Kickstarter Manuscript

Compiled Previews

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# Just Another Family Dinner

*By Eddy Webb*

Moonlight pours through the stained-glass windows of a remodeled Gothic church, and in its basement, the dead dine with family. From a small table off in the corner, I watch a thin, almost emaciated woman with steel hair and pale eyes stand from one end of a ridiculously long table. Anja Giovanni raises her wine glass of treated blood to the assembled. I swirl around the thickening blood in my own glass, half-listening to her speech. Something about gathering the Clan of Death, embarking on new beginnings, the usual horseshit. I tune in just as I sense she's wrapping up. "For we are all Hecata, now. We are all family."

She nods to the Japanese man at the other end of the table, who also stands up. Hiromitsu Asano has a twig pinned to a jacket that's worth more than I make in a year. He thanks her and raises his glass in return. Everyone else raises their glass, too. The whole room smells like a hospital dump: nothing but coppery blood and dead bodies. The gazillions of flower place-settings just add a layer of fragrant death over everything.

The fat, sweaty-looking man in a rumpled suit sitting next to me has been trying to catch my eye for half an hour now. Clearly annoyed that I didn't raise my glass for the toast, he reaches over and taps his glass against mine. "There. Now you're being social."

I take a sip of the blood. "Didn't come here to be social."

"Tough." He shoves a hand out to me. "Tony Ambrose. Of the Puttanesca."

I sigh and take it. It feels clammy and soft, like a fish a day past its sell-by date. "Maria. Of the Pisanob, I guess."

He raises an eyebrow at that. "Pisanob? Ain't many of yours around anymore."

I bite back yet another profanity and close my eyes.

*I watched the flames lick the sides of my sire's haven. I didn't get the call fast enough, I didn't drive fast enough, I wasn't fast enough to stop it. I fell to my knees, tears rolling down my face. And all I could hear in my head was him chiding me, like he did during my first ceremony lessons.*

*"Don't cry, little Maria," he would say. I could remember how he always smelled of sandalwood and copper. "Death comes to us all, even the immortals. One day I, too, shall cross the Shroud and join both those we have lost and those we have enslaved. You can't become a necromancer if you cry over every single death."*

*I wiped my arm across my eyes, and blood smeared on my sleeve. In the corner of my eye I could see a man who was also watching the blaze. He put his cell phone away and got back into his large sedan. He was a fat, sweaty man in a rumpled suit. He didn't look at me as he drove away.*

"Hey, you listening to me?" Tony's voice cuts through my reverie. "I asked you what happened to all of youse."

**[EDITOR NOTE: "YOUSE" IS INTENTIONAL.]**

I open my eyes and turn to stare at him — the first time I've looked at him all evening. "Most of us were murdered." He leans back from my gaze, and I imagine what it would feel like to rip his throat out with my teeth.

I feel a hand touch my shoulder, gently. "Leave him be," she says. "It's not nice to play with your food."

I turn back to look at her. Berlin smiles at me, like she always does when she knows I'm about to punch someone. Her green eyes twinkle with mischief, like they always do. We've only been seeing each other for a few weeks, but she's always telling me that I've gotten under her skin, in the best possible way. I nod, and she drops her hand to my knee. Her fingers feel cool through my stockings as she points to the head table. "Besides, Mora the Death Seer is up to something."

I follow the line of her finger, and see a delicate person dressed in a draping black sweater stand up. Their back is to our table, and they speak softly, but their voice carries through the room. They talk about Augustus Giovanni's plans to murder the Cappadocians, and how they've killed many Giovanni in retaliation. They just manage to avoid making it sound like a boast or a threat before they offer their condolences to Asano for his losses. He murmurs something nice in return.

Berlin clicks her tongue against her teeth. "Damn, Mora must have practiced that apology for a week. Imagine having to kiss Giovanni ass after everything done to them."

I take a sip from the glass before pointing it at Berlin's face. "You're just mad they're not kissing your Giovanni ass."

"Damn straight," she laughs. "My ass is much nicer than his."

*"Nice ass," I said, as I watched her walk down the hallway.*

*She looked over her shoulder and smiled. "You know it. Have we met?"*

*I shook my head and walked to her as she turned around. "Maria Ibarra. A cousin."*

*"Berlin Giovanni." I clasped her hand as she looked me up and down. "A cousin, huh? Not a kissing cousin by chance?"*

*"Kissing? No." I leaned over and put my lips next to her ear. "I'm thinking of something much, much better."*

*She shivered then. The same shiver she had later, tied down to the bed, when she was begging for my tongue.*

I smile, but I'm not looking at her. Instead I'm watching as Asano walks over to Mora, who's pulled a cylinder wrapped in pale blue silk out of the folds of their sweater. The two vampires are going through some tiresome ritual where Mora offers the gift and Asano refuses it, then he pulls out a small wooden box from his jacket and the roles are reversed as the two of them go through it all over again.

The man sitting across the table from me sighs and turns back to face us. The moonlight from the stained glass glints off the polished ebony of his mask. "I have always found these pleasantries to be tiresome. They detract from my studies." He carefully adjusts his tattered brown robes around his frail form, and carefully lifts the edge of his mask up so that he can sip from his wine glass.

“I’m surprised this pulled you away from your studies, Zebadiah.” Berlin has reluctantly pulled her hand off my knee and leans forward on the table, her elbows resting on either side of the barren plate in front of her. “I figured you would still be in mourning for the loss of your childe, Elias.”

Zebadiah carefully pulls the mask back over his face. “We are the Clan of Death. To mourn those that have died seems… pointless.”

Tony has, unfortunately, decided to join in the conversation. “Pointless? Don’t know about that, Zeb. If I—”

“Zebadiah.”

Tony is distracted by the sudden interruption. “Huh?”

The cool, flat voice comes from the mask again, faintly muffled and hollow. “My name is Zebadiah. Not ‘Zeb’.”

“Sure, that’s what I said. Zebadiah. And if I had a childe that was tore up like that, I wouldn’t be mourning. I’d be out hunting the bastard that did it.”

“Would you? I suppose that makes a degree of sense. But I am simply… what is the word?”

Berlin leans back again. “Upset?”

Tony knocks back the rest of his glass. “Fucking furious, more like.”

“Jealous. Yes, that’s the word. He died in such a creative way. I hope I get to experience that some night.”

*The pale man never said a word when I nailed his hands to the wooden top of the table. Nor his feet. But when I pulled his mask off, he started screaming like he was on fire. “Please! Please! Give me back my face! I am Elias of the Harbingers, and you must* give me back my face!*”*

*I leaned over him and gave him a smile. I made sure he could see the blowtorch under the spoon, which had started to glow from the heat. “Here’s what I’m going to do, Elias. If you don’t answer my questions, I’m going to scoop out your eyes. If you do, you get to keep them.”*

*Those same eyes, dark and terrified, stared at me. “And then you’ll let me go?”*

*I set the blowtorch next to his hand, which was starting to ooze thick, coagulated blood. “Let’s not go crazy now. But first things first. The Harbingers are hunting down the Pisanob. Correct?”*

*He closed his eyes. I jammed a finger in one of them, and they snapped back open. I waved the cooling spoon in front of his face. “Correct?” I asked again.*

*“Yes! Yes! You know we are!”*

*“I do, because you tried to come after me, and you were sloppy. Honestly, I don’t know how you ancient fuckers managed to accomplish anything. But I’m not here to debate your failings as a family.” I moved onto the table surface, managing to sit right next to where his hand was nailed down. I picked up the blowtorch again and began reheating the spoon. “Next question. Who told the Putanesca where to find my sire’s haven?”*

*“I don’t—” The rest of his sentence was lost in the scream, as I plunged the white-hot spoon into his right eye. There was a soft pop and then a sizzling sound, as the vitreous fluid in his eye began to boil.*

*I gave him a minute to calm down before I spoke. “I told you, I need you to answer my questions. See, no one really gives a shit about the Pisanob except you Harbingers. And the Putanesca aren’t clever enough to hunt down one of us in our haven. But they are* just *dumb enough to take on a job for someone else if they think it will get them somewhere.” I slid off the table and moved to the other side, so he could see me with his remaining good eye. “I know your sire hired them. And don’t worry — he’ll get his. But I also know that you don’t get out of your crypts for a simple hit job. There was someone who arranged everything. Wasn’t there?”*

*He cried a bit. I slapped him in the face with the blowtorch. “Wasn’t. There.”*

*“Yes… yes, there was a… a Giovanni that my sire knows. Someone who wants to take out the competition in her family.”*

My thoughts are interrupted as a crowd of mortals start to mill into the dinner area. They’re all dressed in white clothing, but otherwise there’s nothing linking them together. A wide variety of ages, genders, sizes, what have you. Some carry carafes of blood and start refilling glasses. Others start to carefully put food onto the places — small bones stuck into carefully sliced raw meat, also covered in blood. Tony waves off the meat and looks a little green around the gills as he looks at it. Zebadiah nods once at the server filling his plate. Berlin just stares at me with a smirk on her face as she takes a sip from her newly filled glass. I can feel her foot running up the side of my leg.

As the servers continue to fill glasses and plates, Mora is chanting a prayer. “I am the end and the beginning. Dead flesh may cover my bones, and my bones may encase an unbeating heart, yet I remain….”

*I held the spoon close to Elias’ remaining eye. “Give me a name.”*

*He started to speak, like he wanted to negotiate. But he realized that I was going to kill him anyway. I could see his whole body relax a little, as he accepted the end.*

*“Berlin. Berlin Giovanni.”*

Mora’s voice rises in volume. “For I am Hecata. I am the beginning and the end. I remain.”

I turned and looked into Berlin’s beautiful eyes. I wonder what they taste like.

# Introduction

*"Welcome to the one family where 'motherfucker' isn't a pejorative."*

— Accorri Giovanni, giving a warm welcome to a fledgling Hecata

Faith, religious order, and cultish devotion hold places of incredible importance within Kindred society, and contrary to views spoken in Camarilla domains and Anarch baronies tonight, they always have. For every instance of fledglings murdering sires, Anarchs burning down the havens of Camarilla Princes, and cannibal vampires pursuing campaigns of diablerie, there are others who hold opposing views. These childer worship their sires due to the strength of the Blood Bond. These Kindred look up to their Princes due to the might the vampire in charge wields each night. These neonates revere their elders and the godlike methuselahs of their clan, just hoping for a trickle of that rich vitae, that it might allow them to become more like these deific figures.

Cults form as vampires look up to their elders. Sometimes, cults form as vampires look down at the mortals beneath them. Power becomes religion, religion exalts in power, and vampires are all about the value of power.

## Believe in the Blood

If you are a Storyteller or player who wishes to involve vampire religions, ceremonies, and worship in your chronicles, you will find a great deal of material in **Cults of the Blood Gods** to satisfy that need.

This book provides everything you require to run and play in chronicles within or branching away from the traditional Camarilla and Anarch setups, as characters take on fringe or established religions, gain benefits from following them, and attempt to balance morality on top of the demands these faiths place upon their believers.

**Cults of the Blood Gods** is the book you want for full detail on the state of the Hecata — the Clan of Death — and their necromantic powers. This clan is probably the largest singularly focused cult in the **World of Darkness**, unified against opposition, dedicated to its goals, and prepared to stand and die for its vampires. After all, when you're the Clan of Death, death is far from the end.

Whether you're an established or new Storyteller, the story and chronicle hooks found in this book will be sufficient to fuel dozens of **Vampire: The Masquerade** stories involving sacrifice, black magic, the strength of belief, and the monstrous, alien might of methuselahs as benefactors and enemies.

# A Place of Worship

The content in the following chapters of **Cults of the Blood Gods** invites you to explore the myriad Kindred faiths, religious orders, and darkest powers present in tonight's **Vampire: The Masquerade**. We invite you to take or adjust any of the material in this book, whether it be part of a belief system, a religious hierarchy, a character, or just a concept from one of the chapters, and make it your own. We encourage you to use this material as you see fit for **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

- **Introduction** — You are here. Now you just need to step through the door into these pages of sin, faith, dogma, and miracles.

- **Just Another Family Dinner** — Fiction to introduce you to the current state of the Clan of Death, and some of the activities they get up to around the dinner table.
- **Rise of the Methuselah Cult** — A chapter filled with in-character accounts of religion's rise to prominence in the modern nights, with accounts from several of the cults profiled in this book.
- **Kindred Religions** — A thick mix of religious orders of various sizes and influence levels, along with new powers new coterie types, and other new mechanics for adding to your games.
- **The Cult of Death and Undeath** — Welcome to the family known as the Hecata. This chapter introduces you to the history, current plots, and hierarchy of the Clan of Death, while also providing further coterie and Predator types for your chronicles.
- **Mortal Cults** — Not all cults are populated by vampires alone, with this chapter detailing some of the orders where vampires have set themselves up as gods to be worshiped, or mortals have pieced enough together to form faiths to combat the undead.
- **Cult Construction** — New uses for Backgrounds and rich detail on how to form cults in your own chronicles, with tables and advice on how to form religions, the methods cults use to indoctrinate their members, and the kinds of ambitions cults in your games might strive to attain.
- **Hecata and Oblivion** — This chapter provides the detail all players who want to play a member of the Hecata might need, with clan archetypes, introduction to the kinds of people the clan Embraces, and a bevy of Oblivion Discipline powers and Ceremonies.
- **Bloodlines and Loresheets** — The Hecata is a clan comprising multiple bloodlines, so this chapter breaks down how to use bloodlines in your chronicles and provides the Backgrounds for you to do so straight out of the book. The Loresheets that follow connect to the cults introduced throughout this book.
- **Styx and Bones** — A high-energy story set in Munich where you play members of the Hecata in pursuit of (or fleeing from) a creature of horror even to the Clan of Death. Ready-made characters and even more chronicle hooks await you once you're done reading the main story.

General Difficulties

Some minor characters in this book have what are referred to in their stat blocks as General Difficulties. These come in the form of two numbers divided by a stroke, such as 4/3 or 5/2. The first number is the Difficulty the players have to beat if ever opposing this character in an area in which they excel. The second number is the Difficulty whenever players oppose this SPC in an area in which they are mediocre or poor. For those who want to use Attributes and Skills to determine Difficulties, these characters also have stat blocks. For those who prefer a simpler method, the General Difficulties are there for you.

# Rise of the Methuselah Cult

*"The gods are cruel and capricious, and we acknowledge they shape our destinies. We should despise them. Yet, when you realize they may be the only creatures free from the puppet master's strings, we of course seek to worship them, serve them, and ultimately, emulate them."*

— Arjun Shah, Patre of the Cult of Mithras

For as long as there have been Kindred there have been those that worship the more powerful.

The modern nights are a tumultuous time for Kindred of all stripes, from Camarilla to Anarch to those in between. Oftentimes, the nights are uncertain. Long-standing bastions of Kindred society have been shaken. The Tower leans. The Pyramid crumbles. The Anarchs… are Anarchs. Those set adrift on these tides of change are drawn to beings of power, to collections of stability, to any calm in the storm.

Given the current state of things, the swell of ancestor worship should come as no surprise. It is easy to see creatures such as Mithras, who is said to have been able to enthrall entire cities, as divine and worthy of worship. Legends of these methuselahs, stories of these veritable gods of blood, are passed around in whispered tones on every stratum of Kindred society, in every generation. There are those who even claim to have met them, and they are the most zealous of all.

Cults centered around these creatures dating as far back as the Second City rise to the fore with the desecularization of the Camarilla. These are old faiths that speak to the blood as much as they speak to the spirit. Some have survived largely unchanged. Some shift in order to appeal more to the young vampires populating the cities. All fight for the attention of those that walk the night.

Some of these cults and faiths claim to have the Cainite's best interest at heart, some simply prey on the weak-willed the same way similar groups of kine would, but all of them should be known to a wise vampire seeking to survive this new and horrific landscape.

**[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]**

# The Justicars Speak

*The following was transcribed from a mnemonic recording of a meeting of the Camarilla Justicars*

**[BEGINNING OF RECOVERED SECTION]**

**Ian Carfax:** …and this rising of faith is most disconcerting. More and more of our young are turning toward the esoteric in these troubled times. We are losing our hold on our message and it's being replaced by messages of worship, prostration, and faith.

**Diana Iadanza:** The Ministry must be having a field day.

**Ian Carfax:** Look, we are dealing with the fallout of our rightful choice to no longer extend our protection to the Anarchs, pulling back on the use of technology…

**Diana Iadanza:** And whose fault is that, hmm?

**Ian Carfax:** …and by doing so strengthening our Masquerade. Not to mention the Anarchs are filling the power vacuum left by the Sabbat. Along with that, the Ministry, or whatever they're calling themselves now, turning Anarch, and a handful of our number getting caught in the Paris bombings. We've lost domains to this so-called "Second Inquisition" and there is even talk of a new death cult forming. Reports are unclear. Might just be the Giovanni acting up again. The Promise is close to ending…

**Diana Iadanza:** Yes! Fine, alright. We get it. Must you whine on? We are all aware of the shifting sands. One thing at a time. The question is what do we do about these new faiths rising up?

**Ian Carfax:** Many of them aren't exactly new, are they? Some have been around for quite some time in the shadows. It's an even greater indicator that we are losing our hold. The Ministry will leverage this, like they leverage everything. So many of our elders have been called away. Surely some of you feel it as well?

**[THERE IS A LONG PERIOD OF SILENCE]**

**Lucinde:** It is hard to deny the power of old blood. I can see how often they become objects of worship.

**Ian Carfax:** You sound like you might know something about that.

**Lucinde:** I've had dealings with the… Mithraists… the Cult of Mithras, yes.

**Ian Carfax:** Dealings. Yes. We are wasting time. What do we do about it? How do we stem this tide so we can deal with all of our other… challenges? We must be seen as the Tower we have always been, gleaming in the night.

**Lucinde:** We do nothing.

**Ian Carfax:** What? Lucinde, you must be…

**Lucinde:** Put out a call to the Archons. Tell them not to waste resources on stopping any religious gatherings should they not be working actively against the Traditions or the Camarilla. Put a moratorium on the collection of the *Book of Nod*, *Revelations of the Dark Mother*, and any other such documents that survived into these modern nights. We will not deny the existence of ancient ones, how can we now? But we will not support the idea either.

**Ian Carfax:** Explain.

**Diana Iadanza:** Can you not see it? We would run ourselves ragged trying to "stem this tide," as you say. But we will do as we have always done. We can use it, can't we, my dear Lucinde? We use these faiths, these little religions, as a mortar to help shore up the cracks in our beautiful Tower. Like Japanese Kintsukuroi.

**Lucinde:** Yes. I have seen first-hand how faith can bolster a domain. With enough influence over some of these faiths and cults, we may be able to fashion them into a cudgel to use against the Ministry. Perhaps we should look into the idea of adopting an "official religion" of the Camarilla in these coming nights. Use the kine's idea of separation of church and state but maintain a steady hand upon it. See it done. Now, we should discuss the situation in London…

**[RECORDING ENDS]**

**[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]**

# The Why and Way of Worship

*As written by Aditya Hay, Ventrue, former Seneschal of Edinburgh*

My childe, you've asked me why I worship? Why do I, every night, bend my knee in supplication to my Lord? Why do I cut my arm from fingertip to shoulder? Why do I starve myself each spring to the edge of frenzy? Why, when I supported the Toreador for centuries, did I deliver the throne of Edinburgh to de Camden without so much as a challenge? Because my unlife has meaning. My unlife has meaning through Mithras, my Lord. Our own God of War who Walks. Mithras who will come again.

There are so many who do not understand, so many like you, who simply float through their existence or fill it with political games or debauched excess. My Lord fills my existence with purpose. I am a part of a plan for his glorious return. I prepare for the coming war that will follow in his wake.

Meaning is rare and fleeting in this world, my childe. You must grasp it when you can, and mine was given to me only once I took it. I have a place. That place is now at the side of de Camden, the Voice of Mithras. London fell and he arrived. Who better to lead us than the one who stood at our Lord's right hand?

Every night and every season we prepare. We spill blood on grounds that were battlefields and may be again. We starve ourselves so we may fight our Beasts. We bend knee in supplication and understand there is an order to things. For what is a war without soldiers? What is a god without followers?

I have tried to instill in you an understanding of these things. Brought you to the mithraeum. Read for you the Roman texts. But I can see it's been for naught. These questions you ask of me tell me you have not absorbed the lessons. You have failed to find the meaning willful supplication can bring. So, I cast you out. Wander until the burning fires of war from within or without light your way home.

**[LAYOUT: THE BELOW IS A TYPEWRITTEN LETTER]**

## The Bull and the Blood and the Bone

Welcome to the Syndexioi. If you are reading this then you have been given all you need to prepare you for what is to come. You are being welcomed in Mithras' light. He, the Unconquered Sun. He, the right way.

Prepare.

The Bull. Bring its blood to the one who reveals Mithras' light to you. Thank them for revealing the way of the true Sun.

The Blood. Follow them to a place of battles past or battles to come. Pour the blood there along with your own vitality. Pray to Mithras for strength in the night.

The Bone. Be interred in stone in the mithraeum for seven days and seven nights. Remain in control and free yourself. Be born into the Church as Mithras was born into this world.

Welcome shall be yours.

Keep these secrets in your mind. Destroy this document.

Prepare.

**[/LETTER ENDS]**

**[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]**

# Time of Thin Blood

*A conversation between two Duskborn as recorded by Philipa Hernandez, Nosferatu of Lima, while testing her new parabolic microphone outside of a local resort club, Bella Luna*

**Duskborn 1:** I don't know about this. This place looks dangerous.

**Duskborn 2:** Trust me. We have to do this. What did we say when we found out what we were?

**Duskborn 1:** We said we'd survive, no matter what.

**Duskborn 2:** Exactly. I'm tired of living this half-life. Looked down on by the vampires of this city? Chased around and hunted? Eating rats and dogs and…

**Duskborn 1:** Don't! Don't remind me. I get it. And hush… Philipa told us not to use the V word out loud, remember. She was nice. Real messed up face, but nice.

**Duskborn 2:** She also told us this was the place to go if we wanted to be… how did she put it… if we wanted to be brought fully into the night. I want that.

**Duskborn 1:** If we could just… I don't know, find a cure? Pray it away? Can't we do that?

**Duskborn 2:** No, we can't. You heard her. That's impossible. God has turned his back on us. This is what we are now. We can already do some amazing things if we feed right. Philipa just appeared out of nowhere, literally. And she isn't even that, uh… thick-blooded. She said the power is in the blood and ours is thin. Look at what we can do, even as so-called "Duskborn." Imagine what an elder can do? What they could teach us? You trust her, right?

**Duskborn 1:** I mean, I guess. She has shown us the ropes a bit. Told us where to stay away from. Got us some rats.

**Duskborn 2:** Don't forget we would have been dead if she hadn't stopped those men. I see no reason to stop trusting her now. It's a shame she got called away like that though, but it was good of her to tell us about this place before she left.

**Duskborn 1:** So, what, we just walk in and introduce ourselves? Is there a secret handshake?

**Giuliana:** There is no need—

**Duskborn 2:** My God!

**Giuliana:** —for that my young friends. I am Giuliana Santisteban and you are most welcome at Luna Roja. [Laughs] I apologize for the dramatics. It's a weakness of my line. Philipa told me you were coming. Why don't you come inside? I have much to tell you and much to teach you, I suspect.

**Duskborn 1:** It's… it's a pleasure. You know Philipa? Do you know where she is?

**Giuliana:** Sadly, I do not. But I'm sure she will be glad to hear from you when she returns. I understand you are looking for elders to teach you. To bring you into the night. I believe I can

provide. Now, let us not stand out here, exposed in the open. Come inside and let me tell you of what I know. Let me tell you of the Children of Si.

**[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]**

# Brother Sweetwater Speaks

*A sermon as given by Brother Sweetwater, clan unknown, to his congregation*

I say to you, my dear sisters, brothers, and all others, Gehenna is here. Gehenna has come and reigns over us as certain as I stand before you! Our elders vanish in droves! Swords have broken! We have failed! We have been left behind by the dark rapture! The end is here, creeping and silent and terrible!

We cannot fight. We see this now. Dreams of the past must die and we must face a burning future. I hear you crying. I do, I do! I tell you these things not to frighten you. No, no. I am here to offer words of comfort and joy. I have seen light. I have seen truth. And I am here to share it with you.

I tell you, we must forge our broken sword into a plowshare. Let us make peace with our oppressors. Only through worship may they be appeased! We must prostrate ourselves before the Christ that is Caine. Only He may beseech his children on our behalf! He speaks through the blood. Through the blood we are bound. Speak to him and we speak to them!

The more we resist, the more conflict we create. Let us not follow those who war. The way to salvation is submission my dear congregation. It is through the light of this submission we will find our way through the End Times. Now… let us pray.

**[LAYOUT: PLEASE HAVE THIS AS A HANDWRITTEN PRAYER SHEET]**

## A Cainite Hymnal

Caine has come, Caine has risen, Caine will come again.

Caine, our Dark Father, whisper to your children.

Caine, our Dark Father, tell them words of peace.

Caine, our Dark Father, sate their lust for blood.

Caine, our Dark Father, keep us from the flood.

We call on the name of Zillah.

We call on the name of Irad.

We call on the name of Enoch.

Speak to your sire on our behalf.

Lead us through Gehenna. Lead us to peace.

**[/PRAYER SHEET ENDS]**

# Protect the Flock

*The following is a leaked transcript from Blacksite 34, location unknown, somehow obtained by Molly MacDonald, Nosferatu Justicar*

Location — Blacksite 34 “The Cage”

Clearance Level — Crimson

Involved Agencies — [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]

Interrogation Lead — Gwen Zhang

Interrogation Support — Harold “Doc” MacElroy

Observation Theater:

Witness — [REDACTED]

Witness — [REDACTED]

Witness — [REDACTED]

Subject — Kit “Patches” Esposito, Designation — Blankbody, Subject 23

*[Loud and tortured sobbing can be heard on the recording. Requisition of directional microphones placed.]*

[REDACTED] — Please state your name, agency, and role for the record please. Loudly, please.

**Zhang:** Agent Gwen Zhang of the [REDACTED], onsite. Lead interrogator, Blacksite 34 “The Cage.”

**MacElroy:** Doctor Harold MacElroy, freelance, former [REDACTED], Interrogation Support and Autopsy.

*[Sobbing becomes a series of wails]*

**Zhang:** Let’s begin, Mr. Esposito. Tell me. How long have you been… dead, shall we say?

**Subject 23:** Who… who the fuck are you people? What did you do with Claire? Where the fuck am I?

**MacElroy:** Fascinating. Is that blood? I didn’t know blankbodies could cry. Do you suppose all of their fluids have been infected? Perhaps all of their fluids have been replaced by blood? Can they mimic intercourse?

**Zhang:** Focus MacElroy. [Zhang snaps twice] Shhh… shhh. It’s good to see you’ve calmed down. You injured quite a few of the agents bringing you in from that zoo. Did you know that?

**Subject 23:** I… I did?

**MacElroy:** Subject 23 seems to be expressing remorse. Their ability to mimic us is extraordinary.

**Zhang:** You did. Do you not remember? Allow me to remind you. Here. Take a look at these pictures. This is Agent Jemma Perkins. Not that you can tell. Half of her face is gone and the other half was chewed up. This here is Prishna Agar. He will most likely be on a liquid diet for the rest of his life... if he makes it. And this… this is Thomas Detrick.

**MacElroy:** Even the subject’s snot… mucus, sorry, seems to be made of blood.

**Subject 23:** Please put those away. Please…

**Zhang:** But I think you need to see this Mr. Esposito. Thomas was just in the wrong place at the wrong time it seems. The one you call Claire murdered him in the most brutal fashion. Look here, you can see how she ripped…

**Subject 23:** That's because you bastards opened fire on us! You made her lose her shit! You did this! We just… we just wanted to be free.

**MacElroy:** The subject is now convulsing with sobs, even though we suspect they do not need to breath. Reminder to send the information requisition to the Society… again. What would this be, Zhang? Three times? Four?

**Zhang:** Five. Now, Mr. Esposito, that's interesting. Lost control? That implies it's something you can't control. It's also interesting you feel like you're trapped. Why don't you elaborate? Does this have something to do with why you were at the zoo in the first place, killing those poor animals?

**Subject 23:** [Screams]

**MacElroy:** Zhang has stabbed the subject in the leg, repeatedly. This is my first time seeing the blankbody healing factor up close. The wounds seem to have no lasting effect, but there is a pain response? The nerves should be dead. Amazing.

**Zhang:** Mr. Esposito?

**Subject 23:** Stop it! Please stop it! I don't want… I don't want to lose myself again. I don't want to [growls] hurt anyone again.

**Zhang:** Tell me what you were doing at the zoo. Why were you killing those animals surrounded by those ridiculous candles? What makes you "lose yourself?" You killed so many people. Are you not responsible? Is it not your fault?

**Subject 23:** Claire and I… we… we aren't monsters. We don't want to be this way. I can still feel it in me. It wants me to kill you. Oh God, what have we done?

**Zhang:** Now we seem to be getting somewhere. What is in you, Mr. Esposito. We can help you.

**Subject 23:** She said it would work. Why didn't it work? Claire… I'm so sorry.

**MacElroy:** Maybe you should back off, Zhang. I don't... Look at... There is so much blood coming out of his face. They can even ugly cry.

**Zhang:** Keep focused. Mr. Esposito, so far, I have only used one knife. Hold this for me, will you?

**MacElroy:** Zhang has stabbed the subject in the leg and left the knife there.

**Zhang:** If you look over on this table, you'll see I have many more tools at my disposal.

**MacElroy:** Subject 23 seems… I suppose the right word would be "inconsolable."

**Subject 23:** She told us it would work! She said if we killed the beasts it would kill our beasts! We said the words! We did everything she asked us! [screams] We don't deserve this…

**Zhang:** Who are you talking about? Is there a third blankbody? Tell me. Tell me and we might let you see Claire again.

**Subject 23:** You don't understand! How could you understand? We just wanted to be like you! She told me it would make me like you!

**Zhang:** Who? Who are you talking about!

**MacElroy:** The subject has suddenly gone ridged and unfocused.

*[Recording compromised, distortion causes the voice of Subject 23 to fluctuate and occasionally sound feminine. Rush requisition of directional microphones placed.]*

**Subject 23:** I think you have asked enough questions of my lambs for one night, Gwen Zhang of Hong Kong.

**Zhang:** What is this? How do you know that?

**[REDACTED]:** What is happening? What is this?

**Subject 23:** Oh, I know so much about you, Gwen. For example, I know you are the secret wife of Cynthia Hong. I know you tell her you work in immigration, but she doesn't know what horrible things you've done. What would your parents think? Look at me Zhang. What would Cynthia think?

**MacElroy:** A… agent Zhang has fallen to her knees, staring at Subject 23.

**[REDACTED]:** We have been compromised! Lock down Interrogation Suite 3! Prepare for purge! Back up all recordings to Blacksite 34-B

**Subject 23:** You have been abandoned.

**MacElroy:** The… the subject is calm now. Almost serene. Zhang has started to weep.

**Subject 23:** And you Harold MacElroy. You named yourself "Doc," but do you know what they really call you? "Stitch." It's all you're good for after all. Do they know what you get up to in the morgue, "Stitch?" Now run. I curse you. Live with what you know, dream of it every night, and find no succor except among the dead.

**Subject 23:** You… you came for me?

**Subject 23:** Shhh… shhh. Of course I did my lamb. But it's time. It's time for release. You did well. My fire shall burn it out of you. I will free you as I promised.

**Subject 23:** What? You said I could be like them! I just want to be human! I don't want to be like this anymore!

**Subject 23:** And you won't be.

# Planting the Seed

*As written by "Joe," Gangrel bartender at The Wilder, Portland*

To She Who Tends the Garden, To My Sister, To My Savior, My Tremendous Pain In The Ass

I am trying to write this as best I can, I know how you love your poetry, but I'm no rose. Give me the thorns.

I told you I'd write when I got to where I was going, so here it is.

My garden grows. Since you kicked me the fuck out, I've made my own way. The words of Lilith echo in my head, are detailed on my skin, and etched on my heart. I guess I should thank

you enough for your final gift of, let's call it "guidance." As you suggested, I have set up shop here in Portland. I picked Northeast, where it seems the whole fucking city is fighting for its own soul. You'll be happy to know I've found myself the owner of a bar, the oldest bar in this damn town, in fact. Weirdly, the Prince was fine with me claiming this choice location. One of the Primogen suggested it would "be a good place to keep an eye on them all." Weird how that worked out? Don't suppose you had anything to do with that you meddling old biddy? Anyway, it's proving to be fertile ground as I "plant my seeds," as it were.

I admit I have a soft spot for the dregs, the Duskborn, the Caitiff, and those who find they have no place among either sect. But I think you already knew that when you suggested this place.

I gotta tell you, I'm shining here. It's like they were just looking for a place to be, the punks, the gutter-trash, the sad children, the lost. It's become quite the hangout and hunting ground. If you're new in town, everybody knows Joe will look out for you. I'm proud of that. It's pretty much a halfway house. I even cleared out some space in the back room for a promising Kindred (I know you hate that word. I don't give a shit) should the Dark Mother guide them my way, like you did for me.

I listen. Everyone talks to the bartender.

I don't coddle them, of course, but I love all these little turds in my way. As you told me countless times, pain is an excellent teacher. I'll take care of them whether they like it or not.

I learn about what they value and I trim or nurture as they need to help them lift the scales from their eyes. I've pruned more than a few who couldn't get a handle on their new existence. Tragic accidents, but it makes the rest rally around me, without even knowing it.

I'll beat 'em 'til they get it. Teach them like you taught me. Be the Maiden. Be the Mother. Be the Crone. But most importantly, just Be.

# Rotten to the Core

*A diary entry as written by Ken Higashiyama, Brujah member of the Rough Road, a Camarilla biker gang*

Look, if you're reading this or got your hand on this in some way, go fuck yourself for killing me. I hope I got a few good licks in. Welcome to my diary. I write this at the top of every entry in this doc, all off-line, of course. Part of the new low-tech directive from the top of the Tower. But I gotta put my damn thoughts somewhere. And that's here. Congrats to you, shitbird. You got me. Enjoy the reading. Oh, and just in case it wasn't clear. Fuck you.

