while some Nosferatu use these gatherings to gain followers and adulation, there are a small number who promote greater well-being. In particular is a Nosferatu by the name Michelle of the Beautiful Scar who has influenced the cult of Saint Foy. She inspired the clergy of Aquitaine to initiate a peace movement for the protection of peasants, pilgrims and traders along the peril-filled roads of Europe. She was thus instrumental in stabilizing one of our key messenger routes. Although she has long fled the region, she is well known and respected among our clan; we call her Saint Michelle.

The Plague: The Larvae and the Volsi

There are dying breeds among our kind, Sradish, though I often find disturbing evidence to affirm

their survival: monsters far less human than any childe of the Crone or Matriarch. These Nosferatu are ancient, decidedly pagan and still adhere to their barbaric principles. They lie hidden, however, scattered across Europe or even drifting down to Africa through al-Andalus.

One lot hides in these very mountains where Rila Monastery sits. Small, tight river valleys amid frost-covered peaks and dead volcanoes frame the Rhodopi Planina. Water erosion and magma tubes create a unique subterranean empire of caverns and tunnels few have ever seen. This labyrinth ventures deeper than any ocean-floor, I'd warrant. Nosferatu calling themselves the Larvae make their homes here, but they bear little resemblance to any Cainites I know. Their limbs are thin and near skeletal, their skin chalk-white, their eyes set near their ears, and their faces dominated by a vertical gash lined with rows of hooked teeth — they bear much in common with lampreys. They use their inhumanly strong teeth to burrow through soft rock and soil, disgorging it from regions decorum prevents me from mentioning. Master Androvikus spoke of these creatures; they are among the handful of Nosferatu tribes taking into the deepest earth. Given the rapidity with which these Larvae burrow, this next century shall be the last witness of their departure.

Given the Larvae's odd mouths, they rip through their victims horribly, leaving large open wounds. They use an elongated cartilaginous tongue to draw out the blood like an insect's proboscis. They are barbaric and live in abject squalor, but they are intelligent enough to maintain herds of animals for feeding purposes. Because they cannot feed without killing, they share their meal — devouring flesh, bone and muscle, and excreting a sickening pulp of the victim if only to filter every last droplet of vitae. They leave the dead where they excrete them, and walk around shamelessly naked and painted with mud and tree sap. Anyone or anything outside their tribe is food.

The Larvae are the withered descendents of a Nosferatu tribe dating back to Roman days. We must thank the Tzimisce for these beasts, for they created the Larvae through experimentation on my kind. It

remains a secret grievance ignored by the other clans. Whenever food is scarce, I hear the Larvae extract some degree of vengeance and fall upon Tzimisce herds and keeps for sustenance. The Fiends offer handsome bounties for these degenerates.

Elsewhere, in the twin cities of Cologne and Berlin on the Rhine, are said to be Nosferatu who sleep in the surrounding bogs and swamps. They're called the Volsi, and may include our oldest members. I've heard rumors they are the same tribesmen mentioned in the *Volsungen Saga*, but Androvikus believed the mortal tribe of legend merely worshiped the Volsi Nosferatu ages ago.

Regardless of conjecture, Cainite scholars believe the Volsi were among the original settlers of the Rhine and may have forced the mortals there to partake in cannibalism. They were certainly instrumental in stopping the Roman legions from crossing the Elbe. The Romans were so cowed by them, that the great Julius Caesar himself forbade his armies from expanding east of that great river. Tiberius's brother, Nero Druses, claimed to have seen a horrible giantess upon the riverbank who warned him to not to return and who foretold his death.

As the legends claim, the Volsi are the giants of our kind, easily measuring the height of a bear. Their teeth and nails are like iron and their eyes are feral embers burning in the deepest socket; one might even mistake them for Gangrel. Because the Volsi sleep in bogs and swamps, a carpet of long weeds and roots covers them like a cloak of decaying green. The fetid stink of their water-bloated bodies sullies the air around them. By civilized standards, they are truly barbaric and illiterate. Do not mistake this for weakness, Sradish, for the Volsi can rend you limb from limb with but a glance. They are dangerous opponents.

Tools and Ghouls of Rome

Journeying through Hungary and the Western Empire, I enter Rome with an eye on her catacombs. I circumvent Venice, for a gathering storm summons a host of Cainites with their eyes on Egypt and the Holy Land. I continue further into Rome, knowing I tread upon most ancient soil.

The term "catacomb" is of recent coinage, derived from San Sebastiano's underground cemetery. Local argot called it *ad catacumbas*, which translates

to "in valley bottom." Regardless, Rome's subterranean system extends for 40 leagues with 70 known main tunnels and too many secret lairs to consider even in fancy. The walls are tight enough to scrape both shoulders on the journey through, and sometimes the ceilings force one to stoop.

Despite Christian insistence otherwise, construction of the catacombs began between 50 to 150 AD on the private grounds of rich estates for the wealthy and the members of burial societies. Certainly some Christians took refuge within this subterranean empire, but they lived along its periphery. Cainites controlled its deepest heart.

After saints and other religious figures were laid to rest here, the growing pilgrimages eventually inspired the construction of above-ground churches like Saint Peters — built by Constantine the Great in the fourth century. Thanks to the Nosferatu and Cappadocian denizens of Rome, the full extents of the catacombs are unknown to the mortal world. Unfortunately, I also am entering this territory in ignorance; I pray I encounter friendly kinsmen and not the dour Graverobbers.

The Spoken Hand

To find Nosferatu, you must sometimes be found. Wearing black robes dappled with white patches, and donning a tall red hat, I made my way through Rome's streets, banging my wooden castanets together. Nobody questioned my mask; they were simply grateful I took consideration to hide my shame. To the kine, I was a leper in prescribed clothing, warning of my passage with sporadic clacking. To Nosferatu ears, however, I used code to announce my presence as a brother. Because of our proximity to lepers, we often use their castanets to communicate in secrecy.

The mortal lepers have served us well. We keep them because their pain amuses us and distracts us from our own, and because they are a feeding stock no other Cainite touches. The lepers, in turn, believe we are their blight made manifest. They serve us, hoping we shall pity them enough to end their suffering, and we do (either through death or Embrace). Oathbound lepers act as our mouthpieces, traveling throughout Europe and the Levant and relating news and warnings. Because the castanets echo through the streets, the leper need not even see who receives a message. Instead, Nosferatu ghouls and their masters hear the message from afar without ever risking exposure.

This is but one method of communication among our kind. We learn much in the course of our spying, yet we must use some manner to share our secrets. Messengers skulking about the street have a way of attracting notice, but we often ignore the person seeking attention. That is why we use the sickly and even jongleurs and minstrels to deliver our missives. They are loud and make a habit of being seen.

Minstrels, troubadours and jongleurs play their messages out in code as well, but use songs to relate their news. The method varies according to the region, but generally the following are universal. If the entertainer uses a lute, it means that the first word of each stanza relates the missive. Using a rebec, however, draws attention to the end of each stanza. Others place emphasis on various words to impart their message. Regardless, the songs themselves convey the spirit of the epistle. Tales of bravery and heroism bespeak of war; courtly love is reference to other Cainites with influence among the courts; morality songs tell of Cainites within the church; ribald lyrics share gossip and innuendoes; the tales of saints relate clan news. Ironically, because the Toreador also offer patronage to the troubadours, we have been forced into compromise. The Toreador allow us unhindered use of these musical messengers if we, in turn, share our secrets, courier messages and offer them none of our vitae. That means we cannot enforce an oath of blood upon these minstrels, making them more loyal to Toreador interests than ours. Beware this fact when dealing with troubadours, Sradish. The Artisans swiftly learn what they know.

Of course these methods of communication paint messages in broad strokes like charcoal renderings. They serve well for general warnings, arrival announcements and requests for meetings as I have done. More skillful encryption includes the use of our tainted blood with such tricks as Blood Apocrypha. With this, we can disguise text and information for those skilled in the same blood art.

Honored Helpers

Success in measures. The Nosferatu of these domains are a suspicious lot and refused to meet with me. Instead they sent me one of their ghouls.

Roman Feuds and Catacombs

The ancient feud gripping the catacombs began after the fall of Rome. The Cappadocians were the undisputed masters of these warrens, though some Nosferatu did live peaceably among them. When the Goths sacked the city, many Cainites hid their antiquities with the so-called Graverobbers for safety.

When Christianity later flourished in Europe, priests and missionaries plundered Rome's holiest sites for relics. These blessed antiquities were then used as altar gifts for the newly converted kings and queens of the north. Not even cemeteries were safe from these depredations; the trade in both authentic and forged items of faith bloomed, and some thieves were even bold enough to sell the relics of false saints.

The Cappadocians were infuriated when Nosferatu opportunists sacked the catacombs' holy chambers and *loculi* (wall alcoves) for treasure. Rather than form an alliance with the local Fossore Nosferatu to preserve the sanctity of the underground cemetery, the Cappadocians universally condemned our clan and tried driving my kinsmen out. They met with staunch resistance, however, for our *fossori* had the support of Rome's prince. Neither clan could uproot the other, and neither was willing to leave. The catacombs became a confusing web of disputed territory and shifting borders.

This stalemate has persisted over the last four centuries, waning into détente and tenuous coexistence, and waxing into open conflicts and maze hunts. With 40 leagues of passages spread throughout the catacombs, it's easy to understand why two dozen Nosferatu cannot control these dispersed tracts of tunnels. Unfortunately, any hopes of settling the matter peaceably died when another brood of our clanmates invaded the catacombs.

These new Nosferatu number a small handful. Were they to join with our *fossore* clanmates, they could do away with the Cappadocians, but this new lot is uninterested in alliances. Cato even claimed these newcomers were corrupt. They mark their territory with skulls and use arcane symbols in blood to ward against intruders. The other Nosferatu can hear the screams of mortals echoing through the tunnels and smell the taint poisoning the air. The peaceable *fossori* and the Cappadocians might do well to unite and be rid of these foul beasts, but neither trusts the other enough; both keep their dilemma secret from Rome's prince for fear of betraying the full reach of their underground domains.

"My masters beg your forgiveness in this matter, but they say we cannot recognize brethren from enemy until this feud ends."

I understood the frightened ghoul's dilemma and did my best to calm the young man. Cato, as he was called, knew his master chose him as messenger because they could afford his loss. This pup would die with no secrets because he had none to barter with. Conversely, I had no intentions of slaying him. Instead we spoke through the night before I finally dismissed him. I would return when circumstances favored a better reception.

Meanwhile, my encounter with Cato revealed a fact I'd not known. The Cappadocians may claim dominion over the catacombs, but it was not they who supervised its formation. Nosferatu oversaw its construction through specialized gravediggers called *fossori* who dug into the soft tough stone. When they could no longer build out, they dug down, creating the tiered labyrinth of today. Even now, *fossori* ghouls dig deeper, creating more space for their masters. The region's Nosferatu adopted the *fossori's* name for themselves.

These gravediggers represent an interesting example of our choice in ghouls. The high clans assume we choose the wretched because we enjoy staring into the mirror of misery. Only a few recognize the merits of our allied kine. Our ghouls include rakyers who sweep dung from the streets in London, these Roman *fossori*, numerous lepers shunned by society, blind street mendicants and city butchers awash in the stink of blood and gore. We choose those mortals, already invisible and ignored by society, and reward them with a taste of our blood. Few people pay heed to this lot even if they appear deformed by our taint — in fact their blisters and pock marks only add to their invisibility.

Our ghouls serve many roles, the most important of which are as messengers and observers. Blessed with sun tolerance, they mark the proceedings of the

day and follow the course of our enemies. We even maintain ghouls in the dungeons of various lords, and smuggle blood into their cells so they may withstand the rigors of torture. There is much to learn in the bowels of these keeps, especially since the local lords hide their most hated enemies there. Some cooperate out of spite, while others we rescue in exchange for their knowledge.

Another function performed by our ghouls is that of recruitment. They can travel freely through the mortal world and know whom best serves us. Although we seek the downtrodden spit upon by society's upper echelons, we value a wealth of skills. Bring us the lepers and beggars who are so beneath contempt that others ignore their presence, the barkeep and serving wench who loosen your tongue with libations, the whore who performs that which your wife will not. Give us the greengrocer, fishmonger or butcher who shares in the market's gossip. Give us the young priest who takes confession or the architect who creates our secret doors and tunnels. With our more visible servants, we limit the sharing of blood lest they become too hideous to elicit the trust of others. Occasionally, however, a hunched back or skin malformation betrays a ghoul who's supped too often from his master's wrist.

Spies and Thieves in Paris

While my inspection of Rome bore little fruit, I did expect more of the city built on the shores of the Seine — Paris. With a heritage dating back to the Roman Empire and earlier, Paris enjoys the Church's patronage in such matters as learning and in reclaiming the local swamplands. This past century has seen much growth and the city spreads new districts upon once fallow fields.

After traveling through the polluted Seine, I made my way to Ile de la Cité, the true heart and most ancient quarter of Paris. The original settlers, a tribe of Celts named Parisii (for whom the city took its name), settled the island before Christ's birth. Later, the Romans swept through Gaul, sacked the Parisii settlement of Lutetia, and built on the Seine's Left Bank. They also fortified Ile de la Cité as a stronghold. With their baths, privies and underground cemeteries, the Romans created a subterranean network of passages to rival Rome and Constantinople.

In particular, the Romans riddled Ile de la Cité with a hive of tunnels and storage rooms in case of siege. Nosferatu were present, directing this work detail or that overseer to extend the passages further. When the glory of Rome finally waned, the Nosferatu took control of Ile de la Cité's warrens. This subterranean empire was their keep, and they successfully guarded it against the other clans until earlier this century.

The Church has had great influence over Paris' heart, and where the clergy tread, Lasombra and Toreador follow like shadows. Bishop Augustus Navarre, a shrewd and cunning Magister, represents the local Lasombra interests, I'm told. His subtle touch with the regional church has ensured Notre-Dame Cathedral's construction takes place on Ile de la Cité over large underground cemetery chambers. Although the project is still in the foundation work and expected to continue for a century before completion, Lord Navarre hopes to breach the Nosferatu catacombs and launch a silent invasion against my kind. Little does he realize my kinsmen have protected their lairs well with false tunnels, deadfalls and hidden portals. While Lord Navarre influences the guild heads, my brethren guide certain diggers and builders. Secret passages and double walls already riddle the foundations of the cathedral and link it to Nosferatu domains.

Familiar as I am with our clan's trickery, it required little effort for me to find our brethren. A giant orphanage spans the width of Ile de la Cité and rests at the foot of Notre-Dame. I walked the quiet pathways of the orphanage grounds, knowing my kind flocked to such places — the sense of lost innocence is a siren's song to us, Sradish.

It did not take long to remember that the apostles did not number 14 as the statues in the central atrium corridor suggested. Two false statues at the end of the passage watched me move about. They appeared solid stone, but something of their dead eyes unnerved me. I'd never seen the vanishing used in such a manner, but I'd heard rumors that the Parisian Nosferatu used variants of our gifts to cloak themselves as religious sculptures and effigies.

Among the Parisii

"So, you wish to forge an alliance?"

"To forge solidarity," I corrected.

I was deep in the Parisian catacombs, before Dame Mnemach, a Nosferatu unlike any I'd previously encountered. Her skin was like thin fabric, betraying a web of veins and vessels floating just

beneath the flesh. Mnemach's face was drawn, hairless and melon-smooth, but her feral teeth shone through her closed lips like a jagged rictus. Tribal tattoos and scars adorned her arms and skull; because of the obliteration of her flesh, however, they appeared to float against her brow. Dame Mnemach led the Parisii Nosferatu until her sire emerged from his long torpor. They both drew their lineage from the original Celtic tribe that had settled the island.

I was fortunate that Mnemach knew Androvikus and was willing to entertain council for my visit's duration. She too has claimed the title of Nictuku, though I doubt her childer knew that secret, for she used the legend to keep them beneath her thumb. Because her Nosferatu live in a city draped in Toreador intrigues, they must rely on a great deal of guile and ingenuity. While other Nosferatu trade secrets for a hint of power or consideration, this band hides and spies to survive.

Passive Artifice

Generally, all Nosferatu use passive measures to steal secrets. This involves waiting like the patient crocodile and snatching up the morsels that drift by the surface. Our most typical strategy is to vanish from sight and listen, though that alone does not protect us from discovery by others cursed by Caine. We must rely on cunning lest we depend too greatly on our blood.

Subtlety is ingrained in Nosferatu; even our unholy obfuscation requires patience and tempered movement. In the early years of our Embrace, our most common gift, the cloak of shadows, is like armor made of silk. Appearances not withstanding, it offers little protection against blade or arrow. We learn to whisper for fear of unsettling silence, our ally. We plan each step, careful not to intrude upon our environment or betray our presence. The hunter knows this lesson serves a two-fold purpose. It enables him to approach his prey, and it protects him from becoming the quarry.

Listen from a balcony or window ledge, rest in corners where shadows are deepest and lurk under furniture when you can. Hide in public Roman-style privies and baths where they are still in use (Constantinople, Rome, Paris and London, to name a scattered handful of the cities I have visited); the

view and smell is certainly uninspired, but mortals are apt to share strange facts when dispensing with their ablutions.

This brings us to a trick few Nosferatu learn immediately. Rather than spying on Cainites themselves, keep measure of their mortal minions. Powerful vampires rarely pursue matters themselves; they sully the hands of thralls and vassals instead. By observing mortals and by knowing whom they serve, you can deduce their master's agenda. It isn't simple, certainly, and it requires a hearty pinch of patience, but we survived by being cunning; it behooves us to practice our minds and not rely on singular tricks. We also command animals to follow our prey. While rats and the like are of limited prose, they know enough to return and retrace a mortal's path. We've discovered secret lairs and hidden gatherings because our pets could venture where we could not.

Once we learn how to disguise our faces, new possibilities present themselves. Again, it is easy to use this gift to walk among mortals and pretend we're not monsters anymore, but this deception was not meant to use against ourselves. Instead, it allows us to assume whatever role we please, though remember to temper ambition with wisdom. Bold Nosferatu don the faces of the wretched or subservient, serving those Cainites who expect their lessers to fawn over them. So beneath contempt are such vassals that kine and Cainites of influence often speak in their presence with little care. Even lurking about on the streets, Nosferatu disguised as beggars and mendicants hear interesting tales while listening at the windows of homes or in taverns. The only safe secrets are the ones never shared.

It goes without saying that spying becomes easier as we grow in skill, but so too does the danger. We claim animals as our hosts and see through their eyes, and we can walk amongst others unseen. Unfortunately, some Nosferatu believe this exempts them from harm, and they soon grow lax in their guard. I wonder if we do not lose more of our kind to negligence, when they discover these advanced teachings, than when they are newly Embraced and rightly cautious.

Active Artifice

Neonates rarely employ active techniques for information reaping because the skill to wield them comes with age. I do not condone all these methods, but neither can I deny their effectiveness.

The most common method of actively seeking out knowledge is by harvesting a network of accomplices. I've mentioned the merits of using rakyers, lepers and society's other downtrodden refugees, but ambition also serves us if we foster alliances with the small leaders of the burghs and districts. From my understanding, the Londoner and Byzantine Nosferatu have learnt well from the Ventrue and Lasombra, but have reversed their teachings. While the Magisters and Patricians believe that you must control the apex of the pyramid to rule the base, we know that the apex cannot exist without the base. Why control the Pope when it is the clergy whispering in the ears of the people? Why manipulate the king when it is the scribe who records his words or the herald who speaks on his behalf? Why direct the general when his captains fight and spill their blood alongside the soldiers?

These informant rings serve the Nosferatu well, but not completely. Therefore we must rely on other, less savory methods to gain secrets. Certain kinsmen learn the Ventrue tricks of Dominate to force knowledge from enemies, but this gift is more rare than a Lasombra's reflection amongst our kind. Instead we depend on forced blood oaths and even physical torture to coax information from our victims. This is my limit for inflicting misery, but I know of Russian and Transylvanian Nosferatu who torture entire families to loosen the tongue of one member. Nosferatu in the far north are said to slowly devour their victims' extremities, starting with fingers, proceeding to toes and... elsewhere, till the poor souls scream out their secrets. Similar rumors speak of one Cordoba-born kinsman who forces carnivorous mice down the gullet, though I am admittedly dubious of this tale's veracity.

Other Nosferatu are equally cruel, but far less visceral in their ministrations. The secret to plying the rumors' craft is to foster false stories to see whom they affect. Launching subtle accusations against someone often unearths hidden and unexpected alliances, grudges and even loves. A master player in this facet of the War of Ages merely stirs the pond and watches what surfaces. This is not control; it is a means of discovering where ropes are tethered. Another variant of investigative troublemaking is to assassinate the known minion of a Cainite and see what unfolds thereafter. The murder is a clear signal that the person has enemies willing to act against him, and that this was

Leprous Punishment

Nosferatu Guy Bouchain betrayed his Parisian kinsmen to Lord Navarre by reporting on his clan's efforts to influence Notre-Dame Cathedral's construction. The astute Dame Mnemach saw through his deception, however, and I was privileged to witness his execution.

I had heard of the quartering, but had not seen it firsthand. To be certain, it was not the worst method of execution, but it was effective. The Nosferatu had already drained Bouchain of most of his vitae, and held him immobile while a long chain was tied to each limb. The four strongest of the brood then took one chain apiece and pulled till Bouchain was suspended in air. At Mnemach's behest, they employed their strength and pulled on the chains with a mighty effort. I could hear the joints pop from their sockets before the strain finally tore the traitor apart. The remainder of the brood descended upon the convulsing Bouchain and mauled him with teeth and claws.

Another method of execution I'm familiar with comes from my kinsmen in Krakow. The Nosferatu there strip traitors naked and seal them in bare caskets with their arms and legs pinned down. They then punch one small hole in each casket's roof, and lay them in the open at daybreak, facing east to west. As the sun creeps across the sky, a tight needle of light passes through the hole like a hot blade and slowly inches up the traitor's body. Few have survived this agonizing torture. Most Nosferatu are split in twain like a loaf cut down the middle.

the first volley of many. Vampires caught by this realization often solidify alliances, find ways to protect their assets, and warn their lackeys. The Nosferatu merely follow the couriers around, keeping notice of whom they visit and why. It was one simple murder that enabled the Parisii Nosferatu to discover Lord Navarre's resources and identify a spy in their midst.

Providing Services and Bartering in Tongues

Dame Mnemach was as unsettling in action as she was in appearance. She hungered for news as much as I wished to cement an alliance. We bartered, weighing secrets like grains on a balance. I asked to learn her obfuscation crafts, and paid by feeding from her blood in a public display of passion I must admit shamed me. When we ended the exchange, everyone was laughing. They all looked like me. She'd used Obfuscate upon her brood so that they all bore my countenance. Such skill, but I soon learnt the Manifold Guise under her tutelage.

Thus our relationship vacillated, with trades and barters dictating the strength of our consanguinity. Such is our kind's lot, I suppose, for once we started listening, we gained dominion over mysteries uttered by others. Once we possessed secrets, our clan grew rich with a unique currency. Unfortunately, as Mnemach observed, when the dispossessed become wealthy, others grow jealous.