Well holy shit. St. Louis is as fucked up as they say, but definitely not in the way they say it. We were expecting to ride into the biggest shit storm on God's green earth. We've all heard the stories, Sabbat and Camarilla fighting on the streets, all manner of shit stalking the night, the kine living it up during the day but turning most boroughs into a fucking ghost town at night except for the real well-lit places and the goddamn outskirts. Even heard about some Nosferatu disappearing. What with the Tower kicking out the Anarchs, we expected the Rough Road might take a trip from KC and throw our hat in with the Cam in the Lou. What we expected was a three-way war. What we got was way different.

We planned to roll into town by way of the I-70, easiest way in we heard, not much action in Columbia and St. Charles. We spend a few nights outside, just to fuel up, rest from the road. It ain't easy avoiding Lupes out there, ya know? We lost Frankie, but we didn't need him anyway.

We figured, we'd head through Northwoods, after our repast, figure out where in North Lou the heaviest fighting was taking place. Kill a few Anarchs, Sabbat, didn't matter. We'd present those heads to the Prince and Council, and wham bam, we're in. Simple. Easy for a crew like ours.

Now, we should have known something was off right in Northwoods. We were approached by a preacher. Like, a vampire preacher while we were at a dive bar hunting. Don't know how he found us or knew we were in town, but whatever. Seemed normal enough, for a guy dressed like a priest. We thought Sabbat, but nah. Nice guy. He started off the night right, chatting us up, telling us the Gateway City wasn't so bad no more. We gave him some shit about that. Everyone's heard the stories, right? We told him what we're here for, asked him where the fighting was fiercest and he starts talking about how "That's not the fight here anymore." Then launches into a speech about how Caine was Christ or some shit. We beat the blood out of him and left him in an alley. I'm sure he'll be fine.

So, we move on to North St. Louis and we start trying to stir up some shit. It takes a week and a half, but we finally find a fight, except it's not, like, between the Sabbat (can't even find those fuckers) and Cam like we were expecting. It's between two cults or churches. Members of two goddamn churches are fighting over a fucking graveyard. It was too weird. We just got the fuck out of there.

We spent a night just staring at the walls, then decided it had to be a one-off. It's fucking not. We have goddamn ridden all over this goddamn city, every fucking neighborhood, and that's what's going on. It's like, six or I don't know how many fucking churches or whatnot fighting for territory and worshipers. Don't get me wrong, the Tower *is* here and we did find *some* Sabbat, but it's almost like they aren't important in this town any more. I mean, I'm writing this from an Anarch bar in fucking Dutchtown where some ugly hipster is asking me if I've heard the good word of motherfucking Sutekh. So, shit's fucked up all around. I don't know what the fuck is going on here, but the face of the goddamn world is changing, man. Maybe I need to find a god too, huh? Seems to work for these fuckers.

**[LAYOUT: A LETTER]**

# Beauty is Divine Truth

My beloved childe,

Returning to our discussion concerning the existence of God, or "intelligent design" as your generation calls it, versus nature: have you considered that Darwinian evolution has no purpose for beauty? A bird with bright plumage stands out to predators. Weaving a delicate song requires time and energy better spent on catching worms. A bowerbird nest, viewed through a utilitarian lens, is sheer absurdity. Yet we see all these things in nature. Even if we allow, purely for the sake of our discussion, that these qualities are implausibly the most efficient way to attract a mate, there is no evolutionary reason why *we* would find them beautiful too. Yet the feathers of a peacock, and the song of a nightingale, bring such profound ecstasy it makes one weep. What is this if not a glimpse into Paradise; a gift from God Herself.

Which brings me to Michael, fallen Archangel and patriarch of Constantinople, or rather: to his childer. I shan't bore you with the tale of Constantinople and its egregious destruction. Either you already know it (and you should, my childe, or I must chide Miss Evers for being so lax in your training), or I hereby grant you permission to peruse my library for the history. Of importance to us is what happened after. From the ashes of Constantinople's Dream were born the Nephilim, the surviving childer and acolytes of Michael. Where lesser creatures might have decided that beauty and dreams bring no succor to the struggle of the night, and thus serve no purpose, the Nephilim recognized the opposite to be true. Existence is ephemeral. Nothing lasts. Nothing is safe. Within that insecurity, that forever looming destruction and despair, *beauty* is the only thing of true value.

The Nephilim pursue beauty in all their endeavors. Art and architecture, poetry and song, even the reshaping of their own bodies: all these pursuits with abandon, and with beauty as their highest goal. This is the way to paradise, the road left to us by God, and I intend to follow it. Yes, my beloved childe, you read that correctly: beauty calls, and I must leave you. But fear not: I have put my affairs in order and prepared your presentation to Prince Harami. I leave to you the mansion, town house, night club, and the contents of the safe which you'll find quite generous. I have also made arrangements to reward Miss Evers for her service, though it behooves you to thank her yourself. She will no longer be your governess once you are accepted into the Prince's court, but she can still make a powerful ally.

We must both spread our wings and fly now, my beloved childe. You to go forth from my shadow and become the force I always saw in you. Treat Prince Harami with respect and the occasional *slight* touch of rebellion, and you will keep him endlessly entertained. I myself will ascend the next rung on God's ladder. From kine to Kindred, and now from Kindred to Angel. Beauty, and only beauty, holds the key to apotheosis.

I hope one day you will join me in the ranks of the Nephilim and have squirreled away all the clues you need to follow the trail. For now, I bid thee well.

Forever your loving sire,

Antonius Di Amoran

Clan of the Rose

**[/LETTER ENDS]**

**[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]**

# Bed the Bones

*Transcript of meeting between Subject 1, Madrigal, and Subject 2, Surya. Date [REDACTED]. Observed by Agent Pink of the Milan cell. Our target remains the elder leech Nico. Agent's advice is to detain Surya for questioning.*

**Madrigal:** Bed the bones.

**Surya:** Excuse me?

**Madrigal:** The servitor that's been giving you problems. Remember your breathing days, you'd attune tarot cards to your will by carrying them in your purse and drawing a card a day? Or sleeping with your pendulum under your pillow? Same thing.

**Surya:** Ick. I'm not taking a bunch of withered old bones into my coffin.

**Madrigal:** It's that, or letting your sire know you're struggling. Wait — you sleep in a coffin?

**Surya:** I am all about style. And valid point about Nico, but still…. It doesn't strike me as hygienic; you know?

**Madrigal:** You literally drink blood. Those bones are more likely to catch something off you than vice versa.

**Surya:** Fair, but-

**Madrigal:** Nico.

**Surya:** Okay, I'll do it. For how long?

**Madrigal:** Seven nights. It's the number of completion.

**Surya:** And if it still doesn't work?

**Madrigal:** Well then I tell you about **bedding** the bones.

**[LAYOUT: SAME, BUT UNDERLAY THE VERY TOP OF THIS FOLLOWING TRANSCRIPT UNDERNEATH THE LAST PAGE OF THE PREVIOUS ONE]**

*Transcript of meeting between Subject 1, Madrigal, and Subject 2, Surya. Date [REDACTED]. Observed by Agent Pink of the Milan cell. Our target remains the elder vampire Nico, but this "mass" presents new opportunities. Agent now advises letting Surya remain at large and trailing her.*

**Surya:** Can I ask your opinion on something?

**Madrigal:** Opinion or advice?

**Surya:** Bit of both, I guess.

**Madrigal:** I like you, so I'll play you straight: you haven't repaid me for the last one yet. Sure you want to run up a debt?

**Surya:** Better you than someone else.

**Madrigal:** Oh honey. Ask for advice then, and don't say I didn't warn you.

**Surya:** So Roseline invited me to a mass. As a way of showing unity, she says. But — well I don't want to go. Firstly, fuck her for usurping my place in Nico's eyes. And second, she's creepy.

**Madrigal:** Creepy?

**Surya:** She literally has to staple her face together every evening, or chunks of her fall off. Plus this mass is just some weird superstitious vodou shit, and—

**Madrigal:** Vodou shit?

**Surya:** You know, it's just — like — chanting and sacrificing chickens, and stuff.

**Madrigal:** Have you ever been to a vodou mass?

**Surya:** Well, no, but—

**Madrigal:** Then I think you need to set your racism aside and go.

**Surya:** I am not racist!

**Madrigal:** You raise ghosts from their graves using necrotic blood, yet what Roseline does is superstitious shit? Good news though: now you know you're racist, and you can learn to do better.

**Surya:** You're a bitch.

**Madrigal:** A bitch you asked for advice.

**Surya:** Okay, fine. But even if Roseline wasn't an interloper, and her brand of necromancy isn't superstition, it's still a mass.

**Madrigal:** Yes.

**Surya:** Dedicated to this Baron of theirs.

**Madrigal:** Yes, I assumed that.

**Surya:** Don't you think that's a little offensive? Like, you can't just go around pretending to be a god.

**Madrigal:** Who says he's not?

**Surya:** What?

**Madrigal:** A god. Do you believe Christianity is the only true religion?

**Surya:** It's my religion.

**Madrigal:** Not what I asked. Is it the only true religion?

**Surya:** I don't know. I didn't come here to debate theology.

**Madrigal:** Then let me skip to the conclusion. Either he is the loa of the dead, which you have to admit is pretty fucking appropriate for a progenitor, or he's just a really old vampire pretending to be a god. In both cases, you're going to that mass.

**Surya:** But—

**Madrigal:** Do you want to be the girl who turned down a perfectly polite invitation toward integration, after Nico made it clear he was keen on that? Or the girl who refused a god? Or the girl who refused an ancient? Because if you don't go, you get to tick two out of three.

**Surya:** Shit.

**Madrigal:** Maybe you're right, and the Baron is a pretender. He will still crush you for not paying proper respect. Heck, Nico will crush you for making unwanted waves. So you get your petite little ass to that mass, you are nice to Roseline, and you worship the Baron like you would any other god — even if it's not your god. This is no different than bedding the bones — put your reservations aside, and just fucking do it. And honey? While you're at it, try to keep an open mind. It'll do you good.

**[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]**

# Hail Gorgo, Slayer of Men

Medusa was a heinous monster, a seductress who lured men to their stony deaths until a brave hero stepped forward to remove this female scourge from the land.

This is the story you likely heard, the lie passed down by men. The women of ancient Greece told it very differently.

Medusa's snake heads were a blessing, not a curse, from Athena to protect the Gorgon from ravenous men after Poseidon raped her. Even with this divine weapon and shield though, Medusa did not seek retribution or vengeance. Instead, she retreated quietly. Medusa wished only to be alone and to heal, but this was not a wish men would grant. They still came in ships, bringing sword and fire, intent on taking her as a trophy. Athena's gift brought them all death. Until Perseus, the last man in a long line of abusers — and he, finally, killed Medusa for daring not to submit.

The life of Medusa ended there, though her story was passed down from mother to daughter. Men warped it into a cautionary tale: submit, or be a monster worthy only of death. We know better though. We also know Medusa was not the last of the Gorgons. She had two older, immortal sisters.

The Gorgon of *this* story is not as kindly as her younger sister. She is not content to retreat into a cave and heal in solitude. Gorgo laughs as she grinds oppressors under her heel, and scatters their ashes to the wind. She laughs as she topples the Ivory Tower, and breaks the Sword of Caine. She laughs as the age of men draws to a close. Only when the work is done, does Gorgo allow herself to mourn her sister and all others struck down by the kyriarchy.

*Hail Gorgo, Slayer of Men.*

We are the Daughters of Gorgo, and we are already among you. We know your secrets. We know where you sleep. Warwick, Pascek, de Guy, Mysancta: they all fell to our righteous fury, and now we are coming for you.

**The Six Truths of Gorgo**

If you mistreat your childer, or Embraced without their consent or forgiveness — fear us, for we are myriad and coming for you.

If you use the Bonds of Blood to rule as a tyrant — fear us, for the Blood of Gorgo breaks all chains, and we are coming for you.

If you are an elder in the Ivory Tower or the Pyramid — fear us, for Gorgo owes allegiance to no one, and we are coming for you.

If you are alone and cast out — join us, for we are all sisters among the downtrodden.

If you are wronged — join us, for we will not rest until your abuser is ashes on the wind.

If you desire freedom — join us, for we ask no less of you than to break all that binds you.

**[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]**

## On a Mission for the Goddess

*Transcript of meeting, taken for posterity by Tamil Gorgonsdottir. Secured against unsanctioned reading by the Rite of Stone Eyes. All hail Gorgon, her name be hallowed!*

**Jamina:** Where to next? Is Chicago ready?

**Tamil:** The pack in Chicago is still collecting intel. For now, I suggest Bogotá, Colombia — we have a potential new recruit there.

**Jamina:** Damn, that's a ways away. Are we flying or road tripping?

**Tamil:** Road trip for sure. I have more targets lined up in Medellín and Manizales.

**Jamina:** Sounds good. Tell me about the Bogotá recruit?

**Tamil:** They're a Blue Blood. Embraced for their knowledge of computers, with hacking side skills, so that's great. Didn't get along with their sire, but he went "mysteriously" missing in a recent SI raid. Turns out grandsire is even more of a jerk though.

**Jamina:** I love hackers — so useful. Who's the grandsire?

**Tamil:** That'd be Lady Ezrella Di Morti. Some high-up from the local Blue Bloods.

**Jamina:** This just keeps getting better. Do we have all the info we need on her?

**Tamil:** Courtesy of our new prospect.

**Jamina:** Perfect. Speaking of the prospect though — they get that breaking "all that binds you" means *all*? No killing grandsire and then sticking around to rise in the ranks of the Camarilla.

**Tamil:** They understand, and welcome that. They're indigenous, of the Muisca people. Majored in Environmental Studies at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, with minors in Gender Studies and Political Science. Embraced by a colonial Blue Blood to serve as glorified digital adapter. They are ready to burn the whole thing down.

**Jamina:** Amen to that. They also understand that Gorgo is real?

**Tamil:** Real as in ancient Cainite, yes. Real as in the actual Goddess Stheno — not quite there yet. But honestly, I did not believe that until my initiation. I bet my pretty parts they'll come around.

**Jamina:** Fair. Do we have packs in place for all our targets?

**Tamil:** Medellín is a two-girl job — target goes to bed early, and his haven is badly secured. I honestly think he was relying on secrecy to keep him safe. Q's crew is meeting us in Manizales, as that job looks to be tougher, and they'll ride with us to Bogotá.

**Jamina:** Perfect. I'll go prepare. Meet back tomorrow night. All hail our Lady Gorgo.

**Tamil:** Blessed is Gorgo.

**[/TRANSCRIPT]**

# The Seeker and the Moon

*From the lost and found Diary of Kalini, Seeker of Golconda, entry for the twenty-fifth week*

The local Kindred have not approached me yet, but I can sense them watching me. Let them — it's not them I seek. I have come for the Children of the Moon, Los Hijos de Si, who are said to possess the last secret of Golconda. This is what I seek — throwing off the shackles of Caine's Curse, a new birth, and transcendence.

Moonlight soaks Lima. I can feel Her, the one locals call Si, seeping through my flesh and into my blood. Not the hard light of the sun, but a gentler touch preparing me for Transcendence. I requested a meeting with her High Priestess, a Kindred named Illari. I have not clearly

ascertained her clan — she is by all public accounts a Leper. Mine is not the place to judge this, nor does it matter — we are all the same as we endeavor to Golconda.

*From the lost and found Diary of Kalini, Seeker of Golconda, entry for the twenty-sixth week*

Illari granted my request for a meeting, and her presence lifted me. We spoke at length, the high priestess asking many questions about my time with the Inconnu, and answering my own questions in return. I felt the sun rise and set again as we spoke, but neither its burning rays nor sleeping balm touched us in the caves where Los Hijos de Si dwell.

Los Hijos worship both Si, a local moon goddess, as well as creatures they call Machukuna. I believe they are vampires of sorts, but possibly not descended from the Dark Father. Both Si and the Machukuna are needed to complete the journey, and this in turn is more than a Transcendence of Self. The Children of the Moon believe this age will end, and the next Pachakuti will turn the cycle to a world of eternal moonlight where, away from the baleful sun, the Machukuna and Los Hijos de Si will live in harmony.

It's a wide-reaching vision, and one I never dreamed of. But the path seems clear now that I see it — which, of course, is true of all steps of the journey. Self and World are both manifestations of will — transcending one transforms the other. This is why the moon shines so powerfully in Lima. The Machukuna light the path, and Los Hijos walk it — and as they do, they transform themselves *and* the land. We will leave the Curse of Caine, and our transcendence lifts Lima up from this world into the next.

The king is the land. The Machukuna are the path. The seeker walking the path *is* the journey. Everything is connected, parts of one greater and radiant whole. Illari promised to take me to the Machukuna, to initiate me further into their teachings. My eyes are open. The path is clear. My journey nears completion.

**[LAYOUT: EMAIL]**

# Trickle-Up Religion

**From:** marianargh@sunburst.org

**To:** sofia3x@redq.net

**Subject:** Cult of Shalim

Beloved Sister,

I looked into the Cult of Shalim, as you asked. Most acolytes dutifully spread the cult's wonderful nihilistic message of suffering, but I found one dissenting voice — I attached their exposé now, and will sort and send the rest of my findings later. I made an effort to track the dissenter, but they seem to have gone missing shortly after writing this. I don't know if that is the cult's doing, or one of the other people they maligned.

I will telephone you an hour after your usual waking time. That gives us enough time before I'm off to sleep to discuss your repayment of my efforts.

Affectionately yours,

Marian

**[/EMAIL]**

**[LAYOUT: TYPED WORD DOC]**

# Beware False Religions

In a letter to his wife in 1938, L. Ron Hubbard wrote: “You don't get rich writing science fiction. If you want to get rich, you start a religion.” He did, and he was right. Such a grand pyramid scheme — nothing but money and pussy all the way out to sea. Take a look at any modern religion, and you can see money flowing up. Scams, the lot of them.

But you tell me our religions are true? Pull the other one.

Mithra was a Persian deity. A SUN god. Yet somehow he ended up as one of us? Either we believe the Mithraists’ tale about Mithra walking the world in corporeal form when an ancient overpowered and turned him — or we go for the simpler explanation. Someone saw a good opportunity to be heralded as a god, took the trappings of Mithra, added an *s* to his new name so it wouldn’t be too blatant, and waited. Another scam, just like Scientology, and it fucking worked. Seven steps to the Sun in the cult of Mithras (what, is that supposed to be a secret?) while servitude flows up, and commands flow down.

Or take the Cult of Shalim, if you will. They destroy anything that holds value, ruin your existence, and then propose *they* have the answer to your suffering. Piss on someone, then turn around to sell them an umbrella. “Reality is suffering” the Shalimites say. Sure it is, after they bend over backwards to make it so. And once the target buys into that story, they have to do the same to others. Ruin more lives, preach more false answers, recruit more acolytes. Another fucking pyramid scheme. Who benefits? The person at the top, whoever this Shalim is.

By which I mean to say: Do. Not. Fall. For. It.

Our kind’s inclination toward religion is no different than any mortal’s. Indulge if it comforts you. Pray if you believe any god is listening. But enlightenment flows down — it is a gift from the Universe to You. If resources are flowing up, be they money or labor, it’s not a religion but a pyramid scheme. Run as far as your little legs can carry you, and do not look back.

**[/WORD DOC ENDS]**

**[TRANSCRIPT]**

# The Lord of the Red Desert

*From the collected teachings of Wise Neferneferu to their pupil Ahmose*

**Neferneferu:** We have many desert flowers to choose from this year. Perhaps we can finally find you a sister.

**Ahmose:** Thank you, sire, I would welcome a sibling. I too noticed an upward trend of acolytes. What do you think caused it?

**Neferneferu:** The time of the Tyrant Priest of Rome draws to an end. People are returning to the gods of old. Our Lord included.

**Ahmose:** True. Do you think it will last?

**Neferneferu:** Nothing lasts. Even in the Old Kingdom, our Lord waxed and waned in popularity. But this does not matter — He is true, and people always return to truth eventually.

**Ahmose:** Why now though? Do you think it ties into the rumored awakening of the ancients?

**Neferneferu:** For the children of the Storm Father, certainly. The ancients proved themselves real, and our Lord at least rewards His faithful. We are servants in His army, soldiers and generals alike, rather than lambs to sate an ancient's appetite. Many children of the Aeons seek to abandon their false and tyrannical masters, in favor of our Lord's magnanimity.

**Ahmose:** And kine? Why so many new adherents among them?

**Neferneferu:** A congruence of events. The stranglehold of Rome finally abates, and its scandals have come home to roost. Meanwhile war, climate change, and diseases once thought eradicated seem poised to end the world. People search for meaning and power, and find it in the old religions. Our Lord is a natural fit — it's the ruling class that got the kine into this mess, and He is first among rebels.

**Ahmose:** Fortuitous indeed.

**Neferneferu:** For us, yes.

**Ahmose:** Our doing, sire?

**Neferneferu:** Theoretically possible. But if so, I am not part of the conspiracy.

**Ahmose:** In the Old Kingdom, Osirian propaganda turned the people against our Lord.

**Neferneferu:** Yes. But people were less educated then. More prone to believing what they're told.

**Ahmose:** And they're smarter now?

**Neferneferu:** Oh, the masses not at all. But those who seek hidden and secret knowledge? Yes. They keep searching until they find the oldest, truest tale. Before Isis and Horus fed the world lies about our Lord. But the old legends tell the truth of Him as the most faithful of warriors, standing at the prow of Ra's solar barge to do battle with Apep.

**Ahmose:** Isis and her spawn. If anyone profited from a return to the old gods, it's them. We should mount an offensive to—

**Neferneferu:** No. Our grievance with them is long in the past. We should prepare our defenses, and if they come we will annihilate them. But if they choose to maintain peace within the Divine Family, our Lord welcomes that. They were at balance once, our Lord of the Red Desert and Horus of the Black Land. There is room enough for all of Egypt's gods, as it was in the Old Kingdom where people prayed to them in turn.

**Ahmose:** Are you certain?

**Neferneferu:** Our Lord is certain. His battle now is with the false children, not with his sister and nephew. You should not question His wisdom. Or my words.

**Ahmose:** Yes, sire.

**Ahmose:** You spoke of the false children of the Aeons. Sire, I do not fully understand. They are like us in the night, are they not?

**Neferneferu:** They are nothing like us. You are correct that we all share the Blood of the Defiant. The difference lies in the other half of our heritage. Their progenitors were all mortal once. Ours is a god, made only more powerful by the Defiant One's Blood.

**Ahmose:** Does that alter the Blood?

**Neferneferu:** It makes us more powerful, certainly. But it also gives us great responsibility. The Pharaohs of Egypt were gods born of men. Tearing out of the womb bloody and wailing like all men do, yet lifted into Divinity by the touch of a god. We too are born of blood and the touch of a god. And just as the Pharaohs had to tend their lands and subjects, so must we tend the lesser children of the Aeons. Correct their errors. Remind them of their place. *This* is our battle now, rather than an ancient and best forgotten grudge with our Lord's Family.

**Ahmose:** And the ones that abandon their false sires to worship our Lord?

**Neferneferu:** I shall not lie — their lesser Blood will forever be a hindrance to them, no matter how hard they strive. However, we will be benevolent and kind, and teach them all they can learn. This is our Lord's gift to those who worship Him.

**Ahmose:** I see the wisdom of Your words, sire, and the grace of our Lord.

**Neferneferu:** Of course you do. Both are undeniable. Still, your continued eagerness to learn pleases me. Let us discuss your sibling. I have a candidate in mind, from the University of Cairo. I will allow you one guess as to their identity. Show me you are indeed paying attention.

**[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]**

# Kindred Religions

*"Every methuselah is capable of shepherding a flock of devotees, convincing them of miracles of the Blood, and forcing them to supplicate before an almighty leader. Every methuselah is a god just waiting to take on the title."*

— Shrug, Nosferatu Mistress of Cardiff

Undeath causes many a crisis of faith. The devout Christian might cease to believe in the sanctity of life and the forgiveness of God Almighty. The Muslim might fail to reconcile their own experience with the Qur'an's teachings on death as a long night of sleep, where upon dying, the individual immediately discovers their destiny in heaven or hell. The Hindu waits for their atman to be reborn in a new body, only to find themself locked in their own damned, unliving shell.

It is enough to drive one away from faith entirely, and yet, vampires discover new beliefs. There will always be great mysteries in the world, and faith has provided millions, perhaps billions of humans with answers, and comfort where there are no answers to be found.

Vampirism is a terrifying state in which to find oneself. It's only natural that Kindred flock together to find meaning, purpose, and sometimes, salvation in communal struggle. Sometimes it comes in service to a higher power, other times it comes through examining the Beast within, and rarely, it leads to transcendence beyond a vampire's base instincts.

The religions presented in this chapter all exist within the World of Darkness, with some as prominent vehicles of vampire faith, and others merely existing on the fringes of Kindred society. In your chronicle, these might act as backgrounds, support networks, the sources of powerful Mawlas, or the font from which to draw horrifying antagonists.

# The Ashfinders

*"We are one click away from becoming the next step in Cainite evolution. One share from enlightenment. One algorithm away from becoming gods. This is our path, to share and understand that which has come before us."*

— Amber Freeman, Duskborn Influencer and Yogi of the Cinder Institute

The Ashfinders are a new philosophical movement within the tangled web of Kindred religious observances. These Yogis are born from the literal ashes of the ongoing Gehenna War, the cult built around the understanding that there may be ways other than diablerie to evolve a Duskborn's powers. The Ashfinders and their wider conglomerate — the Cinder Institute — possess a multi-faceted dogma, but it boils down to one part ecstatic bacchanalian cult, one part data-mining firm, and a healthy scorn for vampire society. Seen as the "other" by mainstream Kindred, Ashfinders have come to terms with this separation by reveling in life's greatest pleasures and showing off with the use of social media. While this bravado is tacky to some, by enjoying existence, or some semblance of it, Ashfinders remind themselves of what they lose if they give themselves to the Beast. It is also a way to tell the Camarilla to "fuck off, the Duskborn are here to stay."

## Dust to Dust

The Ashfinder movement is reactionary, built from a quest for survival and a disillusionment with political factions such as the genocidal Camarilla, who have made no secret of their hunt for thin-bloods. While there are those Kindred who sympathize with the plight of the thin-bloods, this cult is now seen as an open threat to vampiric society. The cult counts few true

Kindred among its membership, though the majority of the "full-blooded" Kindred who support them have Anarch tendencies. One of the Kindred who mentored the early members of this cult was the Tremere Dr. Mortius (see p. XX), who has been instrumental in providing information and thaumaturgical ability to the Duskborn in exchange for small portions of Ashe — a drug created from vampire remains — for his own personal experiments.

Donning the mask of millennial high society, the cultists portray themselves as ambitious revelers enjoying the peak of the nightlife scene while searching for enlightenment. The hustle of life and unlife blend together into a perfectly edited Instagram photo. This hides the underlying fractious after-effects of Ashe use and the "fake it 'til you make it" mentality which drives the religion forward. Donning loose forms of organization, the Ashfinders are a conglomeration of influencer culture, New Age philosophy, and the quest for Golconda through the deliberate and systematic annihilation of as many Kindred elders as possible.

While diablerie is a sure-fire way of becoming notorious among the Damned, these thin-bloods have discovered a way to synthesize necromantic power, thin-blood alchemy, Thaumaturgy, and the ashes of dead Kindred to ingest the shattered elements of the Beast. This drug — known on the street as Ashe — is consumed any way the Duskborn prefers, whether eaten, injected, snorted, or rubbed into an area rich in blood vessels. Doing so creates a bond with the memories and powers of the dead. This way, thin-bloods continue to possess the benefits of walking between the two worlds without having to completely compromise their morality.

The Ashfinders' agenda is an incredible threat to the Camarilla and cults who venerate the ancestors. The knowledge and pervasive nature of this new party drug alarms many within Kindred society, especially as it's apparent Ashe has no effect on non-Duskborn. It is highly addictive and has horrifying consequences if taken in excess. The Ashfinders are flooding the party scene in Chicago, Ibiza, Bangkok, and supposedly elsewhere with their new drug, and offering the recipe to anyone bold enough to ask. The drugs they pass around may not even be Ashe, but merely marketed under that name to drum up excitement and enticement. The real drug is the physical embodiment of a culture of sharing as it blossoms into a perfect death spiral. Ashe is sharing the memories, abilities, and Disciplines of dead Kindred, all blended into a psychedelic euphoria seldom seen among vampires. There are even rumors certain special batches cause the Hunger to slip away for brief moments of time. The ritual to create the substance itself is incredibly dangerous and can cause lasting consequences for both the creator and the partygoer who eventually imbibes the drug.

The use of Ashe has generated some unintended side effects in its users. Some Ashfinders find their withdrawals completely consuming them, and the after-effects drive many to kill vampires so they can obtain their next fix.

## Are Millennials Killing Kindred Elders?

On its surface, the Ashfinder movement provides a communal and welcoming space for any thin-blood who chafes under the pressure of vampire politics. Its membership cultivates a deliberate marketing and social media campaign to propose and propagate centering activities such as meditation, yoga, esoteric classes, and other forms of New-Age prosperity practice among Duskborn. These sessions are also offered to the public, using the kine as a sort of barrier against any bands of hunters looking to harm the thin-bloods. Through the fashioning of these carefully crafted communities, the Cinder Institute was built. On the backs of donations and delicate social engineering, the cult built a new corporate center within the Hive of the Chicago financial district. Hiding in plain sight, the Institute provides a multitude of philanthropic and spiritual services for the Kindred and kine of Chicago. This hub has

satellite studios all over the greater Chicagoland area and has recently branched out to build a consulting service wherein "meditative gurus" can use video conferencing platforms to give sessions to those willing to foot the cost.

The Cinder Institute is a fantastic front, forged in the fires of social media presence and club scene culture, and one the Camarilla would balk at. While these Kindred and kine find store-front enlightenment from the teachings of New Age spirituality, they routinely proceed to throw afterparties in nightclubs and lofts. The locations of their budding "guru" network are very specific, with connections to the cities of Bangkok and the island of Ibiza, both known for their vibrant nightlife. The cult's public face lures in disenfranchised thin-bloods, who sample the drugs, and then join the cult. They then go on to advertise their experiences in clubs, retreats, and times spent meditating — not referencing the drug, naturally — to lure further adherents to the cult. The cycle goes on and on, using social media marketing as a highly efficient cult-building tool.

The endless party lifestyle this perpetuates does nothing but bolster the fledgling Golconda cult. People want to feel good about themselves, and what better way than to pair wellness of body and soul with a decadent social gathering.

With the boom of Ashe and the demand for the substance growing, the cult's Tremere sponsor, Dr. Mortius, considers how best to farm Kindred "humanely" for the drug's creation. While the potency of the substance is dependent upon the age of the vampire from whom it was synthesized, Mortius has discovered the memories of the vampire can still be transferred over to the drug user and provide the same sense of fleeting joy, no matter the age of the drug's Kindred of origin. With the Gehenna War ongoing, the amount of raw materials coming in from battlefields has not diminished, as the thin-bloods and Mortius use agents on the front lines to discreetly harvest remains for shipping back to more lucrative market sites. With social media's tools at hand, the ability to hound a vampire into fleeing their haven is also an option the younger members of the cult have grown to enjoy.

> What exactly is an Influencer?
>
> Influencers are social media personalities who wield enormous social clout over their followers on whatever platform they prefer. Some of these people choose to put their lives on display for whoever wishes to watch, promoting whatever they wish, and go on to create a cult of personality around themselves. They may also offer "advice" on subjects, often amounting to nothing more than product pitches. This strange voyeurism, in turn, provides intense political, social, and economic force when an influencer's followers are told to consume, destroy, or act in a certain capacity. This form of marketing presents a face to potential consumers and builds a "relationship" much as we see in traditional sales. Products and beliefs an influencer may recommend, events they may attend, even things they wear may become overnight successes or failures at the whim of these mini-celebrities. This exchange humanizes the consumerism involved, creating deep devotion within their own small cults of personality.
>
> Within the context of the World of Darkness, these influencers function identically. If the influencer is a vampire, then the vampire might use their following to take part in the Jyhad and turn followers against or in favor of Kindred in their domain. Such activity should warrant a Blood Hunt in Camarilla domains, but many Princes and Sheriffs are too long in the tooth to even understand the influencer phenomenon. One set of groups who do keep a close eye on this online behavior are Second Inquisition bodies such as

FIRSTLIGHT. For thin-bloods, influencer culture is a way to garner influence under the radar of the Camarilla's watchful eyes. For the Inquisition, it's a fine way to identify a city's Kindred as the online vampires talk about their friends and rivals. For now, the Cinder Institute seems to be a legitimate front for New Age businesses and party lifestyles. The Inquisition has yet to realize vampires are behind it.

## Data Mining

At the core of the philosophy, the use of Ashe is a sacrament toward the goal of enlightenment. By "sharing" the memories of the dead, Ashfinders might discover truths about their existence, their curse, and their possible powers. These mental walkabouts are often taken in meditative places of relaxation, with stronger doses of the drug. Trip-sitters are present to record the vampires' meditations and report them more widely within the Cinder Institute. These memories never leave the Kindred, causing occasional dysphoria within many of the Ashfinders, making them question or lose who they really are after extended use. Yet cult members continue to use the substance, as the memories gained are of insurmountable worth. To be able to find and use lost resources or contacts, or to locate lost fortunes or acquire knowledge built over centuries, is a short-cut for which these thin-bloods willingly make the sacrifice.

Mortius sits at the head of the Cinder Institute, monitoring the results gleaned from Ashe use. He finds that the cultivation of Ashe becomes simpler with time, and the data synthesized from the experiment compounds upon itself. Mortius is in the fortunate position of geting to study thin-blood activity as much as he wishes, being seen as a benevolent godfather by many of the Duskborn, while acting as the puppetmaster behind an entire cult. As for Golconda, his theories weave back and forth. The amassing of knowledge at such a scale is any Tremere's dream, and his allegiance to House Ipsissimus (see **Anarch**, p. 170) wavers as he finds more power at his fingertips via the Ashfinders than the New-Age House could ever provide. Practically at will, he can witness the range of human and Kindred existence, though he can't experience it himself. What he questions now, however, is why his test subjects keep seeing shadows move out of the corners of their eyes, and why there are areas in his lab that fill him with seething dread. It seems the ghosts of the dead blame him directly for the desecration of their remains.

## Cinder Institute: Ibiza

One of the centers of power for the Ashfinders exists on the island of Ibiza, where several coteries of vampires dedicated to this cult sample the blood of the thousands of tourists who pass through the clubs, beaches, and bars every year. In a strangely seasonal cycle, the Ashfinders are active in the domain between the months of May and October, but sink into torpor or fly to Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, or Morocco for the other months of the year. Ibiza's tourist trade drops with the weather, therefore the vampires move in and out too.

The cult has no formal hierarchy, hasn't appointed a Prince or Baron over the island, and has yet to organize hunting territories or Elysia. They're fiercely territorial over the island's south coast, where in places like Platja d'en Bossa they receive shipments of Ashe from domains on either side of the Mediterranean and mix them up with the blood of intoxicated kine to create exciting cocktails.

Despite the length of time Ibiza has been a party venue, few vampires took advantage of its throng of drunk, often doped-up mortals until the Cinder Institute set up on the island. Now that they're there, it's proving difficult to make room for the Ashfinders during their feeding

seasons, which has led to consternation and conflict between them and the Kindred who do make Ibiza a permanent residence. Many suspect a war might be brewing. It's likely the Ashfinders will seize the island in its entirety in the coming months, acting as an invitation for fledglings wanting to embrace an unlife of thrills and no consequences, and for mercenary Kindred looking to profit from serving Ibiza's non-Ashfinder vampires in driving the cult off the island.

Ashfinder Convictions

The Ashfinders are a new cult, with some Convictions handed down from the mind of Mortius in the Cinder Institute, others passed on by yogis and gurus within the ranks of Ashe-takers. Some of these common Convictions include:

- **Always sample new experiences on offer**

The Ashfinders are libertines and new experiences are a part of the package that comes with taking Ashe.

- **Never withhold Ashe from others who wish to sample it**

Experience and sensation are to be shared. Solitary euphoria is a hollow high.

- **Never allow someone to silence you**

The Cinder Institute requires the spread of its word to draw new adherents and new experiences. Silence is a method of the Camarilla.

- **Always listen to those of greater experience**

Wisdom can be gained from those of greater age and experience. One doesn't have to believe or emulate every word and action, but listening is mandatory.

- **Always know where your next fix is coming from**

Ashe isn't to be sampled once and forgotten: it's a way of life. Only a fool takes the drug and fails to take account of their forthcoming supply.

- **Never allow the kine to realize your undead nature**

Though the Cinder Institute advocates the spread of their word, they are very specific that Ashfinders must keep their vampiric states a secret from mortal followers. As far as the kine are concerned, Ashe is just a new lab-grown drug that doesn't give them a buzz like it does to you.

## Perspectives

**Anarchs:** *Our closest allies of the "full-blooded" variety exist in this sect, but they'll never understand what it is to go through existence half-formed, impotent in the middle of a measuring contest. They might be sympathetic, but they've no idea what to do with us. I think if we fell completely on their mercy, they'd make a nice padded room for us to bounce around in and feel like they've done a good job.*

**Camarilla:** *For a whole bunch of reasons, some of them valid, they'd see the Cinder Institute wiped off the face of the Earth. The good news is they're so behind the times they don't even know what the Ashfinders are, what we do, and why they should be bothered.*

**Church of Caine:** *When we kill, it's for enlightenment and the betterment of Duskborn society. When they kill, it's because they think they're angels of murder, or some shit. They revere the act of bloodshed itself. At least for us it's a means to an end.*

**Cult of Shalim:** *Is there such a thing as pursuing enlightenment in the wrong direction? If so, this cult has it down pat.*

**Mithraic Mysteries:** *Some people call us a cult.* This *is a cult. They embrace the whole robes, ceremonial masks, chanting, and ranks nonsense. They know their god is dead too, so what's the point? Does it provide them comfort?*

## Beast Shards

Beast Shards — or just Shards as they are known in Ashfinder circles — are mischievous and dangerous monsters who stalk in the wake of a creator or user of Ashe. Many Ashfinders see the destruction of their first Shard as a rite of passage, proving their mastery over their vampiric natures. Most Shards exist as a shadow version of their previous body, wisping and twitching in and out of existence. They possess no human features beyond a distorted body shape, and their actions are generally more feral than reasoned.

Shards hide themselves and stalk Kindred, possessing portions of their previous identities' Attributes and Skills. These may be modified as the Storyteller sees fit. Dr. James Mortius is researching whether an amalgamation of these entities could exist, or if they breed at all.

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 1; Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl (Claws) 4, Stealth 4, Survival 2; Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 3; Awareness 2

**Disciplines:** Animalism 1, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 3

**General Difficulties:** 4/1

**Special:** Beast Shards cannot communicate but they can create empathetic hotspots that cause humans around them to bend their Resonance to a Shard's will. A mortal who passes through this hotspot, rarely wider than 3 yards/meters squared, must make a Resolve + Composure roll (Difficulty 3) or the Beast Shard dictates the mortal's new Resonance, lasting until the end of the scene. Beast Shards attack with claws that deal +2 Superficial Health damage.

## Amber Freeman (ThriveHive)

**Epitaph:** Ashfinder Yogi and Influence Junkie

**Quote:** *"If these elders wish to rip away our right to exist then we will pave a path unseen in this Jyhad. A path through these ancient crumbling monsters right into Golconda. One like, one retweet, one upvote can and will open this door. We will be left atop the embers of history, watching the sun come over the horizon. Something they will never do again."*

**Clan:** Thin-Blood

**Mortal Days: Selfies and Brunch**

Left much on her own throughout her formative years, Amber grew up like many millennials, cultivating a group of friends in chat groups and via social media. Filling the void her parents left was easy to her. Amber was a natural at the budding world of social networking and wielded it to her advantage. She began documenting her lifestyle and mentoring others in the discipline of yoga, despite having no formal training in the practice. Her charisma and perceived innocence attracted viewers and followers by the thousand, many of whom didn't emulate Amber, but just watched, and watched, and watched.

When she finally went away to the University of Chicago, Amber had already cracked over 300,000 followers on social media under the name "ThriveHive." Her subtle blend of "woke" style philosophy, Earth-based spirituality, and self-discipline earned her a place as a student

in the new Social Media Administration track in the Communications Department. Amber began receiving offers from "green" companies looking for her approval and patronage. With just a simple promo lasting for a month's worth of videos, she made some start-ups into city-wide successes. The money she earned from these endorsements helped her balance out her feel-good lifestyle with a healthy dose of partying in and around Chicago's Rack. Despite her New Age devotion to clean living, she was still a young woman enjoying the wild scenes of the city's nightlife. A mixture of drugs and sex helped fuel her sense of control over both herself and her surroundings, and she felt comfortable in her balance between hedonism and purity. It was something she never had at home and surely was never going to give up.

At the end of her freshman year, she was recognized for her abilities and grades, receiving scholarships from both the Bishop Blake Educational Fund and The Stewart-Freeman Fund for Young Women. It was at the reception of this second award ceremony, one her parents promised to attend but ended up missing due to last-minute "events," that she met her eventual Mawla, Naomi Stewart.

**Kindred Nights: Selfies and Enlightenment**

Naomi wanted to know if the young woman was the real deal or just another poseur using her power for her own benefit. The young woman impressed Naomi; her convictions and power were new, exciting, and focused. Naomi, in need of an assistant with such grace and control, took Amber on as an apprentice. Naomi had no desire to offer Amber the Embrace herself, but through a deal she brokered with a Caitiff named Tim Roche, who owed her a favor, Amber received the Embrace after a night of fine dining, drinking, and sex.

After Amber realized the truth of the "date" Naomi had arranged between her and Tim, she railed and kicked out against the Ventrue and her manipulations. Naomi attempted to pacify Amber with talk of the eternity she now had to lay down a good influence for fellow Kindred and young women. Night after night came lessons in Camarilla law and power dynamics. Amber was a good student but revolted against the fact she was now Damned. She wanted to make the world a better place, not control it. Naomi desperately reassured her, but the Ventrue's words slid off their target. Amber continued building her empire of self-help with ever more fervor, and while she accepted that Naomi wasn't the worst of the bunch, the fledgling and her Mawla now rarely see eye to eye.

Posing as Naomi's ghoul and changing her name to Amber Freeman, the two sometimes still visit Elysia around the city of Chicago. One such evening, a Warlock named Dr. Mortius grabbed hold of Amber. He knew of her "situation" and wished to offer possible solutions. Intrigued, Amber lied to her sire and met clandestinely with the doctor. The two combined their resources to build the Cinder Institute, all as Mortius provided Amber with copious supplies of Ashe.

Amber is now the face of the Cinder Institute and its satellite studios. While she understands taking Ashe is nothing more than consuming dead Kindred, she justifies it as poetic justice and a part of Earth's cycle of renewal. She knows older vampires want to eradicate her ilk's existence so she champions the use of Ashe as a spiritual road of advancement. She traveled to Bangkok under the guise of seeking a cure for her vampiric state, but truthfully, she leads her new cult in advancing her message of Golconda and freedom from the curse to other thin-bloods.

**Plots and Schemes:**

- **The Wholeness and Wellness of Diablerie:** Naomi has taught her adopted childe about the sin of diablerie, but the possibilities of potential power through consumption of

another vampire's blood and soul appeals greatly to Amber. In the meantime, Amber routinely partakes of Ashe (without Naomi's knowledge) to grow in power.

- **Gold Dust:** Amber knows little of Golconda, but believes the consumption of Ashe is a potential route to reaching it. The amount of good done by someone immortal and not cursed could change the world, and what better way of learning how to cure the world's ills than taking on the memories of her ancestors? She has been looking for the ashes of older Kindred to support this theory and has supposedly gathered a sample of one from a trip to Spain.

**Domain and Haven:**

- **Wicker Park Two-Flat (Contacts 2, Haven 2, Herd 2):** Amber has blended into the Rack of Chicago and ingratiated herself into the Chicago party scene. Her haven is next to one of the Cinder Institute's yoga studios and occult bookshops, which provides her a source of blood and confidantes within the local occult community.

**Thralls and Tools:**

- **ThriveHive (Influence 4, Fame 2):** ThriveHive is an international influence marketing scheme. Compounding her knowledge of Kindred politics with influencer swagger, her message now reaches over 700,000 followers. Her brand provides significant income from marketing products and is now building a financial portfolio with Naomi Stewart's help. She routinely pitches for the Cinder Institute on her vlog.

**Kindred Relationships:**

- **Kevin Jackson (Fear):** Amber is terrified of the Prince of Chicago. She knows she will be Blood Hunted if the Prince ever finds out about her work with Dr. Mortius, and has even heard tell the Camarilla routinely purges thin-bloods. Her only hope is to become useful enough to the Camarilla that they won't kill her, or build up enough of a shield through her cult that she no longer needs to fear the Ivory Tower.

- **Naomi Stewart (Mawla):** Naomi uses her nights to aid Caitiff and Duskborn in rising above the bias pervasive within the Camarilla. Naomi respects Amber and her talents, but is busy with her own machinations for Ventrue Primogen and often forgets to check in with her adopted childe. Amber suspects Naomi had a weak-blooded Caitiff Embrace her for plausible deniability, and so a Blood Hunt, if called, could take place without the flack hitting her Mawla, straining the relationship between the two.

- **Dr. Mortius (Admiration):** Amber looks up to Mortius. She truly believes the Tremere wants to help her and the other thin-bloods become more than a shattered and scared community. For now, she does as Mortius tells her when he commands her to not share their experiments with Naomi Stewart.

**Whispers:**

- **Liars and Thieves:** Amber is a Tremere ghoul of Dr. Mortius and assisted in the liquidation of the House Carna chantry in Milwaukee. She masqueraded as a Bahari to throw off the trail of the Ashfinders.

- **Prophet of the End Times:** Amber sees herself as a new prophet for this age. She wants to bring thin-bloods out of the shadows and give them rights and privileges. While violence isn't her first choice, she is beginning to believe it is the only choice.

- **Paragon:** Kevin Jackson knows of Amber's plight and is grooming her from the shadows to show to the rest of the Camarilla. His goal is to normalize the thin-bloods and tear

their population away from the Anarch Movement. He wants an example for the Ivory Tower of what lengths these Duskborn are willing to go for recognition.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Amber's real surname is Gallagher, but she adopted the name Freeman after her Embrace. In truth, her changed identity has done her little good, as her internet followers all know her as Amber and ThriveHive, and she has no way of erasing all online record of her existence.
- Amber is a small-framed, freckled woman, who when online has a perpetual genuine smile and commonly wears yoga gear and eco-friendly threads. In person, she's less confident, though alcohol and drugs quickly boost her self-assuredness. She wears her blonde hair in long braids.

**Sire:** Tim Roche

**Embraced:** 2015 (Born 1991)

**Ambition:** Find a step on the path to enlightenment

**Convictions:** Never stop striving for wellness

**Touchstones:** Sandra Kowalski — Amber's webmaster

**Humanity:** 8

**Generation:** 14th

**Blood Potency:** 0

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics (Yoga) 4, Drive (City) 2; Etiquette 2, Insight 3, Leadership 3, Performance (Vlog) 3, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 2; Academics (Communications) 2, Awareness 2, Finance 2, Medicine 1, Politics 1, Science 1, Technology (Social Media) 4

**Disciplines:** Thin-Blood Alchemy 4

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Dr. James "Mortius" Howitt

**Epitaph:** Thaumaturgical Scientist

**Quote:** *"The most important thing, the only reason to exist, is the work."*

**Clan:** Tremere

**Mortal Days: Blood Sorcery Savant**

Raised by monks among the ranks of other orphans, his parents having succumbed to plague in his youth, James Howitt never knew the warmth of kin or the care of a loving mother. He was a perpetual loner in life, working harder than the other children and rejecting their calls to play. He earned praise from the brothers at the monastery for his candlelit writings and illuminations, despite never seeking a pat on the head from one of the venerable masters. His sole love and focus was "the work," as he called it, and in that he excelled.

Where many of his peers went on to join the monastery or priesthood, James departed on his 14th birthday and never again looked at religion as anything but a distraction from the work.

He translated texts from around the known world, penned his own treatises on sciences, sorceries, and beliefs, and earned many a wealthy patron through his efforts. For many years, he occupied a tall stone building in Edinburgh as a city elder, unaffiliated with any order but famed for his intellect and skill in academic pursuits.

James was in his 40s when he first became aware of blood magic. A dabbler in alchemy and, according to some, a hedge wizard, it came as little surprise to Edinburgh's small Tremere contingent when James started probing for insight into the arts of the Blood. He was taken on as a ghoul, and to every Warlock's great surprise, showed more skill with the clan's Thaumaturgy than many of the city's Kindred.

Mesita — the Tremere Regent of Edinburgh — came to Howitt one night during his studies, and offered him life eternal to continue studying the world's great mysteries and become more than apprentice in the field of Blood Sorcery. James took his time to consider the offer before accepting, despite the inkling that Mesita was deliberately cutting off his advancement by ending his natural life.

**Kindred Nights: The Work Goes On**

James never stopped his research or practice. He was determined to become what he called "a master of destiny and life" through studying every avenue of sorcery, philosophy, and alchemy. With an eternity, it seemed easy. Mortals might discover one or two things in a short lifespan. He was convinced he could achieve more than any living being with immortality stretching out before him.

Among his grand works were his translation of the Book of the Grave-War, a tome said to contain information enabling the breaking of the Blood Bond; the creation of dozens of minor and major Rituals utilized by the Tremere all over the world in the modern nights; the establishment of research chantries in various cities, including Shanghai and Milwaukee; and the co-development of the Ashe drug with the thin-bloods of the Cinder Institute, informally known as "the Ashfinders." Still, he feels his work isn't done. "The work" is not yet finished.

James wasn't in Milwaukee when the city's Tremere Regent — Carna — broke her bonds to the clan and formed her own house. He returned to the wreckage, however, and the few vampires who know him well say he seemed elated. He spends most of his time these nights wandering, sometimes teaching, most often researching, but always pursuing the work so important to him.

James was supposed to be one of the attendees at the great convention in Vienna, when the assault on the Prime Chantry saw the clan's highest levels annihilated or sent to torpor. He opted at the last minute not to attend, and hasn't spoken of the event since. As Clan Tremere found itself fragmented in multiple splinters, James informally broke from the core faction and aligned with House Ipsissimus, due in most part to their eagerness to research, expand mental horizons, and avoid the Camarilla hierarchy, which doesn't interest him in the slightest. His defection angered prominent members of House Tremere and House Carna, but he really couldn't care less, having been apolitical his entire existence.

**Plots and Schemes:**

- **The Work:** The doctor is constantly in pursuit of "the work," but only Mortius knows what this work entails. He seeks to bend, twist, and burn the Blood in vampire bodies, subjecting it to every force, every element, and every chemical compound to see what reacts. He wants to understand the Blood, master it, and eventually, learn all the secrets behind its manipulation. Mortius doesn't hold stock in the Caine myth. He believes all things in this

world — vampires included — are subject to science and physical principles, and are therefore tools waiting for the hands of learned masters.

- **Clouds of Ashe:** The Ashe experiments started as one of Mortius' trivial hobbies, after he discovered what the Duskborn could do with this drug, but have borne surprising fruit. While his initial studies indicated there may be some resonant force present in vampire remains, the capacity to transfer memories from victim to Ashfinder opened his mind to new possibilities. Ashe, therefore, is a whole new dimension of learning, and the current users are simply test subjects. Mortius is playing the long game with this drug and eagerly notes its long-term effects in consideration of how to refine them.

**Domain and Haven:**

- **Marquette University Campus (Contacts 3, Haven 3, Herd 2):** Mortius spends much of his existence moving between domains, but often returns "home" to Milwaukee, the city in which he spent much of the 20th century. He keeps a body of contacts among Marquette faculty and a fringe religious group known as the Cult of Isis, but feels increasingly drawn to Embrace students just to drain them, which intrigues him as a grand new experiment of the Blood. The domain has plentiful occult phenomena to study, so he's happy remaining there for months at a time. Unfortunately, the current Prince of the city is prone to persecuting vampires who move in and out of Milwaukee without contributing to its defenses (see **Let the Streets Run Red** for more on the domain of Milwaukee).

**Thralls and Tools:**

- **The Cult of Isis (Allies 3, Retainers 3):** This cult of mortal witches and vampires linked to the Bahari operates in many domains across the world, tending toward spaces afflicted with severe occult phenomena, such as Cairo, Thessaloniki, Edinburgh, and Milwaukee. Though their membership is entirely non-male, James lends them his research in exchange for their acting as his sometime bodyguards and spies.

- **The Ashfinders (Mawla 2):** Mortius is the hidden head behind the Cinder Institute, though he has less interest in its operation than he does in the results of Ashe usage. The majority of its members are — to his mind — junkies and lab rats. However, the cult also acts as a group that offers guidance and aid when James needs it, so as their sponsor, he looks out for them and they look out for him.

**Kindred Relationships:**

- **Amber Freeman (Curiosity):** As one of the pioneers of Ashe ingestion, and one of the drug's biggest promoters, Amber is a curious test subject for Mortius. He sponsors her, gives her advice, supplies her with Ashe, and watches the dominoes fall while taking notes, as her followers fall deeper and deeper into addiction. He has no real affection for the young vampire.

- **Carna (Resentment):** What Mortius tells people is that Carna stole his research and used it inappropriately to form her hellish cell of Kindred. What actually happened, is while Mortius translated the Book of the Grave-War and practiced its Blood Bond-breaking Rituals, he never got them to work. Believing the book incomplete or inaccurate, he moved on to other things. He greatly resents that Milwaukee's puppet Regent — Carna — somehow cracked the code without telling him, and wants to know how she did the deed.

- **Karl Schrekt (Fear):** James has remained apolitical for most of his existence, aligning with the Camarilla because it suited him, and falling within the core of Clan Tremere because they schooled him, and sent him books, students, and blood for study. His break from Schrekt's wing of the clan was meant to be quiet, but apparently the head of House

Tremere is livid Mortius just walked away with hundreds of years of research, especially as the doctor was supposed to attend Vienna when the attack on the Chantry took place. Mortius is deathly afraid of what will happen if Schrekt catches up to him.

**Whispers:**

- **Hot Dose:** Mortius knows how fucked up the users of Ashe are going to be and doesn't care at all. He's poisoning them to eradicate thin-bloods and form a new case study.
- **Peas in a Pod:** Mortius and another Kindred scientist named Netchurch often exchange notes, sometimes acting as peers, other times as rivals. Both are detached from compassion.
- **The Call:** Mortius has been feeling the Beckoning with each night of rising, and only subdues it through transfusions of vitae directly into his dead heart.
- **Traitor:** Mortius knew exactly what was going to happen in Vienna, which is why he didn't make the journey and why he's so scared of Karl Schrekt.

**Mask and Mien:**

- James took on the name "Mortius" in the 19th century as a flight of fancy. He has no great connection to the Clan of Death, nor is he particularly morbid — though he is studious and stuffy — but the name keeps people guessing. It doesn't serve as an effective Mask, however, due to the strangeness of the name. It hasn't occurred to him yet to change it.
- Mortius is a stooped old man with a beard and grey skin marked where he suffered the pox as a child. He rarely makes eye contact and speaks mostly in a mutter. He was Embraced in his 60s, which at the time was a venerable age, and it shows in his appearance and manner.

**Sire:** Mesita

**Embraced:** 1566 (Born 1516)

**Ambition:** Further "the work"

**Convictions:** Never turn down the opportunity to experiment

**Touchstones:** Grace Brooker — mortal witch from the Cult of Isis

**Humanity:** 3

**Generation:** 7th

**Blood Potency:** 5

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3; Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Resolve 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 8

**Skills:** Drive 1; Etiquette 1, Insight 1, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2; Academics (Anthropology, Archaeology, Mathematics) 5, Awareness 2, Medicine 5, Occult (Alchemy, Blood Sorcery) 5, Politics 3, Science (Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Physics) 5, Technology 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 5, Blood Sorcery 5, Dominate 4

**General Difficulties:** 7/3

# Ashfinder Blood Alchemy

The thin-bloods who make up the majority of the Ashfinder cult have turned their Alchemy over to the process of ingesting Ashe and retrieving memories and powers from it post-

consumption. Crafting Ashe is Blood Alchemy of the Fixatio form, therefore requiring Intelligence + Blood Alchemy to create it. Receiving powers from Ashe is Blood Alchemy of the Athanor Corporis variety, as the drug only conveys benefits when ingested, injected, or otherwise exposed to a Duskborn's dead blood vessels. The distillation roll is therefore Stamina + Blood Alchemy, together with a Rouse Check as the vampire consumes the ash with a mix of vitae (commonly their own, but sometimes from another source).

# Level 3

## Concoct Ashe

The process of creating the Ashe drug is a form of Blood Alchemy in itself, and generally takes place in a laboratory or workshop due to the need for an open flame and metal filings.

- **Ingredients:** A destroyed vampire's ashes, an open flame reaching 1,500°C, aluminum filings.
- **Dice Pools:** Intelligence + Thin-Blood Alchemy
- **System:** The vampire's ashes are contained in a vessel heated by an open flame and then mixed with aluminum filings. Each success on the distillation roll produces a single Ashe dose suitable for a Blood Alchemy ritual requiring the drug. On a critical win, the dosage provided from the alchemy is doubled. On a total failure, the sample is ruined and a Beast Shard (see p. XX) emerges in the area.

## Chemically-Induced Flashback

Upon imbibing the concoction of vampire ash and vitae (generally the alchemist's, though it doesn't have to be), the alchemist experiences the destroyed vampire's memories.

- **Ingredients:** A sample of Ashe, sufficient vitae to compel a Rouse Check from the donor.
- **Activation Cost:** One Rouse Check (additional to the check required if the vitae donor is the alchemist) and 1 Superficial Willpower damage.
- **Dice Pools:** Stamina + Thin-Blood Alchemy
- **System:** Once the concoction of Ashe and vitae is inside the vampire, their player makes a distillation roll (two Rouse Checks if they are the vitae donor at that time). If in a place of calm, where meditation is possible, the alchemist adds two additional dice to the roll. For every success, the Storyteller grants a short memory belonging to the destroyed vampire who has just been consumed. On a critical win, the alchemist can request a memory from a period or event the alchemist specifies. On a total failure, the memories come through confused and muddle the alchemist permanently, removing their own memory of a place, event, encountered character, or other moment from their life, to be discussed between the player and Storyteller.

# Level 4

## Discipline Channeling

Counterfeiting Disciplines is part and parcel of Blood Alchemy's use, but the ability to channel a Discipline from the ashes of a deceased vampire is a form of necromantic Alchemy, at least according to Dr. Mortius and the Duskborn who practice it. Those who

practice this Alchemy find themselves able to use any one of the Disciplines of the destroyed vampire, even if they would typically not have access to powers of this level.

- **Ingredients:** A sample of Ashe, sufficient vitae to compel a Rouse Check from the donor, crushed leaves from the indigo plant.

- **Activation Cost:** One Rouse Check (additional to the check required if the vitae donor is the alchemist, and also additional to any checks required for the chosen Discipline's use) and 2 Superficial Willpower damage.

- **Dice Pools:** Stamina + Thin-Blood Alchemy to initiate this power. Blood Alchemy replaces the standard Discipline requirement for using the power. For example, Spark of Rage (**Vampire: The Masquerade** p. 265), as part of the Potence Discipline, requires a dice pool of Manipulation + Potence. When used as part of Discipline Channeling, it requires a dice pool of Manipulation + Blood Alchemy for use.

- **System:** Once the concoction of Ashe, vitae, and indigo petals is inside the vampire, their player makes a distillation roll (two Rouse Checks if they are the vitae donor at that time). If in a place of calm, where meditation is possible, the alchemist adds two dice to the roll. On a success, the Storyteller grants the alchemist access to one of the Discipline powers (such as a specific level 1 power or a specific level 3 power) the deceased donor possessed. The Storyteller may state the Disciplines and specific powers the former vampire held so the alchemist can choose from a list, or if the alchemist has a power in mind, they can request this from the Storyteller. The Storyteller has final say. The Ashfinder gains a power they can use on one occasion before the end of the chapter. On a critical win, the alchemist gains the use of two Discipline powers until the end of the chapter. On a total failure, the alchemist succumbs to a hunger frenzy aimed at any nearby vampire.

> Ashe Addiction
>
> Every time a thin-blood takes Ashe, they suffer Superficial Willpower damage. If they take any Aggravated Willpower damage while experiencing the effects of Ashe, they must roll to resist a hunger frenzy as they suddenly crave the vitae, experiences, and powers of other vampires. This frenzy is pointed at other Kindred. If the vampire ingests any vitae as a result of their frenzy, they recover a point of Aggravated Willpower damage but their Hunger rating increases. Addiction to Ashe can be a paralyzing circle of needing more and more blood to survive and Ashe to continue experiencing the buzz of power.

# The Bahari, Children of Lilith

*"The Dark Mother suffered in the wastes. When we follow in her blood-stained footsteps, we are the children she lost, born anew to make her enemies pay for what they've done."*

— Sophie Maïga, Priestess of the Garden of Storms, La Balize

Who was Lilith? Few ask the question, mortal or not. Some say she was the haughty first wife of the first man, who took off to consort with demons because of a conflict rooted in a gendered and sexual inequality. Or, she was the victimized first wife of the first man, who ran to the darkness beyond Eden for safety.

In the medieval period, new versions of her story leapt into being, with one among others capturing the imaginations of many. Created by the debates of holy men and a satirist, it would prove to be the one that dug deepest. Lilith was the first wife, and Eve was the second.

Lilith and Adam quarreled from the day they met, and Lilith grew tired of it. She used a secret name of their Creator to whisk herself away to safety. When mothers put amulets on their babies to ward off Lilith, they were warding off a woman whose rage was eternal, who would take all children in the night, and leave them dead. To kill the children of Adam and Eve was to strike back at their shared Creator, to unmake parts of a world that had been set in motion long, long ago. Despite the powers ascribed to her, there was almost something human to her pain and hate. In other tales Lilith is confronted by angels and stakes her claim on the lives of newborns. She becomes a consort of the Angel of Death, and evolves into a figure of powerful evil, one connected to a violent, roiling world beyond that of the average mortal; one that was terrifying, but perhaps necessary for existence to have the meaning that it does. Perhaps, if Lilith sits upon her throne, she will not come down into the night, and take more than just newborn babies. In each myth, intermixed, the smallest seeds of the truth can be found by the determined reader. There is something almost human to her pain, and hate, but also to her love, and her grief. She does not simply access a world beyond the mundane human reality, she is part of it. For a time, she was the lover of an angel. In all her grief, she has had only herself to rely on.

Lilith is loyal to herself. She is self-assured, she is above human morality, and she possesses a power and sexuality utterly alien to many, even some of the Bahari. She is self-sustaining and resists heaven, Caine, and humankind, century after century. She is power, and knowledge. And she is a scapegoat, for humans and Cainites alike, for their fears and their desires. Her story has been passed back and forth between the children of Adam and Eve, and her own children. It is not pure, nor is it untouched by the hands of men, uninfluenced by those who do not know her revelations. Those who follow her know that without question, they will die. They will know fear and be forced past it, their bodies sent past the breaking point. They will suffer greatly for understanding and to protect each other. They are dedicated to bringing about the goals of the Dark Mother, and these are their reasons for living.

What is Lilith, is the most important question. She is the voice heard in the dark apartment, when no one else is present. The fragment of a song that obsesses but seems to come from nowhere. Dreams of blood-filled trees or the full to bursting belly gorged on food and blood, before the bed is ripped apart. The mother wailing and rocking the bodies of her dead children. A woman whose garden has been burned to the ground. All of the Bahari must know loss in their time. Physical and psychic pain. The role of a feast in the night. The role of *being* the feast in the night. To worship her is to be a fragment of her, to feel pain and crave vengeance.

The many Gardens of the Bahari have their own feelings about what parts of the scriptures or satires or scholarly treatises of mortals have captured an inkling of the Dark Mother. Each Garden has as many opinions of the *Revelations* and rituals as a pomegranate has seeds.

Stories about the Dark Mother are like holding a fistful of writhing snakes. The observer may see the storm, air, flight, angels, night, light, lovers, loss, desert, birth, sea, thorns, violation, magic unimaginable — and by that point they will be bitten and die.

**[LAYOUT: A HANDWRITTEN NOTE]**

## Overly Devoted Scholarship

I'm feeling confused, and... upset, and angry, maybe betrayed, not sure yet. These self-actualization classes have been getting pretty weird, and some of it is good weird, but I have questions I'm afraid to ask there. When Taylor started telling me about Lilith, the ways I could live my life without fear or shame, that sounded cool. But the longer we talk, the more I've been digging.  Lilith, the sexytimes demoness who kills children and fucks men for their

“seed” and queen of evil shit, she’s not from antiquity. I mean. She, Lilith, the Dark Mother, Queen of Night, what we know her as is… new. The first time it’s explicitly stated she’s the first wife of Adam, that she’s got freaky powers and left the Garden and etc. etc. etc. is this misogynist satirist’s book (that praised scriptural heroes for evils that never happened!) written sometime during the Geonic period. Maybe. There are even multiple versions that managed to limp to the present day, and I’m not sold on their accepted state as one large body of work. And then it’s off to the races, with somebody, everybody and their mother (ha) making new stories about Lilith, casting her as cosmic evil, people making amulets to protect new mothers and infants from her left, right and center. Men are supposed to pray before sex with their wives to save themselves from the “liliths.”

Point is, she’s not from scripture, everyone who says she is, is making a point of extreme conjecture, and in some stories she’s been replaced by a different demon, or a bad angel, but then another version says it was her. Taylor has been teaching me pieces of the word of Lilith, but it sounds like it was written by a man. She says there’s nerds like me out there among the other followers, but if they have seen what I saw in my research, are they still followers of the Dark Mother?

Men cast her as a symbol of evil. And Taylor says she is evil, in her way, but that it’s okay. And honestly, like, I’m not sure if I necessarily care if she’s evil or not. But I want to know. I want some fucking answers. If we’re following something so old and powerful that it transcends our understanding and presumably hasn’t been seen by her followers, her children since... a long, long time ago, Taylor hasn’t taught me those sorts of verses yet, not more than a few lines.

If nobody knows where she is, and they buy a version of her word that sounds like it was based on the words of men who cannot give two shits about a woman, and all the stories are much newer than antiquity and say she can be bound, or at least sent away, and none of them agree about where she is and what’s she’s doing... what is her word? Her real word? Her true name and purpose? Because whoever her enemies are (and I can piece together that a mainstream deity is up there), do we really know the whole story? Do they believe she can be sent away with the names of angels? Because if that sort of object or power is in the world, wouldn’t her enemies chase it? Seek to lure her out? Shouldn’t her followers know either way? Does someone protect her interests, or is everyone too busy having sex in the back of a bookstore and cutting each other up and... that’s it? I know Taylor says there’s “greater mysteries” and they’ve got a system, clearly, of when someone is ready, just...

If I’m going to die for an ancient Goddess, I want to know the people next to me in the metaphorical pew have my back and an equal investment in the truth behind our mother. I know when Taylor gets off shift, and I also know that you’re not supposed to fear death if you worship the Dark Mother. I have a gun. I will get answers. And if those answers say try again somewhere else, I’ll do that.

May the Garden be watered with blood. I will grow her a damn grove of manchineel if I have to show people I’m serious about this.

**[LAYOUT: NOTE ENDS]**

Lilith the Baby-Snatcher

The personality and actions of Lilith herself are less important than those of her followers, or those who follow the legends surrounding her. Among the most deplorable of her purported activities was the stealing of infants from unworthy parents, or as sacrifice to ensure the fertility of others. The majority of Kindred

harbor severe misgivings about replicating this ceremony, and most Bahari cells do not encourage the kidnap of children. Ethics play a part, of course, but police scrutiny comes into play when children go missing.