"We are privy to the machinations of the Toreador and Lasombra, and that makes us disgusting *and* dangerous. We pry open the courtly intrigues between the Brujah and Ventrue, and they turn on us for daring to lift our heads from the mud. To the Tremere and Tzimisce who fight their battles through spells and arcane craft, we are no more than intelligent mongrels who've seen too much. Can we forget such slights? I say no, but what satisfactions do we have left? I will tell you. We are a clan of hunters and not soldiers. Therefore we stalk the secrets others leave adrift in this eternal sea, and barter them away to the enemies of our enemies. Is revenge not delicious?"

Mnemach's speech is as impassioned as her hatred, but I understand the root of her poison. The high clans come to us, knowing we alone store secrets concerning their enemies like bolts in a quiver. When they need us, we hear the fond titles "brother" and "sister"; when they've done with us, they send their dogs to kill us lest we speak of their own improprieties.

So be it, Sradish.

Secrets Among the Nosferatu

We cultivate an image of tight organization, but as you've seen from my travel logs, Sradish, we are not as united as others might believe. Our penitent brethren who shy their faces from the heavens would love to band us beneath the mantle of solidarity and flagellation. I, however, have no wish to punish myself on a whip provided by the other clans. They demean us already. Must we do it

to ourselves as well?

Within a city or burgh, the Nosferatu are more often allied than not. We barter information for the sake of strengthening the bonds between the various tribes and families. Have no doubt; as travel between the cities grows safer, our fellowships will span countries and possibly even empires as they did in the nights of Rome. For now, however, such ambitious dreams are better left to the seer Malkavians. We simply barter for knowledge, half in kinship and half for the crowing.

With outsiders we keep our lips sealed, but it is difficult not to bray amongst ourselves about a particularly scandalous tidbit of gossip. It is not the information itself that matters, but the very fact that we snared it. If there is any measure of prestige among the Nosferatu, it is for our skill in acquiring secrets. Naturally, we share these morsels of knowledge as a result of bragging of our exploits, but the laurels of our victory are short-lived. Nosferatu prestige, like gossip, is fleeting. Accomplishments are well and fine, but glory is for the risk-takers and the innovative, not the indolent or torpid.

Our propensity for such gossip can be very useful at times, if it can be channeled. Those who take the time to build solid contacts among fellow Lepers can rely on them to convey messages safe from all ears save those of the clan. This means that if you have a secret you wish to keep from a clansman, this is not a safe system, nor is it if your enemies also have allies among the clan. But it has its uses nonetheless.

Bartering with Outsiders

Sradish, the wild-lust Gangrel are the only clan we embrace as family. The rest can rot. The Gangrel often share in our knowledge freely since they act as our couriers, but few of them are given to gossip. A few of us served alongside them in the fight against Christianity's advance across Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The mortals fought over religion while the Gangrel battled the incursions of the black-hearted Lasombra. Christianity won, but the Lasombra came away licking deep wounds. The Magisters uncovered that a few of us masqueraded as pagan Gangrel and bear us enmity for that. But this was also a lesson to them in how effective we can be.

Bartering in words, we know how little they truly mean. So when a Cainite supplicates himself through declarations and not actions, know that you are speaking with a viper who'll poison you given the chance. For these fools, we offer something of value only for a worthy favor in return. Sometimes we don't even care for the traded artifact, as long as our patron suffered to fulfill his portion of the bargain. Never forget that in these situations, we hold the upper hand and can make greater demands than we normally could. I've known Nosferatu who took this lesson to advocate greed, but we serve the clan best by playing the pious and the wretched. We should take care never to wave our accomplishments over the heads of the other clans lest they retaliate in anger. The Latins do this well. Unlike my Levantine brothers, Europe's Nosferatu understand how to swallow their pride and play their roles handily. We'd be wise to master their proficiency in sycophancy.

Conversely, the one lesson the Latins could learn from us is bargaining in such a way as to make it appear you are providing a favor rather than a service. The most skilled Nosferatu of Baghdad could seal a bargain and get what they needed without the other Cainite ever realizing he was in negotiations. This requires a delicate hand and much maneuvering, but avoids resentment and recriminations later on.

Brother Asianin,

I am troubled by recent events in Paris. Dame Mnemach speaks of dissent within the Nictuku. New currents seek to rip the Nosferatu apart, and one faction opposes us in particular. Androvikus' fears are being realized, and if we do not uncover Mollundai, then all our efforts are for naught.

Allies and Enemies of London

I hate London already, Sradish. I miss Paris and her Nosferatu, but my mission is my mistress tonight. I hope to return to Paris in the next summer, but I have a winter of learning and negotiations in this foul-looking city.

Home to over 50,000 inhabitants, London possesses none of Paris's charms. The homes are of timber and clay facades, with beaten-earth floors and unglazed windows not large enough to crawl through. The streets, when cobblestone paved, are slanted towards the middle where a runnel lies. All slops are to be emptied into this open gash of a sewer,

Bridging the Gap

I am months into my journey, and I finally understand Androvikus' reference to the "greatest barrier." Even more than the differences in outlook and beliefs that divide us, the raw distances of the world divide us. We exist in scattered clutches and broods across Europe, the Levant and areas even more remote. To survive, to thrive, we must exchange information.

But our lines of communication are tenuous. We rely on the Gangrel and on trade caravans to link disparate factions. We communicate through lepers and traveling minstrels. Unfortunately, such messages change as they are passed from one person to the next. We need some manner of unified communication that doesn't rely simply on tongue, song or the banging of castanets. The Parisii provided me with many helpful suggestions concerning this matter.

- **Homing Pigeons:** The Nosferatu of Kiev, Krakow and Prague use pigeons to carry messages between them, and this has proven highly effective. The practice spreads west and south, but too slowly I fear.
- **Ride the Call:** I've heard of a blood gift among the Nosferatu of the north named the Wolf's Lament. With it, a vampire bays like a wolf at the moon, and sends his voice across the forest. Each wolf in the region joins in the howl, carrying the message even further like sails caught in the wind. The Northlanders claim they can send brief messages and warnings over a hundred leagues in this fashion, though one disquieting rumor indicates that Lupines can also hear these missives.
- **The Company of Others:** In these troubled times, there are those among the other clans — high and low — who gather in bands to carve out their own domains. These coteries can serve us well, including in aiding communication. It is far easier to travel in the guise of an ambitious Lasombra's aide-de-camp than alone as I do. That way we may enter cities and meet with our own kind. Of course, Sradish, we must remain alert to betrayals within such a coterie, but the risk is often worthwhile.

and yet, the uncultured Londoners are too lazy to do even that. The streets are the dumping grounds of refuse thrown out through the top floors and left to rot in open piles.

I stayed to the wharves and piers lining the Thames, hoping to encounter a Nosferatu amidst the stink of animals and decaying harvests. London draws in many food producers, including farmers, butchers and fishmongers, so the docks are a lively spot day or night. My assumption proved correct and I found a kinsman by the name of Thomas the Rat. He escorted me through the city, taking time to warn me of this street or that residence. London is a Ventrue city under the powerful stewardship of the Methuselah Mithras. The Nosferatu here are an organized front and part of the political machinations. Unlike Paris, where anonymity is key, the Leper Richard de Worde had proven himself to Mithras as both spy and confidant during the prince's war on Norman Cainites. Mithras allows the Nosferatu to actively participate in the courts, both because of our ability to snare secrets and because it upsets Toreador sensibilities so terribly. In turn Richard keeps the Nosferatu well-mannered and punishes any kinsmen who embarrass our clan. He wants no impropriety to sully Mithras' trust in him. As such, Thomas the Rat warned me, I was bound by the absurd number of codes and regulations dictating Cainite life within London. If I failed to observe any of them, Richard would have my head.

The Clans

Thomas the Rat has proven to be London's sole saving grace. Richard de Worde is as haughty and arrogant as any Ventrue I've ever met, but Thomas has taken the time to school me in the city's clans and peculiar laws.

"Tell me of the different clans and what we think of them."

This was but one of Thomas the Rat's exercises before I was to enter London's courts. The Cainites of the city are locked in a complicated web of alliances and hatreds, and I had to supplant what I knew against what Richard de Worde expected of me. I suppose that is true of any place, for for every hatred I espouse against one clan, I have met Nosferatu who claim the opposite. Remember this, Sradish: hate your enemy only as much as your peers allow.

Assamites

Thomas the Rat tells me to hate this lot with nothing but malice in my heart. The Assamites have sought Mithras' blood on more than one occasion, thus making them enemy to Richard de Worde by default. My concerns lie in common sense, though, for our encounters with the Saracens have varied according to their needs and their thirsts. Were I Muslim, perhaps I would deal with them more readily — as do the Hajj, those of our blood who follow that devout Methuselah Tarique.

Even as a Levantine Christian, I know the Assamites have often sought out our abilities as spies. They are Cainites of their word. If you can negotiate for your safety in exchange for the information they seek, then do so, for their promise is a true bond. If you spy one moving silently through your domains and have no offer of protection, run and hide lest you fall to his blade.

Brujah

I am less venomous towards the Brujah than the Londoners, but I distrust them just the same. The Brujah claim they can only accept us as brethren if we abandon our mercenary ways and make a stand with them. I find that difficult to believe. They think we've forgotten how they treated us in Carthage, when our members did not fit their vaunted ideals. Enough of us escaped that city to remember our sires and kinsmen being destroyed for not matching some physical aesthetic of Hellenistic beauty. I am uninterested in discussing their bygone glories save to rub their faces in their failures. Deal with such Zealots as swiftly you can and be done with it. Otherwise they'll entwine you in philosophical arguments and bore you with tales of their former greatness. Worse yet, you may uncover the rabble currently sweeping through England, a lot consumed by their clan's bitterness and hell-eager for destruction. They can't be taken at their word and are as likely to pay you with a stake than an agreed upon price.

Cappadocians

Thomas the Rat seemed most interested on my view of this clan since he had had few dealings with their ilk. It seemed wise to tell him that I had no real

quarrel with the Graverobbers, but I say to you that my true feelings are closer to those of our Roman brethren. I dislike these self-important scholars of death and wish to see them ejected from the dark places they have stolen from us. They seem so comfortable acting as courtly advisors and respected scholars, let them spend their nights and days side by side with the prancing Artisans, then. One who wears fine robes and drinks blood from silver goblets should not claim the dank underground — it is ours, and ours alone.

Followers of Set

One of the few bridges Richard de Worde and I share is our hatred for this clan. The Serpents represent what would happen to our kind were we ever to surrender to the abyss. We both deal in secrets, but the Followers of Set use their knowledge to corrupt and fell their victims. Worse yet, they barter in secrets without the stigma of a broken countenance. In fact, I've heard the Nosferatu of Pisa and Venice allied themselves with this clan, sharing secrets and tricks so that neither city is safe from their combined ears. Damnation take them both; isn't our clan accursed enough without befriending such villains? Call it jealousy or anger, I do not care which, but why must we be cursed when it is they who are black-hearted? I would capture a Serpent if only to scar his pretty face. Let him learn what it is to be Nosferatu, distrusted by appearance alone and forced to earn his secrets from the shadows.

Gangrel

Ah, the Gangrel. We either trust each other like only brothers can, or we fight like only brothers can. Ages ago, when we existed in the wild, conflicts were inevitable. We preferred remaining close to mortal herds, while the Gangrel drifted as they do today. Back then, they were raiders and pirates who sacked our food stocks and paid little heed to our territory. Unlike the other clans, however, they fought us not because they believed us monsters, but because they saw us as equals in the hunt. We were worthy foes. As odd as it sounds, a mutual respect began from that bit of rivalry. Today we remain close, for they talk of their journeys and we recount to them the news of the cities. They've provided us with invaluable information and often saved our lives by offering safe passage. In turn, we listen because we alone understand the desire that sets them adrift. If you ever discover that a Gangrel has joined a coterie, then it is safe for you to do the same. At least you can count upon one ally, as long as you return like courtesy.

Lasombra

Hate the Magisters for their arrogance and treatment of our kind, but never forget their importance. Over this last century, an unspoken alliance has formed between our numbers. The Magisters love to rule, and they can provide us with much in this world if we have something to offer them in exchange. In turn, they know we are invaluable as more than just gossipmongers. Our spies nearly upended their war against the Gangrel during the Christian conquest of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. They remember that slight well, but recognize the importance of such services for future endeavors. Be wary, however, for the Lasombra publicly denounce us and bar us from certain domains. They claim we are plague-ridden, yet they do not hesitate to petition us for our services in secret. We are the Lasombra's embarrassing little whores. While I would enjoy seeing them suffer for each favor they ask, Lasombra patrons are too valuable to neglect or cast aside. Consider your barter carefully, Sradish, and allow yourself some recourse for escape lest they seek your destruction.

Malkavians

I would count the members of three clans as trustworthy allies, and the Malkavians number as the second of that trinity. Their lunacy is infectious, however, for they seek to enlighten others to their twisted visions. Unlike we who quietly listen and wait for others to speak first, they earn their knowledge by prodding and pushing conventions to their breaking. They are far more observant of other clans than Cainites believe, and their insights, while difficult to sift through, are often profound. Help them when you can, for they make good allies and better distractions.

Ravnos

The Londoners don't much care for the Ravnos and dismiss them as thieves and tricksters. They spit the term Charlatan and condemn them all. But the Londoners are fools. Even Thomas the Rat made the mistake typical of the highborn: confusing appearance for fact. Our clan, more than any, should know

that what the Ravnos appear to be and what they actually are, are two very different things. In the same city that condemns all Charlatans to banishment, I observed a French courier arrive with a message for mighty Prince Mithras. The assembled courtiers assumed him to be a Toreador, but I saw the signs of a Ravnos brood called the Phaedymites about him. Messengers and courtesans, they are as prideful and chivalrous as any Ventrue. My feeling is that the Ravnos have their own agenda, which the high clans seem not to even suspect.

Salubri

I doubt I or any other Nosferatu shall ever stop mourning the death of Caine's gentler children. They are the missing third of our pyramid of allies, but the damnable Tremere robbed us of that blessing. If you are ever fortunate enough to find a refugee of this clan, do not hesitate to help him escape or hide. How can we refuse them shelter when they took us under their wings so often and kept us hidden from our enemies? How can we not protect them with our very existence when they pointed many of our kind towards salvation? Certainly, we clashed with their warriors over misunderstandings during the Baali and Usurper wars, but the time of anger has passed. Animosity remains between the warriors of Samiel and us, but even they know better than to discount us so readily. Unfortunately, not all agree. Some of our so-called "brethren" willingly aided the Tremere in uncovering a Salubri warrior's grave. I mourn that betrayal, but know more can follow if we aren't careful.

Many Nosferatu believe that the Salubri were so close to the Lord's breast that if we die in service to them, we too shall ascend into Heaven. While the thought itself is whimsical, the intention is not. We are bound to more than simply helping. Seek the Salubri out and protect them if you can. I know of at least one Nosferatu faction in Scotland who made their lairs above an entombed Salubri in torpor. Should the Tremere come, they will fight a horde of my kinsmen first and know what made us hunters.

Toreador

How can we respect a clan whose greatest celebration came after the discovery of the mirror? Vain and unworthy of the blood in their hearts, the Toreador do not bring beauty into this world; they drain it from their mortal prodigies and claim it as

Brother Asianin,

Could this be the reference we were looking for? I'll look into it when I reach London, but I admit the journey wears on my soul. I wish to end this ceaseless chase, for whatever tracker I earned in Constantinople is more adept at following me than my own shadow. He could kill me if he wishes, but I sense he seeks what we do as well.

Are we on the right side, Brother Asianin? Perhaps the other Nictuku are right to hide behind legends and pursue their various agenda as whispers. Perhaps...

their own. Deal with this clan if you must, but demand trades that exact a price on their sensibilities. Ask for one night with their most beautiful ghoul, and then let it feed from you in public. Or ask for a prized piece of art, and then return it to them while they sit with their peers. See how quickly they'll abandon or destroy their so-called loves for the sake of appearances. Although the Toreador are beautiful and we monsters, take comfort in the fact that we cannot be made uglier, while they can.

Tremere

Foul blood thieves! Could I fill my mouth with their vitae and spit it back into Saulot I would. These hated Usurpers walk among us as though they were equals. They are pups in the face of creation, and I pray they broker the attention of Saulot's brothers; perhaps they can avenge the Salubri in blood. Spit on their shadows and take every opportunity to use their secrets against them, Sradish. We may not be strong enough to confront these wizards in their greatest keeps, but they have enough enemies we can gather to our cause. If one is stupid enough to approach you for secrets, give him the information that will most likely destroy him. Never lie to these wizards, for the truth is far more potent a weapon. Unfortunately, I cannot say all Nosferatu hate the Usurpers, for a number of our Balkan kinsmen work for this lot, as do willful Lepers within some coteries. Fools, for they too shall become Gargoyles and familiars to these blighted wizards.

Tzimisce

The Tremere and Tzimisce are our two most hated enemies. My greatest joy is their mutual venom of each other. Perhaps they will do the world a favor

and destroy one another. How can vampires truly call us monsters when the Fiends walk these lands, damning creatures at a touch and twisting flesh like cloth? Were our faces as repugnant as their hearts, I'd warrant we'd turn mortals to stone at a glance. The Tzimisce are powerful and not to be trusted save when they offer their word as lords and nobility. Even then, I wouldn't stake my existence on that presumption or their charity. They count themselves as above all others and believe that sanctions their behavior. Worse yet, they toy with us and knead our flesh into further mockeries than they already are. Look upon the Larvae and know the Tzimisce had a hand in their deformity. If we are ill-treated by other Cainites, it is expected, but what I cannot abide is the Fiends' ministrations of my clan as playthings. Turn away any barters with this lot, for the sake of helping them is not worth your dignity.

Ventrue

Ah, the dear Patricians. The Ventrue are eager for their glory, but they're also children compared to Lasombra manipulators. How eagerly they scamper for power, believing that sitting upon the throne is the same as ruling it. They don't see the Lasombra's strings manipulating them like puppets. We do, however, for shadows are all we know. Mind you this view never departs my lips given the loyalties of my London hosts. I merely acknowledge the Ventrue's beneficence and offer Thomas the Rat a smile when I mention their name. The Ventrue are likewise duped by sugared words. They only care for what you say to their face and demand public acclamations concerning their greatness. Their insecurity is almost charming. Perhaps that's why our clan finds it so easy to speak with the Patricians. Mere hints of impropriety against them are enough to send them plotting and scheming. Still, do not take this clan for granted, and bargain with them when you can, Sradish. They've been our greatest patrons in the recent years and can still offer us much. In truth, they grow in power and it would be wise to foster our relations with them. Know that with each Ventrue lord or potentate, there is a small nest of Nosferatu who have his ear. Richard de Worde is proof of that.

Baali

There is little I can say about this damnable lot save to tell you to destroy them with all the hatred in the known world. Since Saulot's destruction, these infernal maggots have multiplied into a plague. With each death, I can only hope we do our Salubri brethren proud. Mind you — on an entirely mercenary note — use the Baali's death as a trophy to present to the local Ventrue or Lasombra lords. This might curry you some favor and do much to ease your existence.

Gargoyle

Another reason to despise the Tremere is the Gargoyles. We know not whence these creatures came, but we smell our blood in them. Are they like the Larvae, another debasement against us? We will tolerate no more of this. The Gargoyles have proven efficient at detecting us and protecting their masters' havens, but they are worse off than we are if such things were possible. We must foster alliances with them and encourage them to break their bonds. This is dangerous, for they are faithful lapdogs; yet, even kept animals revolt against cruelty and torture. Let the Tremere continue mishandling this lot and they'll soon have a viper in their midst. Hopefully, we can contribute to their misery by helping the Gargoyles rebel and escape.

Brother Asianin,

This is where the journal entries I have uncovered end. We know that Rasalon's journeys continued and he must surely have uncovered more. I was unaware of the fossori's struggles, and I'm sure greater secrets await us. But others hunt this same prey and, all pretensions of solidarity aside, I fear our enemies share our blood.

Be cautious, my friend. Be cautious.

New Acres of Flesh

New Archetype

This new archetype can serve as a Nature or Demeanor for Nosferatu characters.

Hunter

The world is filled with danger and two types of people: hunters and prey. You've chosen to be the hound, and therefore everything around you must be prey. You assess life by this maxim and spend your time studying everyone's strengths and weaknesses. Within minutes of meeting people, you've already decided whether they are quarry and can easily fall to you in a fight or if they are predators worthy of your attention. You ignore prey, for they provide you with no real interest, but you compete with other hunters to prove yourself better. From seemingly simple tasks like sneaking into a keep to complicated matters like engaging in melee, you must assert your supremacy.

The hunter and prey axiom is not necessarily a violent one. You do not deliberately hunt after your companions, but you make it a point of knowing their strengths and weaknesses should the time come. In fact, you're patient, with a cold calculating nature and a highly developed competitive streak. Remaining patient, however, is necessary in studying your victims and approaching them without arousing suspicion. You may even believe your own coterie the ultimate game, and enjoy seeing how close you can get to them without arousing their suspicion.

— Regain Willpower whenever you outperform a rival of equal or greater skill than yourself, or when you successfully stalk and snare prey through patience and cunning.

New Background

Couriers

Like a spider, you've cast a net of communications throughout a city, region or even countryside. You can courier messages through any known Nosferatu means — whether with caravans, Gangrel scouts or homing pigeons — and know they'll be reliably transmitted to other Nosferatu in your area of influence. These communications are not entirely secure, however. Your messages can travel far and wide because they pass on the lips of those who aide a variety of Nosferatu — so another who has earned their trust could well catch wind of what you are conveying. Although Lepers value the clan's secrets, they also must make deals with outsiders. A Magister's coterie-mate may well pass on your plan to steal into his haven.

Dots in the Background represent how trusted and connected the character is in the local network of couriers, and so how far and wide a message is reliably conveyed. This also determines how easily the vampire can tap into others' messages. The Storyteller can ask the player to make a Charisma + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 10 - dots in Couriers) to find out if anything interesting is being passed along by local couriers.

A player who wishes her character to have a very secure way of relaying information might purchase the Retainers Background to represent a personally loyal courier.

- • The communication web extends over one city.
- •• The web touches upon two cities.
- ••• The player now has a choice of reaching three cities or a country's district like Aquitaine in France or one of the Papal States.
- •••• The character's message can reach four major cities or affect a geographic area like the Carpathians, the Seine's shores or the Alps.
- ••••• The character can communicate with up to five cities or an entire country like France, England or Bulgaria.

Broken Tongues

Nosferatu with the Couriers Background have a reliable way to relay information to other Lepers, although they must realize that many clanmates catch wind of whatever they communicate. Those who wish to use other means — either to hide secrets from clanmates or to go beyond the reliable range of their regular couriers — have other options.

The Storyteller always has the final say as to whether a message arrives or not, but the following systems can serve as a convenient shorthand for off-stage shenanigans. The difficulty of these rolls is usually between 6 (for a message relayed within the same city) to 10 (for a lengthy journey through dangerous lands). The number of successes indicates how completely the message is transmitted, with one indicating basic intent and meaning, and four being a verbatim recitation.

• **Letters/Codes:** Literate characters may use letters, coded or not, to communicate. This has the advantage that if the courier gets through, the message is relayed in full. Of course, the recipient must also be literate and any literate enemies who intercept the message are privy to its contents. Fortunately, most bandits (indeed, most people) are illiterate and codes can increase security. Any character with Linguistics 3 can be assumed to know a code and, given the chance, can teach it to another. Coding or decoding is an Intelligence + Linguistics roll, difficulty 5.

Regardless of whether a message is coded or not, it still needs to be transported. So the following guidelines still apply.

• **Allies/Retainers:** Trusted servants and friends can reliably convey a message if it is in their ability. The Storyteller should adjudicate whether they make it safely or not, rolling their Stamina + Survival or Wits + Larceny to navigate dangerous wilds or dark streets, respectively. If the messenger is an ally rather than a retainer, some form of payment and reciprocity is necessary.

• **Animals/Carrier Pigeons:** Through the use of Animalism and ghouling, Nosferatu can use animals as reliable messengers. They do so either by speaking directly to an animal or by sending a carrier pigeon with an attached missive. The former requires the use of Feral Speech, and both systems require a Manipulation + Animal Ken roll to send the beast to the proper destination. Difficulties can be lowered by 3 for ghoul animals.

• **Contacts:** The use of simple contacts to relay secret messages is much trickier. The Contacts Background represents acquaintances who provide some information, but no concrete support. Doing a favor like passing a message along (without sharing it with third parties) requires payment and favors, and even then, there is no guarantee. The Storyteller can require Manipulation + Leadership or Charisma + Etiquette rolls. Of course, the use of Dominate can ensure compliance, but few Nosferatu have that highborn gift.

New Discipline Powers

Blood Apocrypha (Auspex Level One, Obfuscate Level One)

In an attempt to create a secret language all their own, the Nosferatu have generated different methods of coding their speech and messages. One faction living in the Levant uses Blood Apocrypha for private dialogue based on the nuances of expending blood within their body. The Parisian Nosferatu, however, use a variant whereby they write actual script that remains unseen. In both cases, the only people who understand this language are those with Blood Apocrypha as well. Most broods who employ this trick have one Nosferatu among them who can provide translations since it would be unreasonable to expect all clan members to be versed in this language.

This Discipline allows a vampire to relay coded information in one of two fashions. If related to speech, the two discoursing Cainites must be close enough to smell and taste the atomized blood. Kissing is the safest route. The second method, scripting, enables the writer to draw blood pictographs using his own vitae on cloth. The blood

never actually touches the medium, but its dissipation infuses the porous fabric to create the message.

The recipient, in turn, must expend a small taste of blood to speak to the other vampire or he can breathe blood vapors upon parchment to highlight the text. In both cases, Blood Apocrypha does not supply the coded message; it is merely the ink used to relate instructions. This means that a vampire with this Discipline must also understand the codes being used. That is why the Levantine and Parisii broods are able to maintain their secrets.

System: Regardless of whether the message is in speech or script, and whether the vampire is the sender or receiver, the player must spend one blood point for the character to retrieve or relate the message. In spoken communication, as long as the two Nosferatu are face to face, no roll is necessary. For written missives, the sender's player should roll Perception + Subterfuge (difficulty 5) to determine how long the message will last (see below). Reading the message requires blood expenditure but no roll — it succeeds unless the message has expired.

Blood Apocrypha costs ten experience to learn.

Successes	Survival of Written Messages
1	two days
2	four days
3	one week
4	one month
5+	indefinitely

Wolf's Lament (Animalism Level One, Obfuscate Level Two)

In ancient times, the wolf's howl echoed across the forests and mountains, communicating with its far-flung brethren. The Nosferatu and Gangrel living among the wilds of northern Europe learned how to do the same, resulting in Wolf's Lament. This gift enables the vampire to howl a message out into the open, where it carries for miles. Additionally, any wolf hearing the wail supports it using its own voice. If done properly, a chain of wolves can sustain the lament across dozens and even hundreds of miles.

Anyone listening merely hears an eerie keening that pierces the air and settles across the land. Those with Feral Speech, however, hear a voice carried within the howl. The content is brief, but it imparts emotional imperative and a general missive. It can warn of danger, summon a specific individual, grieve for someone's death or carry any other quick and simple messages. Wolf's Lament can vocalize roughly two simple sentences.

System: To use this Discipline, the player relates the simple message and the Storyteller judges whether or not it is too complex (saying it in one breath is a good rule of thumb). The player then rolls Manipulation + Animal Ken (difficulty 6) and the vampire sends out his instructions in a howl; the successes indicate the distance the message travels on the voices of wolves (see below). A failure simply means there are no packs in the area (or they fail to pick up the message), while a botch indicates that the caller attracts unwanted attention.

Wolf's Lament costs seven experience to learn.

Successes	Distance
1	five miles
2	10 miles
3	50 miles
4	100 miles
5	250 miles

Gap of Ages (Animalism Level Six)

This gift is an advanced kin to Feral Speech and exerts such great conditioning upon natural beasts that the effects are passed down through the generations. Affected animals and their descendents roam the wilds of Europe with a singular intent or thought burned into their minds and very being. Often times these creatures are simple guides with instructions to lead travelers of a certain "smell" (Nosferatu, in this case) along a specific path. Not all commands are altruistic, however. Some animals readily fight clearly superior foes because a vampire commanded their great-grandmother to protect a domain.

System: Like Feral Speech, Gap of Ages allows characters to command animals. Talking to them requires no roll, but to condition the creature and its descendants, the player must succeed in a Manipulation + Animal Ken roll (difficulty 7). Thereafter, depending on the number of successes (see below), this beast and its offspring obey. Again, because the animal is simple, the commands must be as well. "Bring others who smell like me through this path" or "attack anyone who smells dead but continues walking" are viable orders. Conditioning can be broken if another vampire uses this Discipline to issue new instructions. In either case, Gap of Ages does not affect the already-born offspring of newly commanded animals.

Successes	Affected Animals
1	two generations (the conditioned animal and its immediate progeny)
2	three generations
3	four generations
4	five generations
5+	This family-line is eternally bound.

Manifold Guise (Obfuscate Level Six)

Most Cainites believe that Obfuscate is only good for hiding. After all, the Nosferatu are hideous; why else would they use this Discipline if not to conceal their repugnant forms? The Nosferatu wield Obfuscate to shroud their presence, true, but it is also a tool of survival and a means to confuse the enemy. Manifold Guise enables the vampire to drape his countenance (or that of another person present) over everyone around him. What better way to elude a party of hunters bent on your destruction than giving them plenty of you to hunt after?

As with Mask of a Thousand Faces, those affected by Manifold Guise do not feel different. Still, by outward appearance, they look like whomever the vampire chose as a template. This mask cannot be wiped or cleaned away; the Cainite employing this power must leave the area or stop using his ability for the effect to fade. Additionally, Manifold Guise also projects the same voice upon each person, so when they talk, they all sound like the template.

System: If the player succeeds in a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7), the character can either cast his own appearance upon everyone within the immediate area, or choose someone he's looking at during that moment. The only way for people to detect each other is if one target notices movement or actions that are typical of his ally or known enemies. This requires Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6) in a resisted roll against the vampire's successes in pulling this charade.

The successes in Manifold Guise also work towards increasing the range of the effect. That means anyone caught within the area, be they two or a dozen, are all equally affected. The vampire need not see all the victims, just as long as he can see one target and the person whose appearance he is borrowing (unless he's using his own face). The effect is always centered on the vampire. If the Cainite employs this ability and moves about, he alters anyone new within the Discipline's influence. Anyone who moves out automatically reverts back to normal.

Successes	Range
1	Five yards in all directions.
2	10 yards in all directions.
3	30 yards in all directions.
4	100 yards in all directions.
5+	500 yards in all directions.

New Merits and Flaws

Blood Bloat (1-3 pt Merit)

Somehow you've developed the ability to store more blood in yourself than is normal for your generation. You are a fat little sausage saturated with vitae, and your skin is strained and partially split whenever you are full. Every point in this Merit increases your capacity to carry blood by one extra point above your generation maximum. You have a larger reservoir, but you cannot process or expend the vitae any quicker than your peers can. Whenever you are fully fed, your skin is a ruddy color, and other Cainites can smell the blood trying to squeeze past your pores (on a Perception + Alertness roll, difficulty 7). This can cause frenzies in hungered vampires.

Feeding Tongue (2 pt Merit)

This Merit gives the Nosferatu a cartilaginous tongue through which he feeds. It is believed to stem from the Larvae Nosferatu and any of their progeny. The tongue cannot extend more than six inches past the mouth, but it does cause aggravated wounds (treat the attack as a bite). Unlike the Kiss, this feeding is very painful for the victim. It's much like a giant mosquito plunging a spike-sized needle into flesh and siphoning blood fast enough to collapse blood vessels.

Legendary Accomplishment (3 pt Merit)

Somewhere in your past, you accomplished a great feat of Nosferatu cunning, turning you into an immortal legend. Perhaps you stole the Pope's miter or convinced a Lasombra lord he actually possessed a reflection that looked just like you. Regardless, your one exploit has marked you in the annals of clan history, and it's unlikely the legend will die during your existence. As a result, you gain two dice in any social interaction with other

Nosferatu based on status (Intimidation, Leadership, etc.). Unfortunately, all other actions and exploits are measured up against this one great accomplishment. Nothing you do can equal to that one moment of greatness, and younger Nosferatu are constantly competing to outdo you.

Mother's Milk Run Sour: Inheriting Deformities

Nosferatu often inherit deformities and abilities from their sires and pass these same disfigurements on to their childer. Specific malformations thus identify lineage back to the Methuselahs and elders who sired various lines. These are not bloodlines, but familial traits passed down through blood heredity; they do not come with special Disciplines or other advantages.

There are a wide variety of such deformed lineages. The most common in Europe are those descended from the Matriarch, most of whom are baldheaded with moth-eaten lobes and disintegrated nostrils. Baba Yaga's childer, more common in the Slavic east, are badly twisted in mockery of age. Similarly, Larvae Nosferatu look like lampreys, Volsi Cainites are twisted giants, Parisii possess almost jellyfish-like skin, and Lazarene resemble mortal lepers.

These inherited deformities are not uniform however. Each childe adds another layer of horror and inhumanity to the Nosferatu repertoire; hairy hags, bloated whales of flesh, and salt-encrusted beast all pop up in the clan. The dominant deformities are just the general trends among the wretches of Caine.

To facilitate character creation, following is a list of recommended Merits and Flaws for the Nosferatu broods mentioned in this chapter. All are balanced for your ease, although some individuals may not have all these traits. Some of these traits appear in **Clanbook: Nosferatu** for **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

- ***Fossori* (Rome):** Acute Sense (1 pt Merit), Celestial Attunement (1 pt Merit), Enemy Brood (3 pt Flaw), Legendary Accomplishment: The Catacombs (3 pt Merit), Territorial (2 pt Flaw)
- **Larvae (Balkans):** Efficient Digestion (3 pt Merit), Feeding Tongue (2 pt Merit), Gaping Maw (2 pt Merit), Territorial (2 pt Flaw), Uneducated (5 pt Flaw)
- **Parisii (Paris):** Institutional Control: Masons (4 pt Merit), Putrescent (4 pt Flaw), Sleep Unseen (2 pt Merit), Territorial (2 pt Flaw)
- **Lazarene (Constantinople and Parts of Europe):** Code of Honor (1 pt Merit), Higher Purpose (1 pt Merit), Leper (1 pt Flaw), Stench (1 pt Flaw)
- **Volsi (Western Empire):** Huge Size (4 pt Merit), Notoriety (3 pt Flaw), Piscine (1 pt Merit), Slimy (1 pt Merit), Stench (1 pt Flaw), Territorial (2 pt Flaw)

A Leprous Legion

Advisor of Intrigues

Quote: *Your ploy is bold milord, but keep careful watch on Lord Brenner. He partakes of the Serpents' council and would stick a forked knife in your back given reason.*

Prelude: Born the sole daughter of a minor lord, you grew up within the courts of Adrianople, watching and learning the trade of Byzantine politics. True, your family was a mere shadow of Constantinople's true masters, but they were heartless nonetheless. Still, their station did not save them when the Crusades swept through your city on the way to the Holy Land.

Armed with God's blessing, the Crusaders stole and pillaged with Papal authority. They were not the only monsters among God's army, however. A hideous creature of flayed skin and grave rot spied you one evening and decided you belonged to him. He stole you in the darkness, then despoiled your youth by sinking his rotting fangs into your throat. Power, wealth and beauty were all lost to you in that moment. In a panic, as the disease gripped and ripped through you, you plunged a spear shaft into your sire's chest, then fled further west than you'd ever been.

Concepts: Despite your condition, you could not help but spy on the courts. That's when you noticed several noblemen plotting against a young lord of promising skill. You warned the young man, only to discover him a Ventrue. Impressed with your initiative and talent, he took you on as secret advisor and spy. Now you serve him, and keep watch on the courts from the shadows.

Roleplaying Hints: Bereft of the qualities of life you'd become accustomed to, you are a ghost filled with envy and anger. Still your grasp of Byzantine politics and your Nosferatu gifts make you a priceless ally. In another time and another place, you would have made a fine Ventrue. Your patron has said as much, but you know your current condition causes him embarrassment. That's why you are his secret. Partly motivated by revenge and partly by concern for your patron, you steal and plot men into early graves. You are better than they are, and if you cannot prove it in beauty, you will do so in ability.

Equipment: Clothing of your noble station (now in tatters), a dagger, heirloom jewelry

VAMPIRE
THE DARK AGES

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: AUTOCRAT
Demeanor: SURVIVOR
Clan: NOSFERATU

Generation: 8th
Haven:
Concept: ADVISOR OF INTRIGUES

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○○	Charisma	●●●○○○	Perception	●●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○○	Appearance	○○○○○○	Wits	●●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	●●○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○○	Academics	●●●○○○
Alertness	●●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○	Investigation	●●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○○	Law	○○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○	Melee	●○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○○	Music	○○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○○	Ride	○○○○○○	Politics	●●●○○○
Leadership	●○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○○	Science	○○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●○○○	Survival	●●○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
OBFUSCATE	●●●○○○	GENERATION	●●●●○	~~Conscience~~/Conviction	●●●●●
POTENCE	●○○○○○	HERD	●○○○○	Self-Control/~~Instinct~~	●●○○○
	○○○○○○	RESOURCES	●●○○○	Courage	●●○○○
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		

Other Traits		Road		Health	
	○○○○○○	HUMANITY		Bruised	☐
	○○○○○○	●●●●●●●○○○		Hurt	-1 ☐
	○○○○○○			Injured	-1 ☐
	○○○○○○	Willpower		Wounded	-2 ☐
	○○○○○○	●●●●●○○○○○		Mauled	-2 ☐
		☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐		Crippled	-5 ☐
		Blood Pool		Incapacitated	☐
		☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐		Experience	
		☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐			

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Brother to Wolves

Quote: *How can you call yourself Nosferatu and walk around covered in mortal shit? We are hunters; we don't wallow in the waste of our prey!*

Prelude: Your family had always lived in the wildest hearts of Russia and called upon the ancient gods of the land. Even when Christianity forced the local lords and kings to bow down before Christ, you mumbled through their prayers and continued worshipping Perun the Thunderbolt. The icy forests and snow-covered mountains formed your world, and it had no place for a god who couldn't stop bleeding.

One night, you hunted into the evening and tried returning home. It was then you realized you were being hounded. You spent the eventide hiding in the woods and stalking a creature that smelt of the grave. Neither of you gained the upper hand, for you would either dive into the brush and avoid its filthy claws, or it would dart into the darkness and disappear whenever you were about to strike. Finally, after a night of this game, it ambushed you and nearly bit your head off at the neck. It was the most pleasurable sensation you'd ever experienced. You moaned Yarilo, the God of Joy's name for only he could offer this kind of bliss. You didn't realize death felt this warm, this comfortable. The creature smiled with a row of teeth that split the sky and muttered "Not many of Perun's children are left, believer. Does a moist grave take you, or do I?"

Was there ever a doubt?

Concept: You were born to the wild, and you died in the wild. Is there nothing more fitting than continuing your existence there? You are a wild Nosferatu and friend to the Gangrel who stalk your mountains. A hunter of men, the thrill of this wild abandon fills you with utter joy. There is no better life than this, despite your shattered countenance. Your face is a small pittance for such power.

Roleplaying Hints: You're new to this vampiric experience, but you relish every sensation. You move like the wolf, see like the eagle and swim like the breathless fish. Your existence is a celebration of life; you are the legacy of the primal hunter reborn.

Equipment: Battle axe, spear, tattered light armor, bone necklace of your victims

Vampire: The Dark Ages

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:
Nature: Hunter
Demeanor: Celebrant
Clan: Nosferatu
Generation: 7th
Haven:
Concept: Brother to Wolves

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○○	Charisma	●●○○○○	Perception	●●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○○
Stamina	●●●○○○	Appearance	○○○○○○	Wits	●●○○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	○○○○○○	Animal Ken	●●●●○○	Academics	○○○○○○
Alertness	●●●●○○	Archery	○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	●●○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○○	Law	○○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○	Melee	●●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○
Intimidation	●●●○○○	Music	○○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○○	Ride	●○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○○	Science	○○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Animalism	●●○○○○	Generation	●●●●●	~~Conscience~~/Conviction	●●○○○
Obfuscate	●○○○○○		○○○○○	~~Self-Control~~/Instinct	●●●●○
Potence	●○○○○○		○○○○○	Courage	●●●●○
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		

Other Traits: ○○○○○○ (×5)

Road: Beast ●●●●●●○○○○

Willpower: ●●●●●●○○○○ / □□□□□□□□□□

Blood Pool: □□□□□□□□□□ / □□□□□□□□□□

Health:

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Experience:

Combat:

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Crusader of Yima

Quote: *Tell me, have you heard of the legend of Yima? No? Then point me to Saint Foy's abbey in Aquitaine, perhaps the monks there can be of some help.*

Prelude: Following the Third Crusade, you were part of the German army that swept across Sidon and Beirut, bringing them under the cross. Unfortunately, upon word of Emperor Henry VI's death, the German army collapsed and scattered to the winds. With the boats to Cyprus full, your band hid in a trade caravan bound northward for Antioch. Saracen raiders ambushed the caravan outside of Tripoli.

While your comrades tried escaping the fierce nighttime raiders, you felt obligated to remain and fight alongside the overwhelmed merchants. One by one, men and women died alongside you. Some weren't even old enough to wield a sword properly, but they still perished bravely. Finally, you succumbed to the arrows in your back, arms and legs. You fell unconscious, but later awoke to a foul stink in your nostrils. Suddenly a bitter wash of hot slime slid down your throat and set your soul ablaze. That's when the pain truly began.

Concept: Slowly, you are journeying back West. Your sire was a wretched beast who abandoned you when you failed to turn your back on your honor. His only gift was a mocking tale of Yima, but that was enough. Yima is the cure to your accursed condition, but you don't know where to begin. So you seek out the elders of your clan, hoping to question them about this pagan Holy Grail. Although the Lord is still in your heart, you know your salvation lies in uncovering the tomb of this sleeping Nosferatu ancient.

Roleplaying Hints: You were apparently Embraced because of your compassion. If this is a reward, then the universe is a poor benefactor. Still, the legend of Yima is a driving urge, making you wonder whether it's your desire to uncover him, or somebody else who has forced you upon this quest. Could it be you're a pawn in another's game? You know not, but perhaps your sire could provide some answers — if he hadn't vanished into the Syrian night. Only the journey will reveal that answer to you.

Equipment: Bitten sword and piecemeal armor, hooded cloak, horse and a scroll of Yima in a language you don't understand

VAMPIRE — THE DARK AGES

Name: | Player: | Chronicle:
Nature: DEFENDER | Demeanor: JUDGE | Clan: NOSFERATU
Generation: 9th | Haven: | Concept: CRUSADER OF YIMA

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○○	Charisma	●●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○○
Stamina	●●●●○○	Appearance	○○○○○○	Wits	●●○○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	○○○○○○	Animal Ken	●●○○○○	Academics	●○○○○○
Alertness	●●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○○	Law	○○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○○	Herbalism	●○○○○○	Linguistics	●●○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○○	Melee	●●●○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○○	Music	○○○○○○	Occult	●○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○○	Ride	●●●○○○	Politics	○○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○○	Science	○○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○○	Survival	●●○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
ANIMALISM	●○○○○○	ALLIES	●○○○○	~~Conscience~~/Conviction	●●●●○
OBFUSCATE	●○○○○○	GENERATION	●●●○○	Self-Control/~~Instinct~~	●●●○○
POTENCE	●●○○○○	RESOURCES	●○○○○	Courage	●●●○○
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		

Other Traits: ○○○○○○ (×5)

Combat:

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Road: CHIVALRY ●●●●●●●○○○

Willpower: ●●●●●●●○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Blood Pool: □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

Health:

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

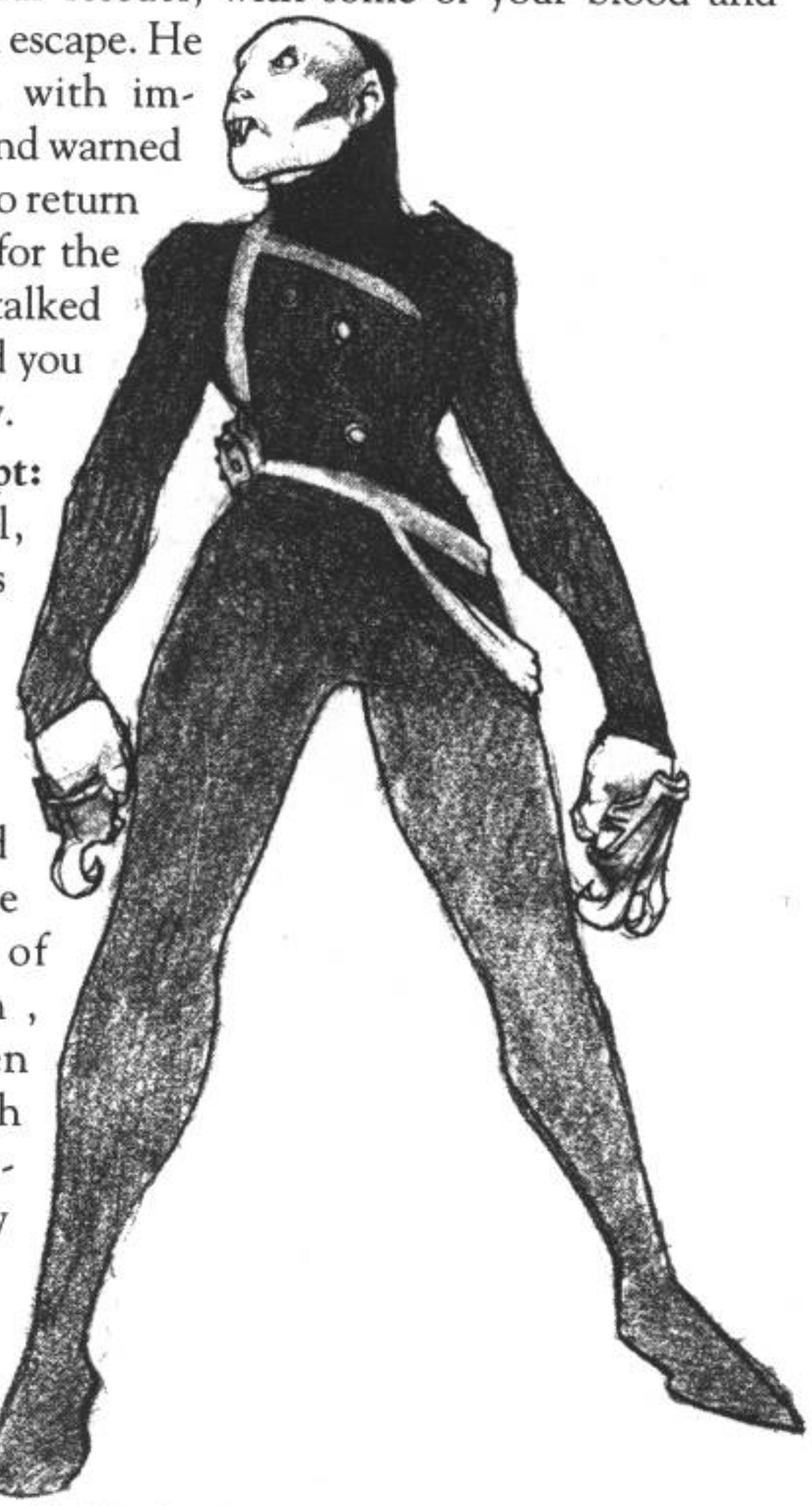
Experience:

Wander-Struck Neonate

Quote: *Oh, what's in there pray-tell? I won't be more than a moment.*

Prelude: After pleasuring a patron behind a Genoan tavern, your demand for payment was met with a drawn sword. That should have been the end of you, but something dropped down from the rooftop and sank its jaws into your attacker. Off in the distance, you heard the snarling of something inhuman. Your savior drained your patron, and stumbled off into the darkness, trailing a rotten stench in his wake. He was badly injured.