Sadly, this practice is not entirely foreign to the modern Bahari. Some followers of the Dark Mother believe they have the ordained right to decide who must parent and who must not, and others at the cult's hard core believe no blood tastes sweeter than that of infants. Whether through a combination of bitterness at their cursed state, fanatical belief in Lilith and an attempt to emulate their Goddess, or simply as an act to terrify local kine and Kindred alike, fringes of the Bahari have and will continue to terrorize children and new parents.

## Out of the Desert

From Canaan, Babylon, and Israel, the myths of Lilith traveled from people to people, carrying with them both error and truth about her and the Bahari alike. Even then, the cult carried within it a mix of Lhaka, humans, and mages. When the Babylonians said the night-demons of the air were women and men, once human, angry at the living, they were unaware of how much truth was in their belief. In this period of human and Cainite history, the recruitment of new Cainites was rare compared to later periods, and the Lhaka of the time were frequently of lineages that, while not old enough to have come from the Garden over which Lilith wept when it was destroyed, were still old. Those among the Bahari of antiquity who may have sprung closer to Lilith's blood kept their own counsel, and no oral or written documentation of their number has been found. While Jewish folklore was early to adopt discussion of Lilith, this pursuit of understanding her nature and binding her power made its way to Christianity. Where lilins once skated under the notice of Greco-Roman mystery cults and the Cainites haunting the halls of Greek and Roman power, the rise of the Christian Church brought a new threat to their nights. Where the children of Caine represented both danger and secret enmity, the Christian empire brought with it fervent prosecution of witchcraft, and a weaponized fight against demons.

## Beliefs

The Bahari believe that Lilith, the Dark Mother, would have been the greatest gardener of Eden, if not for Adam and the human God. She had three Gardens; Elona, the Garden of Hope, D'hainu, the Garden of Renewal, and Bahara, the Garden of Suffering. Whether the Gardens were each a physical place or a metaphor is of some debate, but their names and the events surrounding them are without question part of Bahari belief and what one could call their liturgy.

In one of the few ways the Bahari have always been united, they are intent on forming new gardens of paradise (or their interpretation of what paradise is) around the globe. Historically, the Bahari named the city of Jericho their new Garden of Renewal, where between the 9th and 14th centuries CE, Kindred could find sanctuary, succor, and time to pacify their Beasts. The Inquisition of the time routed the domain, but for a time it was one of the Bahari's strongholds. Likewise, a powerful Bahari cell declared Oslo their Garden of Suffering in the 19th and early 20th centuries CE, but that group disappeared almost overnight prior to the start of the Second World War, leaving other Kindred to discover the domain had been used for the imprisonment, torture, and diablerie of countless vampires for over a century. None of the Oslo cell have re-entered society under the same names since that time.

The superiority of Lilith to Caine is a vital part of their belief structure, and the hate of Cainites is not something open to interpretation, let alone something to be approached with passivity or without violence. Cainites, down to the very last one, will either become Lhaka

in the Garden, or die. The religious opinion that all supernatural creatures in the world are the children of Lilith is widespread, but not required. In the end, beneath any poetry, sin within the Bahari comprises a spectrum.

Bahari Convictions

Lilins frequently gravitate toward the following Convictions, their belief helping to justify their actions:

- **Always correct the false myths of Caine when you hear them**

To destroy Caine, one must destroy his myth. To elevate Lilith as she deserves, one must destroy Caine in every way.

- **Never feel remorse for serving Lilith**

The Bahari cannot afford to dwell in remorse, because remorse is the thread by which self-doubt and artificial morals are sewn to the soul. Remorse creates hesitation.

- **Always participate in Bahari rituals**

The personal feelings of a Ba'ham do not matter in regard to ritual. Whether they wish to be elsewhere, or believe the Garden they have entered is not worthy of their presence, worship of the Dark Mother and her wisdom supersedes personal preferences or politics.

- **Never show fear in the face of death**

Lilith did not show fear at any point after her creation, nor should her children.

- **Only kill in sacrifice to Lilith**

Killing is made sacred by being part of worship, learning, and growth. Sacrifice can be about holy vengeance. Sacrifice can mean volunteering your body to be the feast, to die in the hands and mouths of other Bahari. All deaths must have meaning to the Dark Mother.

- **Never fail to dispense pain and anguish to Lilith's enemies**

Bringing discomfort to the comfortable is not just a pithy saying, but a necessary component of bringing someone into the Dark Mother's embrace as well as destroying her enemies in a manner she would find pleasing.

## Organization

Members of the Bahari start somewhere on the outskirts of someone else's Garden. As they embrace the lessons of the Dark Mother, they progress in acceptance, and education, before they can stand in the Garden with their fellow worshipers — or be buried in it, depending on how far they get in their time as a newly minted Ba'ham. But none should be afraid of watering the Garden.

A Garden is led by at least one person, frequently two. The number of Bahari in the Garden's grasp is limited only by the goals and resources of the group. In cities where initiates may draw attention to the Garden, their number is tightly controlled, and replaced only as needed. When an initiate is human, with no supernatural gifts, their study before their ritual of initiation delivers only basic information about Lilith, focusing primarily on lessons of pain, the extinction of personal fear, and the necessity of blood sacrifice. Would-be initiates drawn from the ranks of mages and the psychically gifted have more openly supernatural discussions during their early studies, while Cainites receive formidable and painful deprogramming about the mythos of Caine, and indoctrination into the story of Lilith.

Outside coven-scale organizations, regions of Bahari will from time to time work in concert on large-scale rituals, or to coordinate the destruction of influential Cainites standing in the way of Bahari goals. When traveling to new cities, a Ba'ham may find some or all of the local Bahari customs quite alien on their face, with only the essential elements of the Dark Mother's wisdom (blood and creation) recognizable. The oldest Garden still in existence — the Garden of Hope in Budapest — is a place of holy pilgrimage, and echoes of their liturgy have been carried piecemeal through centuries of Bahari immigration to other places, seeded into daughter-Gardens over time. Not every Garden is modeled on Lilith's three, but undoubtedly, the Bahari would love to bring them back to life.

## Modern Nights

The need the world has for the Bahari is ever-growing, at least according to the lilins.

For every pain someone suffers, there is the chance at renewed purpose, or deep insight. There is no fear of death, or final death. In a world that seems increasingly desperate and chaotic, the bloody hand that tilts up someone's chin to tell them the suffering are seen is a powerful one. The lilins spread a truth craved by those paralyzed by grief and pain. In the beginning, Lilith was there, and Lilith was repeatedly betrayed, and they can attain vengeance for Lilith. The suffering that lilins spread feels like a substitute for the justice they will never have. To the new Bahari of the brutal modern world, the worship of Lilith is not only transgressive, but serves as a shadow faith against all human faith, a shadow nation against the children of Caine. It is an unholy time, and the Bahari of the world walk through blood and thorns on their way to the ocean, to hasten the waters' rise.

They are playing a dangerous game in war zones around the world, operating under the noses of thrill-seeking members of the Camarilla and their enemies, seeking to both lift up would-be lilins from the bloodshed and strike down the children of Caine.

> Spirals of Vengeance
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> Some lilins try to act with all humanity and use their gifts to do nothing but help the victims of abuses, tortures, and harsh lives.
>
> These lilins are, however, in the minority.
>
> Lilins are not "good vampires" and they are not "Kindred angels," nor are they more interested in equality, fairness, and justice than they are in blood, righteous mandate, and punishment. The Bahari are more than happy to cultivate their image as avenging angels, and some only feed from abusers, target awful men, and persecute the patriarchy associated with worshiping Caine. However, when the survivor who pointed the lilin at their abuser thanks the vampire, the vampire is inclined to take that mortal as a retainer, a blood doll, or just drop them without future aid, now their task is done. When they target awful men, ripping them to shreds in an alley, they enjoy the pain they mete out, relishing the bloodshed and tortured cries. When they attack Cainite worship, they suggest a replacement: Lilith worship. Neither is truly better than the other.
>
> Some Bahari come face-to-face with their hypocrisy and walk away from the cult. Others embrace it and use it to elevate themselves. Others deny the hypocrisy and genuinely see themselves as deliverers, righteous in their actions. Very few Bahari ponder the idea that abuse begets abuse, or how the spiral of vengeance becomes all-consuming until scores of innocents fall due to their supposed moral crusade. Examining their actions might give one a crisis of

faith, and denying Lilith's way is a good way to find oneself excommunicated from the Garden, or lashed to the old Judas tree and burned to ash.

## Recruitment

Among mortals, promising future Bahari are often sought out among survivors of abuse, crime, and events involving substantial fatalities (natural disasters, bus crashes, and the like). Mortals going through intense periods of grief (someone who may have lost all immediate family within a brief span of time, survivors of war) and those who take care of them are of particular interest. The *Revelations of the Dark Mother* — a text of importance to the lilin, though its authorship is disputed within the Bahari's scholarly circles — have much to say about grief and betrayal, and that's what they look for; people still within the gravity well of a grief that threatens to destroy them, down to their soul. These are the people crying in the waiting room or a parked car, unmoving at home, putting on a strong face at work. They give their mourning to pets, doctors, volunteers, other survivors, bar tenders, social workers, their dealer. Even when they give their grief to the right people, they're still drowning in it. A Bahari working in any of these roles is introduced to a sea of faces, constantly moving, and if she, like Lilith, is meant to move within a sea… she'll have a mortal in her talons with only a modicum of effort.

Among the children of Caine, Bahari still seek out those with broken hearts and broken will, but they also seek out those who have been deprived justice, as Lilith was. Mortal acolytes who have known injustice are plentiful in every era. But among the children of Caine, the rage and pain of a child taken from them in antiquity, or the husband lost to the hardships of life in a company town — immortality gives these agonizing abuses of an unfair system the chance to become a frozen tableau in what Kindred might call their soul; memories they can't pry out of their minds, because half a world away — if not closer — are the people who orchestrated their agony. They might even ask them about it, from time to time, over the centuries. That painful wrath is Lilith's wrath, and the Bahari will court one of the vampires outside the Garden for as long as it takes to bring that anger to the Dark Mother.

It's rare to have a chance to recruit a mage, or eat a saint, but these delicacies take effort, as does killing the last mortal descendants of a self-important beast who knows his lineage back to Caine. It's possible that if that death rends his heart and brings about his sympathy to the ravages of grief, he could be opened to the truth.

Purists — traditionalists among the Bahari, if one can be described as such — say that initiations and offerings alike don't have to be made, you simply have to pay attention to where the Dark Mother directs you. For those who approach things with the swift and raging sensibility of the modern era, there isn't enough time left to waste on looking around. It's an unpopular sentiment, and in antiquity it smacked of laziness. Those who believe in this Burke-and-Hare shovel discount on observing the teachings and sacrament of Lilith will become the bloody rags and picked-over bones that fertilize one of her beloved Gardens. What the Bahari do with these new recruits is funnel much of their energy into directed violence toward Cainites. The Bahari have no inner circle of any kind to direct any Ba'ham as a puppet, and they rely on a cell-structure for their outward-facing activities, much like those used by terror groups.

The Bahari are an emulation cult, and any individual with a similar tale of woe is a healthy bud waiting to be nurtured into full bloom.

## Bases of Operations

The Bahari are a globe-spanning cult, and have tended Gardens in some places for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Generally, the Gardens have been located somewhere with fertile land and privacy, two things rapidly vanishing in the modern nights. Climate change has killed a number of Bahari, be they unwilling to move a Garden, unable to leave their Garden, or perhaps caught unawares by the shift of time and tide. There has been unease among their number at the increase in groups seeking to build Gardens beneath the waves, where Lilith is said to have lived among the dragons of the dark. Those seeking to nurse poisoned wastes into beauty once again have all died, save but a few known groups whose final fate no one has been able to confirm, including those who chose to go into the Zone Rouge in France after the Great War. Throughout their history, some Ba'ham who sought to heal the Earth did so to heal a measure of the Dark Mother's unimaginable agony from when Caine sullied her Garden and killed her children. They are permanently at odds with the Bahari who prefer a technological and accelerated end to the planet, who will go to their starving, choking deaths with a smile after they have killed every descendant of Adam and Eve, and all of Caine's as well.

In any part of the world, as long as a Ba'ham has a pot of earth (or silt, if the sea-seekers are still alive and well), she is one of the most dangerous things beneath the sun or moon. It doesn't take a forest or a private park to make a Garden, it's simply powerful, and frequently aesthetically pleasing.

## Garden of Hope: Budapest

These nights, the greatest Bahari-led domain is in Budapest. For nearly a millennium the lilin worked in the background of the cities that led to Budapest's formation. In the present era they believe they have finally cultivated the domain into Lilith's new Garden of Hope, and only in the last decade have they emerged at the forefront of domain politics. With the Beckoning calling away so many of Prince Laszlo's allies, the city's Bahari drove the Prince underground and seized the city for their own.

For centuries, the cult influenced the city's Kindred to abide by many of Lilith's precepts, manipulating vampire culture so the Kindred of Budapest were unafraid of death and pursued Golconda without fear, indulged in masochistic activities to prove themselves to each other, and restricted the murder of Kindred and kine to only great sacrificial purposes. Though Prince Laszlo didn't know it, the reason he changed domain laws over the course of the 20th century to suit the ways of the Bahari was because their voices filled his court. He even encouraged feeding from men above all other vessels, though he couldn't explain why.

Steadily, Budapest became the Garden of Hope. Its natural beauty plays a part, the glorious Danube cutting through it like a life-giving vein. Over the years, more Bahari traveled to the domain, reinforcing the cult's rites around other Kindred of the city until these became as natural as the Camarilla Traditions in any other domain. Whenever a Bahari needed to rest for an extended period, they would sink to the bottom of the Danube and bury themselves deep in the riverbed, giving their life to the city and taking the city's life in return upon awakening.

Importantly, as a symbol of the city's role as a domain of hope, the Bahari dedicated much of their time to giving Kindred reason to exist, reason to rise above the Beast's primal needs, and a channel into which they could pour all their anger and self-loathing. For years, unknown to the Prince, the Bahari pursued the path of avenging angels, visiting pain and sometimes death on every abuser named in a newspaper or brought to their attention through anecdote or rumor. The cause became less about justice and more about catharsis, with some Bahari finding their own hold on Humanity slipping, but the fact a domain existed where

vampires could exorcise their guilt and hatred filled many with hope that with guidance, eternity needn't be so cruel.

Now, the domain's leader is a Nosferatu named Natali Tarr, though she goes by the title "Anya," meaning mother. She's the latest in a line of lilin to have led the cult in Budapest, but easily the most ambitious, reaching out to the until-recently torpid Vencel Rikard for assistance in ousting Laszlo. Rikard called in some favors to aid the cult in removing his usurper, but had no ambitions of claiming the domain for himself, content to just damage Laszlo's pride.

The Budapest of tonight is one where at least 60% of the Kindred present are Bahari, with more joining the cult each month. In this domain, Natali's lilin peers have built up a trove of texts in the library of Wenckheim Palace, forming the most complete record of Lilith and her most acclaimed followers' exploits. Natali sends out feelers to Bahari in other domains, inviting them to the Garden of Hope to contribute their experiences and lessons.

The Bahari believe Budapest is heavenly, but as with every domain, vampires on the wrong side of the religious or political divide suffer horribly. The lilin carefully ration feeding grounds for non-believers, deny them the right to Embrace, and persecute them mercilessly when they cross the cult. Likewise, the kine have experienced a rise in sudden deaths via heart attacks, aneurysms, and hemorrhages, knife crime is apparently on the increase, and blood conditions such as anemia have shot up. These issues seem to affect men while non-males appear exempt. The city's Bahari don't hate all men, but if they're to hold to their ideal of avenging abuse, they would argue thatmale hands commit the vast majority of assaults and violent crimes. Some newcomers to the domain take a pre-emptive stance and beat, mentally crush, or just kill men they suspect might one day engage in harmful behavior, with this practice extending to sires who have abused their childer.

The Camarilla are interested in observing how long Budapest can remain a Garden of Hope now that the Bahari are in charge. It could be a case where now that the cult holds power, they don't know how to control it. Or, the Bahari may cement their grip, find a balance between catharsis and purpose, and through Budapest form a paradigm for future domains. Until then, the Kindred of Budapest follow highly modified variants of the Camarilla Traditions and form a bulwark against outside attempts to change their domain structure.

## Goals

The Bahari seek to destroy the Kingdom of Caine, make the world Lilith's, and bring her pain to the living and the dead. How these things are accomplished varies between Gardens, countries, Lhaka, mortals, and the supernatural creatures who have been drawn into the cult. Despite the prohibition against killing, in contrast to sanctified death, there have been lilins throughout history who felt engineering mass casualty events was perfectly acceptable when it allowed for the progress of the cult's goals. New generations of Bahari who subscribe to the permissibility of violence have embraced the new era's methods of death, from car bombs and train derailments to chemical attacks and drone strikes. Their approach to violence shares much with Bahari who seek to destroy the world Cainites inhabit, and that the God so many love created, through pollution and accelerationism. Some target the billionaires seeking to build climate-change-proof bunkers, pledging that their last nights will be spent bringing pain to whoever seeks shelter in such shrines to the denial of death. Others go after small-fry but no less horrible abusers, whether society deems them reformed or not.

To the Gnostics of the Church of Caine in particular, the Bahari vow to systematically destroy their power, comfort, and belief in order to honor the pain of Lilith and achieve

vengeance against those who claim Caine as their forefather. The psychological cataclysm of such a process has resulted in almost as many conversions as it has deaths.

Due to the Bahari's size and uncoordinated nature, any given Ba'ham might pursue personal agendas against solitary targets in emulation of Lilith's lust for vengeance (or justice, if you were to ask the lilin), just as easily as one might be on the verge of founding a doomsday cell entertaining the notion of destroying the local dam and flooding the town so life can grow again from scratch. These vampires believe they are working in Lilith's name to make the world a better place, but if the Bahari have one commonality among them, it is that their ambitions inevitably lead to violence.

Those Ba'ham who cleave deeply to Lilith's role as gardener in a literal sense seek to make the world into one giant Bahari Garden, reversing unsustainable farming and pollution to restore it to a natural state, terrorizing all humans and Cainites left within it until they too either become sacrifices or Bahari themselves, giving Lilith a planet to rule and proving neither the children of Adam nor the Cainites were victors in the end. A minority splinter group believes the planet must be completely covered in water to bring about Lilith's return to the Earth from her throne in darkest night, interpreting the waters' rise in the most literal of senses. These Bahari are in the minority, but they exist, and while a number of them wait for the rest of their cult to catch up with their way of thinking, others are prepared to launch full-scale disasters to start the wheel turning.

## Rites and Rituals

There are all manner of rites and rituals performed by the Bahari, some as frequently as several times a night, others perhaps only once every millennium. The Bahari are an oral tradition by pride and preference, written rites being exceedingly rare. Even the most devoted and murderous lilin looking for surviving written works are lucky to find even fragments of such past worship. Winter is a cherished time for rites that mourn and reflect on Lilith's pain, leaving blood and entrails to steam on the snow before they freeze. Spring is as vicious as the birth pangs felt by the Dark Mother, but any season and nearly any sacrifice can be made within, or to start, a Garden of one's own. At the most basic level, the rites and rituals of the Bahari should contain or celebrate pain, water, death, fertility, sex, excess (particularly of food, blood, etc.), fury, and grief. Marking someone or something for suffering and death would be particularly apt.

Among intrepid lilin who focus their attention on the seas are rituals like the Dark Fall (a sort of whale fall, albeit conducted with a chained Camarilla elder in torpor rather than a deceased cetacean, to bring prey to the denizens of the ocean floor), the Memory of Storm (a dusk-to-dawn vigil in honor of lilin lost in hurricanes), and Deep Songs (a marathon rite praising the creatures that live in the deep trenches, with continuous singing until the rite is done; the first three lilins to falter in the song are sacrificed at sea). These arcane practices have no material benefit, but provide a spiritual calm to the participants, reassuring them that they're following the correct path.

Those preserving the land and the followers who dwell on it have the Song of Poison Gardens (for places poisoned by war or industry, to bleed away the poison and make them worthy of Lilith), Blood and Roses (sacrifices are killed in ghost forests or copses of trees to keep the Garden fertile), and Night of Shadow (lilins who were taken into the Bahari due to exceptional grief are imprisoned in a place of death or sorrow during the Winter Solstice, either to confront their grief and rise above it to serve Lilith, or be sacrificed to keep their Garden untainted by their past).

A lilin is not unmoved by life, or the dictates of their heart. Love, hate, grief, joy, sorrow, all expressions of feeling have their place in the Garden of Lilith. Their depth of feeling keeps them from falling prey to purposeless sadism, dangerous sorrow, or profane lust that would take them away from their purpose. As long as Lilith is first in their lives, and their Gardens second, any and all love, rivalry, or other attachments are treated as natural parts of existence. Whether one of the Bahari is human or something else, an empty heart is an invitation for the wrong things to take root within it. The pride, pointless violence, egotism, abuse, politics, and purposeless lives of the Camarilla and much of humanity are a threat to the purity of Lilith's truth. It is the denial of deep roots, and the disrespect for the fertility of life, that places so many beyond the reach of the Bahari.

## Enemies

The Bahari list of enemies extends across the living, the dead, and plenty of entities who fit neither piece of taxonomy. Nearly all Kindred are potential future Lhaka, but all of them are enemies first, future coreligionists second, unless circumstances make it clear that a particular Kindred could do very little to threaten the Bahari. Even then, someone unassuming could be someone else's catspaw.

Among Kindred, the Toreador and Nosferatu are still afforded a sentimental regard on the part of the Bahari. This can be as gracious as leaving them intact after metaphorically or physically slaughtering everyone around them, to as callous as a lilin saying they will be fair, and letting their quarry have a head start to run before being killed and eaten. The Bahari have their own reasons for long preserving the memory of the Toreador and Nosferatu progenitors' attenuated complicity in the destruction of Lilith's Garden and her children within it. Gnostics of any clan or sect have earned a special place in many Gardens as the centerpieces of sacrificial rites. There is no reason to try and convert a soul so thoroughly defiled.

## Perspectives

**Anarchs:** *They're on the way to a certain form of wisdom, but that's what a lot of alcoholics say after their fifteenth shot. Yes, sometimes freedom for freedom's sake is a cause worth fighting for, and for that they have my respect. Other times, they rail, they swing, and they punch themselves in the face.*

**Camarilla:** *When I observe the Camarilla I see a two-edged blade. Wield it intelligently, benefit from its structure, and find that it's the greatest modern creation of Kindred thought. Rely upon it, forget that it's there, and you'll find yourself cut to ribbons by its politics, backstabbing, and imprisoning hierarchy.*

**Church of Caine:** *We have every reason to despise this group of Gnostic bastards. Even in their own legends, Caine is a murderer, a pig, and a coward. Yet they revere him? It is typical of patriarchal nonsense that this society of theirs would prefer to defer to a flawed man than a near-perfect woman.*

**Church of Set:** *We share some similar principles, and for that they are our kin. Of course, they see it differently, but Ministers, Setites, and the rest are easy to fool if you call Lilith "Sutekh" or another name that appeals to their sensibility. They want to follow, and we can lead them. You just need to apply the correct blinkers.*

**Los Hijos de Si:** *An interesting development none of our legends mention, yet one that grips me whenever I delve into their behavior. Watch and learn, and see if they are of the same or a different Garden as we.*

# New Coterie Type

Though many coteries formed from religious Kindred emerge as blood cults (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 197), the Bahari have their own type of coterie formed through unity among the downtrodden, the marginalized, and the vengeful.

## Nemeses

*"Never again will we or you bend over for these motherfuckers."*

Formed from the ranks of Kindred who were kept down in life or unlife, nemeses coteries exist to ruin their enemies and improve the lot of those who suffered like them. Far from altruistic, most such coteries behave in this way as a form of catharsis, often escalating until vengeance consumes them and all thoughts of questing for equality are long forgotten.

- **Domain:** Chasse (••), Portillon (•)
- **Contacts:** (••) (downtrodden kine)
- **Influence:** (••) (marginalized mortals)
- **Enemy:** (•) (a mortal who the coterie wishes to ruin)
- **Status Flaw:** (•) (Suspect)

**Possible extras:** Herd (survivors), Retainers (survivors)

# New Rituals

The lilin teach each other uncommon powers, that while not exclusive to the Bahari, are rare beyond their ranks. When Bahari hear of other vampires practicing these arts of the Blood, they're quick to pay a visit to the Kindred involved and find out if they represent another chapter of the cult, or if they've stolen these gifts from a more worthy vampire.

Bahari Blood Sorcery exists in the form of Rituals, with the rolls required detailed on p. 275 of **Vampire: The Masquerade** and still requiring dots in Blood Sorcery, unless noted otherwise.

## Level 1

### Coax the Garden

This Ritual allows the caster to bring plant life, such as roots, grass, and tree branches to act in their defense.

- **Ingredients:** Human blood, poppy seeds.
- **Process:** The vampire casts a concoction of human blood and poppy seeds onto the earth, and in doing so rouses all plant life within a 5 yard/meter diameter. While these plants are rarely lethal in their attacks, they can successfully disable and alarm their victims.
- **System:** A successful Ritual roll following the casting of the Ritual ingredients animates the plant life. The affected flora causes −2 to all dice pools for those caught in the range of the Ritual, as plants trip and grip them. Victims who stay in the area for longer than a turn must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 3) or be grappled and suffer one point of Superficial Health damage for each turn ensnared. If the caster achieves a critical win, the damage from plant attacks doubles. On a total failure, the plants attack the caster. The plants will target anyone who isn't the caster. They remain active until the end of the scene.

## Level 5

### Eden's Bounty

This rare Ritual allows a vampire to drain blood and energy from any living creatures in the nearby area, allowing the caster to stave off Hunger without even having to bare their fangs.

- **Ingredients:** A dead body, a living tree, one fresh apple, one rotten apple.
- **Process:** The vampire lays a dead body (age of the corpse is immaterial) at the foot of a tree and places the healthy apple in the corpse's mouth, followed by the rotten apple into the vampire's. If the apple does not fit in the corpse's mouth, the caster may hammer it in, dislocate the jaw, or otherwise rend the throat open, so long as it fits. As the body rapidly merges with the tree's roots and trunk, blood from mortals up to 1 mile/kilometer away drains into the earth and out through the rotten apple in the vampire's mouth, sating Hunger.
- **System:** The player makes a Ritual roll following the placement of the corpse and the apples. The vampire's Hunger reduces by one for each success. On a critical win, the Hunger level drops to zero. On a total failure, the vampire falls into a Hunger frenzy. Depending on the number of kine in the Ritual area and the type of kine nearby, more Stains may accrue; vampires draining blood from children in a rural hospital will likely gain Stains, while practicing this Ritual in a park in the middle of a big city is less likely to have an ethical cost. A lot of blood is wasted with this Ritual, as all the mortals in the area lose a little blood to the earth, though the loss is not visible. For the remainder of the chapter, those kine suffer −1 die to all Physical rolls and 1 Aggravated Health damage.

> What of Golconda?
>
> Golconda is the semi-mythical state of enlightenment hundreds of vampires talk about, but nobody seems able to attain. In truth, some Kindred do reach a point where they exist more in harmony with their Beast, where they're capable of suppressing some of their curses, and where they can even pose as mortal without significant effort, but this heavenly state comes at great cost. For some, they must lose all mortal connection and become akin to a cold-eyed, hunting shark to find such peace. For others, they must diablerize their sire and study in the fallen vampire's wake, retrace their steps, and meditate until ready to feed their soul to their own childe. Beyond that, some Kindred find Golconda through being more human than human, abandoning Kindred society entirely, and existing as a paragon of good and joy until their inevitable fall.
>
> Importantly, there is no single route to Golconda, despite what the adherents of the One True Way (see p. XX) believe. It is possible to attain Golconda as an adherent of the Church of Set, through liberation of Touchstones and Convictions, just as it is as a Bahari, through sacrifice of all enemies and those who might harm you and your loved ones. A Mithraist may find inner peace through commitment to law and hierarchy, while a Shalimite may find the same through the absence of all things. Golconda may be a perfect state for some Kindred, but to those not at that level, the vampire who has reached Golconda is often alien, detached, and terrifying.

# The Church of Caine

*"It is time to revel in the truth of our condition. All Cainites must be taught. They must know their truth. For as they know themselves, you will know the Dark Father."*

— Arch Verger Alexi Farmer, Defender of the Immaculate Church of the Dark Father, Detroit

**[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]**

SoSL undead religions study. So-called "Church of Caine," believed gnostic group. Meeting between undead titled "Cardinal" (name unknown), undead named "Pygram" sometimes titled "Deacon," and undead named "Jehoshebah" (no title listed), no dialogue recorded, as her voice came through as static. Recorded with directional microphone by Father Glas in Miami, FL. Father Glas apologizes for interruptions to transcript based on moving vehicles and Jehoshebah static interference.

<1.22.19.24.32.51.63 RECORDING BEGINS>

**Cardinal:** —group will never amount to more than a heresy. It was purged once before.

**Pygram:** We won't be purged again. The Cainites need faith now more than ever, and the old ways of your sect have failed them.

**Cardinal:** Is it arrogance that compels you to believe they would flock to your temple? Why would anyone so recently alive believe in Caine. Why would they believe themselves as angels? It's a folly. Pygram, my friend, you can still join us in our crusade. There's still time.

**Pygram:** I thought on it, your Eminence. I prayed on it.

**Cardinal:** And?

**Pygram:** Caine answered me. The Dark Father spoke in my daytime dreams and said the true heresy was within your church of cannibalism. That now was the time to accept our divinity and allow you to destroy yourselves as the Amalekites and Canaanites were judged and—.

[Sounds of traffic eliminate nearly a minute of discussion at this point.]

**Cardinal:** —never seize the hearts and minds of Kindred, no matter whether you call yourself "Deacon." Your prophecies hold no more weight than those of a preacher on a box, on the side of the road. You give yourself and your followers over to a lie, and for what? What's your angle?

**Pygram:** Your use of the word "Kindred" shows me how far you've fallen. There is no angle but for salvation. Golconda. Recognition from Caine himself and elevation to his level. Caine was ordained with the rite of bloodshed because God wanted it that way. He is an angel and we are his cherubs.

[Pause lasting 25 seconds. Car pulls over.]

**Cardinal:** You will see yourself killed if you speak this way in any but the weakest Anarch domains.

[Car door opens and closes.]

**Cardinal:** Jehoshebah, I'm pleased you could join us. Please tell me Pygram does not speak for all of you.

**Jehoshebah:** [White noise for 11 seconds.]

**Pygram:** Your time is up. Go join your legions. Fight in your Battle of Ramoth-Gilead. When only the wounded remain, they will find our church waiting for them with open arms.

**Jehoshebah:** [White noise for 24 seconds.]

**Cardinal:** No. No, I will not join you. Vampires are not divine. We are not angels. I agree we are the dominant predator, but you use faith to justify your monstrosity, and I remember what happened the last time you tried to do so. Good luck in surviving this Inquisition.

[Car door opens and closes.]

**Pygram:** Remember doubting Thomas. We will show the Cardinal the truth of our faith and he will respond to direct personal experience. Or, he will never find his way to the cargo ship designated to take him to Morocco.

**Jehoshebah:** [White noise for 35 seconds.]

**Pygram:** Yes, a fine example.

[Car pulls away and outdistances our recording hardware.]

<RECORDING ENDS>

**[/LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT ENDS]**

## The Heresy Falls

For over a thousand years, a vampire subsect of Gnostic Christianity operated within Cainite society. This group, known to some as the Crimson Curia, to others as the Church of Caine, and to their enemies as the Cainite Heresy, posited that Caine was God's divine angel of murder who had absorbed the soul of Christ, and that all vampires were his children and just as blessed. It was their divine mission to cull the weak, turn the living hell of the world into a heaven, dominate the Catholic Church, and usher in the Time of Caine, or third resurrection of Caine and Jesus, prophesized to arrive in the year 1239 CE.

The Cainite Heresy subverted the faith of mortals and vampires alike, its adherents believing themselves to be God's chosen predators. Most importantly for other vampires, their actions inside and outside the mortal Church drew the attention of the Catholic Inquisition as well as hunters from the ranks of the Muslims of Iberia. In a rare show of unity, imams sided with churchmen and put the torch to the Cainite Heresy before their Time of Caine could arrive. The parent clan of most of these "Gnostics" was the Lasombra, and along with vampires of the Banu Haqim and Clan Brujah they hunted down the remaining stragglers.

The Church of Caine reached its end close to the time when mortal Gnosticism was declared a heresy punishable by death. Just as the Catholic Church had no more patience for rival faiths within its own sphere, the Lasombra ran out of tolerance for the Church of Caine's increasingly aberrant views of Earth as hell, vampires as angels, and mortals as soulless cattle. Vampires who knew of the cult's denouement celebrated its fall, and those who campaigned against it worked hard to scrub the cult's name from the scant Cainite history books that recorded it.

## The Heresy Rises

The idea of a Demiurge on high, responsible for all the evil in the world, alleviating of that responsibility the perpetrators of criminal acts, is a reassuring one to some. Vampires have a tendency to find excuses for their terrible acts, and when one can point elsewhere and say "He made me that way," it — at least in the mind of the vampire — helps absolve them of their sins. Not that the modern Church of Caine are truly looking for absolution.

The re-emergence of the Gnostics in the modern nights is a subject of great mystery and conjecture. Few Kindred recall the original Cainite Heresy, most being Beckoned, succumbing to the sleep of ages, or destroyed in the last eight centuries. While some believe the rising Gnostic tide must be at the beck and call of methuselahs who wisely slept instead

of facing the torches of the Inquisition 800 years ago, the modern Church of Caine shows few of the hallmarks of a methuselah-led cult. They don't have a hierarchy based on age, they care little for lineage and clan, and their centralized power comes in the form of the renewed Crimson Curia — a council of priests — rather than a single, ancient figurehead.

Of course, the other conclusion is that Caine brought the Church back into being, though there's no evidence to show he was ever around to see the Church in its original form, let alone approve of its purpose or methods. The idea that this cult may exist in direct service to Caine is a thought that undoubtedly troubles many Kindred, however, and leads a surprising number to join its ranks just to err on the side of caution. If the Dark Father *is* real, awake, and leading a sizable cult, better to be on his side.