You don't know what overcame you that evening, but you went to the creature's aid, even though he appeared leprous beyond imagining and the snarling was drawing closer. You helped him into a stable and covered him with horse manure to hide his scent. The ploy worked, for whatever monster stalked the night drifted by the doors and never entered. You cared for Absaire, your rescuer, with some of your blood and helped him escape. He repaid you with immortality and warned you never to return to Genoa, for the beast that stalked him hunted you as well now.



Concept: As mortal, Genoa was your prison. Now that Absaire has freed you from the shackles of breath, you've been struck with infinite curiosity about the world around you. You are an explorer and inquisitive as to the ways of Europe. Clan hatreds mean nothing to you, so you eagerly greet other Cainites as brothers and sisters. Only when the Beast growls in your belly do you think this new life may indeed be cursed.

Roleplaying Hints: So your appearance is ravaged, what of it? You've been a pariah for most your life despite your mortal form, and look where that brought you. You are reborn, and possess a sensuality to your horror that you never thought possible. You can look like whomever you please and walk places where only the shadows know of your passing. While living, you were a ghost because it was imposed upon you. Out here, you are spirit by choice.

Equipment: The clothes on your back, a dagger and the coins you just stole

Vampire: The Dark Ages

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:
Nature: Jester
Demeanor: Rogue
Clan: Nosferatu
Generation: 9th
Haven:
Concept: Wander-Struck Neonate

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○○	Charisma	●●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●●○	Intelligence	●●○○○○
Stamina	●●○○○○	Appearance	○○○○○○	Wits	●●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	●○○○○○	Animal Ken	●○○○○○	Academics	○○○○○○
Alertness	●●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	●●○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○○	Law	○○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○○	Herbalism	●●○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○○	Music	○○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○○
Larceny	●●●○○○	Ride	○○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○○	Science	○○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○○	Survival	●●●○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Obfuscate	●●●○○○	Generation	●●●○○	~~Conscience~~/Conviction	●●●○○
Potence	●●○○○○	Mentor	●●○○○	~~Self-Control~~/Instinct	●●●●○
	○○○○○○		○○○○○	Courage	●●●○○
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○○		○○○○○		

Other Traits: ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○

Road: Humanity ●●●●●●●○○○

Willpower ●●●●●●○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Blood Pool □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised	□
Hurt	-1 □
Injured	-1 □
Wounded	-2 □
Mauled	-2 □
Crippled	-5 □
Incapacitated	□

Experience

Of Historical Note: The Benefit of Hindsight

October 31, 2000

Fools don't even see what's in front of them. The journal fragments I've found are all annotated with a special brand of medieval pap. The unnamed researcher, and Rasalon the author, both speak of the Nictuku as agents of various Methuselahs and elders. They speak as if the title were nothing but that, instead of a far older story my medieval predecessors simply appropriated. Just because you call yourself the bogeyman, doesn't mean he isn't really out there.

The Nictuku stalk us and to say otherwise is idiotic. They talk of the legend of Yima without even understanding it. An ancient clanmate free of the curse of disfigurement and waiting under the earth? Don't they understand that's just another story of the Nictuku? What would a flawless ancestor do but destroy his vile cousins?

They are so naïve.

- Calebros

PS: There are references in the journal to a "Brother Asianin" who appears to have been an associate of Rasalon and Androvikus. But I can find no mention of such an associate anywhere else, and I have very complete records of that dead lineage thanks to Vykos' little exchange back in '24. The journal's author even says that the line is dead in a note to Asianin, supposedly a member of that line. Who is this Asianin?

Book Three: Madmen

"Stop! Seize him..."

That is all Anatole could hear as he fled down winding streets slick with mud and snow. He could feel tiny cuts in his feet as he ran though freezing puddles: each a miniature maw filled with razor-sharp teeth of forming ice, biting deep and hard with each stride.

Behind him, the grotesque shadows of his pursuers dogged him. A slithering mob that boiled with fear and anger. Anatole ran from the shadows, not the prince's henchmen, because he knew demons lurked beneath them, and they were gaining ground. They were hungry for him and wanted revenge.

Fear is madness, Anatole thought to himself as he ventured deeper and deeper into the city, into its Roman and ruined heart. He let chance and luck take him where it may, knowing providence guided him and that God would not abandon his instrument — not tonight. Behind him, the prince's henchmen and their shadows followed.

Prince Rudolf of Prague wanted nothing to do with Anatole; his envoys made that clear enough. What was he afraid of? If it was madness, then it was already too late because it seethed in his city. It called to Anatole. But that was it: madness and fear of madness. So afraid of it were they that the prince and his subjects spiraled into its depths.

Anatole recalled how the local Cainites had leered from behind windows and shadows as he had entered Prague. Hidden from view, or so they thought, they had watched him, afraid to even cross his path for fear of contracting his madness — as if they could be so lucky.

Proud Brujah found excuses to be out of town and lofty Toreador whispered that mongrels such as Anatole should not be tolerated in this civilized age. The wiser Cainites said nothing, but their fear was equally palpable. The prince himself refused to see Anatole, on the pretext of pressing matters, even though the Malkavian brought a message from Lucita and her Magister superiors — such a breach of etiquette would not be easily forgotten. Anatole savored the fear his divine lunacy caused in others. It meant they glimpsed the terrible light of God through him, that he was His messenger and herald, a mercenary of the Word and nothing more. The Cainites feared their own damnation and judgment at his hands.

And then the rumors had started. By the second night, the Tremere Ardan's apprentice was found dead and the Zealot Ecaterina's new childe was nothing but ash — but Anatole had nothing to do with these mysteries. There was something else lurking in the night, and it had called for him from its slumber.

Anatole felt the city bubble below him. He'd seen this before, and knew what furor was next. This was why Anatole was running now , and the faster he ran the more the streets and cobblestones bled into one. Soon, he was swimming in a maze of narrow streets and darkened alleyways — caverns and tombs where secrets rested. Others would admit they were lost. Anatole, however, felt the call that beckoned him and so he went deeper and deeper into Prague.

He stopped hours later in an old section of the city. Ruins and hovels surrounded him. He could see a colony of lepers housed in one of the tenements. They were not afraid and this gave him pause. Moments later, the two henchmen were upon him, leaping from behind a collapsed column. But even distracted, Anatole moved with divine swiftness, and his sword, rusted and scarred, slashed through one of the guards before he was even aware he was being attacked. Steam from the warm carcass, ripe with the metallic stench of blood, enveloped Anatole. He felt his Beast stir and howl for more; he could not resist. From behind him, the second henchmen swung his axe deep into Anatole's shoulder as he fed.

Anatole bellowed with rage and plowed into the second guard, running him through until his ribs burst like thorns from his chest. Anatole turned in time to see the shadows of his pursuers engulf him. Their swords cut deep into him, and with each blow more of his blood fell to the cold ground.

Wounded, Anatole thrashed at his assailants, buying himself enough time to slip through a hole in a broken wall. He stumbled into darkness and fell for an eternal moment until rotten timbers and rubble broke his fall. In a haze of dust and snow, Anatole looked up at the thick stone arches and columns that entombed him. It took him some time to realize he was in a basement, below the skeletal remains of an old church.

Then Anatole felt it, a presence, ancient and silent. The very air resonated with it and called to him. He followed the silent call, flanked on all sides by crumbling statues and effigies of saints and angels. The crypts led through a twisting labyrinth of seemingly endless corridors, reflecting a spirit even more twisted than Anatole's own. At its core was a room, bare save for a stone altar on which a sleeping statue lay. Only it wasn't a statue, but a Cainite — the voice that had led him here. In the darkness, Anatole felt her pain, she was tired of the darkness and he knew only he could save her.

She did not fight or resist as Anatole pieced her rock-hard skin with his fangs. She did not move as Anatole drank in her vitae. However, at the threshold of oblivion she let out of sigh and with it a single whisper. "Why?"

Anatole stopped. For the longest time he hovered above his victim, her existence in his hands. Then, abruptly, he turned and left, sparing her.

He did not know *why*.

Born to Madness

From the journals of Anatole the Prophet, childe of Pierre:

I write to understand my madness.

This is the sole purpose of this record. To illuminate that which consumes and condemns my clan to mysteries and enigmas older than the land itself — to the secret wonder of God and his damned servants. Our legacy does not begin and end with Caine and Malkav, but with the Almighty who cursed us, who destined us to unlife and consecrated all Malkavians with sight and madness.

I can do this because I know that, though cursed by Caine's sin and sentenced to madness by Malkav's blood, I follow the will of God. Even in our fractured state — damned and insane — we are His agents, that most divine of powers. Just as it was His will to banish our dark father, it was His will to bestow madness on Malkav, who then bestowed it upon me. For this reason, I *must* understand.

Tonight, I seek that which Malkav himself sought: to glimpse the abyss that dwells within us all and emerge transformed, enlightened.

And so I begin....

Blessings and Curses

We are blessed with insight and understanding, but are also cursed. Visions and mysteries haunt us every night and leave us in anguish and uncertainty. However, in this storm of voices and murmurs, there are moments of holy lucidity. It is as if something deep within us reaches out and shows us the truth we have been blind to. Everything becomes clear and we understand — the gossamer fabric of our madness fades and we see what we are meant to see. For that one moment, we know only ecstasy. We see deep into the empyrean as if we were God's Seraphim, forever cast beyond His sight but not forgotten, forsaken angels set adrift in a sea of madness.

Then, when we have caught a fleeting glimpse of the great truth, our delirium returns to shatter our vision and all we are left with are fragments. These fragments are our curse. We Malkavians are set apart from others of our forsaken race because of our vision, this vision that causes our dementia and brands us as mad. It is both the font of our blessed nature and the cage that contains us. And as with our journey into living death, our madness begins with the Embrace.

The Calling

We are *chosen* for the Embrace. That is the bond that ties our fractured clan together. Unlike the other clans, we do not damn those unready or unwilling to accept our curse — to do so is cruel and a waste of Malkav's blood. We Embrace only those ready for madness and to be remade in our image. The candidate may well be blind to his own potential, and others may see only caprice in our choice, but that is but a mirage. There is always meaning in our choice. Always. We are agents of destiny and divine providence.

The truth is Malkavians can sense the seeds of madness in others. We call this *the calling*. Like a siren's song, the calling draws us to our future childe. It reveals which soul needs our blessing and which deserves naught but an early grave. To hear the calling is to see the divine lunacy in others, to experience an intoxicating and fleeting epiphany. We hear the silent pleas for help, redemption and understanding that are the root of madness. Some heed this call like a powerful urge, a desire born of impulse and instinct. Without warning, often unaware of their own actions, they Embrace their chosen in a bloody rage. To others, the calling leads to a careful pantomime: a game of cat and mouse that culminates in the Embrace.

Our Embrace is a rebirth. We are all born into this world innocent and blind in our love for God, unable to speak anything but babble. In a word, we are born mad, touched by His divine love. In time, however, the base language of man infects and taints us. We forget our divine roots and its essential madness. But there are those who remember. It is they who call to us to Embrace them, to reunite them with the glory and mystery of God through our damned existence. It is the hand of God that chooses — and condemns — our childer. This potential is rooted, sometimes deeply, other times just below the surface, in knowledge, ambition or sin.

Genius, the Madness of Knowledge

Truth is often enough to sow the seeds of madness, and genius is more often the mark of dementia than

enlightenment. Those gifted with genius stand at a threshold between ignorance and enlightenment. They are bound by their mortal perceptions and only the Embrace and rebirth can set them free. That's why they are chosen.

The gifted usually embark on the path of seers and oracles regardless of the voices or visions they see. Some are enraptured by the magnitude of creation and spend their nights wandering the wide globe. Others, cunning, use their vision and knowledge to rule kingdoms. Regardless of the path, the gifted always seek to understand, to unlock the mysteries that condemn them to blood and madness.

Greed, the Madness of Ambition

Greed and avarice erode morals, and in the process, send the ambitious into madness in pursuit of their goals. The calling seeks either to show these fools the error of their ways or to facilitate their hunger. They are chosen for the blood to build empires or to destroy them. There are those among our clan who believe our duty is to remind Cainites of our curse. That just as God destroyed Enoch and the Second City, we must destroy everything we build because we *are* outcasts of God and not permitted to dwell with His chosen. That is why the calling and the Embrace both rewards and punishes the powerful.

Depravity, the Madness of Sin

We are cursed. Evil comes easily to us and this is why the cruel and demented are chosen. Perhaps in committing atrocities on a biblical scale they enter into contact with God on a level even other Madmen cannot comprehend. It is impossible to know His actions, and even the most depraved can be angels in His sight. This is why we Embrace them, why the calling leads us to sinners and the deranged. They are reminders to us that His way is unknowable and mysterious — as is ours. Are we not enigmas after all, touched by madness and cursed by God? Therefore, our actions should never be wholly comprehensible and sinners should be chosen to show us the power of mystery and chaos.

The March of Madness

We are reborn, not only because we are drawn into Malkav's mystery, but also because we are forever alive and not dead. Our madness flows through us, always changing us, shattering our senses and opening our eyes to new vistas within our minds. For that reason, we are not dead like other Cainites. Our madness is not stagnant. We are forever caught in a cycle like the mighty Oroborus — a cycle of endings and renewals. Like the serpent, we shed our skin and are reborn with each layer

of understanding our madness bestows upon us. We are always in a state of flux. We are not the stone and marble statues that other vampires become, but are instead mosaics and stained-glass windows that reflect a greater truth. Through us, the mighty light of God shines forth; our way leads to madness and to enlightenment.

Once Embraced and infected with dementia, our journey has only begun. We are always in a state of transmutation, our blood adapting to our fantasies and changing us within and without. Our madness is alive. It whispers to us, granting vision and revealing prophecy. Unlike the dead breasts of other Cainites, our souls preserve sparks of life.

Stigmata

The words of Jakab, Mystai Aenigmatis:

I have been expecting you. You who claims a gift from God, a prophet guided by angels to illuminate our darkness with light and purpose. You who have come looking for answers and truths: to hear me speak and steal a glimpse of the madness that runs through our veins. To understand the curse placed on us, so that you may better understand what you call your "blessing." Yes, I have been expecting you Prophet....

Be warned, however, that you may not find the answers to your liking, because the truth — like the secrets of Malkav himself — is fleeting. The more you seek it, the further from your reach it goes. Before you know it, you find yourself lost. This is the trap that claims too many of our clan.

You seek the madness at the heart of our vision. I seek a student and initiate.

A History

For too long we have been silent. There was a time when we were respected, sought after for our vision and understanding. Our delirium, fickle and maddening, opened us to truths others ignored or which they could not see because of pride and hate. Like Saulot's brood, we possessed an inner-eye and like them, in time, others came to distrust us for it. Myth labeled us mystics and seers, philosophers and innovators. While not all of our brethren embraced their gifts as such, all understood the power madness bestowed in the form of visions and prophecies.

Tonight the weight of these visions blinds us, and like infants, we grope in darkness and howl at the shadows that surround us. We are nothing but madmen and sinners, driven by fear and demons instead of enlightenment or vision. We no longer see truths, only lies. I see you think otherwise, that we are touched and blessed. You have much to learn. Your angels do not grant vision or purpose. They rob you of them and shackle you to madness. No, embrace the mystery and then you'll understand. But I digress....

The Past

In the dim history of the past, we too built empires and ruled over kine like the Ventrue and Lasombra — never forget that. We may be outcasts now, but that's only because we have fallen from grace.

Many accuse us of destroying Rome with our madness. They forget that it was our vision that infected and inspired both kine and Cainites to build a city on those seven hills. We should not lament its fall, as many of our clan do, but see in Rome's failure a reminder of our curse. Yes, the blood might enlighten us with madness, but this madness is both destructive and capricious.

I could spend hours speaking of Rome, of the migrations of our clan following its dissolution, of our contempt for Byzantium, which replaces vision with excess... but you know all this. What you don't know is that many of our clan were among the first to accept Jesus of Nazareth, that many Malkavians saw in Him a reborn Malkav — redeemed by God Himself to spread His vision to kine and Cainite. It is recorded, in dusty scrolls now lost beneath the sands, that some of our clan traveled in His company, out of sight but present and recording the so-called Messiah's travels. It is also written that they recorded their own gospel, their own accounting of the time of Jesus. This gospel is rumored to have within it *The Book of Andreas*, wherein Jesus speaks to one of our clan and pleads with him to find Caine and seek his redemption before God.

In the years after the crucifixion, our clan was divided between the lords of Rome and those humble preachers of the Reborn Malkav. In time, these prophets faded into the wilderness, preaching in remote corners of the world, and time soon forgot them. But we remember, and some prophets are still among us, teaching and carrying out the Word of the Reborn Malkav. The gentle among them continue their holy mission to find Caine, but others are lost in heresies of blood, spreading lies and not redemption. But, you are too young, too lost in your own voice to even seek them out.

Ah, this is all history, and since when do we Malkavians concern ourselves with what was?

Our Brotherhood

I fear — like the mighty Brujah and our Salubri cousins — we are shattering, becoming a fragmented whole like the great mosaics of Byzantium. Shards of madness are all that threaten to remain of our once glorious whole. This is the truth of our clan — and your destiny.

I have heard say that we Malkavians share no link, nothing to tie us as a clan except for the cursed blood of Caine's Oracle. That we are mongrels no better than the Caitiff and should be treated as such. Lies. Malkav's blood may run fractured in our veins, casting us like ashes to the wind to settle where we may, but we share a bond beyond that of simple blood and lineage — we share the gifts of vision and dementia.

True, we Malkavians are a mutable clan, ever-changing and fluid. That is precisely what we share in common. We have no titles, no hierarchy and often our madness forces us to lead solitary existences. Some accept the gift and plunge into the abyss that is lunacy, drowning in potential and possibility. Others run from it and build walls within to shield them from the visions or voices that the blood awakens in us all. Far too many of our brothers see our delirium as a curse, when in fact it is what liberates us.

We do not claim to understand, such hubris is providence of the Lasombra and Ventrue. We Malkavians, however, accept that we do not control everything, least of all our minds and Beasts. We do not question what we see and hear, but accept all possibilities. Even the poor lunatic, Embraced out of pity and who is ignorant of his purpose, accepts that he's privy to secrets and visions both enlightening and damning.

Therefore, we exist in the periphery and observe the dance of chaos, divining what is, what was and what will be from the illusions around us. Unlike so many of our kind who cast a doleful eye to the past or hide from the future, we exist in the present — to do otherwise is to lose oneself to madness. Though we are feared and mistrusted, many of our clan have the ear of a prince or the favor of a cardinal. On the surface, many treat us as outcasts, no better than Caitiff or Serpents. But look carefully and you will see our influence burrowing below the surface.

Yet our delirium is infectious and often drags us deeper into damnation. Be wary, young prophet, of chasing too many images for their own sake. In the process, you might lose perspective and drown in the voices that mark your existence until you can no longer discern what is and what isn't. This is why I cling to logic, to divining reason in even the heat of chaos, and why I discount visions as nothing more than hallucinations obscuring the real truth. In this, I am an iconoclast.

There are those in my clan who would balk at my statements, deride me as a charlatan and denounce me, but I speak the truth. I am not afraid to look deep within and see there is more to us "Madmen." We fear that which gives us our power and bow to the weak and ignorant. We hide from the truth that burns in our blood and slowly we forget that which makes us great. Madness is not a curse: ignorance and fear are. Understand and accept that madness is only a tool, and enlightenment will follow.

Believe that madness *is* enlightenment, and you are a fool.

Companionship

We are not all solitary creatures clucking to ourselves when the moon is high. It's a falsehood; a tragedy that keeps our clan on the fringes where madness feeds on solitude. Take heed, prophet: Madness liberates and enlightens, but spend too many nights alone with it and it will devour you.

Our clan shares a bond of brotherhood and family, though it is fleeting at times. Individually we are isolated, haunted by voices and visions, but together we are one — a family born of madness and the blood of Malkav. You are never alone when you hear the whispers of others in your mind. They tell you secrets, hint at your past and help you when you need it. All Madmen are but part of a whole.

And yet, madness is an infectious and hard taskmaster; the kinship of other Malkavians is not always enough to stave off the cacophony. The company of other Cainites, be they savage Gangrel or contemplative Ventrue, grounds us, helps us tame our delirium so that we may better hear the voice of Malkav. This is why you travel with the Lasombra Lucita, prophet.

The irony, of course, is that the more the other clans shun and ignore us, the more our madness takes root.

On Madness

To begin, you must understand why we see the world as we do. See how Malkav's touch bends and distorts our view of reality. Imagine, if you will, a reflection on a tranquil lake. This is how most see the world. They mistake the inverse image of the mountains and sky for the mountains and sky themselves and remain ignorant of their own blindness. Now cast a stone into the lake. Notice the reflection shatter. Waves radiate outwards, each a fragment, a portion of the disjointed truth. This is our madness. Where others see one, we see the myriad reflections of reality (those true, those false and those possible) and understand that not all is as it appears to be.

Traveling Companions

Throughout the ages, from the time of the three brothers, Malkav, Saulot and Set, to the present, Malkavians have always sought the company of other Cainites. Perhaps they seek others to ground their madness, to act as guideposts when the waves of delirium overwhelm them. Then again maybe not. What is certain is that most Malkavians, at one point in their unlives, crave company.

For every legend of a lone Malkavian, another tells of a lasting bond of friendship between a Madman and another Cainite. The truth is most Malkavians are not solitary creatures by nature, but are rather cast out by their madness and the fear others have of it. Alone, and with no company, their dementia usually blossoms to a terrifying scale.

Storytellers who want to reflect this in play can use the following optional system: Players of Malkavians who are active members of a coterie (such as most players' characters) can have their characters momentarily overcome their derangement by rolling Willpower (difficulty 7) instead of spending a Willpower point as normal. Those playing solitary Malkavians (or Malkavians isolated from their coterie) conversely have to spend two Willpower points to override derangement for a scene.