What is known, is the Church of Caine has leaked out of the darkness again, with its words, beliefs, and practices becoming visible for the first time in centuries following the Beckoning's commencement. The Church claims Caine himself calls his errant childer to fill his long-empty veins, and only the Church will be saved. Caine is the face, voice, and mind of the Demiurge in this hell on Earth, and he will not be denied. His angels will ascend with him once the rest of the world accepts their place as the meek and the fallen. Until then, his will be done.

## Hell on Earth

The Church of Caine has long held the view that the world is divided into many planes of existence, with the Demiurge above all, and his angels governing the ranks of the unknowing. At each level of awareness, an individual grows closer to becoming an angel themselves, but these levels go down as well as up, and the farther down one descends, the closer they come to being damned forever.

This view may seem incompatible in a modern world, but to vampires of the Church, and mortals who believe themselves more enlightened — through intellect, influence, money, or even charm — it's a rational view. It's a class society imposed by a supreme power, and it makes sense to an amoral mindset. The Church of Caine for instance believes that while the Demiurge is all-seeing and all-knowing, he sends a representative (sometimes more than one) to Earth to mete out his will. Specifically, the Church posits, this representative is Caine, though infamous vampires such as Sutekh and Mithras may have been his angels as well, and Lilith certainly fits the mold of an angel who couldn't help but abuse her power and fall. The Antediluvians were likewise angels, but fought Caine's children and therefore fell from grace. They still deserve punishment for this. Likewise, humans with proficiency in angelic arts — whom the Tremere call mages — are of greater importance and value than the sleeping kine.

Earth is not a median point in this cosmic theory. Earth is hell, and receiving the Embrace is a step toward escaping that hell. All worlds layer on top of each other, so it is possible to exist in heaven and hell at the same time, but divine right grants one resilience against hell's slings and arrows. At least, that's the Church of Caine's theory behind Disciplines such as Fortitude, and their reasoning for why all their powers are symbolic of the type a god might use against a mere mortal.

## Sublimating Divinity into Society

Gnostics have forged never-before-seen paths into the Ivory Tower and the rekindled Anarch Movement. Their gospel celebrating the vampiric condition has seldom been heard within these sects. This message is surprisingly accepted, if not enjoyed, by the "Kindred," who wish to come to some deeper sense of understanding of their damnation. Some

Camarilla domains have received word from one Justicar — Juliet Parr of Clan Malkavian — that they are not to oppose this new missionary work. The running theory among some Kindred is that Parr belongs to the Heresy, or one of her ancestors did and now speaks with her through the Blood, but equally likely is that Parr wants no internal conflict while the Inquisition is watching. The absence of the Sabbat helps the Camarilla and Anarch Movements greatly, so why start a new war when these priests aren't striking out with anything but words?

The Church of Caine's belief system is unlike most widespread mortal religions of these nights, so their dogma is one rarely delivered in full to vampires of any sect, at least not until vampires have shown willingness and acceptance of the Gnostic reality. To start, most Gnostics introduce their belief that Caine was chosen by God and all vampires are likewise blessed children, uplifted to the role of divine predators. This is a belief many vampires can understand, as most know the story of Caine and Abel and most realize they possess more power than when they were mortal. Tales of layered planes of reality, vampires as angels of murder, all beings as spirits trapped in a liminal state, and Earth being equivalent to hell tend to follow much later.

The Gnostics find themselves occupying an unexpected role within Cainite society. While they themselves rarely use the term "Golconda," Kindred who know of the legendary state of being see the way Gnostics believe in ascension and divinity, and the peace with which they hold their faith, and wonder if this cult is the key to Golconda. For its part, the Church of Caine makes no promises that a follower will achieve a state where they "lose their curse," as its doctrine is adamant vampires aren't cursed, but blessed. That blessing may grow as a vampire acquires wisdom and strength, and that may be what others call Golconda, but to tell a Gnostic they're cursed by God is a good way to earn an adversary.

## Ad Limina

Despite its recent appearance, the Church of Caine draws vampires as old as ancillae, with at least one elder serving as a member of the modern Crimson Curia. Something of the cult draws vampires in, whether through talk of Caine, reassurance that their state as vampires is not unclean or damned, or because of the hope for ascendancy from hell once the Time of Caine arrives again. According to the Crimson Curia's prophecies, that time will come soon, having been forestalled from the previous appointed time in 1239 CE. They claim Caine arose and found his church absent, and so in great sorrow destroyed the boundary between worlds and fell into a deep slumber. Kindred scholars wonder at what boundary this story relates to, whether geographical — as the appointed time was close to that of the Mongol Invasion into Europe — or spiritual, annihilating a layer between hell and heaven, or bringing the deepest level of hell closer to the surface. The tale is likely apocryphal, but vampires in cults make for dedicated theologians.

The Church's outward confidence aside, many new converts to the faith exist in constant fear of the Sabbat bringing forth all its fury down upon them. They worry the sect will return from its crusade stronger, having devoured a flock of angels, and will visit the same wrath on the Gnostics that the Inquisition and traitor clans did eight centuries ago. The Church amasses lore to defend itself and reaches out for allies within the Cainite populace. Their current catechism is of unity, "compassion," and conversion, reaching out to those less fortunate and providing what help they can give. This religious instruction coincides with Gnostic teachings and revealing of the truth, wherein all vampires are Cainites, those of Caine, and his blessed children.

The Lasombra defection to the Camarilla poses an interesting conundrum for the Church, as while the Cainite Heresy of old mostly consisted of Lasombra, it was other Lasombra who directed the faith's purge. For now, the few vampires who recall these details — most of whom are Lasombra anyway, or were told the stories of the Cainite Heresy by older Magisters — prepare for the Night Clan to once again visit destruction or manipulation on their order. Old habits die hard and they expect many Lasombra will assume the church is theirs to wield or crush as it once was before. The Church is content to provide guidance to most Kindred, but treads warily around the Night Clan at this time.

The reconstructed Church of Caine aims to rebuild an official magisterium, a codified scripture, review and revise their holy sacraments, and write canon law that will be both easily disseminated and protect the congregations. Then there is the defense of the new Holy Cainite Empire in Heaven, which may not exist in any meaningful way as yet, but will soon if the Crimson Curia's plans come to fruition. With the Second Inquisition's control over most forms of travel, the Church struggles to find a way to build all the answers needed to finish these tasks. The faith's parishes have been content with building their own local traditions and denominations, all with a different dogma, creating a tapestry of faith much more diverse than previously expected.

This is a time of new freedoms, an age of enlightenment constructing a marketplace of ideas for Cainites to partake in and defend. Some Gnostics appreciate this freedom, others fear the heresies that will inevitably spring up to challenge the new order. Some churches have already begun venerating the Second Generation as saints or bodhisattvas of the higher Cainite pantheon. These parishes are rare though, as above all things, Caine is mighty and glorious. There are even rumors of parishes who venerate both Caine and Lilith, though the Bahari are still perceived as vile enemies to most Cainites and burned out as the heresy they are.

## Church Hierarchy

The Church of Caine upholds a hierarchy resembling a blend of the Medieval Catholic Church, modern Gnostic churches, and even the Eastern Orthodox Church. To the cynical vampire, the church hierarchy structure is just a means to exert control and has little bearing on the spiritual significance of the vampire holding the rank of "deacon" or "bishop," but curiously, the modern Church of Caine eschews the idea that only the eldest may hold the most important roles. This vampire religion rewards merit, which may come to fracture the organization when elders refuse to shift from their long-held roles.

### Congregation / The Flock

The bulk of vampires who consider themselves faithful Gnostics, Cainites, or simply believers, are referred to as "the congregation" or "the flock." Individual vampires at this level believe in Caine as the progenitor and uphold the belief that they are divinely mandated as predators. Despite the latter belief, the congregation are far from uncontrollable monsters. Their superiors in the Church teach Gnostics how to unleash their Beast, how to satisfy the urge to frenzy, and how best to retain one's Humanity while accepting the nature of an undead blood-drinker. Members of the flock are permitted to hear the cult's liturgy but cannot witness the sacraments.

### Doorkeepers

The ancient role of doorkeeper was assigned to churches to prevent their persecution by other faiths, opposing societies and governments, and sabotage from unhappy citizens. This guard role exists to this night, with those vampires more disposed to violence (whether doling it out or preventing it) more likely assigned this title than one responsible for administering the

faith. Doorkeepers are more than hired muscle, as they're expected to still attend services and participate in the sacraments, but they are also the first vampires opponents of the Church will see, if threats or delivery of violence is required.

Doorkeepers tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (•).

### Acolytes

Acolytes of the Church of Caine are responsible for several duties, including arranging safe venues for Gnostics to meet, ensuring priests are equipped with the tools and apparel needed to perform their ministerial duties, and hunting down artifacts important to the Church. This varied role is commonly the first title a vampire earns upon formally joining the Church of Caine, with each acolyte having performed at least one firewalk (see p. XX). Acolytes often act as audiences to encourage or cajole others participating in the sacraments.

Acolytes tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (•).

### Vergers

The verger is a vampire who wanders from domain to domain teaching others of the liturgy, the Demiurge, and Caine, in the most non-controversial terms. These roving preachers vary in importance from nominal Gnostic mouthpieces to cult leaders building larger and larger followings. The most notorious vergers are known as arch vergers. They hold no influence over the Church of Caine's formal hierarchy, but in this era when the Second Inquisition scrutinize cult-like behavior and strange reports of priests administering blood to their congregations, the merits of being a traveling holy person sometimes outweigh those of being a leader with a static flock.

Vergers tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (•) and at least one dot of Streetwise.

### Lectors

Lectors act as readers during church services. The role is largely honorific, as when not performing for the flock, they occupy the same standing as acolytes. The major difference is in the confidence given to a lector, as a priest or deacon speaks with them on matters of faith and expects the lector to read from the texts important to the Church of Caine with earnest belief and understanding.

Lectors tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (••) and rarely have fewer than two dots in Occult, with a Specialty in Gnosticism.

### Deacons

Deacons hold administrative power in the Church of Caine. While they might stand in for a priest to perform services, it's more likely the deacons busy themselves with upholding the financial, bureaucratic, and personnel end of the Church. This sounds mundane, but the power deacons wield over the channeling of wealth in and out of the Church, and the prestige awarded to members of the flock and the acolytes beneath them, is impressive. Deacons are effectively the Harpies of the Church of Caine. In terms of reporting, deacons bypass priests and report to the bishops and Crimson Curia itself. Gnostics cannot become priests of Caine before they have held the title of deacon.

Deacons generally hold Status: Church of Caine (••) and rarely have fewer than two dots in Politics or Finance.

### Priests / Church Leaders

Responsible for overseeing the sacraments, administering Church doctrine, and keeping the faithful community whole and growing, there are few roles within the Church of Caine so

visible and so immediately influential as that of the priest. Priests might read from ancient religious texts verbatim, schooling their flock on the word of Caine, or they might lead a congregation with their own interpretation of Caine's will. Priests carry enough power in their words and actions to form schisms without knowing it, and for that reason their actions remain closely observed by deacons who report priest behavior to the bishops, while priests report on flock behavior to those same bishops. Every city with a contingent from the Church of Caine must have a priest, even if that requires bringing a priest in from a separate domain. Without a vampire who knows the rites and dogma, there is no Church.

Priests hold Status: Church of Caine (•••) or higher, and each has at least three dots in Occult, with a Specialty in Gnosticism, or sometimes, Catholicism. Most have some proficiency in the Presence Discipline.

### Bishops

The Church of Caine's bishops — of which a select few form the Crimson Curia — are responsible for keeping the entire order together, furthering the Dark Father's agenda (such as they interpret it), creating new sacraments, interpreting ancient texts and myths, and acting as spiritual centers when domains run the risk of falling due to priestly absence or failures (though they often delegate this role to powerful deacons). Bishops possess the ability to order sweeping changes across the faith, though before any major decisions are made they must form a conclave of at least nine vampires from the Church of Caine, five or more of whom must be at the bishop or deacon rank.

Bishops tend to hold Status: Church of Caine (••••) and possess at least four dots in Occult and three in Politics. Most hold proficiency in Auspex, so they can glean deep insights into the priests and deacons beneath them.

### The Metropolitan

There is no metropolitan in the Church of Caine, though if there were one, it would be Caine or a vampire who could believably channel his will and direction. The Church of Caine is growing swiftly enough to warrant the appointment of a proxy metropolitan in the next few years, just due to the benefit of having a strong autocrat in charge of such an organization, though the Crimson Curia may overrule any such appointment. Most bishops agree a metropolitan is a necessity for some night in the future, but few are prepared to nominate an untested vampire. They wish to avoid electing a metropolitan, only to see them suffer the Beckoning or suddenly become a target for the Second Inquisition, and so the bishops for now have agreed the Crimson Curia is sufficient, until a suitable candidate reveals themself.

The theoretical metropolitan of the Church of Caine holds Status: Church of Caine (•••••).

## Church Dogma

At its core, the Church of Caine believes it is a vampire's destiny for the Demiurge to select them, make them as holy as Caine, and take them to his right side. To achieve this requires controlling one's Beast, not to become a pacifist or vegan, but to gain the ability to let it off the leash in a measured manner. The most successful predators in the world are not those that mindlessly savage in a whirlwind, but those who stalk, hunt, kill, and devour, leaving just enough bones to make their presence known.

The Church preaches the words of Caine as recorded by experts and seers of the Crimson Curia, and their belief in Kindred as blessed. Their faith is one of trial and victory, in which vampires must prove they're worthy of the love of the Demiurge and of Caine, and when the time comes — and it will come soon, the Crimson Curia says — they must be there to see

and assist in the third rising of angels, sometimes called “the resurrection,” otherwise known as the “Time of Caine.”

The belief that the world is a layered hell with strata of deserving and undeserving individuals, some of whom are being punished for sins they committed eons ago, before they came to possess their current forms, is one all the Church priests come to understand and believe in. As soon as a Gnostic accepts this reality, it makes feeding and killing a lot easier. The moral damage can be severe, but the detachment from the basic human perception of Earth brings one to a new state of enlightenment.

To ascend toward heaven, the cult maintains a vampire must be capable of overcoming their fear of hell’s weapons. The Church of Caine do not believe the Demiurge made vampires vulnerable to fire, but rather, this burden is a holdover from their time among hell’s denizens. After all, are mortals not harmed by fire too? They reason Caine must be immune to this element by now, so they must attempt to be the same way, and so the Church preaches that Gnostics must defeat the fire by staring at it, handling it, and walking through it. The same will apply to sunlight, when a Gnostic is powerful enough.

Arguably the most controversial of the cult’s beliefs is in diablerie as a necessary sacrament. If the Crimson Curia deem a vampire unworthy of their layer in the hierarchy between heaven and hell — usually due to some grievous crime committed against the Church, in the name of Caine, or because they’re a vocal, influential proponent of another faith — the Curia advocates for their diablerie. The Gnostics believe all spirits exist in a cycle and just reform on a lower level when their flesh vessel is destroyed. The only way to prevent this is through the divine act of devouring the soul. While practiced rarely, it is not forbidden, nor is it withheld for any reason other than appearances. The Church of Caine has not yet gained sufficient allies to make diablerie an acceptable ritual in Camarilla and Anarch domains, but they’re biding their time.

Gnostic Convictions

Gnostics often adopt the following Convictions to help them maintain their sense of self while pursuing their faithful existence:

- **Never unwillingly allow the Beast to take over**

Exercising restraint by never succumbing to the extremes of behavior is vital to becoming a renowned vampire in the Church of Caine. Wild, uncontrollable animals find the entire jungle working against them, whereas cool, calculating predators find their stomachs full and their presence unnoticed.

- **Never succumb to fear**

Willpower is all-important to these vampires, who believe that in order to emulate (or even surpass) Caine, one must harden one’s mind against hell’s weaponry. Gnostics are expected to sample a snatch of sunlight, walk through fire, and adorn themselves with holy symbols, just to show their defiance and power.

- **Let nobody prevent you from growing closer to Caine**

This Conviction can be interpreted in multiple ways, but generally refers to the cult’s desire to build its knowledge of Caine and of the Church’spredecessors from the first millennium. Other Gnostics with this Conviction believe any attempt to interfere with cult sacraments is to be punished, and frenzy if someone tries to stop their actions.

- **Feed only from hell’s denizens**

All Gnostics agree some mortals are more worthy than others, and depending on the domain, may have selected some strata of mortal society to exempt from hunting. They believe all others are beings in hell, and there to sate the hungers and whims of angels above them. Some Gnostics might use this as justification to commit diablerie, if a vampire has fallen far enough from Caine's grace.

- **Do not consort with the lowest beings of hell**

The Church of Caine believes strongly that all vampires are angels or blessed, and spending time in the company of devils is a fine way to make oneself fall. Many Gnostics cut away unnecessary mortal ties that might inhibit them from progression within the Church.

- **Never brook an insult to Caine's divinity**

This Conviction leads to more conflicts than probably any other, but is fundamental to the Church of Caine's beliefs: Caine is divine, he is the Dark Father of all vampires, and he is to be revered. Any who doubt that should receive correction and education. Any who insult that should receive punishment. Caine is the angel of murder and hunting, and the Church will not hear him be referred to as some common murderer.

## Sacraments

While it is true the parish structure of the cult allows for disparities in the way liturgy is delivered and how Caine's role in the world is described, there are certain defined sacraments universal to all members. While many of these are being revised and blended together currently, these sacraments are propagated as universal gifts of the Dark Father.

Those Cainites who hold the titles of priest or verger generally teach these rites to the flock. These vampires are protectors and defenders of the gospel of the Dark Father. Part preacher and part templar, these vampires act as a communiqué between the parishes, delivering letters and artifacts between church leaders, and helping to develop sacraments and canon law.

### The Sacrament of Valediction

When initiated into the Church of Caine, a Cainite focuses upon leaving one's previous life and accepting the state of being of a vampire. In modern nights, the Church of Caine performs this rite as a symbolic act, but one filled with terror nonetheless.

A dedicant of the Church must openly name and describe one fear they held within their mortal lives or recent vampire existence and explain how they plan to go about ridding themselves of it. Only by witnessing their lack of fear can they be fully initiated into the Church by sacrament, usually with a drop of blood or vitae upon the new member's forehead. Every member of a parish must take part in this rite, and even older members routinely rededicate themselves to Caine by participating in this sacrament, to show to the congregation their deeper ecclesiastical understanding of the Gnostic mysteries.

**System:** The vampire must name one of their fears and allow other members of the cult to expose them to it. The vampire's player must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll (Difficulty 5) or succumb to a terror frenzy the other members of the congregation will allow. Once the frenzy is overcome or the fear withstood, the vampire regains a point of Willpower (if any have been lost) and when facing this fear the next time, may reduce the Difficulty by 1. Vampires may attempt to lie about their fear to complete the sacrament, but doing so conveys no benefit and requires a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll against the church leader's Wits + Insight.

## The Sacrament of Exculpation

Once referred to as a "Sermon of Caine," this rite sees members of the congregation invoking the flaws of their bloodline while quoting stories or passages from the *Book of Nod*. The participants need to present how their quotations can help Cainites in their present situation. The sacrament invites vigorous discourse and the possibility of social conflicts and resolutions, as the practicing theologians debate the modern merits of the *Book of Nod*. The debates are often used to show the folly of vampires closer to hell or to highlight wisdom found in angelic Caine's words.

Demonstrating a clan bane differs from vampire to vampire, but for a Nosferatu it might mean participating in sacrament rite with no disguise in place, or for a Hecata they would need to feed from a vessel in front of the other practitioners, despite the anguish caused. Some vampires find their banes harder to invoke than others, but for those who have truly situational curses, they are free to just discuss the problems and fears they possess surrounding their weaknesses, and how these weaknesses keep them locked in hell.

Enlightenment gleaned from this sacrament comes through self-awareness, as when the participants discuss and demonstrate their respective clan banes and Caine's verses, they accept themselves for what they are and find hope in their ancestor's words. Vampires who participate openly in this sacrament always feel refreshed and reinvigorated upon its conclusion.

**System:** The test involving the clan bane differs depending on the participants' clans. When demonstrating a clan bane or confessing to a way in which the bane has severely impeded them, the vampire's player makes a Resolve + Composure roll (Difficulty 3), with a successful roll granting the vampire a temporary dot of Humanity (providing they don't exceed a rating of 10) that disappears at the end of the chapter. Failing at this roll results in 1 Superficial Willpower damage.

## The Sacrament of Firewalking

One of the most emblematic sacrament of the Church of Caine sees them walking through fires of varying size and ferocity to demonstrate how they have risen above the weaknesses of hell's creatures. Different branches of the Church argue the ultimate purpose of such a potentially destructive sacrament, and whether it's in fact an insult to Caine and the Demiurge to test one's curses in such a way, but as a measure of a vampire's will few sacraments compete.

The Church of Caine typically makes its newest adherents walk down a narrow corridor of lit candles or lamps, surrounding them with several minor sources of fire. The fires increase with the prestige of the vampire. When attempting to achieve title in the Church, or following another great act for which the vampire desires acclaim, a firewalk takes place as a way of punctuating the vampire's worthiness. The fires in such tests are often long pathways of burning coals or recently broken up burning bonfires or haybales. To become a verger or other church leader a vampire must successfully pass through a roaring fire without succumbing to fear, maybe in the form of walking through a standing bonfire, or perhaps having to traverse an obstacle course of burning tires and rooms — the sacraments depend as much on the sadism of the priest in charge as they do the beliefs of the congregation.

In all cases, physical injury is expected. Vampires with Fortitude resist harm more easily than other participants, but the physical scars are less important than the vampire's ability to withstand the fear. If they are able to pass through the fire without hesitating or frenzying, the vampire feels completely in control of their Beast.

**System:** To pass through any of the trials of flame requires a roll to resist terror frenzy (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 220) and exposure to fire damage (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 221). Successfully completing a firewalk heals all Superficial Willpower damage, and if the walk was through particularly dangerous fire, between 1 and 3 points of Aggravated Willpower damage. The harder the trial, the more likely the Storyteller will reward the character with a dot of Status: Church of Caine, which can then be purchased with experience, or disappears at the end of the chapter.

## Cainite Dominion: St. Louis

St. Louis has always been a contentious domain, swinging from one sect to the next as wars raged between Kindred interests. These nights, the battlefield has changed. Street crime is down, reports of supernatural activity have dried up — at least as far as FIRSTLIGHT are concerned — and the Sabbat have, as with most American cities, moved on. The war for St. Louis now is for its soul, and the souls of the vampires within it. Presently, the warring cults are evenly contested, but rumor holds that influential vampires from within the Camarilla support the Church of Caine in the Gateway to the West.

The Gnostics in St. Louis have adopted a stance of aggressive Caine reverence, leaning into the evangelical. They display the results of their faith in secret ceremonies and displays for other Kindred, manipulating flame and showing no fear of fire like carnival freaks looking to impress a crowd. They show reverence for the city's elders, its remaining Primogen, and the fallen Prince, just due to these vampires' age. They claim that proximity to Caine brings a vampire closer to heaven and thus, farther from the hell fledglings inhabit, making the Gnostics ready servants of the Camarilla's hierarchy. The cult routinely meets with notable Camarilla vampires in Busch Stadium or Six Flags St. Louis, in the belief that ostentatious displays of mortal hubris and wealth at once humble the undead while simultaneously reminding them of the arrogant hell in which they reside.

Crucially, St. Louis' Gnostics turned the tide of Kindred opinion in favor of the controversially brutal Chief Inspector (the Lou's version of a Sheriff, who has weathered the sectarian storms) further to his diablerie of three Masquerade-breakers. Though Chief Inspector Oubier's punishment of these three vampires was unorthodox and inhumane, tantamount to cannibalism in most domains, the Gnostics acted as bodyguards to the vicious Malkavian and extolled his actions as the will of Caine and in the best interests of the domain. They successfully persuaded the city's Anarchs that without Oubier's brutality, the city would have been the next target on the Second Inquisition's list, thereby slumping even farther into hell. What the Church of Caine actually wants with a deranged killer like Oubier is unknown outside the cult. The Gnostics know, however, that he is of significant blood potency and generation, and will make for an adequate figure of worship, before becoming a martyr, a saint, and an icon for the Church and city. The cult is adept at spinning horrifying acts into gripping parables, and intends to do the same with the "passions" of Oubier.

St. Louis' Church of Caine are far from unassailable. The city contains plentiful rival cultists from among the Bahari, Mithraists, and even a couple of Nephilim. Each wants a chance to steer the city through its period of conflict and come out as the primary power player. Where the Gnostics differ, is in their lack of desire to rule. The cult genuinely wants to pull the city from hell and into heaven, even if that requires the sacrifice of every vampire who opposes their view of Caine and codified laws for hunting and herding the kine, to remind them of their place at the bottom of the food chain. They're not going to appoint a Prince to rule the domain, nor are they going to try running a theocracy, instead believing that spiritual dominion over St. Louis is more than sufficient.

The Gnostics in the Gateway City have adopted a formal structure around Bishop Jehoshebah, who makes her haven in the abandoned Eastern State Penitentiary with several of her Gnostic kin. A Lasombra who claims to be a member of the original Church of Caine, Jehoshebah says she voluntarily adopted a torpid state in the 13th century CE. Though few know if her words are true, she carries a body of impressive, believable tales, and regularly demonstrates her command over the Blood to cow Gnostics and unbelievers alike. She claims the Beckoning has no effect on her because she communes directly with Caine. Supposedly, he intervenes in the summons while she has work to do in the Americas. In truth, her Cainite generation is far from what one might expect of a near-900 year old vampire, but she speaks with enough conviction to convince others of her power.

Around Bishop Jehoshebah and the upcoming martyr Oubier, the cult commands six vampires — a mixture of priests and deacons — to handle different aspects of the city, each acting as a go-between for the Church and the Camarilla, Anarchs, kine, and other cults, respectively. Some take a militant stance and employ coteries of doorkeepers to protect them as they spread the Gnostic word, while others tread softly, such as with the city's Camarilla Kindred, offering spiritual advice and "evidence" of their progress on the journey to Golconda, all to win converts and turn the Gateway to the West into a heavenly domain, at least by Gnostic standards.

## Perspectives

**Anarchs:** *A surprising fertile ground to till for worship, though the Ministry have their hooks in with talk of spiritual liberty. I believe we could do wonders with this sect, however, if we could convince prominent Barons to accept their roles as Caine's appointed descendants and leaders of Cainites.*

**Bahari:** *At least they don't have the temerity to refer to Lilith as an angel. She was, but no longer. She fell just like the Antediluvians fell, and just like all of hell's creatures fell. They are misguided, and I feel they should be the last cult we attempt to save. They need to learn to suffer.*

**Camarilla:** *Just two decades ago I would have balked at the idea of working within the Camarilla, but just as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (among countless other religions) have undergone spates of persecution (some longer than others), we are in a period of quiet worship and the Camarilla is the best-placed sect for such. We offer them our support and influence within mortal religious bodies, they offer us their protection.*

**Church of Set:** *Are they a clan or a religious order? How can one be Embraced into a belief system? While I understand the idea of baptism and indoctrination from birth (or the Embrace, in our case), their entire structure seems more based on brainwashing than actual faith. That, and so many other reasons, puts us at odds with this cult.*

**Servitors of Irad:** *We would know more of this fellowship. Few cults rise to worship Caine's first childer, so it begs the question whether they know more of the Demiurge's chosen than most other, non-Gnostic Kindred..*

# New Rituals

The Lure of Flames is the thaumaturgical embodiment of victory over fear. Pioneered by vampires of Clan Tremere, the Church of Caine heavily utilizes these powers as part of their sacraments and their arsenal against enemies of the faith. It is both a way to protect oneself from the bane of fire and a weapon used to instill both injury and terror in the enemy.

This form of Blood Sorcery exists in the form of Rituals, with the rolls required detailed on p. 275 of **Vampire: The Masquerade**, unless noted otherwise.

# Level 1

## Dampen the Fear

This Ritual allows the caster to briefly douse their natural vampiric fear of fire.

- **Ingredients:** A holy object, such as a crucifix, bible, or Qur'an.
- **Process:** The vampire must burn the holy symbol before walking into, past, or otherwise interacting with fire. The object does not need to be destroyed, just exposed to the fire.
- **System:** A successful Ritual roll following the burning of the holy object grants the character +2 dice on all rolls relating to resisting Rötschreck. A critical win results in the character needing to make no terror frenzy rolls at all. The power wears off once the scene ends.

# Level 3

## Fire in the Blood

This Ritual allows a vampire to invoke the anguish of fire in a victim's blood. Blistering heat emerges from the target's veins and causes intense pain. The power from this Ritual differs from Cauldron of Blood (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 274) in that it is usable from a distance and an efficient way to incapacitate rather than kill the victim.

- **Ingredients:** A sample of the target's blood, a visual depiction of the target such as a photo, painting, or video recording, a candle made from red wax or a lighter made of iron.
- **Process:** The vampire concentrates on the visual depiction of their target (which can be the individual in person) and burns the target's blood sample, usually held in a petri dish, glass bottle, or vial, over the flame. The effect occurs almost immediately, as the victim's blood heats up in their veins.
- **System:** The player makes a Ritual roll following the incantation versus the target's Resolve + Occult (adding Fortitude, if the target is a creature with this Discipline). The number of successes achieved are converted into Superficial Health damage that also inflict wracking pain upon the victim, forcing them to incur a −2 dice penalty to all actions taken for the remainder of the scene. On a critical win, the dice penalty increases to −3. A Kindred target must make a Rouse Check due to the damage to their vitae.

# Level 4

## Creatio Ignis

The caster of this Ritual engulfs their own limbs in flames born from vitae and can set items and people alight using the fire. This Ritual is a phenomenal breach of the Masquerade as the power is entirely visible and can cause intense environmental feedback.

- **Ingredients:** Sufficient vitae (from any vampire) to coat the caster's arms up to the elbows.
- **Process:** The vampire immerses their arms in the blood and withholds the urge to feed or frenzy. After extracting their arms, the caster concentrates and the vitae on their arms bursts into flame. The vampire can then go on to set targets alight using the fire on their skin.

- **System:** If the user is at Hunger 4 or more, make a hunger frenzy test at Difficulty 3 when they attempt to immerse their arms in vitae. Following that, they make a Ritual roll and two Rouse Checks instead of the usual single check for a Ritual. Success creates flames on the vampire's hands and arms (technically it can cover more of the vampire if the vampire used more vitae for the Ritual). Touching a victim with these burning hands inflicts one Aggravated Health damage per turn, and if their clothing ignites, the damage grows on subsequent turns. If the vampire grapples a victim, the damage increases to two Aggravated Health damage per turn, or more if more of the vampire's body is engulfed as part of this Ritual setup. A critical win on this Ritual roll allows the vampire to flick fire from their fingertips, allowing them to start fires a short distance away. The burning stops when the caster wills it or when the scene ends.

# The Church of Set

*"If it seems sickly, infect it. If it looks flammable, light the match. Everything that remains is a thing that can't be plagued, can't be burned, won't be defiled. And such things belong to Him."*

— Nonus Dis, Priest of the Cave of Apples in his Eighth Hour

**[LAYOUT: PRAYER CARD]**

## Ancient to the Ancients

Rise up! Rise up, o childe!

Wield your flesh that rots not, your Blood that sours not,

Strike at the chains that crush all souls in common!

Your sire advances to lay bare your heart,

To guide you through Duat, to Set the Triumphant.

He is roused at your coming, enfolds you in his arms,

Kisses you, consumes you,

Fixes the undying stars in their orbits around you.

The false gods fear you,

The great Eternals surround you,

The unread vessels serve you,

Vitae is threshed for you,

Life is distilled for you,

Your monthly feasts are made with it,

Your yearly feasts are made with it,

As ordained and made evident by Set,

Your torturer, your father, your lover.

Rise up, o childe, you shall not die!

*Hymn 11, the Book of Going Forth By Night*

**[/PRAYER CARD ENDS]**

## The Chaos Cult

A vampire can follow Kindred society's laws, uphold the Camarilla's Traditions, cling onto their pillars of Humanity, and struggle nightly with the growling Beast in their heart. Or, a vampire can make their own laws, drive their heel into the Camarilla, divest themselves of their mortal shackles, and make their Beast a weapon.

The Church of Set favor the latter option. It is what they preach. It is what they believe. Possibly the oldest of all Kindred religions, stretching back in time across millennia, the Church of Set have always been present to "liberate" vampires from society's strictures and encourage them to find their true calling.

Yes, many fall, become wights, and are used as valuable teaching lessons. But for those who survive? They become stronger, and praise be to Set for helping those vampires become everything they are meant to be.

Due to their attitudes toward liberation from rules, theoretically, many Kindred should oppose the Church's very existence. They are servants of chaos, advocating that unlife only possesses meaning if vampires free themselves from the edicts of ancient masters such as Princes and Justicars. Yet, vampires see in the Church of Set wisdom that comes through age and experience, freedom through anarchy, and a chance to rebel against all the external tyrants and internal guilt trips that hold them down. Whenever a domain holds a temple of Set, the Kindred know there's a place they can visit for a form of enlightenment, counsel, and hard, bitter truth. They also know that by attending this temple, they can find purpose in the meaningless nature of eternity.

The Church of Set is strong because it appeals to a Kindred's base nature, while promising to eradicate the worst of those desires. It is chaos, storm, and promise of change. When the alternative seems like stagnation, it's no wonder neonates of tonight increasingly flock to the temple doors.

Despite their message of freedom, however, the Church of Set is not some utopic faith to which all fledglings must cling. Even the Ministry — the clan most commonly associated with the Church, through their Blood, founder, and religious practices — urges caution to those seeking to follow Set's path.

## Church and State

In the nights following Gehenna, a curious — though not unprecedented — schism occurred within the flocks of Set, so the Serpents claim. Just as Set's sarcophagus at Ombos was said to shatter many centuries ago, so too in these nights did the body of Set's faith fracture into dangerous shards.

One such splinter group, shedding ties to its venerable history and even abandoning the name of the Red God himself, refers to itself as the Ministry. The Church of Set refers to them as heretics, and yet, it is the Ministry who dominate the clan tonight. To understand the Church of Set, one must first understand the Ministry.