Do not be so arrogant as to think we understand it all. We only know there is more. Our madness briefly shows us the truth before the waves crash down and drown us. The source of our vision, the stone that is Malkav's blood, is also our doom. Look deep into my eyes young prophet: can you not see the waves and ripples? your shattered reflection within me?

Dust and Bones

There are scholars and mystics among our kind who insist we are dead — *truly* dead. That Cainites are frozen in stasis, never aging, never changing, never evolving. However, we Malkavians put the lie to that theorem. We are fluid, creatures of flux and chaos. We are not dead because within us, madness stirs. It is never predictable, never dormant. Even in the deepest torpor, it calls and fills us with voices and visions, slowly changing us and shattering our minds so that the world is always different, always *alive*! In this we are unlike Gangrel, Tzimisce or any of the other clans. Where a Ventrue lord entombs himself in tradition to prevent change, or a Toreador artist grows bored with beauty, Madmen find fascination in the most innocuous of circumstances and objects. Our eyes and minds are attuned to the mystery that surrounds us, that infects us. Compared to us, the other clans are nothing more than a memory frozen in time. Their existence is a lie.

We see the world as shades do: everyone and everything nothing more than a whirl of dust and shadow, an illusion bound in truth and clothed in lies. This is why we seem to ramble and chase chimera, but it is the others who are lost....

The Legacy of Malkav

All Cainites bear the mark of their progenitor. Like fruits of a malignant tree, we carry the legacy of Malkav and condemn our descendants in a never-ending cycle. Even though our madness opens new gateways, it prevents us from ever crossing over. We *are* damned, gentle prophet, but *to* madness, not because of it. You will never see your angels. I will never solve the mystery of our madness. We will never know why Caine cursed Malkav with the delirium that infects us — unless we embrace madness, but then we lose ourselves to it.

Malkav's legacy manifests differently in every one of his childer. To some, his blood is a gift, a long and treacherous path that leads to enlightenment. To others, it is a tremendous weight, a presence that commands and consumes them whole. And then there are those for whom the legacy of Malkav is a curse, a prison from which they may never escape.

Those Blessed: Seers

There are secrets in madness, that is certain. It consumes the faculty of reason, so often praised but just as often misleading and bound to imperfect perception. Malkav's legacy shatters reason into a multitude of fragments — each a shard of truth imbedded deep in the psyche. To those who see madness as a gift, it is a liberating force for which they gladly sacrifice reason. Unbound and free, the unhinged mind reveals the secrets of heaven and hell. Fortune and fate become visible, like morning dew on cobwebs, and we can see strands of possibilities unfold before our dead eyes. We call these visionaries seers, or oracles of madness.

Malkav's legacy condemns them to plagues of prophecies and omens. Theirs is a world of murmurs and secrets. Their delirium is a tempest that blinds them to everything except the truth. But this same truth chains

them to lunacy — the weight of what they see and feel is too much to bear. Some learn how to cope through rituals and chants, finding a common tongue in dreams and visions. Others, such as myself, look to science and logic, a means to structure our madness. The unfortunate, unable to see past their delusions, become lost to them — their divine lunacy consumes them.

There was a time when princes and Cainite lords traveled far in search of such seers, those who were respected and feared for their uncanny perceptions. This same fear has caused the ignorant, in these nights, to hunt seers down and destroy them. The path of the seer is neither simple nor safe, prophet. All Madmen hear voices, feel the presence of our ancestors and dream nightmares of blood, but seers see more than this. They alone have the insight to silence their delirium and peer past its veil.

Those Possessed: Maniacs

Madness does not only come in the form of visions. The Church claims madness is the mark of the devil, that nefarious forces possess all afflicted. To ignorant masses, we embody this fiction rather nicely. We are spawn of the night and we drink blood. Perhaps there is some truth to this mortal superstition after all — that our madness marks us as the damned legions of Hell.

I see you agree with me, mighty prophet of angels. Is this is why you hunt other Cainites and feast on their blood? Do you believe you are on some heavenly mission? Madness, all of it....

Where seers are quiet and contemplative, maniacs are awash in fanaticism. Their minds are never still, never quiet. Even the most clever and subtle maniac, the one with no hint of his madness except the gleam in his eye, is zealous in his delirium. Where seers have vision, maniacs have conviction and so take quickly to the sword, seeking to drown their voices in battle and the spilling of blood. Far too often, in pursuit of their lost tranquility, maniacs become martyrs or creatures driven by the most decadent and deranged passions. They become monsters even other Malkavians fear.

Those Condemned: Melancholics

To some, madness is neither a gift, a glimpse of enlightenment nor a shard of divinity: it is a curse. To our melancholic brothers, our dementia is a mark of our fallen state, the black wings that carry us and other Cainites in tow, down into the depths of Hell. The melancholics of our clan spend their nights bemoaning and lamenting their madness as part of some heavenly debt. They are prisoners of their own consciousness and so seek atonement in hopes of regaining that which madness took away from them — their sanity.

Perhaps these penitents are right, perhaps believing that Malkav's legacy is a gift *is* true madness. Maybe we are deluding ourselves in believing that our aberration is part of a divine plan. Could it be that only the melancholics really see madness for the punishment it truly is? Some of these moralists lash out against their madness, devouring themselves and others in an attempt to end their torment or find redemption. To an insightful few, madness is a fallen state they can ascend from.

Are we not damned as Cainites? Is not our existence nothing more than God's punishment of Caine? Then perhaps the melancholics are right in the end. In denial and penitence, *they* are the ones granted true vision and filled with true purpose. If this is the case, only they know.

Living Memory

From the memoirs of Anatole the Prophet, childe of Pierre:

On the third night, Jakab spoke more of our clan and the factions within it, further dispelling the myth that we are all loners and outcasts. It is true, he said, that many of our number choose to live in seclusion, but it is equally so that many others look to each other for company and protection. In our madness we are alone, but no one better comprehends our torment than fellow Madmen.

I sense, however, that there is more to us than a bond of madness and isolation. Since my first nights, I have known that my clan watches from afar. I recall, after the pain and hunger receded for the first time, the sensation of a thousand eyes opening in the darkness and staring right at me, welcoming me. This is how I knew I was part of the legion, for we are many and the many are one — Malkav.

Hidden from sight, our clan gathers as one, aware of its members like a flock or herd is aware of itself. When I asked Jakab about this, he remained silent. The following night he was nowhere to be found. I felt his presence, however, enticing me to go searching for him.

Across the land I traveled. At times, he left clues of his passing for me to follow. A few were obvious like a whisper or footprint. Others were so hidden it seemed I stumbled upon them by chance, until I realized luck had long ago abandoned me and my kind. And the more I traveled, the more I learnt of my clan.

Madness in the Dark Ages

In the medieval world, madness is truly terrifying because it is unexplained. It afflicts people seemingly at random and targets the one faculty valued the most by the "civilized" world — reason. To thinkers of the time, reason separates man from beast and is the foundation of civilization. For many, madness is the result of a witch's curse, divine displeasure or infernal taint — all of which must be shunned.

The Church is exceedingly harsh in its treatment of the insane. Not only does derangement deny the God-given gift of reason, it presents a threat to the precarious balance and order of medieval society. To the cardinals and priests of the Christian Church, madness is the mark of the sinner and heretic; it is a telltale sign of infernalism. The only "cure" for madness is torture — to draw out the devil and make the insane confess — only then is redemption offered. The truth is, in the medieval world, insanity is a sentence to exile (for the harmless) or death (for the disruptive).

Even in the Islamic world, which has a more humanitarian outlook towards the insane, madness is a disease worse than leprosy. The mad may not be tortured, but they are nevertheless scorned and feared in Muslim lands. Muslims establish the first asylums, however, understanding that madness can be treated instead of pushed away.

In an age of uncertainty and darkness, order is a paramount concern. Madness denies this order, and the resulting lack of control is why people of the Dark Medieval world fear the insane. Madness is thought to be contagious, an invading and demonic force that possesses the mind and body of those afflicted. Yet, madness also possesses a mystical quality. Many prophets and saints are infected with a religious mania — they hear angels speak to them and see signs from God everywhere. The Church, when it doesn't condemn them to the pyres, venerates such divine fools, believing them touched by God (usually in retrospect). The truth is that the line between demonic and divine possession is nebulous and too often crossed with bloody and torturous consequences. If being touched by the devil is frightening to the average commoner, being blessed by God is unfathomable.

This fear of madness is not solely a mortal phenomena. For all their arcane knowledge and biblical legacy, Cainites are as perplexed by madness as mortals. To most, Malkavians and their dementia are a plague that threatens to steal the last bulwark Cainites have against the Beast — their reason.

The Tongue of Babel

I have learnt of the practice of leaving secret signs only discernable to those of our clan; symbols resembling nothing more than stains or random etchings but which our madness can decipher. I learnt this was one of the gifts of Dementation, an art form weaving madness and words into a language called the *Tongue of Babel*. Over many nights, I pieced together its alphabet, though it could hardly be called such because the tongue is not a language in any traditional sense. It is more like being able to *sense* the lingering presence of madness and divine meaning where others would see nothing.

Slowly, as I deciphered the tongue, I realized that language itself was a lie, a form of madness that people use to hide the true meanings of things. Perhaps the myths of Babel are right. Maybe in the past, we all shared a common language that tied all people as one. Perhaps our tongue is what remains of this divine dialect.

In these nights, the tongue allows clanmates to communicate with one another. Everywhere we travel, we leave its arcane symbols, on buildings, by roadside signs and in certain books. It indicates the location of safe havens, warns of possible danger and lets travelers know whose domain they are entering. It is also helpful in keeping our secrets hidden from other Cainites.

A hermit Madman told me that it is impossible to teach our language; only time and madness awakens one to its symbols. All of us have the potential to see the signs, but many remain blind to them. A division exists between those gifted with the tongue and those condemned to ignorance. Such is the way of madness, fickle and capricious. Had I not come to understand this hidden language, I never would have found the others of my clan.

The Order of the Crooked Cross

One night, I met a band of knights and crusaders in the honor of Malkav. Their armor was nothing more than patchwork, rusted and old, but they carried themselves with dignity and pride. Their symbol, a misshapen scar-like crucifix, marked the band as belonging to the Order of

the Crooked Cross: Cainites in service to both God and Malkav. A knight, by the name of Verro St. Germain, welcomed me and spoke at length of his order and mission:

We follow the Trinity. That of Caine the Father, the one who judges our actions to see if we are worthy of his gift. That of Malkav the Holy Ghost, who inspires and illuminates, who fills our minds with madness. And finally, that of Jesus Christ the Son, who gave his life for forgiveness as we gave ours to the blood. By following His word, and honoring our heritage, we hope to find forgiveness and redeem our Father from the curse of God. This is our mission and Holy mandate. But our path is long and hard. We seek understanding and so travel to the ends of the world in search of Malkav and his voice. For this reason, we joined the Crusade and traveled to the Holy City, but we have abandoned our sword-brethren because He is gone from there.

Our tenets are simple, and we welcome warriors, prophets and wise-men to our ranks — each an aspect of the Trinity we follow. We drink blood, just as Malkav and Jesus have instructed that we do. We seek enlightenment because it condemned Malkav and redeems us. We live by the sword because it is pure and noble.

Before dawn, Verro insisted I divine their future before continuing on my journey. I did and saw them travel back to the Holy Land, but stop in a city of gold. There a voice would call to them and a sign appear. This voice would consume them, welcome them into itself and this is how they would vanish until the End of Nights. Then, I saw only four return, each bearing the sign of the Father.

L'Enfant Perdu

Few of our blood choose to rule over kine and Cainites. But those who do are both feared and respected, none more so that the Child-prince of Antwerp. L'Enfant Perdu — "the lost child" — as most call him, holds court over the growing seaport, content in the freedom given him by the upheaval in nearby Brussels. He is ignored, rather foolishly, and considered nothing more than a curiosity by the dark lords of France. But there is more to L'Enfant than meets the eye.

I saw his court and it was no less ostentatious that that of Paris or London — only smaller. His madness was hidden beneath an impenetrable veil of respectability and wisdom. The same qualities I have observed — time and time again — in our brethren who choose to join courtly life, whether as poets, courtesans or knights. I realized then how adept our clan is at hiding behind masks, at concealing our motives and using our madness to lull others into complacency. This makes us deadly manipulators.

L'Enfant's ascendancy is a testament of the influence, pervasive and subtle, that our clan wields. He began as a child Embraced because of his innocence and purity, but his sire's madness quickly infected him and granted him the ability to divine the weaknesses of others. With this knowledge, he made his sire a tool and then used him to secure the throne. I witnessed, while at Antwerp, Toreador artists and Brujah seneschals dote upon the child in hopes of earning his favor, and like a master, he played them one against the other.

L'Enfant's madness, however, hides a capricious and tainted nature — he has recently fallen to the Road of the Devil. In nights to come, he will be known as "L'Enfant Terrible" and condemn his court to the fires of the Church. This I saw in a vision.

The Monastery at Skellig

Already months had gone by without sign of Jakab, and I thought my way was lost. I stopped at a monastery in Bohemia, home to an ancient *monachus* and Noddist of Clan Brujah. Here I came across a curious manuscript, a book with commentary based on a Babylonian fragment of the Book of Nod — my host's most prized possession.

I almost dismissed the illuminated script, but out of boredom I started reading. In doing so, I noticed, over many nights, that subtle alterations and changes had been made to the text. A word changed here, a passage there, but woven into these changes was the mark of Dementation. It was then I discovered the hand of my clan in the clever forgery — woven so expertly that the changes hummed with damning truth, even though they were lies. These lies infected the reader and placed some kind of spell upon him.

This is how I came to know of the Brotherhood of Skellig, all *monachi* and expert scribes who weave madness into books meant to enlighten. I searched through my host's library (and other libraries I visited) and found the Skellig script on volumes of Plato and Aristotle, on Bibles and works of heretical content. Some of the tomes are simple forgeries, but others infect readers with a lunacy that makes them unwitting tools of the Skellig monks.

Covenant of Madness

The Skellig manuscripts led me back to Jakab in the spring of 1200. It was as if both trails converged. When I finally found Jakab, not far from the ruins of Athens, he spoke of our cults, the *ordo* that sought the key to our madness and promised power and enlightenment to their followers. Cults both ancient and treacherous....

The words of Jakab, Mystai Aenigmatis:

Prophet listen, for tonight you become one with mystery. Tonight marks your coming into the cult, into the *ordo*, the societies that have bound our clan since the dawn of time. Once there were many cults among our clan, each a doorway to the mystery at the root of our madness, each an image of Malkav and his disciples. They held great rituals where the very fabric of cosmos was as sand through our hands. The orders were gateways to mysteries that no priest or sorcerer could pierce. Across empires, from Egypt to Greece and Rome, the cults held great sway. Some legends say they even spawned religions of their own, although it might be closer to the truth to say we echoed, and were echoed by, the gatherings of human priests.

The Biblia Negra, a Skellig Manuscript

Bound simply in sun-scorched leather, the *Biblia Negra* is a Spanish translation of a text supposedly written by an Arab scholar. Within it, the Biblia speaks of 67 ancient beings trapped within earthen prisons dreaming of a time when they shall be free and reclaim the world as theirs. Of the 67, only 13 are mentioned, and Cainite scholars find in the *Biblia* disturbing echoes of the Antediluvians and dire predictions of Gehenna.

Scholars reading the *Biblia* soon see a vast conspiracy at work and can feel the call of the "ancients." They become paranoid in the extreme and refuse to even set foot outdoors at night. Everywhere they look, they see signs that Gehenna is at hand. In time, the *Biblia* completely warps the mind of the reader and plunges her into the abyss of madness. Then the reader simply vanishes and the *Biblia* finds its way into the hands of another poor soul.

Fra' Dolcino of the Skellig monastery wrote the *Biblia Negra*. A work of fiction fired by Dolcino's own prophecies of Gehenna, the *Biblia* was made using the Dementation technique Madman's Quill (see p. 110) to keep Cainite scholars away from true fragments of the Book of Nod. Anyone reading the manuscript is affected by Howling Lunacy (Dementation level five) if her player fails a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). If afflicted, the reader develops the following derangements for as long as she owns the *Biblia*: Paranoia (the Ancients *are* real), Obsession (I must help them, do anything they ask), Fantasy (I know where their tombs are), Delusions of Grandeur (I am their High Priest) and Amnesia (I had a life before the *Biblia*?).

Some cults dedicated themselves to mysteries forbidden to even Cainites and were swept away by them. Some meddled too openly in the affairs of others and were hunted down for their ambition. As with all things Cainite, most of our cults eventually collapsed, thanks both to their own hubris and their fear of others. In time, hiding and secrecy became the only means to survive.

Tonight, this secrecy is the font of our power. Only those of Malkav's blood are allowed to join, but each member has followers and initiates of his own — both kine and Cainite — unaware of the role they play in furthering the *ordo*. While none reveal the secret order they belong to, all promise something to their non-Malkavian followers — power, protection and knowledge most often. While there are only three true orders, these are built on the foundation of hundreds of smaller cults ignorant (save for their leader) of their connection to Malkav's mystery.

I welcome you to our true brotherhood. Until this evening, you have been grasping at the truth like a suckling at its mother's breast. Tomorrow you will see the night with new eyes. You *will* understand. Before that, however, you must accept the price of membership. We are bound by three rules, three dictates that none may break. Adhere to these and you will reap the rewards of a greater understanding of the dementia infecting you.

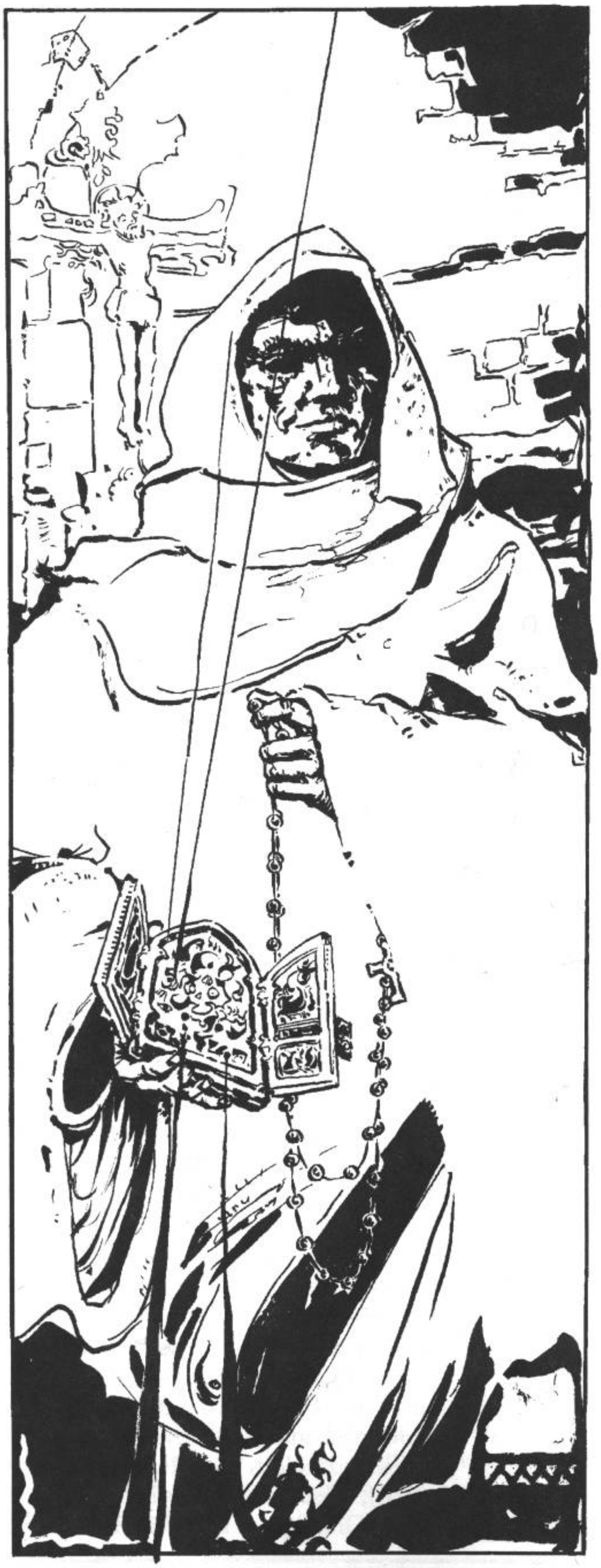
The Dictates

Of the rules, the first is cardinal — *Never Reveal the Order*. Our madness helps us conceal the existence of the cults, and the uninitiated never see more than happenstance and coincidence in our actions. Our mad acts serve as a veil to hide our true brotherhood. That is why not all Malkavians are indoctrinated. In their ignorance, the uninitiated protect those who know and see. The indoctrination of another, and thus my words to you, is the only exception to this commandment.

The second dictate makes us one, joined by blood, madness and brotherhood — *Protect Those of the Order*. Enemies surround us, both outside and within our very clan. We are a threat, our vision and prophecy both maddening and frightful and that is why we must stand as one. Call and the order will heed. Be wary, however, of the first dictate — mask your actions of camaraderie and assistance with your madness. To do otherwise is to risk us all.

The final rule — *Never Question the Order* — speaks of the divine purpose of the cults. The divine enlightenment of our leaders must never be questioned. Never.

Accept these three dictates and you are welcome. Break them and know that you can never hide from that which hides eternal.



Hierarchy and Rites

We are all brothers in mystery, but not all are equal. Age means nothing to us, only enlightenment and mastery over our madness. While the *ordo* are one, the truth is that we are like the spokes of a wheel. Never do we gather as one, instead small covens exist across the lands — from the deserts of the Holy Land to the churches of Paris and the frozen steppes of the north. A deacon, blessed in his understanding of the mystery of Malkav, heads each coven. The deacon sets the law for his wards — *mystai* and initiates — and guides their path to enlightenment. The deacon is our link to divinity, to the mystery at the heart of our madness. Not the divinity of the Christ Child, but the divinity of our own lost heritage as gods and rulers of the kine.

Deacons are oracles and I believe all possess a pure portion of Malkav in their veins. It is said that shortly before the Great Deluge, Malkav gave himself to his closest apostles to ensure his clan's existence even without him. These anointed few, baptized with Malkav's blood upon a great rock, set out to create a cult in homage to their mad father. They have become Malkav's true legacy, and to gaze at the mighty deacons is to see Malkav manifest in all his fragmented glory.

Mystai, or those "of the mystery," make up most of the cults' membership. Their influence extends from oracles, to kings and kingmakers, to mercantile empires and the Church. They are the Madmen other Cainites ignore, or even foolishly believe they control, and who have influence and cunning to match that of any Magister or Fiend.

I am *mystai*, young prophet. We seek to understand madness, to unlock its potential and overcome our Beast. Some search for clarity, others for power and influence, but all understand and accept the mystery at our core. Like all Malkavians succumb to madness, all *mystai* succumb to their *ordo*, becoming one with it.

Initiates, like yourself, know nothing of the mystery of our cult — only that they have been chosen. For a period of one year, initiates commune with their deacon, learning the ways of the mystery. Like sheep, you need a shepherd to nurture and guide you.

The Ordeals

Know then, there are three tests to be accepted into the flock, little sheep.