The Ministry are the Clan of Faith, but they are not a single religion. The Ministry holds the keys to salvation and uses them to deface every surface around them. They are known to steal, reproduce, and even forge texts of orthodox doctrine, disseminating them among unbelievers, unworthies, and the otherwise unready. Doctrine is often twisted to fit their own needs, especially when it comes to the holy search for the mysteries of Set. Ministers have shown themselves eager to enshrine Set within or attribute to him anything that benefits their autocratic philosophies or actions, syncretizing him with tyrannical kings, chosen

Antediluvians, or, among the radical fringe, Set's inimical brother Osiris. The Ministry is content to use Allah, Catholic saints, Vishnu, or any other being of reverence as a mask for Set. They attract followers because the clan is made up from followers of every religion, every culture, and every background. The Ministry are a clan of chaos, but they are the body, the bureaucracy, and the society that ostensibly governs the realm of faith among Kindred.

The Ministry perverts doctrine of all religions to bring its members closer to Set. They are wreckers and despoilers to some, but liberators and counselors to others. Ministers might spread terrible lies about supposed abuses of power committed by the Church of Set, just as the Church of Set finds itself taking in Ministry survivors who have been subject to those same abuses. It is not unheard of for a temple of Set to offer shelter to kine or Kindred misused by the Ministry. To many, it appears the Ministry and Church are at war. To others, it is clear a cycle of abuse and manipulation in the form of nurture propels vampires between them.

The Ministry is devoted to the cause of individual Anarchs rather than the spirit of independence and freedom as a whole — that is, Ministers seem eager to rule Anarchs rather than convert them, in contradiction to the edicts laid down by the Red God. This is where the clan and the Church most widely differ. As infiltrators and warmongers, the Ministry makes itself a frequent target of the Camarilla, but while the Ministry take the flak and earn support from their downtrodden Anarch brethren, the Church maintains a distance. The Church does not involve itself in the sectarian wars. So committed is the Church to decrying these pretenders that they will justify a Contending — a trial more akin to a kangaroo court than a place to express one's defense — against any adherent who abets a Minister outside the Church, to be called off only if the wayward child returns to the flock and sufficiently atones. Anyone shown the true path who still allows the silvery voices of the worldly to lead them astray has become useless in the eyes of the Red Pharaoh.

To the rest of the world, the Church and Ministry appear to occupy a shared history, but distinct spheres in these modern nights. They share some members, they share some ideals, but the two are opposed at a structural and philosophical level. The Church of Set's leadership outwardly regards the Ministry as insignificant, incorrigible children at best. Ministers are not in the business of being ignored, and seem to delight in overt, ill-advised stunts that threaten scrutiny by the Second Inquisition. Such theatrics are to be smothered or undermined with any resources a temple, priest, or lay member has at hand. The Church even says honest cooperation with the Camarilla to suppress known Ministers is preferable to the Ministry operating unchecked.

## The Clan of Lies

Of course, that's what the Church of Set wants other Kindred to think. The damage from this so-called schism is difficult for any outsider to ascertain. The Church of Set maintains the fractures between Church and Ministry are dire heresies. Some Ministers, however, believe the front-facing aspect of the clan is just that: a carefully erected façade that allows the Church to continue its own practices and aims, deflecting all out-of-clan attentions toward the new kids on the block making such a noise within the Anarch Movement.

If this is true, the Church of Set is successfully playing the Anarch Movement and many of their own clanmates. The Serpents have, after all, served Set for millennia. An overnight reformation is unlikely. The danger to the clan from all this scheming, is the possibility of their new face growing in power and relevance over the ancient traditions and beliefs of the orthodoxy. If the Church of Set deliberately cultivated the Ministry, they may have lit the fuse for a bomb destined to collapse their foundations.

## Divine Origins

Was Set really a god? That is a question many Kindred aware of the Church are obliged to ask.

The Church of Set claims that millennia before two brothers squabbled over their offerings, a mighty family reigned over the Earth, and among them dwelt the forebear of what some crudely refer to as the Followers. Set, of violent storms, of the cruel red desert, of the incomprehensible outsiders beyond the civilized world. Set the warrior, Set the triumphant. Set, who would be king.

In the faith of ancient Egypt, and through the ages to tonight, metaphor is more valuable than linear narrative. The myths remain in fragments. The interpretations mature with each new era.

In one translation, Set is a betrayer to his kin. His father, Ra, retires the throne and grants it to Set's brother, Osiris. In a cold rage, Set slays Osiris — some say by drowning, some by dismemberment. In another version, Set is betrayed. Osiris at turns visits upon him a great violence, or tricks him into an unwinnable conflict, or steals Set's consort for himself. Osiris takes advantage of his own brother's weakened state to seize rule of the world from him. Or, perhaps, Set never wanted to reign — an Anarch, even then, striving against the tyranny and corruption of Ra's bloated, degenerate court.

Regardless of interpretation: there is a great sin against truth, and Set the Pharaoh never sits upon the throne. Setites of tonight abide by this message even now: members of the Ministry may claim cities for their own, but if you are a member of the orthodox Church of Set, you must never take rulership.

According to legend, when Ra discovers what Set's done to his brother, he levels a curse similar to that from Noddist theology, and banishes Set to the shadows. When Osiris tricks him and the terrible serpent Apep sinks its fangs into Set's mighty heart, it is the monster's venom that corrupts his physical form to resemble an eternal corpse. When Set must hide himself from his despotic siblings in the stygian waters of Duat, it is through starvation that he resorts to drinking naught but blood. Or so the myths go.

Curse, liberation, radical conversion. All of the stories together make the shape of truth, but in the telling they become lies. The Church preaches that Set made his curse a gift and delivered it to his congregation, the gift of flesh that never rots and blood that flows more potent than the rivers of the underworld. The corruption of Apep burned through that which was fallible in him and left only perfect, atom-fine edges of obsidian. Duat's unliving waters could not have converted the god, changing him from one purpose to another, so much as *everted* him, stirring the exalted appetites within.

The question remains: Was Set a god? The question is incomprehensible to those of the faith. He *is* a god, and, in the curious para-temporal way gods have about them, will always be a god, and has always been a god. He sleeps in the temple at Ombos. He winnows unrefined souls with his childer. He makes his living church among them.

And when the tragic heroes of the *Book of Nod* walked the Earth, Set's "followers" were already ancient.

### A History in Whispers

Regardless of how one feels about his eminent divinity and the mythical origins of his church, scholars of the Hecata, Malkavians, and Ministry record Set's last appearance on Earth as 33 BCE. He sundered the ground with earthquakes, shook the palaces of Cairo with

wild storms, and delivered his final mysteries to the faithful. When a cabal of Hierophants and witches came to his resting place, they found the obsidian sarcophagus empty and shattered, razor black shards embedded in the sandstone walls.

The ancient Hierophants of the clan ruled in his absence. The faithful tended to Egypt through the reign of each pharaoh and invading king, guiding from the shadows and pruning the crop as they had already done for millennia. Their ideology and history had already prepared them in unique ways for the many and varied changes in leadership, from Macedonian to Ptolemaic. Enemies of the word of Set were deeply polluted — by necessity of their rejection of him — and it was the role of the faithful to encourage that pollution to destroy their enemies from the inside out, and make those who survived worthy of Set's favor.

None of the fearsome conquerors of Egypt showed any interest in rooting out the priests of Set and plundering their flocks. While a few elder leaders groused at the supposed dilution of his kingdom by endless waves of barbarians, the orthodoxy held — Set is also the god of foreigners, in his role as the Lord of All Outside Egypt, and there was more to gain in bearing an invader's indignities than in burning him out.

The faith's greatest test, however, came during their first Inquisition. Not the Christian-led burnings Western Kindred refer to — for the Church of Set, their Inquisition came a full century earlier, at the hands of the Sultan Baybars. His commitment to the eradication of infidels did not stop at his decisive campaigns against European crusaders. Baybars' Mamelukes destroyed ancient temples, burning and burying their relics. They hunted two Eternals of Sothis, methuselahs of the Church, and brought them to their final death. They pillaged the Founding Temple Ombos, most holy among the Church's body, and desecrated its contents.

The Purge of Baybars drove the Church of Set out of Egypt and into exile, taking with them any artifact they could carry. They lived in diaspora for decades until Baybars' assassination. Many of the old treasures smuggled out during the Proclamation of Red Tears still have not been returned, though modern movements arise to repatriate those that have found their way into the collections of unwary museums or wealthy erudites.

> The Burning of Baybars
>
> A special yearly ceremony is held in orthodox temples of Egypt, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Some particularly radical branches in the West may participate, though the ritual trappings are singularly difficult to come by. On the anniversary of Baybars' death in 1277, the faithful gather around a ceremonial brazier, tended by the acting Hierophant or High Priest. He reveals a knife of obsidian, and a bone preserved from Baybars' corpse.
>
> Leading the flock in the Execration Litany, the priest shaves a sliver from the bone and holds it over the fire, releasing it at the climax of the ritual chant. When the wraith of the old Sultan appears in the flames, the followers shout it down, spit on it, and otherwise relish the eternal torture so delivered on their ancient enemy.

Forty years of exile in foreign lands brought the followers of the Church new wisdom through pain. They found that while the European Kindred despised them for their faith or their subtleties or their skin, they craved what the Church could provide them. The Church of Set fed these cravings gladly.

It began with simple trade goods — silk, spices, rare animals. The Church's coffers swelled, and so did the hungers of wealthy Europeans. Setite merchants began to trade in opiates, hashish, specialized servants. Then, goods more abstract and cunning. A perfect forgery of a grant of arms, for an ambitious commoner. An ignorant child with particular physical traits, to pass off as a rival's bastard. A sorcerous elixir of potency, for a knight afraid to meet his death in foreign lands. The Church grew as a network of fixers and informants, collaborating in secret, passing goods from follower to follower. Each branch and temple began to keep records of their resources, as well as members' skills and connections.

Set's treasuries grew, and so did his flocks. Setites learned they could lean ever harder on those who had grown dependent on them for favors of their own, deeds they couldn't risk doing themselves. Entrenched as they were, the faithful of Set could avoid the worst of another Inquisition, purchasing the silence of infidel priests and redirecting hunters to worthier targets. Meanwhile, Western clients who could withstand their poisonous addictions were invited into the Mysteries of the faith. And those who fell were, naturally, doomed from the start.

## More Modern Deceits

With the Renaissance, and the resulting Age of Reason, the West saw a resurgence of classical thought and gnostic cabals. Philosophers of science needed ever more taboo materials for their research. Alchemists, sorcerers, and their secret societies became inexplicably fashionable. There were seductive new ideas to spread, and who better to help their dissemination than the world's first cult of mystery?

The thought-experiments of the Enlightenment led to wars of revolution and renewed conquest. The nascent New World promised liberty and happiness, as entire peoples from half a world away paid for it with their bodies. The Church was there, too, everywhere, a contact in every port and palace; sometimes, they were first.

The presence of the faithful in all corners of the conscious world, and their history of playing both sides, leads many outsiders to think the Church had some part in every atrocity of the last three centuries. According to the Church, these claims are flimsy lies. The Church of Set has and always will stand in opposition to all forms of tyranny, whether from one man over few or one man over a nation — or one false god over a universe. The Master of Duat did not allow himself to be denied the throne of heaven only for his childer to love other kings and despots.

As such, it must come as no surprise that many of the faithful in these modern nights have taken up with the Anarchs, though members of the Church rarely cling to the Movement as fiercely as they do to the faith. Leave that for lay-Ministers. Church members are encouraged to enjoy the disdain of all sects, in their own understated ways. Outsider Kindred have long disdained the Setites as up-jumped pimps, troublemakers and fixers. Being underestimated serves the Church just fine... especially now.

After the Red Star appeared in the sky at the turn of the millennium, the high scholars and new witches reached an exceptional consensus: the Red God sleeps no longer. He is *here*. The modern world groans under the distended corpse of capitalism. Whole nations are bought and sold on the trade of weapons and narcotics. The Second Inquisition burns Princes in their manors. Those with Blood of a thinness previously thought impossible walk the land — walk in the *light!* The Earth itself simmers and boils with the injustices visited on its body.

The world is ready for Set. And if they are to be believed, it is the faithful of his Church that will begin the threshing.

If the Ministry so despises the idea of authority, why did it beseech the Camarilla for membership? While desperation and fear are as likely causes as any with the Gehenna Crusade arriving at their doorstep, the clan's true aim was to change the world's most powerful Kindred sect from the inside while benefiting from its walls. For all their talk of freedom from hierarchy, the clan still possesses Hierophants and church leaders who instruct and guide their less enlightened fellows, so installing their religious structure within the Ivory Tower would not be so anathematic to the Ministers as many might believe.

The clan's greatest philosophical division in these modern nights comes between the Ministry and the Church. The clan's "rebrand" or schism — depending on who one asks — that led to the Ministry's creation came before the attempted entry into the Camarilla, but following the failure of that coalition, many Serpents loudly eschewed the sects entirely, declaring themselves Orthodox Setites, Snakes, or the Church of Set. The vampires who cling to the Ministry epithet are more inclined to associate and politic with Kindred from other clans and join the Camarilla, Anarchs, and Ashirra, while the Church of Set takes the view of "once bitten, twice shy" and despairs for their liberal-minded clanmates, who they feel are destined to face bloody betrayal yet again.

## Snakes in Their Hidden Nests

Because of the Church of Set's reputation, both unearned and carefully cultivated, leadership must construct and disclose their houses of worship with a prudence bordering on paranoia. There are many branch cults with no physical structure to speak of, all the better to go to ground if the Camarilla or the Second Inquisition decide to drive out the snakes.

Mortal-facing fronts are small, mobile institutions, meeting regularly and in-person, usually with Greco-Roman influences. In the '70s, these were bland New Religious Movement centers. The '80s and '90s saw a switch to substance-abuse support groups. These nights, pop-up mindfulness practitioners are coming into fashion. The format does not matter — the Church favors any organization that preaches detachment from what binds you. Even at this level, the doctrine of the Church of Set can be introduced in subtle, bowdlerized formats. Leaders are encouraged to downplay use of serpents and Egyptian gods in their organization names and heraldry, in favor of the more palatable imagery of Mars, Bacchus, or Pluto — all three, if possible, as they are identified with Set as Typhon Trismegistus.

Pierce this mundane shroud of counselors and life coaches to find the true face of the Church — the temple. The architectural requirements for a temple of Set are few but unusual: there must be an inner room from which all outside light can be blocked, and there must be space within this room for a larger-than-life statue of the Red God. Movie theaters are the obvious choice, and darkrooms are equally valuable though rarer in this age of digital photography.

The Church is nothing if not resourceful. Lacking the space or resources to construct a new temple, and in absence of the perfect preexisting architecture, many smaller temples are assembled in abandoned garages, cellars, or large storage units, with the inner sanctum separated from the outer by blackout curtains.

The temple's outer sanctum prepares the celebrant to face their god. Priests help them strip to their skin, cleanse themselves in a consecrated mixture of ashes and urine, and finally dress in *shendyt*, or Egyptian waistcloths, in deep red and green. Past the light-blocking barrier, the inner sanctum is stark and somber, empty save for the black statue of the Master of Storms

and the dim red lights that illuminate its alien edges. Individual prayers and offerings occur here, as well as the smaller or quieter rituals.

Temples with size and secrecy enough can stockpile donations within their walls, serving as a storehouse within the greater decentralized treasury of the Church. Still older temples feature libraries of Setite ritual and magical texts. These texts are precious in themselves and never loaned out under any circumstances.

The most ancient artifacts and cornerstones of the Church's doctrine can be found in aptly named Founding Temples. Such temples include Red Hook in the Harlem borough of New York City, founded in 1893 as the oldest temple of Set in the Western hemisphere. Scholars of Typhon Trismegistus make regular pilgrimages to the Cave of Apples temple in Naples, when they can manage the trip, though this seat of Church operations in Europe has been steadily emptying in the nights since the Beckoning began. Of course, most famous is the legendary temple Ombos at Naqada, Egypt, once the resting place of the Red God himself. Some say Ombos still lies in ruin, and some claim it is rebuilt. The few modern pilgrims have not returned or even sent back word.

## Rituals of Liberation

The experiences of the faith are intimate and individual to each member. Church leadership encourages its flock to pursue personal relationships with the Master of Duat. However, study of the canon set down by priests, meditations on the revelations of wisdom, and performance of the Mysteries must be conducted or shared in fellowship with a member of higher rank available as a guide (the better for leadership to root out any heresy in its infancy).

Kindred are encouraged to maintain a shrine to Set within their haven, provided it does not detract from attending Church rituals and ceremonies. The shrine belongs in the darkest part of the darkest room, cordoned off by black curtains. The altar can be as elaborate as the worshiper feels necessary, though the Red Pharaoh is not known to be impressed by extravagance. The only required accoutrements are a small icon or statuette of Set, wrought in black and red; a bowl for offerings; and an incense burner with *kyphi*, if the worshiper can find it, though juniper or cedar incense are also known to please the Ruler of the Desert. The worshiper may wish to keep implements of pain or torture at hand to enhance their prayers.

With access to a shrine, a Kindred of the Church is expected to perform the nightly offering ceremony. It begins with burning incense until its smoke hazes the air. Then the celebrant parts the curtain to the shrine, bowing before the image of the Red God while offering a favored hymn or a simple "Eternal homage to you, Set the Liberator." They cut their palm to allow some vitae to flow into the offering bowl, mixing it with beer. The icon of Set is dressed in green and red cords, smeared with the still-bleeding palm. The celebrant may linger in meditation, inserting needles under their fingernails one by one or flaying a digit to allow pain to clear their thoughts. When the offering is complete, they extinguish the incense and withdraw from the shrine, scuffing their footprints as they go.

### The Lesser Mystery of Set

Of less intimate but far higher meaning are the two Mysteries of Set, the Lesser and the Greater. The Lesser Mystery is observed once a month during a full moon, with special significance given to mysteries that occur during a lunar eclipse. Any Kindred who know of the performance — though not necessarily who is sponsoring it — are welcome to attend and liberate themselves. Many recruiters consider this a necessary community outreach event.

In the Lesser Mystery, the facilitating priest places emphasis on revelations — in this case, making dramatic shows of magic, supposed artifacts, and other entertaining displays. The

most common sight at these ceremonies is a large python serving the priest as a ghoul, passed among the spectators.

Following his revelations, the priest conducts sacrifices, though these will be called by another name. Sometimes the attendees are asked to paint a source of anger onto a red clay vessel, and then dash it against the wall. Sometimes they are bidden to pour their wine over specific stones in the floor. Sometimes the audience comes looking for the Set they hear of in Camarilla whispers and are disappointed to find anything less than ritual slaughter.

This Mystery is a lesser eversion, a small liberation from the assaults of the soul. But for every attendee who feels the rebellion rise within them, and every member the priest deems worthy, there is a second event to come immediately after: a revelation of one of the Gates.

## The Nine Gates

The Mysteries of the Nine Gates of Wisdom are cornerstones of the religious experience of the Church. It is impossible to progress in the hierarchy of secrets without receiving their transformative lessons. The Gates are as follows: Ecstasy, Terror, Wrath, Desire, Satiety, Despair, Ignorance, Chaos, and Blood. Passage through each requires a guide well-versed in their execution, though an initiate's awareness of the Gate ritual itself is not essential. Indeed, the Church encourages initiation without any anticipation or prior agreement on behalf of the initiate, for the most effective, visceral experience.

As the Gates reveal discrete truths or experiences meant to strip the initiate of corrosion, each calls for a wholly different approach and atmosphere. Scholars recommend the Gate of Ecstasy as an initiate's first, as it is the most palatable and most expected Church experience. The initiate of Ecstasy is subjected to intense sensory experiences meant to awaken her body and smother her ego. The second Gate is usually of Terror: the guide encourages the initiate's starving id to express itself via her basest, most primal fear, then directs her need for relief to the waiting arms of Set and his Church.

From here, the path is individualized to each initiate and her necessities, though many sponsors move on to Wrath, doing whatever is required to goad the initiate's rage into a single livid explosion, incinerating the last of her false self. The Gate of Desire draws from the initiate her most abhorred, subjugated needs, and encourages reflection as she indulges them — why are they so hated? Must she suppress them, after all? The Gate of Satiety gathers the seas of the initiate's hunger and drowns her in them, until the very thought of indulging a past pleasure is revolting to her. Under the Gate of Despair she loses everything she once thought vital to her self — her temporal joys, her wealth and possessions, her playmates and false loves — in order to learn that nothing outside the truth in her soul can possibly define her. At the Gate of Ignorance, she experiences life-changing doubt brought on by a shattering revelation, that something "true" upon which she built the foundations of her being is not true at all. And in the Gate of Chaos, she is shown with unerring soundness that the world itself is a lie, devoid of any reason or sense, and any belief she once placed in the material is guided to its proper home — belief in Set and his unbreaking Church.

At any of these Gates, a vampire may suffer frenzy, gain Stains, or devolve completely into a wight. The Church of Set covers this truth up, assuring its newest members that they will be supported through these trials, with the priest pointing to the handful of ranking Setites in attendance as evidence of how the Church looks after its own. This sense of brotherhood is a lie. Until a vampire has passed through every Gate, the initiate is on their own. If they fall, they must pick themself up. If they cannot, the priest should experience no regrets over that vampire succumbing to the Beast in perpetuity, as clearly they were unworthy. Domains

where the Church of Set holds sway may have a stable core where the Church is at its strongest, but in the domain fringes, more wights prowl than perhaps in any other cities.

> On the Gate of Blood
>
> Of the Nine, the Gate of Blood is considered most sacred, and absolutely vital to full participation in the Church of Set. To be initiated in the mysteries of the Gate of Blood, the celebrant must make herself a life sacrifice to the Red God. Her guide, acting in their authority as a divine agent of Set, consumes every drop of her blood before replacing it with some of the guide's own. The initiate wakes from their glimpse of Duat, reborn in the love of Set the Triumphant. The Gate of Blood is a time for somber reflection on the part of the guide, and ecstatic revelry on the part of the celebrant.
>
> Kindred laity recognize this as an Embracing, done up in the trappings of Egyptian esotericism. Though the Church considers Kindred adoptees of the faith already inducted in the Gate of Blood in their own way, priests of Set are eager to perform a facsimile of the ceremony for them, that they may be Embraced again.

## The Greater Mystery of Set

Of the Greater Mystery, little is written or discussed. Its very nature compels secrecy — to discuss the Greater Mystery outside the confines of its performance is considered heresy. There are, however, aspects of it that all members of the Church understand:

The Greater Mystery of Set is a ritual performed over the course of several nights, once a year, during a new moon in the darkest month. Those of the Fourth Hour or later, who have already experienced a Lesser Mystery, are obligated to attend. In the first night, sacred objects are brought to the temple — an obsidian shard of an ancient sarcophagus, a winnowing-fan, red clay vessels of unknown contents. A mortal man of a certain age must be brought into the temple, dressed finely and treated in all ways as a king, his every desire attended to. From the temple's outer sanctum, the leading priest declares the start of the rites, and there is an all-night feast, though not necessarily of food.

The second night, all initiates must be cleansed in dark water, which they are allowed to procure from different sources, and can wear only green or red as they go about their nightly business. At least once in the night they must visit the temple to leave offerings for the ritual pharaoh.

In the third night, the fasting begins — Kindred initiates may only drink the blood of those who are under the influence of entheogens. Kine initiates likewise must begin imbibing hallucinogenic drugs. The doors to the temple close to all who are not allowed participation in the Greater Mystery, save the ritual pharaoh, who has lived three days now as a god on Earth.

Of what happens in the fourth night, only those present know. But in the fifth night, all emerge from the temple in states of injury or exhaustion, and the sacred objects are carried out — an obsidian shard sticky with fluid, a filthy winnowing-fan, red clay vessels now empty, and several crude cedar boxes that smell like a butchery. The ritual pharaoh is gone, though one member of his body remains with the priest.

In this final night there is an hours-long feast held somewhere secluded outside the temple, featuring all manner of catharsis—specially-brewed beer, hashish and narcotics; carefully

monitored frenzies and fights; orgies selective or all-inclusive; and other more exotic manners of release.

Any who discuss what they performed or witnessed while in the temple, either then or later, are silenced at all costs and made subject to a Contending. Rarely has such a thing been an issue — it seems the Greater Mystery is far too intimate and personal for anyone to want to share its wonder openly.

## Beginning the Journey of the Faithful

All souls, living and unliving, knowing and unknowing, shadow the journey of the dead through Duat, an underworld of black water and pale flame. The existence of this journey, and each person's unwitting recreation of it, may not be made obvious to the believer until they are well along their own journey. Leaders of the Church take care to note each member's progress, so no one is forced to bear the scouring of a revelation before they are ready.

The First Hour of the Journey by Night represents Ra's descent into Duat, and Church doctrine likens it to struggling to make out shapes in the darkness. The Church designates potential converts and curious individuals "just trying it out" as unbelievers in their First Hour. Recruiters make themselves constantly available to the First Hour initiate, anticipating his needs and meeting these to the best of their ability, all while watching carefully for signs that the initiate is ready to be guided through his first mystery.

For many, their first mystery is a surprise. They receive an invitation, formal or informal, to a celebration, the details of which are vague and mundane: a secular party, a small benefit concert, a get-together over vitae and wine. The celebration turns out to be a thin front for a performance of the Lesser Mystery of Set — but the recruiter-turned-guide is careful to conceal the fangs of doctrine under the shadows of a pleasing garden.

Many performances of the Lesser Mystery end in the revelations of the Gate of Ecstasy, for precisely the reasons anyone would expect. The guide crafts their initiate's sensory deluge to fit her particular tastes. This can be head-pounding music and half-moons of molly, ending in a blur of flesh and heat. It can also be a flight of delicate mortals with carefully curated Resonance and choice Dyscrasia, in a garden heavy with night-blooming jasmine. One's unknowing passage into the Second Hour is unforgettably pleasing, leaving the initiate with an enthusiasm that will serve them well in the trials to come.

There are moments when the pain and chaos of the material world align to provide Set's guide with the circumstances necessary to initiate her charge in the revelations of their next two Gates. When the Second Inquisition flashes its muzzles, or the Camarilla levies incomprehensible rulings, or petty grievances sour the bonds of a coterie, the guide is there, offering shelter to her initiate and leading them to the shadow of Set.

The guide does not rely on these moments to occur naturally. When necessary, she creates them herself, using her access to the Church's considerable network of contacts and resources to set the stage for the wisdom of the Gates to make itself manifest. The unknowing initiate may soon find themself beset on all sides by sudden, unimaginable hardship with no discernable source or reason — lovers turned unfaithful, Touchstones in mortal danger, evidence mounting for crimes never committed.

Does the guide feel remorse? Yes, at times her heart aches for the state of this world, that it could construct a soul-cage only torture can break. But the initiate draws closer to salvation in Set's arms with every new torment. More often, the guide feels joy... and envy.

In the Fifth Hour of the Journey by Night, Ra and the host of the dead finally reach the august tomb of Osiris, enthroned in black wings, suspended over a lake of fire. In the initiate's Fifth

Hour, they have been broken upon four Gates in total. They have seen the world for what it is: twisted and restrictive, a place where the true self cannot find happiness. They have known the love of Set and his Church, the only place where they can be truly free. Their sponsor can now reveal herself and her mission, confident that the initiate is ready for the truth. They are ready for a joyous welcome into the Church of Set, openly and officially.

The initiate is central to the confirmation ceremony, flensed of everything but their Gate wisdom and newfound love of the Church. The night begins with somber rituals meant to reenact their Embrace into the shadow of Set, and ends with familial love. These re-Embraced fledglings appear drunk on renewed devotion to their Church, but are undeniably spirited and courageous, making them essential to the recruitment of new members. At this level, they are permitted further revelations denied to others: namely, study of Church doctrine, and membership in performance of the Greater Mystery once a year. Members in their Fifth Hour only now realize there were even Hours to begin with, and often look back on their journey so far with a fearful wonder.

> The Journey for Mortals
>
> For kine, the Journey by Night is conducted with rather more caution and patience. They are recruited through one of the Church's front organizations, invited to Lesser Mysteries scrubbed of most overt vampirism, and guided through the more "palatable" Gates first. While boons and favors are still dispensed with reassurances and warm smiles, the Church presses back on mortals much sooner than Kindred. Members will find themselves volunteered for small tasks or donations — certainly nothing that comes close to what they have so far enjoyed on the Church's dime.
>
> As the mortal initiate passes into their Fourth Hour, the demands of the Church loom large. Tithes increase in frequency, flooding the mortal with debt. Church leadership now screens and approves relationships with outsiders, so that they won't in their ignorance interfere with an initiate's fragile enlightenment. Errands for the Church are now arduous undertakings — the mortal only has time for their Church membership. Kindred of higher levels may be granted permission to Blood Bond or ghoul mortals in their Fourth Hour, making the prospect of leaving the Church even more difficult. Indeed, most of the Church's labor force comes from mortals in their Fourth Hour, known interchangeably as the Hour of Trials or the Hour of the Final Labyrinth. Still, kine are promised the greatest revelation to come if they remain — and having seen the results of a Contending, they know all too well the consequences of leaving.

## The Later Hours of Night

At the Sixth Hour, a Kindred must have mastered a total of six Gates of Wisdom. A member of this level now shoulders the heavy responsibility of guiding others through Gates they themselves have mastered — including the Gate of Blood, if Church leadership blesses them with permission to Embrace a childe. A Kindred in the Sixth Hour of her Journey by Night is a full-time member of the Church of Set, a spiritual employee. She may entertain other hobbies, projects, or titles, but only if these enhance her usefulness to the Church and to the Red God. If she fails to bring Set his due of souls — either in new fellowship or destruction-by-vice — she must also take care to guard herself against a Contending on the basis of infidelity.

In the Seventh Hour, one of the Paths that an initiate may follow comes to a premature end. This is the Hour of Set in his aspect as Triumphant Warrior and Consumer of Apep. Those who follow the Path of Wepwawet forever delay their spiritual development to serve under the Triumphant's command. These warriors are fearsome ascetics, mortifiers of the flesh, and protect the Church as swords of Set. Those lucky enough to study with the paragon Faruq Abd al-Qadir in his training hall at Abu Simbel will find themselves traded like currency from temple to grateful temple. For all the adoration they receive, however, one of the Gates will always be out of their reach. They are figures demanding both pity and great respect.

For those on other Paths, the Seventh Hour begins after the mastery of eight Gates. This Hour confers the authority to open and manage local temples as a priest of Set, one small node in a network of tithes, favors, treasures and hirelings. For many, this is the Hour of their spoiling. Once, they only had access to pleasures the Church gifted in its wisdom, a leash perhaps too short to choke on. However, not even a follower of Set is immune to corruption through power — and just as well, because that which can be liberated, must be. Such a weak leader is allowed to take his fill, as the Gate of Satiety allows, but his elders will step in if it seems he has more followers consumed than converted.

Mastery of all Nine Gates of Wisdom is required to reach the Eighth Hour, the time in which Ra throws open the doors to Osiris's tomb and makes ready the way for the host of the dead. Upper management of the Church can be found at this level — High Priests of older temples (such as Khaled al-Fakhani in the Court of Humility), acclaimed Bahari witches and the greatest of blood-sorcerers.

Members of the highest circle of the Church of Set dwell in their Ninth Hours, a level reached only by the aged, the accomplished, or the gifted. This is the Hour of the Antipode Labyrinth, when Ra reverses his course through the sandy maze of Sokar. High Priests of Founding Temples guide the Church's ambitions from here — or, they did, before the Beckoning left their offices empty. The Church has many millennia of practice at operating independent of centralized authority, though concerns rise through the ranks regarding non-clan Kindred stepping into the vacuum left by Beckoned elders.

Demigods travel in the Tenth Hour of the Journey By Night: the *Djet Sopdet*, Eternals of Sothis, methuselahs who were Embraced 1,460 years ago at the beginning of a Sothic Turn. While nominally the heads of the Church, few continue active management at this level. It is understood they have their own pious undertakings to attend to, but no one of the Tenth Hour has been seen or spoken to since the Beckoning began.

Of the Eleventh Hour, there is only One. Lord Set, the Red God, remains in this penultimate state, delaying his passage beyond Duat to guide followers in the shadow of his Church. And beyond this lies the Final Hour: passage into the primordial *Nun*, where the flensed and faithful will find a new world, or create another. Or so the orthodoxy claims. No single entity, living or otherwise, has experienced crossing beyond.

> Church of Set Convictions
>
> While ultimately, doctrine is less important to the Church of Set than ritual and experience, neither of those will be of much use to an initiate who has no idea why she is doing what a priest commanded her to do. That said, the Church follows closely the idea of secret knowledge: that certain authorities possess divine dispensation to withhold truths from followers who are unready to receive them. An initiate is meant to receive the lessons on her body and soul first, as guided by someone well-versed in the mysteries, before she is permitted to study the texts of a temple library.

The Church of Set finds the idea of commandments distasteful, but for those who require an easily-memorized litany of convictions, the doctrine of the orthodox Church commonly manifests as the following Convictions:

- Always strive to liberate others of their vices

Vice is a tool, not a recreation. The faithful initiate can best serve Set by winnowing the souls of the world — that is, separating the wheat from the chaff — by determining who is prone to degradation and who is strong enough to resist. What can be liberated, will be liberated, and what remains will be a legion of refined souls in service to Set, freed from their bondage to literally anyone and anything else. You are the thresher, not the threshed.

- Never refuse aid to another member of the Church

The Church of Set claims that when they rule this world, or move on to the next, they will do so as a brotherhood of many. There are no kings here, save the Red Pharaoh himself.

- Always respect the commands of those in later Hours

The priests, and also the warriors and faithful witches who plumb the depths of Duat ahead of you, have made ready the path you yourself travel. You are free, but they are more free. Their wisdom and guidance must be observed.

- Always do what is necessary to test another's resistance to liberation

What an individual might think of as "compassion" is, to the Setite mind, nothing less than violence. In refusing to test another soul's limit for freedom, you are dooming it to slavery and denying Set his due. Do not wait for permission when their liberty could begin *now.*

- Always seek the mysteries of Set, hidden throughout the world

The more Mysteries a Setite understands, and the more secrets they wield, the better they will serve the Red God and his Church.

- Always do what is necessary to test the flaws in a social order

Beware the individual who desires authority. Organizations both mortal and Kindred are inherently degenerate by virtue of their disconnection from the true god. If they are really as inviolate as they claim to be, then they must be brought into service of Set's living Church, or otherwise dismantled and allowed to rot.

## On the Church of Set

*As attributed to Khalid al-Fakhani, priest within the Church of Set in the Las Vegas domain*

Before the Red Star appeared, the Church of Set were referred to as the Followers of Set. This is an extremely literal translation of the phrase Walid al-Set, and does not convey the full extent and power of the faith. To call the Church "followers" is like referring to the Roman Catholic Church as "followers of the Trinity." It is technically correct, of course, but it leaves out so many of the nuances that it might as well be useless.

Many atrocities have been laid at the feet of the Church of Set over the years. I will not waste time trying to correct them all. Some are even completely true. I venture to guess that most of them have a grain of truth at the core, but like any resource shared by immortals, time and distance devour the truth alive.

Is the truth important here? I will politely say no. Mythology is built by the people who subscribe to it, and is a reflection of the flock rather than of the god.

Liberation is our guiding light. We, the members of the Church of Set, seek to ruin, that we may find those resistant to the ruination. We do not seek to destroy Osiris; that would be foolish. Rather we bring those who cannot handle the truth of the Outside, that which Osiris and Horus sought, farther into the darkness. We bring them to Set, so that Set may protect the rest of us from the searing light of what waits beyond the doors of the world.

An interesting note on the Church of Set is how we define "we." There are those of the Ministry, of course, but to think that our membership is defined by bloodline or even Path is small-minded. The Church of Set welcomes members from across sects, and numbers among her body the paths of Lilith, Typhon, the Warrior, and others. Morality is personal. Doctrine is essential. In order to be a member of the Church of Set, you must be inducted by a priest, and follow the guiding principles of the Dead God. Judge those in your city. Protect your flock.

The Church of Set has existed for thousands of years, ever since Set passed into Duat. We are in every city. You cannot cross a domain border without running into an adherent. Even if you do not see us, we are here. Ideally, a Setite presence (and yes, the word Setite is acceptable, like Muslim for Islam) should contain at least one priest and one warrior. The priest guides the flock, and the warrior keeps it safe. More are, of course, encouraged, but be careful to balance out your fury with your place of succor. Priests report to bishops, and so on, up to the head of the Church in Cairo. Titles of priests who handle lesser priests in several domains may vary by location.

While liberation may entail torture and death, be careful to keep your flock at a manageable level. Killing off all of your flock in a suicide pact is just not our style. If your faithful are dead, they cannot continue to spread liberty, and they cannot be further liberated themselves.

Should you have Bahari in the domain, convert them. Give them a safe space to practice their arts and explorations. The followers of Lilith are useful to us, and they understand the exploration of the dark in a way some of us do not. Many of them crave structure, as much as they struggle against it. Give them a place in the hierarchy, and duties to fulfill. If you know anyone in the Order of Taweret, make introductions. We used to have witches in the Church, long ago, but their ways were lost to us. In many ways, the Bahari fill that role. Let them do so.

Should there be young, eager warriors not affiliated with the Church of Set in your domain, pay them. Give them work. Let them see you as a source of problems to handle, and you will have devoted Setite warriors in under a year. Feed their need for violence, and they will commit violence on your behalf.

Should there be eager neonates, feeling isolated by their sires, and craving a slice of what the city has to offer, give them a taste. Allow them to assist in managing the mortals who run errands for you, or plant a word in the mayor's ear. Make it clear that you are the giver of these gifts, and they will come to you, friends in tow. Recruiting elders who already look at the Church of Set askance is a difficult task, and they will always be using you for their own aims. Do not allow this. Instead, go to their children, and raise them in the ways of Sutekh. It is through the children that societal norms change and we become more powerful by the night.

I suppose that could be the single simplest principle in the Church of Set. Feed someone's vices, and they will commit more vices on your behalf. The Church itself might not be simple — we span borders and cults and belief systems — but this is the simplest act we can commit to further the glory of Set. Those who indulge and fall are failures and tools. Those who overcome are worthy of passing through the Gates of our faith.

The Ministry represent us, but we represent their heart.

*Dua Sutekh.*

## Setite Temple: Kharkiv

Kharkiv exists as an unusual domain, having recently experienced an almost-citywide conversion from the Camarilla to the Anarch Movement. The Prince stepped down, a new Baron stepped up, Primogen joined a wider council of elders, and the Sheriff — who attempted to cling on to her position — vanished one night, to the mourning of nobody.

Kharkiv likewise exists as an example of what the Church of Set can do to a Camarilla domain if they get inside the heads of power players and convince them of the promise of Setite liberation. For years, the Setites have worked on the city's influential Kindred, one by one, pushing them to the brink of falling to the Beast before snatching them back as saviors every time. They show the possibilities of freedom without binding mortal ties and undead regret, and cut those fetters if they feel their converts are ready. Some resist or realize the manipulation, only to find their peers among the governing Kindred are already members of the Church or worse, to return to their havens and find Setites already there, ready to "vanish" the vampire who opposes their plans.

Despite their success in working on the city's Kindred, the Church of Set couldn't care less whether the Camarilla or Anarchs govern Kharkiv. Set prohibits them from ruling a city, and they've no real desire to become political advisors. Their objective is to test every vampire and indoctrinate those left standing into the cult. They observe the domain of Indianapolis in the United States, where the Ministry rule with a laissez-faire, any-faith-goes attitude, and believe Kharkiv needs to correct the mistakes made to the north. Priests Vyacheslav and Akhtem feel it's integral to the strength of the Church to convert every meaningful vampire, and eradicate the opposition as the sandstorm scours skin from a cadaver. If only the worthy remain, they can then move onto another city instead of arrogantly trying to rule this one. They take the view that the liberated should rule themselves.

The Church of Set in Kharkiv operates a single, unobtrusive temple in the city, into which only confirmed members of the cult may enter. A single-story grey building in the thick of an industrial estate in the Kyivskyi District, the temple is the Church's statement that appearances matter far less than content. Within the temple, Setites may indulge in any pleasure they can pick up from Kharkiv's streets or ferry in from elsewhere, as long as they leave the temple the following night with no desire to ever revisit the experience. Sometimes, that requires murdering a vessel to whom the vampire has become attached. Sometimes, it means experiencing heroin in bloodstream, procuring a blood doll of rare Resonance, or even taking Ashe (see p. XX), with the guarantee they'll never do so again. The grey temple is a testament to the Setite ability to risk temptation and overcome, if they're worthy of doing so.

The cult's public face comes through their operations in the Karazin University, where a handful of its members claim territory, and a storefront in the Ave Plaza shopping mall, where they meet Kindred of other cults in what is advertised as a Scientology testing office. Unlike most domains, many meetings between Kindred occur to discuss faith, experiences, and tests of one's self-control. To an outsider, it initially seems evangelical Christianity has taken hold among the city Kindred, as the name "Set" is rarely mentioned outside the converted, though Priest Akhtem consecrated the museums along Sumska Street as a place to use Church terms freely, after the M. F. Sumtsov Historical Museum hosted an Ancient Egyptian exhibition there in 2019, containing the most intact enameled sculpture of Set dated from at least 3,500 years ago.

Kharkiv's Church of Set possesses a loose hierarchy, with the priests on top — three of them Ministry, two of them from other clans — and everyone else a warrior, who defends the faith, or a believer. Kharkiv's Kindred have quickly adopted the term "believer" to point to those who the Church of Set has saved, "non-believer" to those still to be targeted, and "the lost" for those in need of pity, ostracism, or elimination.

## Perspectives

**Anarchs:** *Of all the Kindred sects, this one is the most tolerable. They're aimless but do have a propensity for enjoying unlife in a way in which so many other Kindred fail. The Ministry can guide their energies to something of worth while we hide in their shadow.*

**Ashirra:** *We occupy a necessary place in this sect, acting as advisors and counselors without ever truly entering their political and religious hierarchy. Sometimes an outside opinion is required. The Banu Haqim would have the entire Ashirra turn on us, but thankfully, there are more clans to that sect than a cabal of rabid assassins. Of note, the Ministry have no presence among the Ashirra. It is a sect where we represent ourselves.*

**Banu Haqim:** *Where they admire and cling to law and autocratic rule with an almost feverish enthusiasm, we believe in freedom to explore one's existence, and that the only way to truly find oneself is to do so without strictures. It is no surprise we have been at odds for centuries.*

**Camarilla:** *They were right to reject the Ministry. We work best without the Aeons pulling our strings.*

**Hecata:** *Our relationship with the Clan of Death is deep and important. Remember the parable of Nakhthorheb and Lazarus, and how both of our clans understand the lands of the dead better than any other.*

**The Ministry:** *A body cannot stand without a spine and a brain. One might say they are the spine and we are the brain. Or perhaps we are the heart and they are the flesh surrounding. Either way, some of us are of the Ministry, others are not, but we cannot expect an entire clan to fall into lockstep in service to the greatest of faiths. No, they protect us, we guide them, and they can remain the cosmopolitan front to our beliefs.*

> On the subject of Paris
>
> The mystery behind the perpetrators of the Paris bombings that led to the Ministry's rejection of the Camarilla (or the Camarilla's rejection of the Ministry) and subsequent joining with the Anarchs is ongoing, though the clan isn't openly making strides to discover the perpetrators.
>
> The prevailing rumor of the time was that the Banu Haqim sabotaged Ministry and Camarilla relations to better insure their own admission into the Ivory Tower. Several prominent Serpents refute this theory, however, based on the risk the Banu Haqim faced if their attack on Camarilla Justicars and Setite Hierophants was discovered. Though, those same Serpents state, the Banu Haqim certainly make for perfect scapegoats. The two clans have fostered a rivalry for centuries.
>
> Investigators into the Paris bombings wonder whether the Camarilla set up the attack to remove troublesome Justicars, deal a blow to the Snakes, and impress the Banu Haqim. Others wonder if it wasn't just another Second Inquisition attack with a hell of a lot of collateral damage. With the Lasombra's recent entry into the Camarilla, further thoughts go to the Magisters taking early steps to

remove a potential rival, though the fear such an attack could cause might have jeopardized their attempt.

The clan's conspiracy theorists quietly discuss whether the attack was orchestrated by the Church of Set to sabotage the clan's liberal arm before it made a terrible decision, while others theorize the Ministry might have planned this all along to make them more sympathetic to the Anarch Movement (and remove some powerful Hierophants at the same time).

The truth may never be known.

## Animals

Vampires of the Ministry, and the orthodox branch of their clan, are as capable of shifting into the form of a wolf or bat as any vampire with the required level of Protean, but the clan has a special affinity for beasts of importance in Egyptian mythology and various types of snake.

### Boa Constrictor

There exists an instinctive fear of the animal that can wrap itself around you, squeezing the air from your lungs and cracking your bones in its tight grip. Boa constrictors are native to the Americas, with Ministers identifying as members of the Tlacique — a vampire cult focused on Aztec mythology — commonly taking constrictor form using the Discipline of Protean.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 1, Mental 1

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 3

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6, Stealth 6; Intimidation 4; Awareness 4

**Special:** If a boa constrictor successfully grapples an opponent, it may constrict its victim for +2 Superficial Health damage.

### Cobra

The cobra is renowned for the way it rears before striking and its notoriously venomous bite. While they range in size, the largest are up to four yards/meters in length. Ministers proficient at changing form often adopt the shape of a cobra, while some endeavor to make animal ghouls of these venomous creatures.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 4, Social 1, Mental 1

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 4, Willpower 2

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6, Stealth 7; Intimidation 4; Awareness 4

**Special:** If a cobra successfully bites a mortal opponent, it deals +2 Aggravated Health damage and its venom kills or debilitates the victim by the end of the scene if not treated. Against vampires, the venom from a cobra bite has no effect.

### Jackal

Small, fast members of the wolf family, jackals primarily prey on small mammals and birds, or scavenge where possible. Though not the toughest of creatures, the jackal is an important animal in Egyptian mythology, encouraging some Ministers to take jackal form for religious reasons.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 1, Mental 1

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 2

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Athletics 7, Stealth 6; Intimidation 2; Awareness 3

**Special:** The jackal's long, curved canines inflict +1 Superficial Health damage on bite attacks.

## Oksana Koblenko "Proserpina"

**Epitaph:** Blackmailer for the Greater Good

**Quote:** *"Did you see the screens I sent? Good. Never mind how I got your texts. Let's talk about how to keep your Prince from getting them, too."*

**Clan:** Caitiff

**Mortal Days: The Scapegoat Daughter**

Natalia Koblenko studied law on a merit scholarship at the Karazin University, concurrently pursuing a Juris Doctor and a Master of Laws. She was poised, eloquent, the superstar of the Koblenko family, the true joy of her mother's life.

Her twin sister, Oksana Koblenko, hated her.

Oksana pursued a degree in engineering at the same school, without a scholarship, or poise, or her mother's love. She didn't want to be an engineer, but a throwaway comment from her mother convinced her it would finally get her attention. She kept her head down. She stayed away from boys. After a disquieting self-discovery, she stayed away from girls. She repressed everything that wasn't perfect, compressed it down until she felt like she might blow to pieces.

Oksana let it out in little ways. Little cuts, mostly, high on her bicep where the scars wouldn't show. Then little thrills she could get away with. She snitched on fellow students because it made her feel good to receive praise for exposing their secrets. She started accumulating stores of blackmail material on students, teachers, even family members. She called them "little tricks." She'd find a way to slip them into the public, in an email to her sister, or a text to a classmate, and watch them work. Entropy — the breakdown of order, the flaws in trusted systems — fascinated her more than anything.

It started little and grew from there. Her tricks got better. Her cuts, deeper. She started going to group when her dormmate caught her; *Olympian Counseling Center — Free to Karazin Students!* It helped, a little, to be around others like her. She had more focus, which she bent toward her little tricks. She found out she could sell them, and her skills. People paid her money for acquiring intelligence and extorting unsuspecting victims. Sometimes she'd see the aftermath of her tricks in the local news, and it'd be her first smile in weeks.

Then someone tried to kill her sister.

**Kindred Nights: The Wanted Childe**

Oksana woke up in the dark, slumped in a chair. The night was a blur of unimaginable, bone-deep pain. Pain, and a bleak, acrid hunger. Three white shadows loomed over her. They brought her something big, warm and struggling. She bit into it without thinking. It tasted — no, *felt* incredible, a better release than the knife's edge.

The white strangers asked something. She couldn't make it out over her throbbing head. They muttered. Got angry. Started arguing. "God *damn* it, Simon!" A woman, high and panicky. "You dumb piece of shit, that's her *sister!"*

She choked on fear, the scent of it rolling off them, and her own, crawling up her throat. The strangers kept arguing. One grabbed her by the shoulder and hauled her to her feet. *What do we do now? We got the wrong damn Koblenko!* They dragged her outside, fighting in angry whispers. Oksana stumbled free of the white claw on her shoulder. She ran, they shouted. The metro was smears of wet light, incomprehensible.

Oksana ran forever and everything melted together like a nightmare. Until finally, finally, something looked familiar.

*Olympian Counseling Center — Free to Karazin Students!*

It was closed, of course. But she forced her way through the locked door. The group leader was there, young and quiet and red-headed, sitting in the dark with a familiar woman. "Oksana." He remembered her name. "What happened?"

She told him about the white strangers, about biting and drinking. She told him about the cutting (though he already knew), and more poured out of her like black water. The engineering degree she didn't want. The girls she didn't want to notice. The little tricks. Her sister, her disgusting sister, better than her and everyone knew it and Natalia didn't have the decency to feel bad about it. Nobody wanted her, nobody. Not even her mother.

Akhtem sat with her for hours. The woman — another group member — came and went as Oksana sobbed and Akhtem listened. He didn't flinch, or ask questions, or raise his eyebrows or scoff. He simply let her purge.

"You've been hurting for a long time," he said when the black water finally stopped. He pulled her to him, an arm around her shoulder like a cloak of snow. "You'll hurt for a long time more," he admitted, and she found herself reassured by it — a plain, respectful truth. "There is someone who wants you," he promised, gripping her hard. "He led you to us," the woman finally spoke, "because he wants you to meet him."

This was how Oksana found the Church of Set in Kharkiv, to her mind quite by accident, but to the Church by an act of providence. They assured her that her reason for being there was ordained by a force greater than any single being, and tutored her in the existence of a vampire. They reminded her it couldn't just be coincidence that she was Embraced so close to a Setite temple. They praised her good work so far in liberating others, and made sure she knew that good work was to continue, but under their direction.

Now, Oksana is a dedicated agent and adherent of the Church of Set, traveling between domains, serving her temple's will. She finds even greater pleasure and purpose in her actions now than when she performed them as a mortal, as she finally receives congratulations for her achievements. The Church of Set liberated her, and she uses its ways to liberate others.

**Plots and Schemes:**

- **Secure the Temple:** In the midst of a new Anarch court, Akhtem's hold on Kharkiv's Kindred wavers between those driven politically and those who feel the summons of faith. What he needs is a front that can hold up to all scrutiny, cover its tracks, and grant protection to other Kindred Church members. Oksana is intent on procuring this for him by expanding her network of victims and defrauding anyone who would stand in the way of the temple's expansion.

- **New Brothers and Sisters:** The feuding Anarch gangs in the northwest represent huge, untapped potential. The Church can help them. Oksana knows it, but they need to know it, too. She's taken it upon herself to deliver digital "presents" to prominent gang leaders, like

blackmail material on rivals or stolen identities to be mined for resources. No strings. For now.

- **There Can Only Be One:** Natalia Koblenko finished her Juris Doctor and her Master of Laws, made a huge splash in the political and public law arena, and is now on track to be the youngest woman to run for — and win — the Kharkiv mayoral seat. Baron Karina wants Natalia in her retinue, and thwarting the Baron's attempts is another of Oksana's full-time jobs. Oksana knows she should be beyond care for her sister's progress or downfall, but she doesn't care. She finally feels superior to Natalia and refuses to let that change.

**Domain and Haven:**

- **Temple of Gray Veils (Haven 2, Herd 4, Resources 2)** When not holding support groups at the Olympian Counseling Center, Oksana works on the establishment of a second Kharkiv temple, in the stockroom of an abandoned KARE Kharkiv furniture store. The faithful number seventeen kine currently, most of whom comprise a strange diversity of recovering addicts. Oksana runs stolen power through the stockroom, making the place livable for her kine. The temple has a stockpile of useful contraband, as well as a directory of Church members in the south who can provide off-site resources. It also features a small library of old orthodoxy texts, which Oksana has not yet read.

**Thralls and Tools:**

- **Court of the Obsolete (Herd 3)** Oksana's personal herd knows her as the Proserpina, an affected cybergoth goddess who holds court with her lessers, the vast majority of them sniveling incels. She's yet to master the art of nurturing Resonances and takes anything she can get. Her followers adore her (Oksana's Presence makes sure of it), and while they aren't the most useful bunch, they faithfully follow the doctrine she lays down. Someday they'll be ready for the temple.

- **Tara Bakurova (Ally 1)** When she met Tara, a fellow self-harm survivor with a similar history of familial trauma, Oksana wanted desperately to be friends. When she got to know her, a determined, fiercely romantic young woman, Oksana wanted desperately to be lovers. She refuses to bring Tara into her herd — she wants her to love Oksana, not worship the Proserpina — but also worries that Tara will recover and leave the group before she's ready to join the Church.

- **Natalia Koblenko (Enemy 1)** Beautiful, passionate, talented Natalia, sharp as knives and twice as deadly. Natalia knows her twin is still in the city. She's seen her fingerprints all over — every local corporation suffering a public scandal, every sudden failure of the local government following a virus or leaked information, every feeble attempt at a smear campaign against her law offices. Natalia won't be brought down to her level. But she *will* find Oksana.

**Kindred Relationships:**

- **Akhtem Veksler (Mawla 2, Adoration)** Akhtem saved Oksana from a premature final death in the chaos of Kharkiv. But he did more than that — he re-Embraced her in the love of the Red God, and now he guides her as a divine agent of Set. Little is known of the man save his basic history: he abandoned his father's faith to come west with the late 19th century goldrush... and found something better. His influence is well entrenched in the city but maintaining a permanent temple has eluded him. Oksana wants to prove herself indispensable to his plans.

- **The Ministry (Jealousy)** Oksana has observed how representatives of the Ministry are accepted across domains as diplomats, counselors, and bureaucrats, and while she doesn't

know any Ministers personally, dislikes what she interprets as their cowardice. To Oksana's mind, they don't deserve to be successful because they abandoned their orthodox beliefs. She's only new to the Church of Set, but the Ministry's polytheist, liberal bullshit is not for her.

- **Simon Danilenko (Anger)** Oksana hasn't heard from Simon, personally, since he mistakenly Embraced her a few years back. She *does* keep in touch, though, looking into his latest vices so she can deliver them to him, in the hopes that one will be his undoing. Oksana knows he isn't fit for divinity and will find a way to destroy him if she can.

**Whispers:**

- **Doppelganger:** In her efforts to become a self-taught Mask cobbler, Oksana has learned how to craft replica documents and spoof data from pre-existing Masks. So far, three titled Camarilla vampires have been brought to task for breaches of the Masquerade, only for the Sheriff to later learn the breaches were committed by Anarchs using stolen Masks.

- **Muckraker:** Oksana's got taps on major cell towers all over the city, and for the past few years she's been training an algorithm to sniff out Kindred texts with telling keywords, like juicebag, leech, donor, and lick.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Oksana Koblenko appears to be a young woman in her early twenties, 5'4" and bony, with dim, sad eyes and a small mouth. Her short, soot-black hair feathers her cheekbones and brushes the edge of her jaw. She writes more eloquently than she speaks; her voice tends toward sudden stops and mumbles. Though she doesn't have a Mask, she does have several online personas.

- At work in the Church, Oksana dresses simply: dark red leggings, a red tunic top, fingerless gloves to keep the joints in her sensitive hands from stiffening while she codes. She travels in a haze of *kyphi* incense, and even outside the temple bleeds a faint aura of frankincense and pine.

- When she appears to her cult as the Proserpina, Oksana's frame becomes delicate and ethereal. She accentuates her eyes with charcoal, weaves long golden cords into her hair, and dresses in a cyber-nouveau collection of neon green straps, gold rings, and heavy black fabric. Her Proserpina persona gives her an ocean of confidence she doesn't normally have, but she tends to fall into campy "dark goddess" clichés.

**Sire:** Simon Danilenko

**Embraced:** 2015 (Born 1993)

**Ambition:** See a permanent temple of Set established in Kharkiv

**Convictions:** Never refuse aid to another member of the Church; Never turn down the opportunity to liberate others

**Touchstones:** Tara Bakurova — fellow self-harm survivor; Natalia Koblenko — narcissistic nightmare twin

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 13th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Craft (Electronics) 2, Drive 1, Larceny (Extortion) 3, Survival 1; Etiquette 2, Insight 2, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 4; Academics (Research) 2, Awareness 1, Finance 1, Investigation (Scandals) 3, Occult (Church of Set) 2, Politics 2, Science (Engineering) 2, Technology 4

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Presence 3

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

# New Coterie Type

The Church of Set are masters of secreting members of their cult among other Kindred sects and within foreign domains. Many Kindred of this religion form coteries specifically for this purpose. Some utilize the sbirri coterie type (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 199), while others opt for the more aggressive saboteur type.

## Saboteurs

*"We will erode their domain brick by brick."*

The saboteur coterie is one without an immediate powerbase or roots within their new domain, but their reach among the kine is likely impressive. They often have the support of a vampire assigning them to the task of spying, assassination, or political disruption.

- **Contacts:** (••) (disenfranchised, outsiders, etc.)
- **Influence:** (•) (surveillance companies)
- **Mawla:** (••) (the vampire who set them to their task)
- **Mask:** (•) (cover identities)
- **Resources:** (••) (liquid cash to assist with their cover story)
- **Adversaries:** (••) (at least one vampire who would oppose their mission with violence)

**Possible extras:** Domain (if the coterie is embedded in their current locale), Status Flaw: Suspect

# New Powers

The Ministry and their orthodox clanmates in the Church of Set practice some refined versions of their clan Disciplines, utilizing the powers of Obfuscate and Presence to better create cult members and crush weaknesses, and Protean to better emulate their clan founder. These powers are not exclusive to the Serpents, but few outside the clan use these Disciplines in the ways the Ministry does.

# Obfuscate

## Level 2

### Mental Maze

**Prerequisite:** Cloud Memory

**Amalgam:** Dominate 1

Serpents maintain that the power to Obfuscate is less about illusion and more about perception. Mental Maze is the ability to remove all sense of direction and location from a

victim, allowing the vampire to make their target a prisoner in their current environment, such as a home, a nightclub, or worse — a vampire's cellar. The victim finds their location folding back on itself, subtly altering their perception of previously visited rooms, convincing them that an actual exit will only lead deeper into the maze, and eventually breaking them down into a state of panic and fragility.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Charisma + Obfuscate vs. Wits + Resolve

**System:** The vampire must be able to communicate with their victim in some way, causing them to read or hear words to the effect of "you cannot escape." The vampire must be present for the power to take effect. If the vampire is successful on the above roll, their victim struggles to find their way out of any multi-room structure in which they're currently situated.

If anyone attempts to assist them, the victim must succeed at a Resolve + Composure roll (Difficulty 4) or immediately distrust the individual guiding them, as their environment conflicts with any guidance given.

If the victim makes no attempt to escape, then no further effects take place. Mortals cannot successfully escape, though the Storyteller may have them attempt to for narrative purposes. If supernatural victims attempt to escape, they only get one attempt, and must roll Resolve + Survival (Difficulty equal to the number of successes the vampire's player rolled when using the power). Anyone who fails to escape a Mental Maze loses two Willpower points and cannot attempt to escape again in this scene.

Normally, the power sees use in a multi-room structure, though with the expenditure of a Willpower point, the vampire may apply the power's effect on a victim in a single room or an outdoor (but still densely-packed) environment such as a forest or construction site.

This power is usable on multiple targets at once (if they all hear or read the same message), though the player only makes one roll, and the victims each make individual rolls to resist.

**Duration:** One scene

# Presence

## Level 3

### True Love's Face

**Prerequisite:** Entrancement, Mask of a Thousand Faces

**Amalgam:** Obfuscate 3

Combining the powers of Entrancement and Mask of a Thousand Faces, the vampire is able to take on the appearance of someone their victim loves, whether or not the practitioner has seen the recipient of this love before. Their appearance (including body shape and voice) only changes to the eyes of the beholder. The vampire gains no additional knowledge of the "true love" beyond what their victim might tell them.

Variants of this power exist, allowing vampires to appear as the object of a victim's hatred or fear. A strong emotion is all that's required to apply the power, whether in the form of passion for a new lover, care for a child, or resentment of an ancient rival.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Charisma + Obfuscate vs. Wits + Composure

**System:** On a successful roll of Charisma + Obfuscate, the victim sees and hears the vampire as a loved one (or other human recipient of strong emotion).

**Duration:** One scene

# Protean

## Level 5

### The Heart of Darkness

**Amalgam:** Fortitude 2

Practiced almost exclusively by vampires within the higher echelons of the Church of Set, this power enables a vampire to remove their own heart and store it outside their body. The vampire's flesh and bone warp as they reach their hand into their bare chest without the need for incision, after which point they remove the heart. This power is not without risk to the practitioner, and can only be used by a vampire on themself. The vampire typically places the heart in a ceremonial canopic jar or urn, though there is no restriction as to where the heart can go. For as long as it is removed, the vampire is immune to staking attempts, unless a stake is driven through the removed heart. The vampire's emotions are detached — metaphysically and biologically, if the heart can be said to be the font of emotion — providing them a resilience against their Beast's urges but a remove from compassion and warmth.

**Cost:** Two Rouse Checks

**System:** This power requires no roll, but takes three turns to complete and inflicts two Aggravated Health damage to the vampire, requiring the expenditure of a Willpower point when removing the heart. No powers can be used to mitigate these effects. Reattaching the heart requires two Rouse Checks. Once removed, the vampire gains +2 dice on attempts to resist all kinds of frenzy but adds a −2 dice penalty to all Insight rolls.

Damage visited upon the heart does not physically manifest on the former host's body, at least until destruction. However, if the heart is dealt Aggravated damage equal to or greater than the vampire's Health, the vampire falls into torpor. If an extracted heart is destroyed — it possesses the same Health and Fortitude as its former host, but can only be completely destroyed with fire or sunlight — the vampire experiences final death. While the heart is removed, the vampire's body cannot be staked unless the heart is located and separately impaled, in which case the vampire falls paralyzed. The vampire is still susceptible to death via fire or sunlight even without a heart.

**Duration:** Permanent (or until the heart is destroyed/returned)

# Cult of Shalim

> *"Do you dream? Do you dare to dream? In this place, our dreams may take form, but the ravages of time and endless march of reality render them to nothing. I can show you a way to end the suffering of hope. The pain of dreams."*
>
> — Apolleon the Traveler, founder of the Cult of Shalim

The hopes and dreams of all Kindred hang by a silver thread. Their very belief structures have been fundamentally shaken by their changing. To the scientist, it seems that every angle they discounted in their studies as sorcery and magic has been shown to exist, and all they have worked for has been for naught. To the religious, they are now agents of evil, immortal

and outside of God's plan. Kindred survive by hanging on to their core values and hopes, the dreams that make them who they are and convince them to drive on to the next night without falling into despair and, eventually, the death-like sleep of torpor.

The Cult of Shalim preys on this fact in the most unusual way. Its agents pride themselves on uncovering the great loves of a person's life, the small joys and bonds that make their reality bearable. They then call those things into question, expose their temporary nature and sever them, leaving the target of their predations left with no choice but to accept the central doctrine of their faith: that reality is suffering. In some ways, the Cult of Shalim resembles the Ministry in their methods. The difference is the Ministers and their Church of Set wish to replace the void with faith, where the Cult of Shalim cares only for the void.

The adherents of this faith do not seek a blissful, endless orgy of experience where all of the bad is eliminated. Their creed is far less utopian and difficult to swallow for all but the most foolish. Shalim's followers believe that elimination of the suffering of existence can only come at the cost of its joys. It is a fact of existence that happiness will turn to sadness, pleasure to pain, and any utopia will crumble with corruption and heresy. This black priesthood preaches how a perfect world cannot exist while the world itself exists.

This madness is what comes from staring too long into the Abyss, as many Lasombra mystics have done over the centuries, looking for truths in the emptiness that seems to consume their very souls. Many of those who have studied the secrets of Oblivion have spoken of a presence in the emptiness. A formless consciousness that seems to observe them and whisper back. When a methuselah proposes that this is the very creator, not just of the clan but of the universe itself, it is difficult for the egotistic and morbid minds of the watchers of the Abyss to refuse its seemingly simple truth.

The first priests of Shalim have been recruited and their numbers are slowly swelling in cities around the world. As the tendrils of their faith grow, they reach out to other clans, targeting the disenfranchised and the desperate, those who appear to have lost everything in life or unlife. They call to them and speak of the succor of emptiness and the bliss of the end. Binding them with a baptism ceremony, they ask the questions the cult's founder first asked of them:

*"Abrenuntias re? Et omnibus operibus eius? Et omnibus pompis eius?"*

With their every tie to reality broken and their mind shattered from loss upon loss, what can they do but answer, *"Abrenuntio."*

## Out of Nothing

The Beckoning provides great opportunities for Kindred who would previously have been perpetually held down by their immortal overlords. However, the opportunities come at a cost: something has summoned all those elders away and, whatever it is, it has Kindred guessing all over the world and asking questions of their long-held beliefs. Like any good conspiracy theory, the provision of plausible answers to those questions can turn into certainty in the minds of those most hungry to understand.

Kindred scholars have long spoken of the great and powerful founders of the clans, the Antediluvians. In the modern nights, it seems logical for Kindred to believe these ancient masters have summoned their closest childer to their sides much in the way some of their own sires may call to them through the Blood. Most who claim to be messengers of these entities are quickly struck down by the local authorities as threats to the Masquerade or as agents of the apocalypse. Only the quick-witted and sufficiently powerful remain elusive. One such Kindred is the ancient Lasombra known as Apolleon the Traveler.

The cult says Apolleon travels the world in the form of a great black mass, sliding along the floor of the seabed, constantly communing with what he believes is his sire, the voice in the dark. This semi-torpid state guides him around the Earth as he reaches out into the minds of Kindred of his bloodline he feels nearby, seeking those with the predisposition he needs: those who have suffered great loss and who are asking the existential questions of what it all means.

Nothing. Nothing is the answer he provides; there is no meaning save that which you assign to the act itself. He comforts them with the knowledge that all Lasombra have, deep inside themselves: that they are part of a great destiny, and that destiny lies in Oblivion. Not only will they end their own suffering, but that of the entire world.

This lofty goal can only be achieved through Shalim, of course. Apolleon preaches that Shalim is the first Kindred and the master of the emptiness that existed before the universe itself existed. He speaks of primordial deities, such as Erebus, from ancient cultures, and links them back to Shalim, their "true" identity. Shalim is the Kindred from whom the first Lasombra arose, the progenitor of all bloodlines and guardian of the purest of those, who retain his link to the primordial dark. Once Shalim wakes and hears the calling of his children, he will destroy the cancer perverting his perfect blackness and return the world to the state of nothingness. In a stroke, war, suffering, disease, unhappiness of all kinds will be expunged and all consciousness will become one with Shalim, all will return to God, all will be God.

Several Lasombra have now knelt before him in one of his guises, pledging the remainder of their time in existence to ensuring its eradication, promising to be the scalpel that will cut reality away and reveal the peace of emptiness to a grateful world.

## The Flowering of the Abyss

As a relatively new cult, the Shalimites maintain a somewhat covert presence in many cities throughout the world. Apolleon's priests have been mainly recruited from around coastal Mediterranean cities, where his trek takes him, but they have subsequently branched out to various areas of the world. The most well-known of his followers is Michalis Basaras, a Lasombra in the city of Chicago. However, cells of Shalimites can be found in the United Kingdom, Brazil, South Africa, and even Egypt where they silently exploit the schism within the Ministry and seek to twist their zeal to Shalim's purposes.