The first is sponsorship. Just as the calling marks one for the Embrace, one of the cult must first choose an initiate to be indoctrinated. Over years, the sponsor keeps a vigilant eye looking for potential initiates who see *beyond* their madness. This potential is rare — few are so gifted. Those who have it are rewarded with membership. However, selection is not taken lightly, for if a *mystai* brings a troublesome initiate into the fold, he is punished and the initiate destroyed.

Once he is sponsored, the coven's other *mystai* judge the initiate. Out of view, they test him time and time again. Your travels over the last few months were these very tests. In every town and city you visited, a *mystai* watched and recorded. Your mastery of the tongue of Babel was a sure sign that you saw beyond your own lunacy. This is why we are talking tonight — had you proved unworthy, you would have never found me. Not tonight, not ever.

The last and final ordeal is beyond my power. If chosen, you become one of the mystery in a ceremony known as the welcoming. For a night, you are cleansed. Your blood is made pure with that of virgins and you are presented to the coven. You then kneel before the deacon, and he brings you to the abyss of destruction, and if it is the will of Malkav, he lets you survive and immerses you in powerful visions as his blood mingles with yours. If you are rejected, the deacon consumes you, returning your blood to its source and making our clan stronger and purer.

The Thresholds

The ordeals mark the initiate's progression into the *ordo*, toward becoming *mystai*. The *mystai's* progression toward a true understanding of madness and Malkav is similarly marked by personal thresholds. These are signposts along our journey to enlightenment. They are at the root of the cults. It would be foolish to think that our thresholds are neatly codified — we *are* mad after all. And enlightenment does not come in easy and ordered steps, but in exhilarating moments both intoxicating and frightening.

The thresholds ease our tormented existence. They are epiphanies that shine through our fragmented states. Some say that they awake in these moments, some that the voices flooding them quiet and become one, others that they suddenly understand greater truths. For my part, I see the great system at work and understand that change and chaos are only a manifestation of a superior order — maddening in its cyclopean glory. You, Prophet, might come closer to God and the angels you chase. Regardless of its nature, your Road and faith, illuminates your path and eventually your madness. Our rituals are designed to challenge and draw out the Beast, so that we can better learn to control it and, through it, our madness.

How can I describe such an epiphany without you experiencing it for yourself? Let me talk of the Eye of Madness ritual, then you may understand. Imagine your

madness coalescing into hundreds of eyes, all buried beneath your skin — a suggestion implanted by the deacon. Each struggles to see, to open, and so you claw at your skin to set them free. With each eye that opens, your blood pours out from the wound drawing your Beast to the surface. In your weakened state, it can do nothing except recede in the face of the abyss. Then, free from the Beast and seconds away from torpor, you understand that your Beast is as much a prisoner of you as you are of it. To understand that is to pass a threshold.

I can say this: Master the Beast, adhere to the teaching of the deacon and your Road and you will reach the thresholds. It is like climbing from the abyss, each victory over the Beast — which fragments our understanding — brings us closer to the top where the light awaits.

Cults of Mystery

Our cults were once numerous, a vast pantheon of seers and prophets that shook the foundations of the world. Now, only three main orders remain, although each has many covens scattered across the world. When such a brood is discovered, it seems to be nothing but another Cainite plot, not an extension of Malkav's mystery. Such is the cost of survival.

Ordo Aenigmatis

My order, your future home, is one of enigmas and riddles. By losing ourselves to the unknown, we emerge changed and are granted a clarity that makes us potent seers and oracles. Our libraries contain rare and damning books, and we spend our time immersing ourselves in the mysteries of our race. We concern ourselves with legends and mysteries — each a fragment of the truth. We delve deep into what others consider lost and forgotten. Each Aenigmatis understands that knowledge, like mystery and madness, is ephemeral and fluid and cannot be entombed in dusty tomes alone. Only by opening oneself to the unknown can true knowledge be glimpsed.

The Aenigmatis claim mystics like yourself who hear the voices of a higher power, but also oracles and prophets rooted in traditions that the Church has condemned and time forgotten. Like myself, the Ordo Aenigmatis understands that in science and reason the roots of understanding and mystery often rest. This is why, in these times, more and more philosophers are indoctrinated into our ranks — to illuminate the darkness with the light of science and philosophy.

Thresholds and Road Ratings

To many *mystai*, faith in their Road is a means to master their madness and help silence the cacophonous voices in their heads. This is what draws many Malkavians to the cults and why they become fanatical devotees. Like the ancient mystery cults of Greece, the Malkavian *ordo* offer a path toward enlightenment and (in game terms) this translates to higher Road ratings. While many deacons deceive *mystai* with false promises like any other Cainite elders, more than a few help their followers master the Beast and, in the process, the madness at their core. A breakthrough in this mastery of the Beast is known as "passing a threshold."

Many of a cult's rites and ceremonies push *mystai* towards frenzy so that they learn how to control the Beast and catch a brief glimpse of their own madness in its purest form. More often than not, frenzy leads to orgies of blood and storms of Dementation, but occasionally the *mystai* experiences an epiphany. In a moment of sheer lucidity, her madness coalesces into clarity and she gains a better understanding of herself, her Beast and her Road. *Mystai* pass these thresholds individually and they are usually tied to their derangements. A Malkavian suffering from amnesia may suddenly recall a memory of her past, for example. Thresholds are usually accompanied by an increase in the *mystai's* Road rating. This is because cult rituals allow *mystai* to explore their darker side and madness in a controlled environment.

While there are no hard and fast rules for passing thresholds (other than good roleplaying), Storytellers can allow Malkavians to raise their Road rating based on their involvement in a cult. Another alternative is to give temporary (or permanent, if they have the experience) Willpower points after a partaking in a ritual or ceremony.

Additionally, Storytellers may allow players to increase their *mystai's* virtues at a cost of current rating x 2 (instead of x3) if they are active members of an *ordo*.

The Enigmatic Mystery

We worship the unknown and incomprehensible. We seek to obliterate our madness by confronting what is unimaginable and magnificent — whether this be God, time, the totality of the cosmos or Caine himself. Our rituals teach us to bleed our consciousness into the world of shadows until we are one with them — and then, free, to open ourselves to divine potential. To some this

is Golconda, the state were we are cured of our blood curse and our madness. To others, it is divinity itself — to become gods in Malkav's image. We hold true the inherent mystery of divinity. This is why a great number of *mystai* of our *ordo* follow the Road of Heaven. They worship the enigma of Heaven and hope to unlock it, whether they call it Allah, Jesus, YHVH or Zeus.

Death, the ultimate mystery and perhaps the ultimate madness, draws others to the Via Ossis, the Road of Bones. Then there are those who turn to life in an attempt to regain that which the Embrace stole from us — our humanity — and so follow the Via Humanitatis. In recent times, reason and honor have become guides to mystery. The art of logic and philosophy allow some to contain madness and hence the Via Equitum, the Road of Chivalry, takes hold. By surrendering to rules and decorum, they are granted lucidity.

Power and Influence

The Ordo Aenigmatis has survived because it is an august order. Our seers have foretold and prophesized the rise and fall of empires and for this we are hunted down and feared. Truth rests in mystery, and power in truth. We consult the stars, read the currents of fate and are aware of the recurring patterns of destiny. This allows us to divine what child is to be king and who should be swayed with madness and promises of enlightenment when none are looking.

Our cult's home is in the hills of Greece, where so much of our history still stands, though we must be wary of the lords of Constantinople who see us as a threat — a challenge to their corrupt dream because we are not blinded by it. We have also traveled to other lands like Egypt, and farther south. In Europe, we move with the Church, where secrets and mysteries come naturally. Join us and, even in the darkest lands, you will not be alone.

Ordo Ecstasis

Once you become a *mystai*, you will learn more of the second order that has survived to this night. While our philosophies differ and our goals bring us into conflict at times, we understand the need to accept and aid each other. Of our clan's three remaining cults, the Aenigmatis and the Ecstasis share an uneasy alliance.

Where we see the Beast as the chain that drags us down into ignorance and base madness, the Ecstatics embrace the Beast as the Beast Embraced them. To the followers of Ecstasis, the fury and passions of the Beast are the key to unlocking our madness and achieving divinity. Blood is not a curse, denying it and losing control over it, however, is. Ecstatics claim the Beast fractured Malkav and set his mind free, unfettered by morality or fear. Only by accepting the Beast, they believe, will we unlock the mystery behind our madness

The Ordo Ecstasis is militant, seeking out extremes of pleasure and abandon to quell the Beast. Where we prefer contemplation and enlightenment, they seek action and howls of blood. Yet it also draws artists and scholars into its folds, where they lose themselves to its Dionysian glory. Creation has a terrible price for us, prophet.

The Ecstatic Mystery

The Ordo Ecstasis gives in to revels and orgiastic rites, often succumbing to base desires and perverse passion. The Ecstatics do so, however, to appease the Beast and unlock its mysteries. They argue that the Beast is what makes us divine creatures, that our mortal faculty is our flaw and our *true* madness. Although dangerous, our Beast is a manifestation of the Almighty and through it rests the key to understanding Him and ourselves. It should come as no surprise, then, that most Ecstatics follow the Road of the Beast.

It is also possible to find the rare Ecstatic for whom chaos is its own reward and who finds himself on the Via Paradocis, the Road of Paradox. Unlike us, those of the Ordo Ecstasis are always moving, and in their great travels many have encountered Ravnos and learnt the road from them. Or, perhaps, even taught the road to the Charlatans.

The Ecstatics have a darker side, and this the source of much conflict between both cults. Second to the Road of the Beast is the Via Diabolis. The dark Ecstatics believe that madness is not a gift from Caine or Malkav, but from the Devil. They view themselves as tainted angels cursed from God's sight and fallen into darkness. They listen to the Beast, whom they see as a companion.

Power and Influence

The Ecstatics move in different circles than us. As I've said, they are a militant order and ply their influence among those who love battle and are addicted to power. I believe that if they put their minds to it (a difficult task given their chaotic nature), the deacons of Ordo Ecstasis could command vast armies and rule kingdoms. Instead, they content themselves with plying rulers with savage orgies. This is not without merit, as their elaborate and orgiastic rites allow them to dig their claws into those easily lost to sin. Many a king and Cainite lord has fallen victim to the Ecstatics' web in this manner.

The Holy Land calls to the Ecstatics. In the sands of Egypt and North Africa, they mask their practices with those of the ancients, ensnaring pilgrims, crusaders and kings alike. Closer to Europe, the Ecstatics are drawn like flies to a corpse to the many heresies that plague the Church. Their madness makes them blood prophets of the Cainite Heresy — a truly damning fate.

Ordo Maleficus

While you should be wary of the Ordo Ecstasis, it is the Ordo Maleficus that you should fear. All I can say is that while there are those of the Devil's Road in both the Aenigmatis and Ecstasis who embrace *our* darkness as Cainites, the Maleficus seek *vile* darkness. Both of the true orders have done what we can to extinguish this cult and its infernal ways. Tonight, only rumors of it exist but even this is too much for us to accept.

We fear — and mark this prophet — that the forsaken Ordo Maleficus has fallen to the infernal swarm. The few we have captured and tortured reek of the Via Hyron — easily lured by the lies of the Baali who exploit our madness to their infernal ends.

You are now warned.

The Lost Brothers

From the memoirs of Anatole the Prophet, childe of Pierre:

A vision came shortly before dawn. An angel descended before me, calm and draped by the moon. She said nothing, but drank deep from me. As she did, her features remained ashen, for now I could see beyond her aura and gaze at her true face — upon her forehead a third eye open. In that eye I knew silence for the first time in my existence. Its gaze was soothing, and when she was done, a whispered "thank you brother" lingered where she had been but a moment before....

I asked of the Unicorns. Jakab said our clans shared a kinship that stemmed from Saulot and Malkav's love, but would say no more. This recollection brought a tear to Jakab's eye, a tear born of sadness, remorse and guilt: sadness at the death of a mighty clan, our companions and brothers; remorse at our silence when Saulot passed from our sight; guilt because we have done nothing to avenge the fallen and had even welcomed the Tremere as brothers, when they are nothing more than criminals. This shall be a great stain upon our clan.

Disciples of Malkav

The following night I met one of the disciples of Malkav, an anointed deacon. With her, blessed and cursed Maxia, I sought answers and followed my own path.

Of Jakab, his madness and lies are no more.

The Word of Malkav

Spoken by Maxia, Deacon Aenigmatis:

You and I are of different ages. I am a relic of the past and I know, though my followers do not, that I will fade into history. You, and the other young ones, are the future of our clan. You will not have the mystery to guide you, and this will save you, prepare you for when the nights end. And trust me, young Prophet, they *will* end as I have seen them end once before.

I see you understand — maybe not now, but in time — many centuries from now, these words will come flooding back and you will understand your true mission. Listen to what I have to say and then leave.

Listen to the Word of Malkav....

...Malkav existed in exile: blind to the light of God, condemned by Caine and estranged from his companion, Saulot. Malkav was alone among his kind, for Caine banished him because of his blasphemous visions and prophecies.

And so Malkav existed beyond, in the darkness, accompanied only by his madness and six disciples, who begot 12, who begot 20, who begot 36. It is they who bring us the Word of Malkav and his mystery. They are the patriarchs and matriarchs of our family — together they are Malkav. But there is more to this tale.

Alone they existed until, one night, an angel came to Malkav with a message. For three nights, the Messenger and Malkav spoke. For three days, Malkav knew the light of God for one last time.

By the end of the third night, Malkav returned and told the Six that the angel had chosen him to bring God's forgiveness to his race. That God had chosen him, outcast and mad, because Caine was full of pride and blind to redemption. The angel showed Malkav the fate of their race in the form of seven great calamities, sure to come if they did not repent.

Malkav spoke of redemption, of a reign of 10,000 years when God would favor Caine's get and not Saul's. A time when all Cainites would be as angels, if only, Malkav said, Caine repented.

The following night Malkav was gone, and the Six followed his footsteps to Enoch.

When they arrived, they saw Malkav stand before Caine. Not as sire and childe, but as harbinger and redeemer. Malkav said nothing, wanting only to speak with his brothers and sisters. His message was intended for them and not Caine. It was his silence that doomed him. Caine descended on him and shattered Malkav. It was when Malkav's blood fell to the ground, dashed upon a rock, that the skies opened up and the rain started.

This is the Word of Malkav.

Lies...

From the memoirs of Anatole the Prophet, childe of Pierre:

There is no mystery to Malkav. The only mystery is God, the true progenitor of our race and curse. We are the diluted essence of God's darkness, but only Malkav knew the truth of what cursed him to madness. We are the darkness that validates the light. Without us, there can be no hope in the world.

This is the knowledge that drove Malkav mad. We are vengeful, tyrannical, because God is. We *are* God's true children. He is our sire. His is the voice that makes us hear angels and the Beast within our hearts.

We are the darkness of this world, cast adrift by a wayward God ashamed of His own children.

An Addendum

No testament of our clan would be complete without an accounting of our clan 's influence over the dark lands. In an age of ignorance and fear, knowledge and secrets are threats, not blessings. I can see this in our elders' eyes as they hide behind the ruins of the empires they created. They leave us to the mercy of the Church and to vengeful princes who struggle to hold onto the reigns of power slipping fast from their bloodied hands. I can see this in the pain of the Salubri. What is our future like when the blessed are vilified and devoured, when our cousins are made into worms' meat?

I have not witnessed the glory of Rome, only its darkened remains, and so I am free to see past its lies. I hear Constantinople shines, blinding all to its dying throes. Across the land, kingdoms bubble like flotsam over churning waters, and yet most are blind to the rising darkness. In this age, Caine's childer lose themselves to the past or cower from the future, but we Malkavians embrace the flow of change and chaos — even though it seems to be turning against us. I fear we are no longer oracles, but outcasts persecuted for our vision and madness.

Labyrinths and Solitudes

The world is dark, and in it we find places to hide and make lairs. Unlike the other clans, so used to ruling men like a dog does cattle, we have always dwelled in the gulf between the shadows. Only during the glory of Rome did Malkavians exist in the open. Tonight, as we stand ready to welcome a new century, we are better suited to endure and survive. Our madness makes us adaptable.

We have found shelter in the secluded monasteries that squat across Europe and the Holy Land. In these keeps, we claim to be mystics uttering the word of God while monks busily record our ramblings. In the cities, growing larger and more dangerous each night, we exist in the alleyways as carrion and merchants of secrets, and in the villas and estates as masters of intrigue and decorum. In this world, there are many places for us to hide, to carve our own kingdoms as our sires and elders — and those of other clans — squabble among themselves.

Yet, this same adaptability, often a gift of our madness, is also our bane. We have become threats because of the instability our dementia promotes and the secrets we hold close to our bosoms. With each passing night, princes and lords condemn us: the same princes that once, many years ago, traveled far and long to speak with the seers of our clan. We have become a hunted clan for the knowledge we possess and the gift of madness that infects us.

The other clans are not our only worries. The Church, harried by heresies, is too quick to condemn to the pyre all those with sight — mortal or not. They have lost their way. The shepherds have become lost in the fires of their own righteousness and I fear, in the years to come, the smoke will only thicken with our ashes.

This is the world we have inherited; a world I know, in time, I will make my own.

Britannia

My sire spoke of a long history of our clan in Britannia. According to him, many Madmen crossed the channel even before the mighty Roman legions and lived among the people of the island as oracles and chieftains. For their gift of sight, these Malkavian mystics obtained a stable of kine worshippers. But in time, such practices faded and the seers retreated into the thick forests and hills of the isles.

The coming of the Romans marked a drastic change among our clan in Britannia. Numerous Roman Malkavians made the journey with the legions, pushing out their indigenous clansmen. Together with the Ventrue, they established a kingdom that lasts until this night. Although the Patricians have since eclipsed us, our presence still touches the land, especially in cities such as London. There, my sire witnessed Mithras' magnificent court and the many Malkavians who attended, respected as dukes and barons under the Ventrue.

France

France calls to us. Perhaps it is the influence of the Toreador, or the many wonderful cities, full with

basilicas and cathedrals, which draws us here. France is truly a civilized land — one of learning and art. The universities of Paris make excellent havens for the more intellectual of our clan, as do the many quaint villages that dot the countryside.

In France, we are loathed and respected both — Malkavian jesters and poets delight Artisans in their court, while in the countryside they infect common folk with heresy and thoughts of rebellion. The south and west, however, are not too welcoming to our clan. Here heresy rears its head, sending many of our clan to the fires of the Church. I've heard rumors of organized bands of mortals rooting out and burning Cainites — usually Malkavians made easy targets by their ravings.

France is a land of roses, tempered with thorns.

Iberia

Of all the lands, save perhaps those of the Cross and Crescent, I long to visit Iberia. My sire described it as a land in flux, of two clashing ideals set to devour one another. One backed by faith and conviction, the other by knowledge and enlightenment. He spoke of magnificent libraries, cruel lords and the Malkavians caught in the middle. Here, more than anywhere else, we are a clan divided. We have also made a name for ourselves as spies, advisors and leaders fighting on both sides.

Italy

Upon speaking to me of Italy, my sire grew melancholic. The seat of ancient Rome marks the ruin of our heyday. Even now, close to a millennium after its glory fell, many of our clan hide in the mountains and deep within the cities. They are still mourning, lost to reverie and dreams. They were the Caesars and lords of Rome, now they are forgotten and unknown. The Magisters may rule Italia now, but in their shadows — and of those there are a great many — we hide and prosper. In the mountains and islands of Italy, many of our elders make their homes, content to spend their nights alone watching the pantomime of time.

The Dread Carpathians

Of my homeland I know much. I know that a great war between the Usurpers and Fiends threatens us all. Not because of its violence, but because it causes a great evil to stir beneath the soil. This is why so few of our clan make their haven in the mountains and crags of these lands — we know better. Those, like myself, who choose to remain, do so to witness and chronicle. We are aware of the dragons in the mists.

Doomed Byzantium

Golden Constantinople, a city built in the image of Heaven, calls to us. For too long, we have been barred from entering its doors, but now those same doors are crumbling. I hear many of my clan are embarking upon a great pilgrimage to the city of gold. Like flies to a corpse, we are making our journey there, alone or in groups of two or three. Slowly, we congregate as harbingers of chaos.

Who better to record the death throes of the grandest of cities than those blessed by madness — the same quality that built the city?

The Holy Land

Of the Holy Land, our kind's homeland, my sire spoke with reservation, even fear. He cautioned against traveling to Jerusalem or any other city where ancient secrets walked the night with impunity. Ah, the ramblings of an old fool — fearful of the prophecy that Malkav lairs somewhere beneath the sands of Outremer.

I long to visit our homeland and feel the lunacy of faith. I want to walk through Jerusalem knowing it pulses with belief. I want to bask in the glory of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and feel God's wrath — and His love. Then I want to roam the desert and travel as Caine did.

The Lost and Ignorant

There are those who believe that Caine only Embraced once and that this childe — Malkav — spawned our race. They assume that all the other clans are lost and ignorant of their heritage; their madness so profound and ingrained, they have invented their histories and myths to shield themselves from the truth. Perhaps, perhaps not. But this is what *I* know of the other clans:

Assamites

Like us they are consumed. They lose themselves to blood like we do to madness. They respect us and understand the importance of seers and dreamers. We respect them and understand their bloodthirsty ways. Their honesty is refreshing, but it condemns them.

Brujah

There is much hate between our clans. The Zealots seek knowledge, like many of us, but they are bound by reason while we are bound by prophecy. Our histories have crossed paths many times, usually in battle. They still blame us for Carthage, but proud as they are, they fail to see the madness that such a city was. Their anger will be their undoing.

Cappadocians

The flowers of death are a clan we share kinship with even though they treat us with contempt and pity. They think death is noble and madness is intolerable but fail to see how they are one and the same. They would do well not to pity us, but take to heed of our visions. Already the Earth rings with the sounds of their clan buried deep beneath it, and I fear, in time, all that will remain of the mighty Cappadocians are these forgotten murmurs.

Followers of Set

The Serpents are perceptive and wise. They see past our madness and see us for the threats that we are. They'd rather destroy us than have us interfere or compete with their deceptions. Thankfully, they are despised and mistrusted by the other clans, and we are left unscathed. Imagine, however, if they could turn the others against us — then we would have something to fear and that is why we must block the Serpents at every pass.

Gangrel

Both our clans are outcasts and in this we can count on each other's help. They do not see our madness as a flaw, but as a gift; their animal hearts are not blind with reason. When traveling, it is always best to seek the company of the Animals.

Lasombra

They fear us. We are a challenge to the order they crave. They have always been a petty and superficial clan — they lack vision and are only fueled by greed. Even in their homeland, it was the Ventrue and us who founded Rome. All the Lasombra did was to cower in the shadows while our clans built an empire from a shaky republic.

Nosferatu

They, like us, are misunderstood, loathed and shunned. Their curse manifests outwardly, while ours torments us on the inside. We would benefit much from adopting their ways, for they share a strong brotherhood. I have heard of too many Malkavians dying alone — but never the Nosferatu. If only we could have their unity....

Ravnos

Fellow outcasts, we and the Ravnos share much in common. They are mysterious and unknown. Unfortunately, the false perceptions of others have tarnished their reputation. They are labeled thieves and charlatans, but we know better. The Ravnos are gifted and can make the imaginary real — and this is why so many of my clan search for them, hoping they have a cure for our madness.

Salubri

Some say Malkav and Saulot were brothers and lovers. One eased the pain within, the other the pain without. Tonight, unfortunately, years go by without our clans having any contact. We hide, plagued by madness while they fight the darkness and the Tremere. We have forgotten what it is like to be warriors. They haven't. Our silence, I fear, will be their undoing. In their moment of need, we turn our backs on them. We leave them alone in their fight for justice.

Toreador

We both love and loathe the Artisans. They occasionally seem to comprehend our torment and value us as muses and poets. Others have nothing but contempt for our muddied rags and rambling nonsense. Still, I have heard of more than one blood union between a Madman and Artisan. There is hope for them.

Tremere

I fear them. They have haunted down our cousins, the Salubri, and I fear we are next. The warlocks worm their claws around the other clans, more adept in this day and age, and change the order that has been in place for millennia. I know a great reckoning will one day be at hand for the Usurpers. Saulot might have been a temperate soul, but this does not mean his clan will quietly fade into the night. No amount of sorcery will save the Tremere in the end.

Tzimisce

There is a bond between our clans, though few are aware of it. We are both privy to the secret knowledge that there is more to our existence than the blood and our mortal coil. They seek release from the flesh, while we seek release from the mind. Together, we would weave a damning web across the land. For this reason we keep our distance, for certain things should not be.

Ventrue

The mighty Ventrue, so proud, so lost. Although many of their young fear and condemn us, their elders know that we Madmen make the best advisors and guides. Together, we have ruled over the known world many times over. While this alliance hasn't always been peaceful, we know that together there is little we cannot accomplish. But, as I said, the younger Patricians are ignorant of our joint potential. A shame really.

Voices and Omens

Madmen, lunatics, prophets and jesters: the Malkavians are all that and more. They are oracles and Cainite mystics tortured by divine understanding and insight. Each Malkavian is individual and alone in her madness, so the clan seems to be made up of outcasts and loners. The truth, however, is that not all Malkavians are rambling fools who utter cryptic prophecies with the vocabulary of a child. There is more to the Madmen than this — insanity is a curse, but not all are lost to it.

Most Malkavians experience moments of lucidity and epiphanies that resonate with truth. Each experiences the world as if seen through a fractured lens — the ignorant call this madness, the childer of Malkav call it insight. Whether a seer flooded by visions, a crusader filled with "divine" inspiration or a priest consumed by unholy desires, Malkavians are *blessed*.

They exist on the periphery not because they are mad and pitied, but because they are feared. Cainites quake before the unknown, whether they admit it or not, and Malkavians stand as heralds of all that is mysterious and unfathomable. Their madness is a reflection of the mystery and darkness that condemns all Cainites.

Malkavians are mercurial and diverse, like the madness at their very core. This is what makes them intriguing and challenging to play. Players are drawn to Malkavians because of their lunacy, but this also makes Madmen intimidating to roleplay — how do you portray an insane vampire, after all? While there is no disputing the fact that it's tricky, far too often players and Storytellers resort to childish shenanigans and erratic behavior and justify it as playing "in character."

While Malkavians, conceptually at least, defy the stereotyping that shackles so many of the clans, their madness often reduces them to caricatures. This section, and this entire chapter, presents Malkavians in a new light. It offers advice for players and Storytellers on how to create and play Madmen who use their delirium as a catalyst, not as a crutch.

Through a Madman's Eyes

When creating a Malkavian character, madness shouldn't be an after-thought. It should be one of your first questions and decisions as a player. Madness is the core of any Malkavian and obviously has a profound impact on the character. It colors how your character sees the world, how he interacts with others (especially other coterie members), and how he sees himself as a Cainite. Think long and hard on how this divine lunacy manifests. A Malkavian isn't insane because she talks to herself and has hallucinations. What makes her mad is that she sees the world in a different, and usually terrifying, manner — one that often reflects some element of truth or prophecy. To a Malkavian, shadows move and slither because they are filled with demons. Madmen see beyond the masks others hide behind and can steal a glimpse of someone's true evil or benevolence. Theirs is an ephemeral world filled with phantoms and murmurs. Their quirks and idiosyncrasies (in game terms, their derangements) are only outward manifestations of this worldview. Like your character, you must see beyond them and arrive at the truth.

While madness should be mysterious, as a player you need to know how to use it as a dramatic tool. This is why you have to understand the source of your character's madness (its catalyst) and how it manifests (the derangements).

Catalysts

Choosing the source of your character's madness is the first step towards developing a playable Malkavian. By understanding the seed of her insanity, you can better portray her. This allows you to find more creative ways to manifest her divine delirium. Bear in mind, however, that this catalyst is only a tool and not the be-all and end-all of madness.

Truth

Whether the character was mad as a mortal or driven insane by the Embrace, he is privy to truths that

have forever changed him. Malkavians are aware and insightful, and this is the font of their dementia. Malkavians either accept and worship this truth, becoming heralds and harbingers, or close their eyes to it, sentencing themselves to ignorance and blindness.

The specifics of this revelation is different for each character but it is always profound and world-shaking. You should choose something truly epic (a conviction that all Cainites are fallen angels, visions of Gehenna, etc.) that damns the character to madness — his rational and mortal mind is unable to bear the weight of this truth, which shatters his world into a crumbling mosaic.

Suggested Derangements: Amnesia, Delusions of Grandeur, Fantasy, Hallucinations.

Cursed

Madness is neither a gift nor a form of enlightenment, but a curse and a punishment. Fueled by guilt and self-loathing, madness sinks its teeth into the character and devours her from the inside out. Madness then becomes a cross to bear, a sign that the Malkavian is forsaken and damned. She is left with nothing more than her fragmented sense of self, blindly groping for forgiveness or understanding.

This torment is the source of the character's madness. While melancholic, this catalyst can offer a *cure* — atone and seek redemption and the torment will cease. Others see the Embrace as an inescapable curse and use it as an excuse to give in to hedonism and cruelty.

Suggested Derangements: Mania, Melancholia, Multiple Personalities, Overcompensation.

Power

Power is both an obsession and a corruption. Greed replaces ambition and sooner or later, nothing satisfies the desire for power and control. Those lost to its grasp eventually sacrifice more than allies and loved ones, they sacrifice their own sanity. The seeds of madness take root and slowly consume the character until all she can think of is power.

Power as a catalyst of madness is insidious. Many fail to realize their own affliction, blind to anything but the pursuit of dominance. These Malkavians are very dangerous. They don't seek to understand a greater truth or to redeem themselves: they become true monsters. However, in this they are spared the agonizing and self-pitying existence that plagues so many of their clanmates. The downside is that few survive for very long, since their ambition eventually betrays them.

Suggested Derangements: Delusions of Grandeur, Megalomania, Obsession, Paranoia, Perfection.

Hate

Hate is a dark seed that bears black fruits, including madness. The source of hate can be anything from an insult, to fear, to the need for vengeance or even justice. Regardless of the source, hate anchors itself deeply into the psyche until it warps and twists the character. Hate becomes a drug, an obsession that can never be satisfied — not by violence, not by forgiveness, not by anything.

Like power, hate consumes the character. It shatters her mind and fills her with primal urges for violence. And when she gives in (as she eventually must), instead of release, she feels nothing. This is what drives her over the edge and seals her fate as one of the mad.

Suggested Derangements: Compulsion, Fantasy, Mania, Obsession, Paranoia

Love

Whether it runs between partners, parent and child, or God and man, love fills the heart with hope, promise and bliss. It is easy to lose oneself to love, but not all love is healthy. Remorse and mourning can poison it, as can betrayal and obsession. Instead of being pure and wholesome, love becomes a sickness. It infects the character until it blinds him. Then, in desperation and longing, he has no other path but madness.

Perhaps he lost a loved one (to death, to another lover, etc.), or was rejected. And this festered into madness. Some find solace in their madness, living in a make-believe world where everything is rosy. The unfortunate know nothing of love and seek destruction — of themselves, of their loved ones, of anyone capable of loving.

Suggested Derangements: Amnesia, Multiple Personalities, Overcompensation, Regression

Derangements

It is easy to mistake a character's derangements for the source of her madness. In truth, they are the manifestations of her divine lunacy and not her lunacy itself. Insanity isn't a curse for Malkavians, it's what allows them to see and experience the world with unique insight. The real curse is that compulsions, false visions and paranoid ramblings taint and distort their vision and insight. It is derangements that blind a Malkavian, not madness.

Derangements, therefore, are not meant to reduce a Malkavian character to a caricature — they should be tools. They're quirks and behaviors that help players portray madness, hooks and guides designed to encourage roleplaying, not a creative license to be a disruptive and uncooperative player. If played properly, derangements not only add depth to a character, they make the whole experience rewarding and gratifying. It takes more than dots in Dementation or uttering creepy prophecies to play a Malkavian.

Roleplaying Derangements

When playing a Malkavian, it is always best to portray derangements with a subtle hand. Just because your character is obsessive or paranoid, that doesn't mean he has to spend the whole session rambling to himself or looking over his shoulders. Derangements, no matter how insane the character is, aren't *always* in play. It's better if they exist below the surface, occasionally (and when least expected) bubbling to the surface. What makes the Malkavians so feared is that they are unpredictable: no one ever knows what they are going to do next.

Derangements work best if you find ways to manifest them as quirks and subconscious ticks. Try to list at least three personality traits to represent your character's derangement. These should be relatively minor and unobtrusive, even appearing normal until people realize that something's not quite right with you. An obsessive could collect mirrors and fill his haven with them, trying to capture a glint of sunlight or set up a reflection that is *just right*. A leather pouch around an amnesiac's neck, stained red with blood, could carry the eyes of his victims, but he might never remember why. Be subtle, and use other people's preconceptions and fears to your advantage.

A paranoid Malkavian who always hides in the corners and bristles with nervous energy is nothing more than a caricature and soon the other players stop taking you seriously. However, if this paranoia manifests as a fear of being betrayed, then the character will do anything (including murder) so that no one *ever* betrays him. Of the two examples, the second is not only more playable, but produces a truly haunting portrayal of a Malkavian.

New Derangements

- **Compulsion:** Your madness manifests as an overwhelming need to do a specific act. It is an impulse that eventually consumes you. This could be something as banal as crossing yourself every time you hear Caine's name, or something more disturbing, like clawing at imaginary bugs that hide underneath your skin. While

obsession is much more of a mental derangement, rooted in passions and desires, compulsion is a "physical" derangement — a need that always gnaws at you, in you.

• **Lunacy:** Your madness ebbs and flows with the cycle of the moon. Like the tides of the sea, your delirium alternates between contemplative catatonia and fevered mania. During the dark of the moon, a melancholy grips your soul making you withdrawn and lethargic. In this mood, visions and dire omens assail you, and as the moon waxes, they become more and more ominous. Then at the height of the full moon, a fury overcomes you, a mania that constantly pushes you to frenzy. You can't stay still for long stretches of time and voices cascade in your head driving you further into madness — that is, until the moon begins to wane once more. (Storytellers can modify frenzy and Rötschreck difficulties by +/-1 to reflect your character's current outlook.)

• **Megalomania:** You are gifted. You understand and know that you are better than everyone else. They are like sheep and you must lead them. You want power, no matter the cost to yourself or others. Those who don't understand your greatness need to be destroyed because they lack faith. There are times when you hear whispers and they tell you what to do. You listen to these whispers because they've always been right.

• **Visions:** Images from beyond plague you. They come without warning and usually leave you spent and worn-out. When they come, you enter a near-catatonic state in which you feel ecstatic pleasure, excruciating torment or both. During this time, you ramble incoherently, leaving others to guess as to the source of your visions. Once they are over and your senses return, you remember only fleeting glimpses and fragments. These echoes return as an unsettling sense of déjà vu. You rarely remember the details of your visions, and what you do remember is often more frightening than the fragments that haunt you.

Nature and Demeanor

Madness, to the Cainites and kine of the Dark Medieval world, is not explained by psychosis or personality disorders. Madness, purely and simply, is a curse leveled against the Malkavian by God and Caine. In the struggle between a Malkavian's insight and dementia, Nature and Demeanor are guides that help players portray madness and the struggle to overcome derangements. Systemically, this is reinforced because Willpower points are awarded whenever a player adheres to her character's Nature. These Willpower points can then be used to contain and subdue a character's derangements.

One way to use Nature and Demeanor as guides is to associate a character's Nature with her madness. If she believes herself to be possessed by angels, then a Child, Defender or even Tyrant (others *must* listen to the voice of God) archetype could represent this divine "insight" and how it manifests in the character. Her Demeanor then becomes what remains of her sane, mortal self. This "memory" is slowly losing its battle with the insight-dominated Nature and the derangements that shatter the Malkavian's perception of the world. So, in using Nature, Demeanor and derangements in conjunction, you can paint a convincing picture of madness.

Storytelling Derangements

Derangements aren't only tools for players, but also for Storytellers. Careful and delicate reinforcement of a character's derangement can do wonders for the portrayal of madness in your games.

Remember, you are the Malkavian player's eyes and ears, and this gives you the best dramatic license to portray his character's madness. You must be careful, however, and keep the character's concept, Nature and Demeanor, catalyst and derangements in mind. The key here is to talk with the player before play, find out his take on madness and then integrate that into your descriptions. If a character has Multiple Personalities, start internal dialogues with the player to represent his madness, or even take actions for this other personality. Slipping a character a note describing a vision is another way to integrate madness and derangements into play.

New Archetypes

The medieval perception of madness is that is either caused by possession, divine insight or condemnation. The following three optional archetypes reflect this trinity of dementia. Though they serve as a starting point, they do not bind Malkavian characters; all the other archetypes are open to Madmen.

Seer

You are an oracle, prophet or poet of Clan Malkavian. Whatever the source of your visions (or voices), sight and awareness are your gifts. Madness has opened your eyes to mysteries and truths both enlightening and damning. You can see past deceptions and have a fluctuating understanding of the past and future. Sometimes you understand your visions, other times they are nothing more than constant reminders that you are different — blessed and cursed with madness and insight.

In life you might have been a peasant girl who heard the voices in the woods and went in search of them; or a noble, bored and jaded who sealed his fate with forbidden knowledge and ancient secrets; or even a simple parish priest who heard the true voice of God. But it was the Embrace that unlocked your potential. Regardless of whether you see yourself as damned or enlightened, it is thanks to Malkav's blood.

To others you seem detached, couched in an otherworldly aura. This is why they come and seek your advice, to learn what you have to say. It is also why they fear you. This is what gives you power over others, be they Cainites or mortals. In an age of darkness and superstition, you are a mystic and a guide.

— Regain Willpower whenever you shed light on a mystery or enigma, or whenever grant somebody else a greater understanding of themselves, their world or their actions.

Maniac

You hear the voices, not out there in the darkness, but inside you. They are all you can hear. They haunt you. It's like something deep within you is begging to come out to play. "Why can't anybody hear them?" you ask yourself, and they answer: "Because we have chosen *you*." Sometimes the voices are benevolent. Other times they are vile, tempting and perverse — and only content when you have embraced depravity. Succumbing to the voices and urges is the only way to silence them. In time, your own voice becomes lost in their cacophony and you recede into the darkness of oblivion while this "new" personality emerges. You grow into nothing but a memory, your body a vehicle for this new voice.

You might have been a crusader blessed in the knowledge that you *were* God's soldier, or the son or daughter of an Italian merchant who listened to the shadows of your dead uncle wanting revenge. Regardless, you are possessed. Malkav's blood has made you a conduit, a portal and agent of powers beyond your comprehension.

— Regain Willpower whenever you fulfill a goal of your "inner" voice(s) that goes against your immediate self-interest.

Melancholic

Once you knew bliss. You stood at the threshold between life and death and gazed at the face of God. For once in your life you understood — and then, in a painful moment, it all came crashing down. The light seeped away and all that was left behind was darkness and madness. You are cursed and forsaken. You do not see visions or feel the presence of the Almighty. Instead you exist in despair, far removed from both light and forgiveness. And those treasures are what you crave.

You might have been an innocent in life, cruelly chosen, or a king who knew no mercy, or a priest selling lies instead of salvation. To you the world is a constant reminder of what you have lost. You are a true harbinger and prophet of doom. There is no doubt in your mind that you have been cursed, that all Cainites are forsaken. However, deep within your madness lies a single glimmer of hope — the belief that redemption is possible for those who acknowledge their sins.

— Regain Willpower whenever your actions cause others to question their own cursed and damned natures.

New Traits

The following are unique Traits, Disciplines and Backgrounds available to Malkavian Cainites in **Dark Ages** chronicles.

New Discipline Powers

Prophecy (Auspex Level Four, Dementation Level Three)

For some, madness is a link to the storms of destiny, and the Malkavian seer is a powerful figure among Cainites. By opening her mind to the inherent lunacy of the world and observing the mind-shattering patterns of fate (usually through the device of ritual implements), the seer can predict the future. She may be bombarded by images or simply gain instinctual feelings, but either way she gains insight that is useful. She can keep this insight to herself, use it to aid others or use it to do them harm.

System: The Malkavian who wishes to spout prophecy, must look to the patterns of fate in the world about her. Such supposedly random devices as thrown bones, billows of smoke, the entrails of slaughtered animals (or humans) or the very tides are common devices through which she may see the course of fate. Although the Malkavian oracle may do these things wordlessly, the player should phrase a question or subject for the divination. (Good examples include "Who betrays the prince?" "What is the fate of my childe?" "How may I defeat my enemies?") The player then spends two points of blood and rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty 8). The process takes about an hour.

If the character is seeking simple information, she receives visions from the seas of fate. A single success indicates a quick flash accompanied by a dominant emotion, while five successes indicate a true experience set in the future. If the character applies prophecy to an

Madness and the Embrace

Not all Malkavians are insane before the Embrace. In truth, for many, exposure to Malkav's blood is what drives them crazy. Dementia is something Malkavians are always fighting, always trying to understand and master. In the Dark Medieval world, Malkavians see madness as something that has turned their ordered world on its head, and they are left coping with the consequences. Whether they accept, or are even aware of their madness, most seek to understand their curse, to somehow regain what it has taken from them — their sanity. Not all Malkavians are totally or obviously mad; some are still sane and trying to cope with the visions their delirium stirs up.

Malkavians are always in a process of evolving and changing. They are continually learning how to cope with their madness and how to decipher it. In this regard, a Malkavian's delirium is like learning a language. Everyday it makes a little more sense, but then one realizes that letters are only the beginning. Realize that letters can be combined to make words — almost infinite in number — which can mean, quite literally, nothing and everything.

This makes it easy as a player to play a Malkavian that is still rational but tormented (or blessed) by visions and voices. At the heart of all Malkavians is a struggle between the remnants of sanity (a character's Demeanor and Road) and insanity (a character's derangements and Nature).

action she is about to undertake — such as facing an enemy or traveling through dangerous land — she gains an instinctual edge. The player treats the successes as a pool and can spend them to reduce the difficulty of any subsequent rolls tied to the action. Each success can only be spent once. The Storyteller has final say as to which type of prophecy is appropriate and can even choose to combine them.

Malkavian oracles often use this ability to trace the fate of others. The same rolls are involved in this case, but two additional blood points are needed from the prophecy's subject. If the prophecy results in visions, it is up to the Malkavian to relay them; if it results in an instinctual edge, the Malkavian must convey that edge through cryptic warnings. These make little or no actual sense, but the subject's player gets a pool of difficulty modifiers (as above) equal to half the Malkavian's successes.

Prophecy costs 10 experience to learn.

Madman's Quill (Auspex Level Three, Variable Dementation Level)

A Cainite using Madman's Quill can weave a contagious madness into a work of art or a manuscript. The very swirls of a pen or brush, the lines of a carving, the notes of a tune or the tiles of a mosaic encode the Malkavian's own lunacy, ready to transmit it to kine and Cainite observers. Using the Madman's Quill, Malkavians can make the target of their power insane or easily manipulated and deceived by the clever and damning forgery.

In most cases, the victim is only dimly aware that the art or manuscript is tied to his madness or delusions. Gnawing obsessions and paranoia are common, but not fatal or deadly, so that the vehicle is preserved from destruction — which would end the torment. Only prolonged observation by someone with knowledge of such things will uncover the arcane madness woven into the item.

System: The Malkavian can use Madman's Quill to embed any active Dementation power he knows (most, except for Eyes of Chaos, qualify) into a manuscript or a piece of artwork. The player first chooses which single power he wishes his character to encode in the document or art piece. He then spends one point of blood and rolls Manipulation + Crafts, Linguistics or Music (depending on the medium) against a difficulty of 5 + the power's level. The number of successes determines how long the madness will infect the item (see below). The process take a number of hours equal to the encoded power's level.

Successes	Duration
1	one week
2	one month
3	three months
4	one year
5+	indefinite

At any point during this duration, anyone who observes the item (except for the Malkavian who created it) for two minutes or more at a stretch, is affected by the encoded Dementation power as if the Malkavian were right there (although any change in the Malkavian character's statistics subsequent to the encoding aren't reflected in the item's abilities). The only additional effect is that any victim of the item also gains a derangement focused on the document. The Storyteller should decide the specifics of the derangement using the number of successes as a guide, but obsession and paranoia are very common. The derangement fades once the encoding duration passes; both derangement and the encoded powers end if the item is totally destroyed.

Characters who successfully resist the encoded Dementation (the person rolling for the item gets no successes on the Dementation attempt) can examine the item to uncover what is behind the strange feeling it causes. A Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 8) reveals that the item is cursed and perhaps more details (Storyteller's discretion).

Madman's Quill is a single ability that can be used to encode any applicable Dementation power. It need not be learned for each power. It costs 15 experience to learn.

For Example: *Miroslav, an advisor to the Ventrue Prince Christoph, wishes to poison relations between his lord and his closest ally, Fredrick. Weaving a forged letter — supposedly written by Fredrick — Miroslav plans to heighten Christoph's natural paranoia of being betrayed. He uses Madman's Quill to encode the letter with Incubus Passion (Dementation Level One).*

Miroslav's player spends a blood point and rolls Manipulation + Linguistics against a difficulty of 7 (the Storyteller imposes a +1 penalty because the letter is a forgery). He gets two successes, so the effect lasts for a month. A week later, Christoph receives the letter and reads it. Miroslav's player rolls Charisma + Empathy against a difficulty of 5 (Christoph's Road rating) and gets three successes — the prince's paranoia surges and he gains an obsession with the letter, keeping it on his person always. Every time he reads it anew, the power comes into play again until the two weeks elapse and the obsession and encoding fade. By that time the two Ventrue are at war, of course.

Vanishing (Dementation Level Four, Obfuscate Level Five)

It is common knowledge that to cross a Malkavian is to invite upon oneself a fate worse than destruction — and those who have suffered the torment of the Vanishing would attest to this if they could. With this offshoot of Dementation, the Malkavian can cause its target to become a living, or unliving, ghost. With a simple word, the target literally fades from view, possibly never to be seen or heard from again.

System: For the Vanishing to work, the vampire must lock gazes with his victim and curse him; the player rolls Manipulation + Stealth (difficulty equal to the target's Willpower rating) and the number of successes determines the effect's duration (see below). For that time, the target fades from view (depending on the Malkavian's outlook, either swallowed by the shadows, devoured by demons or swept away by angels). While vanished, the victim is rendered delirious and can do nothing except babble to herself and seek shelter from

the sun. If the Malkavian scored enough successes, this eventually dooms the victim to torpor.

The Vanishing costs 20 experience to learn.

Successes	Duration
1	one turn
2	one scene
3	one night
4	one week
5+	one month

New Talents

Awareness

You are attuned to the invisible world of the unknown. Through the cracked-lens of your perception, you are sensitive to phenomena that others are blind to. You can feel the touch of the supernatural like a cold wind over your unliving flesh. This is a purely instinctual sense, not the learned sorcerer's knowledge of occult symptoms. Whereas he might see the signs of haunting, you would sense the presence of death and hate.

- • Novice: Things sometimes feel wrong to you.
- •• Practiced: You see glimpses of the truth, but they are always fleeting.
- ••• Competent: You can tell, just by looking at someone or something, whether they've been touched by the supernatural.
- •••• Expert: You've seen the demons in the shadows — and know they stare back at you.
- ••••• Master: Your madness now makes sense (to you at least).
- •••••• Legend: You just know.

Possessed by: children, oracles, holy men
Specialties: haunting, curses, the infernal

Babel

The tongue of Babel is a secret language of symbols that Malkavians use to communicate with each other. It is not an exact science, as if anything Malkavian could be, but functions to warn Madmen of dangers or to impart information. Only those touched by both madness and Dementation are able to decipher Babel's tongue. In particular, a character may never have a higher rating in the Babel Talent than her current level of Dementation.

- • Novice: Does that say "Danger?"
- •• Practiced: You know where to look, and the general meaning but still can't write your own.
- ••• Competent: You are fluent in the tongue, though still a little clumsy.
- •••• Expert: Babel's tongue comes naturally to you.
- ••••• Master: A poet of Babel.
- •••••• Legend: You *invented* the tongue of Babel, no matter what others say.

Possessed by: Malkavians (especially those of the *ordo*)
Specialties: none

Merits and Flaws

Blessed (5 pt Merit)

You exude an aura of holiness, your voice is like that of an angel and an inner light radiates from you. Others worship you, and even those who want to harm you find it hard to take action. The true source of this blessing is unknown, but those who observe you believe God has anointed you in some manner.

Blessed does not confer the benefits of True Faith, but observers may well believe the character is touched by God in that way as well. Blessed does convey the same benefits as Majesty (Presence Level Five) among the character's flock, as long as she does nothing to break the divine perception they have of her.

Touched by the Ancients (2 pt Flaw)

Old blood flows through your veins and something about you makes elders nervous or curious. This attention is usually unwelcome and comes in the form of mistrust, fear or obsession. Whether you want it or not, you are the focus of elder attention. Some whisper that you are a harbinger of Caine, others see Malkav's madness on you and give you a wide berth. The player suffers a +1 difficulty penalty on all social actions with elders that depend on trust, because they fear the character.

Glossolalia (3 pt Flaw)

Your delirium has not only infected your senses, but your ability to communicate with others. During moments of stress, or whenever the Storyteller deems it appropriate (such as after botching a social roll or entering frenzy), you can only speak in tongues. No matter how hard you try, everything comes out as gibberish. A Willpower point can be spent to utter a single sentence, but after this you can only babble for the duration of the scene.

Architects of Madness

Crusader of the Crooked Cross

Quote: *I do not question — I am what I am. I have seen the Kingdom of Heaven and I know there is no place for me there. All I have is my memories.*

Prelude: Once, you believed. You were a warrior of Christ with the solemn duty to spread light across dark lands. It was with pride that you donned your sword and rode, with so many other young men — boys really — to lands both strange and fantastic. You might have been a simple man, but you heard the voice of God. You always had. As a child, when you followed your father in the golden wheat fields during harvest, He spoke to you. He showed you a path and you followed it all the way to adulthood and the Holy Land.

The journey was long and hard. With each passing battle, and with each drop of blood you spilled, His voice grew fainter. Your last days were spent in a haze of violence and suffocating heat while your faith eroded like the sands that surrounded you. You finally stopped believing completely as you lay dying on the cooling sands. Day turned into night, and in that moment you saw His Kingdom. Through the delirium of exhaustion and death, you knew that it would never come for you. You would never be able to wash your hands clean of the blood, or remember His voice. In this final, crushing moment of despair, your sire found you.

Concept: You are forsaken, cursed and banished from God's light. In the darkness of madness, you have heard another voice. This one promises to show you a greater kingdom and prove that Jesus was nothing but a mortal man. God may no longer speak to you, but madness does. This is why you have joined the fabled Order of the Crooked Cross — to find purpose and redemption in your darkness.

Roleplaying Hints: You go through cycles of deep melancholia and fevered delirium. When the darkness engulfs, you seek to inflict your madness on others — to damn them like you are damned. But when the guilt is too much, you seek forgiveness, to be allowed to reenter God's kingdom.

Equipment: Rusted suit of armor, sword, tattered Bible that serves as your journal

VAMPIRE — THE DARK AGES

Name: | Player: | Chronicle: | Nature: Melancholic | Demeanor: Defender | Clan: Malkavian | Generation: 10th | Haven: | Concept: Crusader of the Crooked Cross

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●●○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	○○○○○
Alertness	●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Empathy	●●○○○	Melee	●●●●○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Music	○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Ride	●●●○○	Politics	○○○○○
Leadership	●○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	●●●○○	Seneschal	○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Auspex	●○○○○	Generation	●●○○○	Conscience/~~Conviction~~	●●●●○
Dementation	●●●○○	Mentor	●●○○○	Self-Control/~~Instinct~~	●●●○○
	○○○○○	Resources	●○○○○	Courage	●●●○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○		○○○○○		

Other Traits

Awareness	●●●○○
Babel	●●○○○
	○○○○○
Derangement:	○○○○○
Lunacy	○○○○○

Road: Heaven ●●●●●●●○○○

Willpower: ●●●●●●○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Blood Pool: □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised	□
Hurt -1	□
Injured -1	□
Wounded -2	□
Mauled -2	□
Crippled -5	□
Incapacitated	□

Experience

False Prophet

Quote: *It is God's Will...*

Prelude: You always craved attention. As the second child of a noble family, your fate was written before you were even born, or so they all thought. During Sunday services shortly before your 14th birthday, however, you cried out loud and fell to your knees claiming to see angels. In a trance, you prophesized your brother's death and revealed your mother's infidelities. For three days you refused to move, reciting prayer after prayer (the one benefit, you soon found out, of being neglected and forced to learn while your brother hunted). Then a curious thing happened — your brother died just as you predicted.

Everything changed. You never saw your mother again and your father came to you asking for more prophecies. You obliged him, content to finally have his attention. It never shocked you to see your false visions eventually come true. It just reinforced your aura of a mystic.

Until you had a real vision. A woman came to you with promises of prestige and influence. She showed you the true power of visions and, more importantly, how to affect others with them. Over the next few nights, you discovered she was responsible for making your prophecies come true. She had seen something in you and now Embraced you as a reward for your ambition. Of the consequences — madness and the curse — you thought nothing.

Concept: If childish visions got you this far, imagine what you can accomplish now. Your father is nothing more than a petty tool, a distraction. You have set your sights higher and are planning to use your gift to make your desires a reality, to carve your own kingdoms out of destiny and prophecy — even if they are false.

Roleplaying Hints: You project an aura that makes others believe in what you are saying — an almost saintly appearance. You are more than happy to use other's misconceptions of your clan to your advantage. You know what to say to whom and when. And when simple guile doesn't work, it's a wonder what the liberal use of Dementation can accomplish.

Equipment: Priestly robes, rosary, fine jewelry (gifts from grateful nobles and Cainites)

Vampire: The Dark Ages

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Seer
Demeanor: Child
Clan: Malkavian

Generation: 12th
Haven:
Concept: False Prophet

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	●●●○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	●●●○○
Alertness	●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○	Linguistics	●●○○○
Empathy	●●●○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Music	○○○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Larceny	●●●○○	Ride	○○○○○	Politics	●●●○○
Leadership	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●●○	Survival	●○○○○	Seneschal	○○○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Dementation	●●●●○	Allies	●○○○○	~~Conscience~~/Conviction	●●●○○
Obfuscate	●○○○○	Contacts	●○○○○	~~Self-Control~~/Instinct	●●●○○
	○○○○○	Influence	●●●○○	Courage	●●●●○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		
	○○○○○		○○○○○		

Other Traits

Derangement	○○○○○
Paranoia	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Road: Devil
●●●●●○○○○

Willpower
●●●●●●●●○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Blood Pool
□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

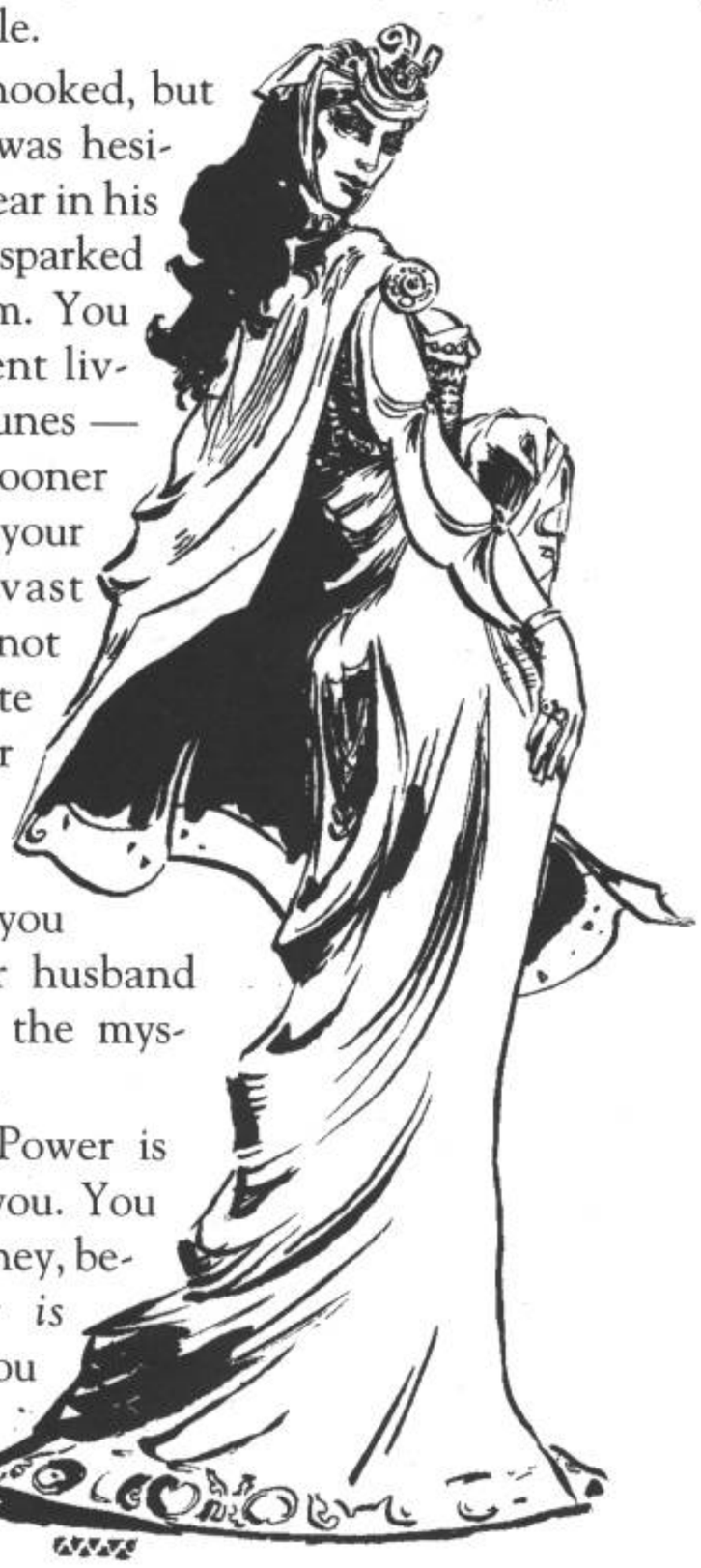
Experience

Mistress of Mystery

Quote: *Come, let me show you something that will change the way you see the world…*

Prelude: As a wife to a wealthy Venetian merchant, you had everything you wanted. Your family's name carried respect and status, not just in your city-state, but also across the Mediterranean. But in time, power and wealth were not enough and you started indulging. At first, it was with grand galas and masked balls, but these soon degenerated into orgies and feasts suitable for a Roman emperor.

During the daylight hours, you drove your husband to increase his fortunes. At night, you used these fortunes to sate your own desires. Money bought more than lovers, and soon you and your husband were moving in new circles. Here you met a secretive group of nobles and merchants who indulged not only in sex and murder, but also promised enlightenment and power beyond anything imaginable.



You were hooked, but your husband was hesitant. You saw fear in his eyes and this sparked loathing of him. You were not content living off his fortunes — you knew that sooner or later even your husband's vast wealth would not be enough to sate your desires for power and prestige. You agreed to join; you sacrificed your husband and embraced the mystery of Malkav.

Concept: Power is everything to you. You married for money, because money *is* power when you don't have a fancy title in your name. You manipulated your husband to increase your fortune and bent him to your will. When he objected to your decadent ways, you chastised him and lured him with sex and indulgences. When this wasn't enough, you killed him. You accepted the Embrace because the cult offered more than unlife, it offered power.

Roleplaying Hints: You're not mad, really, and this is what makes you such a deadly manipulator. Everyone has his or her use. Trust is nothing more than naïveté and ignorance, love nothing more than blindness. You would've made a cunning Lasombra, but fate brought you to Malkav and his cults. You resent this somewhat and there are times when you curse your Malkavian blood. You know, however, that madness is a tool — a tool that brings others to their knees.

Equipment: Expensive clothes, Medallion of the Ordo Aenigmatis, personal attendants, villa in Venice

Vampire: The Dark Ages

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Autocrat
Demeanor: Gallant
Clan: Malkavian

Generation: 10th
Haven:
Concept: Mistress of Madness

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Acting	●●○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Academics	●○○○○
Alertness	●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Empathy	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Music	●○○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Ride	○○○○○	Politics	●●○○○
Leadership	●●○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●●●	Survival	○○○○○	Seneschal	●●○○○

Advantages

Disciplines		Backgrounds		Virtues	
Auspex	●○○○○	Allies	●○○○○	Conscience/~~Conviction~~	●●●○○
Dementation	●●●○○	Contacts	●●○○○	Self-Control/~~Instinct~~	●●●○○
	○○○○○	Generation	●●○○○	Courage	●●●●○
	○○○○○	Herd	●●○○○		
	○○○○○	Resources	●●●●○		

Other Traits

Derangement: ○○○○○○
Megalomania ○○○○○○
○○○○○○
○○○○○○
○○○○○○

Road

Humanity ●●●●●●○○○○

Willpower

●●●●○○○○○○

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Blood Pool

□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		□
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□

Experience

Oracle of Madness

Quote: *We* have *met before, this much I am sure of...*

Prelude: Of your past you remember nothing, not your childhood, not your Embrace — nothing. Your memories only stretch as far back as the last five years, but even of those you are not sure. For all intents and purposes, you were born to madness and the Blood — and this even unnerves other Malkavians.

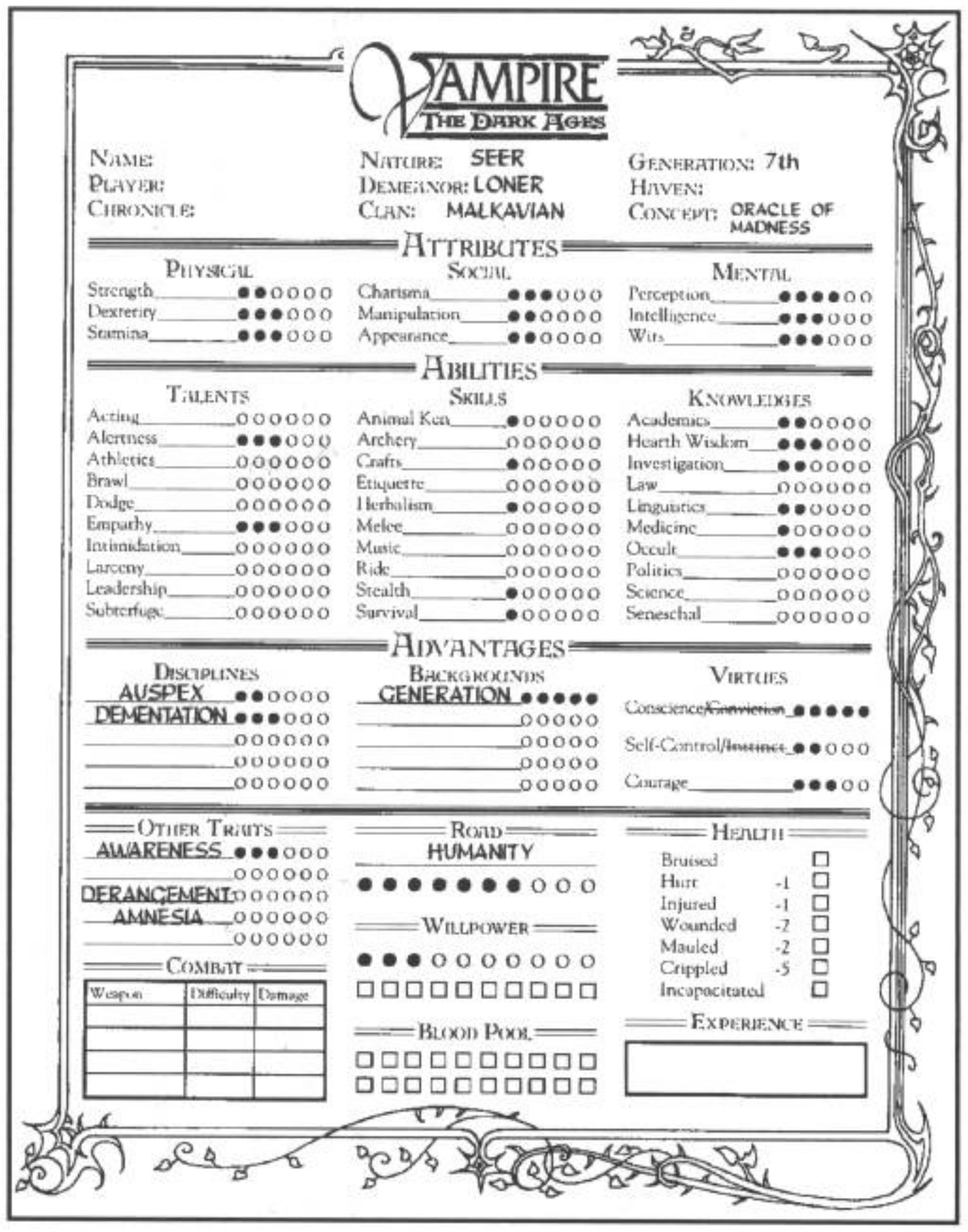
As if your amnesia was not enough, you also suffer from visions — usually terrifying and disturbing. They do not come through a haze of symbols and dreams, it's rather like you're seeing through another's eyes. You hear words like Nod and Enoch, but these seem strange to you. Yet these visions, no matter how unsettling, are your only past and you cherish them — they are all you have to hold on to. That other Cainites fear you because of them means little to you.

You have existed almost in a blessed state. You can do no wrong and no wrong can be done against you. Even when other Cainites, fearful of you, have tried to destroy you, chance and luck intervened and spared you. It is almost as if someone, or something, is watching over you — protecting you.

Concept: You are a nexus and an oracle of madness. Your delirium doesn't seem to torment you like other Malkavians. It's almost as if it is a benevolent force that has attuned you with mysteries both mortal and Cainite in origin.

Roleplaying Hints: You understand the subtle currents that nobody else can see. You don't question your madness but do seek to understand it. Your great hope is that once you unlock it, you will remember. But there's a part of you, hidden deep inside, that fears just what you'll remember.

Equipment: Traveling clothes, thick woolen cloak, a broach with a cracked mirror (you don't remember who gave it to you, or when)



Of Historical Note
— Malkav's Mystery

Budapest, January 9th, 2001

Jan,

I hope the nights are treating you well, my old friend. It has been too long since we've spoken, but I have been aware of your rise in recent nights — a shining star for a new millennium. The Camarilla can only benefit from your actions and foresight. There is an infectious madness in these nights, but only visionaries like yourself can help us see past the hysteria and apocalyptic nonsense.

I know you are actively seeking and destroying any fragments of our history that spread falsehoods and fears. This is why I am entrusting the attached scroll and its translation to you. I trust you will know what to do with it, and that I don't have to underscore its damning potential if that accursed fool, Aristotle de Laurent, were to lay his hands on it.

I know you don't pay any credence to rumors and legends, Jan, but take it from someone who has lived through the darkness of the past; true or not, myths and superstitions do carry power. Take heed my friend, your grandsire was wise enough to listen to me, and I trust you shall be as well.

Yours in Blood,

Vencel Rikard

V. Rikard

And there came a time when Malkav, seer of Caine, stopped receiving visions.
His eyes went dark and could no longer foretell fortunes.
Even his companion, gentle Saulot, could not comfort him.
Doubt consumed him and he left Enoch,
Left his brothers and sisters,
Left his father's city and left in search of Caine.
For many a long night, he was alone.
He would not feed because he needed to know why;
He would lay restless during the day because he no longer saw angels;
His doubt blinded him, his existence a cage.
He asked the One Above to guide him, and like Caine before,
He sacrificed what was dear to him — his vision.
This is how Malkav, blind, came upon Caine.
In the shadows of a sycamore, Malkav spoke to his Father,
Because God no longer spoke to him.
There, in the night, Malkav asked a simple question of Caine,
A question he needed answered to better understand his curse,
And His silence.
Malkav asked Caine, "Why?"
"Why did you cast your brother's blood to sand?"
"Why did you cast yourself to darkness?"
"Why did you refuse forgiveness when it was offered?"
"Why did you condemn us, and our children, and their children's children, to betray one another until the Final Nights?
"Why were you blind to the love of God and your brother?"
And with each question, Caine's anger grew and swelled.
Not because of Malkav's disrespect, or his doubt in him,
Progenitor of his Race, God and Father to them all,
But because Caine himself did not know.
In Malkav's face, Caine saw Abel and could say nothing.
He no longer remembered:
The love that cursed him to darkness;
The words of God before his banishment;
His brother's voice;
Were all forgotten.
He knew that this misery would last until the End of Days,
And this angered him.
Then Caine said to Malkav:
"I do not know, Seer, and nor shall you,
And like my brother feared me, your brothers shall fear you,
Your visions, and your burning questions. I condemn you to silence,
The silence of madness so that you, like I, will be forever alone in doubt."
This is how Malkav was destined to madness, crushed by doubt,
And so he waits until Gehenna to ask Caine once more — "Why?"

The blood of Caine grants some power and beauty, but it brings others down into the shadows and pits. Their minds shatter, their bodies wither and their souls rot. But with the curse comes power, and in the depths of the night lie the greatest secrets. High-born princes dismiss the lesser clans as beneath their notice, but pay the price for such hubris.

Libellus Sanguinis IV: Thieves in the Night includes:

- Full coverage of three clans for the Dark Ages: the Malkavians, Nosferatu and Ravnos;
- New Discipline powers, Merits and Flaws, and other traits specific to the three clans;
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