### Servants of the Abyss

The rank of priest is the highest a cultist can aspire to; however, rank is generally not a concern of those joining this cult. Once one has embraced the purity and perfection of emptiness, such trappings are mere words in your mind, though the priests are those who speak directly with Apolleon and, through him, to Shalim itself. The cultists consider themselves equal, since they are all part of the same problem. They often meet in what appear to be nothing more than self-help groups or religious discussion classes, discussing their problems and their hopes for the future. This is a guise they use to lure those seeking help to their side, and to gain their trust.

Priests of Shalim are always Lasombra who have been touched by Apolleon. His predations vary from subject to subject: some kneel having only heard the word and accepted it, such as Rabbi Basaras; others must be more directly "convinced," such as Gamal Hajjar of Cairo whose every happy memory was annihilated by the methuselah over a period of several months. Each one of them is only released by Apolleon when he considers their faith in the coming end to be incorruptible.

### Shalimite Rites

Very little of this young faith has been formally codified; indeed, their practices and approaches seem to vary from cell to cell. Only through their correspondence do the priests share their stories of success and failure, refining their methods.

### Gematria

They write using a coded cipher that involves translating their writings into numbers using the system of gematria. For that reason, all the coded letters are written in Hebrew and priests are required to learn it by rote to ensure their messages can be understood. These letters are often disguised as missives being sent to their distant sires or friends and it is not entirely strange for such correspondence to be encrypted, to preserve not only any secrets inside but also the Masquerade should the letters be intercepted.

## Abyssal Consecration

*"Do you feel it? Do you hear it? Is it not like God?"*

— Rabbi Michalis Basaras, Priest of the Cult of Shalim

New cultists, once stripped of their hope, are brought into the service of Shalim through a ritual akin to a baptism. The priest coats the supplicant in shadow, placing their hands on the shoulders of the new member to comfort them and hold them steady in the endless, unfeeling darkness. They ask the convert if they renounce reality itself, and all its various trappings. By the time this rite is performed, the supplicant's mind is usually broken, however even those with slight doubts as to the presence of Shalim are faced with the dark truth as they feel his presence in that cloud. Some emerge claiming to have heard an indistinct voice, or even to have received visions and instructions from the master of the cult.

### Dark Purpose

The end goal of the cult is clear, though the method of achieving it has not been made clear at all. Different priests preach different ideas on how to bring about the coming end, others say the cult need only be ready to embrace it and focus on eradicating those who would prevent it.

In general terms, the cult targets anyone who seeks to gain knowledge of their activities with a view to shutting them down. Usually, they seek to utterly discredit them instead of killing them at the first instant. Of course, the cult thinks nothing of killing if necessary; the reality of a person is simply another part of what must be ultimately destroyed. Kindred in their service find themselves twisting their Humanity and replacing it with a horrific version of the cult's credo.

Fundamentally, though the methods vary, the goal remains united. The cult seeks to awaken Shalim from his dreaming and bring about the end of reality, uniting everyone in their great heaven and bringing them back into Oblivion from whence they came.

### Enemies

The cult has no known apostates, or at least any who may have tried to leave the cult haven't been willing or able to speak of their experience. But it does have many critics: failed conversions would be the first among them, since nothing embitters a person more than finding out the people who purported to be helping you were sabotaging your every attempt at happiness. Investigators and Kindred who tend toward cynicism are also opposed to the view of this cult and tend to treat its members or those who spend too much time around them with suspicion.

Some Princes are aware of the cult's presence but see them as little more than an esoteric distraction for the Kindred of their city. If the cult seems benign and gives no sign of their intention to annihilate the Prince's domain, those who are aware are willing to tolerate their activities. The first defense of the cult is its secrecy, however, and they tend not to formally announce themselves and avoid associating outside of their joint activities in places where they know they can speak freely.

Malkavians often feel nervous in the presence of Shalimites; they recognize madness when they see it, regardless of the veneer of civility it is hidden behind.

## Artifacts and Symbology

The cult's symbol is of a hollow person, often portrayed as a simple human figure with a hole cut out from the center. While this may seem a quite morbid symbol, evincing a great depression, the cultist would tell you that it is the hollow they revere above all. Take away the human shape around it and the sadness of the symbol is gone. There is nothing depressing about emptiness unless you obsess yourself with the never-ending task of filling it.

It is rare for cultists to identify themselves by such outward signs. Instead, they speak the phrase "Shin-lamed-mem" to identify themselves to each other. This simple greeting is unusual enough for cultists to recognize it without being suspicious to outsiders, since it is the root of the traditional Hebrew greeting, "shalom," and of their cult's eternal master.

Cult priests carry with them small books, normally bound in black leather, containing lists of dates, places and names. These indicate sightings of Apolleon by their brotherhood and list the names of targets of his predations for induction into the priesthood. Through their network, they also suggest promising members of their own cults who the methuselah may be interested in converting or who may be ripe for the embrace, being raised as Kindred in the emptiness of Shalim's truth.

## Mortal Servants

No creature is considered anathema to the cult if it truly seeks to supplicate itself before the Master of the Abyss. While many of their members are Kindred, there are a good number of mortals within each cell, often chosen for their positions in the local society or the access they can afford the cultists to materials or information they require to conduct their activities. The religious community are often among the most widely targeted by cult historians and archaeologists, particularly those with interest in Mesopotamian and ancient Greek culture.

The cult in Palermo, Sicily is determined to gain ownership of the site of Castel d'Ombro and reconsecrate it as the first altar of Shalim. Through various organizations, both religious and criminal, they seek to achieve this aim. However, the cult fears crossover with the Hecata in this area as they share much of the cult's knowledge of Oblivion.

Shalimite Convictions

The Cult of Shalim practices a regular dance with self-destruction. Nihilistic cults are, as the word implies, prone to implosion. Such behavior leaves a mark on one's soul, especially if a Shalimite is drawn to destroy others in an effort to prove the pointlessness of existence. The following Convictions are common, if just to stave off the inevitability of Oblivion for long enough to spread their word:

- **Never allow yourself to celebrate life**

Life's purpose is to end, and you can help hasten it. What you must never, ever do, is make the mistake of seeking joy through life's existence.

- **Never lose your temper with failure**

Whether faced with your own failure or that of a new convert, anger is a wasteful emotion and failure is best addressed through passivity or correction.

- **Always work to impede those who would control chaos**

You are not a Setite, so allow misrule to unravel naturally or remove its obstructions without attempting to channel it.

- **Only allow Embraces that further the destruction of society**

There is no gain to be had from Embracing someone as a reward or permitting others to do so. The Embrace is Oblivion channeled into an unliving vessel.

- **Do not succumb to the allure of prosperity**

The less you own, the closer you are to nothingness. Absence is utter freedom and material objects tie you to life.

- **Never maintain or protect more than a single mortal of importance**

While the need to cling on to the kine is recognized as an anchor in a tempestuous ocean, more than one is an extravagance.

## Shalimite Operations: Fukuoka

On one hand the Cult of Shalim is one of the least expansionist cults, rarely seeking converts with any passion. On the other, the Shalimites are among the most pernicious, corrosive cults in Kindred society, even when they're not trying to be so. It's difficult to convince a vampire to give up all hope and material purpose, which is why the Shalimites usually target those already on the edge of losing everything, or vampires who have already experienced exile, a loss of Touchstones, or the death of their last remaining mortal family member. The cult has experienced dramatic success in finding targets and converts in the domain of Fukuoka, which spells ill tidings for the other Kindred in the Japanese city.

A conservative domain with a rigid hierarchy, Fukuoka has a defined way of rewarding the elders, the Mawlas, and the powerbrokers, while keeping the fledglings and Anarchs under heel. Most move on to other domains when they realize raging against the machine in this city is fruitless, but some remain, because Fukuoka is what they know, because the underground Anarch scene embraces everything insane about Fukuoka's nightlife and myriad of subcultures, and because it feels like abandoning Fukuoka is abandoning a city with a pulse.

This is where the Cult of Shalim come in. The Shalimites in Fukuoka appeared organically, with their first member — a clanless vampire named Ryoko — having been the victim of the domain punishment named "oyogu" or "the swim," where a vampire Embraced without permission has their hands, feet, and tongue removed and their body cast into the Chikugo River. The trial takes place before dawn and few vampires survive the ordeal. Ryoko herself disappeared for three months before returning with her body healed and her mind committed to the worship of void, which she only recently gave the name "Shalim." Ryoko spoke with her fellow mistreated fledglings and told them of the wisdom she experienced in the dark waters, and while few listened, a couple tried to replicate her experience. They likewise returned three months later, changed and possessed of a desire to erode the fabricated society that for so long has kept Kindred from wisdom.

The Cult of Shalim appeals to the young vampires of Fukuoka in a few ways. For those with a genuine esoteric interest, the idea of finding wisdom buried in the city's waterways holds appeal, as their elders never pass down such knowledge. The vampires of Anarch leaning see

the water burial — which many have since attempted, with more casualties than returns — as a proof of commitment to the Movement, and the Cult of Shalim as the vanguard against the establishment. Many other fledglings just feel a worship of nothingness is cool, that destruction is enjoyable, and joining a group where wearing black is "in" and influence and wealth mean less than action is a more rewarding way to spend an unlife than playing gopher for their sires.

## Perspectives

**Anarchs:** *They seem to want to exterminate us wherever they find us. They believe we serve powerful elders who seek to crush their freedoms. They are blind. We serve the absence of all things.*

**Camarilla:** *While it's not ideal, this is just another way of getting our childer through the long nights. The Camarilla preaches blissful ignorance in all things, and one cannot find fault in that, if it redirects those with curiosity to our ranks.*

**Clan Lasombra:** *The clan from which we draw our greatest number and inspiration, yet many of them look upon us with horror, as if worshiping the tools we use is some kind of sin.*

**Clan Malkavian:** *I believe sensory deprivation is the key to soothing even the wildest of minds. Find a Malkavian and introduce them to our cause. They will eat it up.*

**Hecata:** *Interesting idea, narrow vision. I'm sure it's comforting to them to think that everything is about flesh and spirit, but for us, it goes much deeper. The Hecata who worship what we worship are known as Nagaraja, but they are so few.*

**The Ministry:** *The snake may shed its skin and pretend to be something it is not, but we know. Their Church of Set is a half-measure. They exist only to satisfy their own desires.*

## "Porcelain" Patricia Montgomery

**Epitaph:** Cultist or Apostate?

**Quote:** *"I may be a little touched but I can't be the only one who sees."*

**Clan:** Malkavian

**Mortal Days: Thrill Seeker**

Patricia was the youngest child of a wealthy family from Denver. Her parents made sure that Patricia and her brother, Morgan, fell in love with the great outdoors, regularly taking them out to their holiday home near the Rockies, where they would engage in pursuits from horse rides to rock climbing.

As she grew older, with the trust fund afforded by the family business behind her, Patricia dedicated herself to the enjoyment of life. She eschewed further education and concentrated on scaling her own personal mountains, real or metaphorical. She targeted being the first female to scale all the great peaks of the world and became something of an internet personality in her attempts to do so. This brought her attention and niche fame as a fitness guru and socialite, with energy drink and health supplement companies lining up to gain her endorsement on social media.

While she traveled the world, met and slept with interesting and beautiful people, and performed stunts in exotic locales, her brother managed the family business into the financial crisis. His risky investments had funded Patricia's lifestyle and his parents' retirements. When those investments came home to roost, Patricia's fledgling career could have saved the company from bankruptcy. However, Morgan refused to ask for her help. By the time

Patricia discovered the full extent of the problem, her brother faced several charges of insider trading and a string of angry creditors who wanted blood. He answered those charges with the blare of a pistol into his own mouth.

Patricia returned to Denver to mourn her brother only to find her parents embittered at how she had seemingly abandoned him, too ignorant to notice what was going on in the "real world."

After a major falling-out at the funeral, they never spoke again.

Afterwards, Patricia threw herself into dangerous activities. She garnered ever more followers who saw her as an inspiration, while others called her a fraud, nothing more than a rich girl who always had everything handed to her, who made more money selling products than the people that produced them.

Her descent into depression, as well as her torn state between the life she forged and what she saw as the responsibility of home, caught the attention of her sire. As she enjoyed an exclusive concert by the band Baby Chorus in an underground club in Chicago, she threw herself upon their suave bass player and became his childe.

**Kindred Nights: Empty Eternity**

Patricia had many problems to overcome as a Kindred. Her sire, Raymond Falcon, disappeared almost as soon as he had Embraced her. Whenever he reappeared, he seemed different, like he didn't remember her or the night they shared.

Her tutelage was left to the Primogen of Clan Malkavian, and he was only too happy to have a new plaything to break. He had her perform one final stunt for her followers to enjoy, hanging herself in a hotel room on live stream.

After Son recovered her from the morgue, he introduced her to two things. First, the many comments mocking her death. "Another dead rich bitch" could have been the carving on her headstone.

Second, Patricia's face was far too famous to be seen roaming around the city. She'd have to travel incognito, and he had just the way to do it. A Porcelain Noh mask was surgically stapled to her head, etched with a beatific smile. Son stated that were she ever to take it off, she would be burned as a Masquerade breach.

"Don't worry." he mused, "Now you always look happy, no matter what!"

The Kindred at court were no kinder than internet trolls when Patricia was introduced at Elysium. "Porcelain Pat" they called her. Patricia's eyes swiveled around the room, her anguish stifled by the saintly smile of the mask. Everyone laughed, all but one.

The rabbi approached her, seeming genuinely interested in her and the losses she had suffered. Even in her depression, she found him sitting silently by her, a reassuring presence. He whispered to her and spoke of salvation that she could find if she would let go of her pain.

After a year of listening to his sermons, the rabbi felt she was ready. He offered her a place in the Cult of Shalim and an answer to her cries for deliverance from the suffering of her life.

Patricia wanted to believe him, but the idea that everything she had seen meant nothing proved too much for her. She had dreamed of climbing all the great peaks. Maybe she couldn't do that now, but could she accept that the mountains themselves were abominations that should be expunged so humanity could finally know true peace?

She fled the synagogue and threw herself upon the mercy of anyone she could find. The Prince, her sire, her clanmates. As she ranted of the lowly rabbi's great plan of destruction, it

was clear to the court that she was truly mad. Son seemed amused by it, far too amused by her sudden isolation and pariah status to consider that she might be right.

To this night, she continues her crusade to expose the cult for what it is. But even as she does so, she can't escape the nagging doubt at the back of her mind that maybe Basaras was right.

**Plots and Schemes:**

- **Expose the Cult:** Patricia is horrified at the existence of the Cult of Shalim. Even though her mind is racked with doubt and depression, she attempts to convince anyone who will listen of their threat.
- **Recruitment Target:** Although she is currently campaigning against the Cult, the mockery of her contemporaries, coupled with the complete absence of her sire, leaves her wondering if she shouldn't step into the darkness herself.
- **Famous Face:** Patricia is shackled by her fame. Though it causes her pain, both emotional and physical, she must continue to wear her mask at all times or face the Blood Hunt, feeding through its detachable lower quarter. Furthermore, she cannot travel freely and relies on the patronage of Nosferatu who pity her plight.

**Domain and Haven:**

- **Apartment, Lincoln Park (Haven 1)** What little money she was able to secret out of her personal funds has gone into purchasing a modest apartment for her use. She has no other haven or domain, though she does not always sleep here if other Kindred are willing to put her up for a day to avoid her predatory stalker.

**Thralls and Tools:**

- **Cultists (Herd 2)** Mortal members of the Cult of Shalim often approach Patricia as sympathetic ears and easy meals and whisper heretical thoughts into her broken mind.
- **Connected (Influence 3)** Although she cannot act on her own these days, Patricia's knowledge of who to talk to inside many of the social circles and advertising companies in the city is rivaled by few.
- **Montgomery Trust Fund (Resources 2)** Son had himself placed as the executor of her trust fund but continues to disburse it with mocking contempt, always reminding Patricia that she's just "another dead rich bitch."

**Kindred Relationships:**

- **Evan Klein (Occasional Lucidity)** In the guise of Raymond Falcon, Evan is Patricia's sire. Though often absent, he's likely to believe her tale -— for all the good his support would do her at court.
- **Alphonse Gabriel Capone (Exploitative)** Capone is in search of new allies and he has one eye on Patricia's former contacts as well as the remains of her family's estate. It could be just the score he needs to get back on top.
- **Rabbi Michalis Basaras (Erstwhile Mentor)** Though she is attempting to expose the cult, Basaras holds out hope that Patricia will return to the fold once her final ties to the world fall away. He aids in this by making sure she remains a laughing stock at court.

**Whispers:**

- **Remember Me:** Patricia has been known to favor those who treat her with kindness, especially if they talk to her positively about her former life.

- **Followed by Day:** Not content to plague her waking hours, someone is haunting the places where Patricia sleeps and following her wherever she goes.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Patricia is a short, but well-built woman with straight black hair and green eyes. Her features are usually obscured by the mask she wears, however many photographs of her exist and she was a very attractive woman with a broad smile and pearly white teeth. She carries herself with a slouched and withdrawn demeanor but the power within her frame is evident, even to the casual observer.
- Aside from the mask, Patricia wears cotton summer dresses, often flecked with blood from reapplying the staples to her head each night. These are offset by the hiking boots she always wears, which were one of her trademarks during her life.
- Patricia rarely ventures out in public, but on rare occasions when she does, she is mistaken for a street performer, occasionally handed a pocketful of change with comments on how genuinely scary she looks.

**Sire:** Evan Klein

**Embraced:** 2018 (Born 1996)

**Ambition:** Find my own peace, one way or another

**Convictions:** Don't forget where I came from

**Touchstones:** Frances Gault — fan, following in Patricia's footsteps

**Humanity:** 7

**Generation:** 10th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics (Rock Climbing) 4, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Wilderness) 3; Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 2, Insight 3, Leadership 2, Performance 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1; Academics 1, Finance 1, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Science (Nutrition) 2, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Obfuscate 2

**General Difficulties:** 5/2

# Ceremonies of Shalim

Shalimites practice their own brand of Oblivion Ceremonies, and while vampires outside the cult can learn them with a suitable Mawla, it's rare for a member of the cult to teach an outsider. The rules surrounding learning and practicing Oblivion Ceremonies are addressed on p. XX, but following are some example Ceremonies rare to anyone outside the cult.

**Note:** The Shalimite Ceremonies use Oblivion powers from **Chicago by Night** as their pre-requisites. If you do not own this book, the Storyteller is free to suggest another Oblivion power to act as a pre-requisite.

## Level 1

### Traveler's Call

This simple Ceremony is taught by the cult to all priests before their release into the wider world. Since all priests of Shalim are linked by their common bond with Apolleon the Traveler, they are able to use his presence in eternal Oblivion as a nexus between themselves and their followers.

**Pre-required Power:** Oblivion's Sight (see **Chicago by Night**)

**Ingredients:** The black book gifted to them following their indoctrination into the cult

**Process:** By using the Traveler's Call with their black book in hand and the name of another Shalimite in mind, a priest can send a ripple out across Oblivion, calling the target to their location. Unlike a true summoning, this power does not place a compulsion upon the victim, but does alert the Shalimite being contacted to the vampire's current location through a repetitive, flashing vision of the scenery surrounding the calling Kindred.

**System:** The cultist must possess their black book and know the name of another Shalimite. The vampire's player makes a Ceremony roll (Difficulty 3). The contacted vampire can choose to ignore the call, but the flashing vision gives them −2 dice to all rolls involving concentration for the remainder of the scene, at which point the call disappears. A critical win by the vampire allows them to send a single-word message to their point of contact along with the vision.

## Level 3

### Name of the Father

Priests of Shalim have all been trained to use their voices as weapons, slicing through the sugar coating their victims wrap around their love for the world. By invoking the name of their dark master and calling for his aid, they channel a fraction of his power into an adversary and cloud their very mind with shadow, causing them to stand dumbstruck by the emptiness of Oblivion.

**Pre-required Power:** Shadow Perspective (see **Chicago by Night**)

**Ingredients:** The ability to speak ancient Greek, eye contact with a victim, five charcoal sticks

**Process:** The priest invokes an incantation in a dialect of ancient Greek, invoking the name of Shalim as they crush five charcoal sticks in hand. These words are spoken while making eye contact with the victim, therefore the victim must be able to see and hear the user for this power to be successful. If successful, a shadow crosses the eyes of the priest and those of the victim, leaving the eyes of each participant entirely black as the victim succumbs to a crushing sense of despair. Those who have experienced this power and lived to tell of it speak of an all-consuming darkness closing in around their thoughts and robbing them of all sensation. The last thing they recall is a distant, rumbling laughter echoing in their mind.

**System:** The vampire's player makes their Ceremony roll vs. the victim's Resolve + Composure. The victim is paralyzed with despair for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled. While under this effect, victims cannot see, hear or experience any form of sensory input except touch and physical pain, which brings them out of the effect. The victim can expend Willpower equal to the number of turns they would remain paralyzed to break free of the power.

## Level 5

## Pit of Contemplation

Only the most powerful of Shalim's priests have been able to manifest this ability, but the effect is one of the most terrifying and demonstrative uses of Oblivion yet seen in modern nights. The ability to cast an enemy into Oblivion terrifies even the toughest of Kindred.

**Pre-required Power:** Tenebrous Avatar (see **Chicago by Night**)

**Ingredients:** Pot of ink, three pints/six liters or more of blood from an innocent the user murdered, an unlit room (this power does not work outside)

**Process:** The vampire personally murders an innocent mortal, incurring Stains unless they have a Conviction that enables them to mitigate this cost. While innocence is subjective, traditional sacrifices are children, virgins, and holy individuals. The vampire then takes at least three pints/six liters of the deceased's blood into an unlit room and uses it to paint a doorway on a wall in the chamber. Finally, the vampire splashes a pot of ink onto the blood-painted portal. Focusing their will upon the gateway, the priest opens a tear through to Oblivion.

Anyone foolish or unfortunate enough to fall into the gap is immediately transported into a pocket of eternal black nothingness for as long as the priest sees fit. If the priest is destroyed without releasing their prisoners, any undead prisoners remain trapped in the void (unless and until another vampire reverses the Ceremony).

Priests may choose to pass through the door, but doing so condemns them forever. Some Shalimites do this when they feel they have completed their work as a part of the cult.

**System:** Following the Ceremony steps, the priest's player makes their Ceremony roll, and on a success the effect is quick and implosive. A hole opens at the point where ink and blood mix. The hole draws objects, air, and people toward it and, if they fail a Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 4), sucks them into a pocket within Oblivion.

While trapped, victims are suspended in an endless blackness. They cannot see or hear anyone or anything around themselves. Only the priest who conjures this blasphemous gateway can free those held within, by pouring a vampire's vitae over the painted door (sufficient to provoke a Rouse Check). Mortals sucked into Oblivion are instantly killed.

# The Mithraic Mysteries

*"All hail our lord and savior, Mithras, who journeyed through the Underworld and now returns to us!"*

— Rose Abawi, Toreador Pater of the Soho Mithraeum

The cult of Mithras lies in disarray. Forged in secrets and persecution, the cult long preferred erecting a new temple over expanding an existing one. Likewise, it founded new cells instead of forming a singular sprawling cult. This worked well with Mithras at the helm, but his rumored destruction at the claws of Lupines and subsequent disappearance left the disparate cult rudderless. Unscrupulous Patres started giving their own orders, while the most loyal Patres — paralyzed with grief and a lack of guidance — saw their cells fall apart. Yet now these loyal few sense a stirring in their blood, a whisper on the air: prepare, for He returns. The cells communicate with each other, the network reforms, and the Mithraists stand to rank among the most active power players in Kindred society.

## From Persia to Rome

The Mithraic Mysteries is a cult of personality as much as a mystery cult. For Cainites, there is no separating the cult from the methuselah at its center. Yet what Kindred know of Mithras

is scarce and conflicting. To his followers, he is the Indo-Iranian god Mithra first mentioned in a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns transcribed around 1380 BCE, or depicted even earlier on the royal seal of King Saussatar of Mitanni around 1450 BCE. They know Mithra was a member of the solar pantheon, and his divine purview centered upon honesty, camaraderie, and bargains.

When Mithra was said to have walked the Earth in corporeal form, as gods in ages past were wont to do, the Ventrue claim he was Embraced by an ancient vampire named Veddartha. Mithra remained active for centuries afterward, until the clash between his divine blood and the curse of Caine forced him in and out of torpor. Still, his followers remained loyal and Mithra's teachings, passed down orally, may even have inspired tales of the Buddhist Maitreya. The cult learned to survive without their god's direct presence, dutifully awaiting his return — a trait that served them well to the modern nights.

Mithra became Mithras in Rome, and his religion took on the trappings of a mystery cult. His followers congregated in caves and underground cisterns, coaxed by Mithras' lieutenants to ensure the god-turned-Cainite could visit them. Whenever the Mithraists gained sufficient funds, they erected a new temple rather than expand an existing one. His cult spread rapidly and far, operating in cells rather than as one collective, even reaching Britain at the furthest reaches of the Roman Empire. Building on Mithra's purview as divine judge of truth, companionship, and trade, worship of Mithras was popular with soldiers, merchants, bureaucrats and custom officials, freedmen, and slaves. For a while, Mithraism rivaled the nascent religion of Christianity. In the end, however, the Church of Peter triumphed and Mithraism became a relic in mortal history.

**[LAYOUT: LAY OUT AS A PENNED LETTER]**

### Mithra and the Bull

*As penned by Roger de Camden, Pater of the Cult of Mithras in Britain*

The Persian deity Mithra accomplished many great deeds, but none greater than slaying the bull. He rode the creature until it was exhausted, then forced it into a cave and killed it. This myth is retold over and over on stêles and shrines dedicated to Mithra, and the bull-slaying myth even carried over into Mithras' Roman and British cults.

Yet these same myths name Sol Invictus, the Sun God, as Mithra's patron. Does it not seem odd to accomplish such a great deed away from your patron's gaze? Most Kindred dismiss the myth as allegory, or point out that Mithra as Cainite had to retreat into a cave. They're not paying attention. Myths are allegories, yes, but they are also intentional. This one, specifically, names both the patron Sun and the cave. That's not an error — Mithra performed his greatest kill away from his patron's gaze.

And this, my dear neonate, is where I urge you to stop and think. Who would serve as patron to one as ancient as Mithras? Who would Mithras fear enough to hide his actions from? What does slaying a bull, a symbol of fertility and procreation, embody? Rumors have long named Mithras as Fourth Generation, yet not a direct childe of our clan founder. Perhaps both are true.

**[LAYOUT: LETTER ENDS]**

## A London Renaissance

Though outdone on the mortal stage, Mithras remained powerful in Cainite politics. He moved to the domain of Londinium in 71 CE, where Roman soldiers did fierce battle with Britain's people. By the time Rome accepted Christianity in 313 CE, Mithras was so

entrenched in Britain he could safely bring his most dedicated followers to London, both as reward for their service and to continue his worship. With the London cell now the most important within the Mithraic Mysteries, they began work on the London Mithraeum. Britain's rebellion against Rome spilled over into Cainite unrest though, leading the local Kindred to rebel against the foreign Mithras. Mithras emerged victorious, but again slipped into torpor. The cult continued without him — split into independent cells, certain in their faith, and awaiting his return as always.

While the Mithraic Mysteries never regained the global power it had in the era of Persia and Rome, the cult spread throughout England, Wales, Scotland, and even to the coasts of France. When Mithras awoke again in 1066 CE, he found his cult diminished in numbers and power, but with all its trappings in place and waiting for him. Mithras brazenly reopened the London Mithraeum, only to see it burned to the ground by Ventrue lords acting through the clergy. The cult retreated back into the shadows, playing to its strengths and attracting new followers among young nobles and soldiers. Meanwhile Mithras' Cainite agents sowed discord among the local Ventrue. With the Ventrue focused on each other, Mithras' popularity spread from young kine to young Kindred, patiently waiting while his detractors turned against each other and replacing them with his loyalists. Come 1154 CE, Mithras openly claimed the Baronies of Avalon, England's most powerful domain, as his own.

With Mithras as Prince of London, the cult continued to spread and thrive. The cells remained separate and hidden though, each working toward their god's greater purpose. One might worship Mithras as bull-slayer and soldier, while another celebrated him as god of bargains and merchants. Each cell made its own rules in accordance with the Seven Steps to the Sun.

Mithras himself traveled the world, meeting with a variety of famous and infamous Kindred in pursuit of knowledge and power, with his cult remaining ever faithful. His followers survived Christian persecution, bouts of madness in their god during the Victorian era, and potential coups against their Prince — only to await his return, and resume their service every time.

## The London Blitz

Mithras *designed* his cult to survive without him. The Mithraic Mysteries propagated into independent and separate cells, remained hidden, and fostered relations with the middle and lower classes rather than the elite. This let Mithras pursue his myriad passions, yet always return to find at least one cell still serving as base of operations.

The last six decades were different though. A Lupine pack drove Mithras into torpor during the London Blitz in World War II, after which a Banu Haqim neonate named Montgomery Coven stole and diablerized his body. While no one knew of Mithras' diablerie, his followers could no longer sense his presence and rumors of his final death swelled. Finally, Queen Anne came forward and quietly confirmed his death. Certainly, she would lie to advance her own cause, but she also remained loyal to Mithras — if motivated largely by opportunism and fear — throughout long bouts of torpor, depression, and madness. Queen Anne breaking ranks now was a clear sign she believed Mithras either dead or never returning — and she would be in a position to know. Mithras' acolytes desperately searched for their god's guidance — his voice in their heads, his blood in their veins — and found nothing. For the first time since Mithras' rise three thousand years ago, his followers' faith wavered.

## Faces of the Bull God

Without Mithras to guide the cult, separate cells survived or fell on their Pater's strength — and *many* of them fell. Mithras' Cainite enemies, sensing blood in the water, came down on any cells that revealed themselves in their search for guidance. The cells that did remain were forced wholly underground, with no way to contact each other. The London Mysteries were disparate, weak, and defenseless with Mithras seemingly gone forever. The cult of Mithras stood poised to fall.

Then, in recent nights, a niggling sensation. Not as powerful a presence in his followers' minds and veins as before, but rather an *echo* of Mithras, a voice that was both his and not his. The cells that survived, and the Patres that still believed, painstakingly pulled themselves back together. In London a new Mithraeum arose under guidance of Rose Abawi, a Toreador claiming to be the Voice of Mithras. Throughout the long nights without their god, several beliefs and practices yet remained.

## Mithraist Ambition

The Cult of Mithras follows a many-headed religion, but above all, they are a cult of law. At the cult's height its rituals were formal, its structure rigid, its mysteries impenetrable to outsiders. Since Mithras' destruction the cult broke up, and with it the religion lost much of its power. Mithraism is strongest when centralized around an unliving god with firm edicts. Since his apparent return, the cells returning to the fold have found great purpose in returning to the old ways. They believe in a world where secrets are kept secret, where the truly powerful seize power and hold on to it until someone more potent can topple the leader, and where training should start young, so age and experience might convey wisdom.

Mithras is the model the cult strives to emulate. As a god, he is multi-faceted, symbolizing spheres from conflict to fertility, and justice to business. This appeals to the cult's varied followers, as while the Ventrue adherent might find attraction to the cult's wealth, a Brujah might find appeal in its dedication to war. Through this range of influence, Mithras belongs to his followers, but they all belong to him in turn.

Once a follower digs deeply into the Mithraic Mysteries, concepts such as diablerie become less and less of a taboo. As Mithras gave himself up to his diablerist in the 20th century — at least, that's how the Mithraists describe it going down — some of the cult's elders may give themselves over to promising up-and-comers. They may even try to create gestalt personalities, giving themselves up to create something close to divine. This horrifying ritual rarely works, but such self-sacrifice is a point of great pride to Mithras' cultists.

Unlike the Setites, who believe in unshackling oneself from mortal fetters, and the Bahari, who believe in exalting in vampiric power to serve their goddess, the Mithraists believe in enlightenment by way of control. Mithraists reinforce each other's Convictions, Touchstones, and therefore Humanity, not due to ethical concerns, but because doing so makes the cult stronger and brings a vampire closer to mastering their urges.

When not pursuing their vein of enlightenment, the Mithraists run a successful protection racket in multiple domains, utilizing their tight structure to extort and bodyguard those who pay into the temple. The temple itself acts both as a clubhouse — often along the lines of an exclusive gentlemen's club with old fashions and practices, such as telling stories, singing as a pianist or harpist plays, or even playing war games — as well as a site for cult rituals, inductions, and burial of torpid peers. The few Tremere who gain admittance to the cult (Mithras always despised the clan) draw parallels between their practices and those of Hermetics, Freemasons, and Rosicrucians, while the Mithraists boldly declare that if anyone set the mold the others followed, it was them.

Law and Chaos

If there are two diametrically opposed cults in this book, one might suspect the Church of Caine and Bahari make for the most contentious, but it's the Cult of Mithras and Church of Set most inclined to go to war. One could argue Mithras and Set are among the most "successful" of vampires, to have successfully masqueraded their identities behind the names of gods and cultivated religions in their wake. However, the two have never been comfortable sharing success, this world, or potential followers. The two faiths have two completely opposed views of the world, which in extreme terms amounts to Mithras wanting a vampire world governed with tight laws, with power funneling up to him, while Set wants a vampire world with no laws, and power raging unbridled. The Mithraists may be the best fit for the Camarilla, with the cult's preference for hierarchy, Blood Bonds, and secrets, while the Setites veer toward the Anarchs with their love of unrestricted knowledge and influence.

Of course, neither vampire is open to speaking their views, which leads to this law vs. chaos divide being one perpetuated among their followers. It's not known if Mithras and Set ever encountered each other or discussed their opposing philosophies, but there's enough vehemence between their followers to make any city with a temple of Mithras and a temple of Set within its borders liable to assassination attempts, bombings, and other assorted strife.

## Divine Mithras

The Mysteries teach that Mithras is a god, Embraced by Veddartha when he walked the world in corporeal form. While in the past the cult linked Mithras to the eponymous Roman God, advancing historical insight links Mithras to the Persian Mithra. Devout followers accept this without hesitation — Mithras and Mithra are one, even if the details of his worship changed from one ancient empire to the other. The cells silence any infidels who believe Mithras an ancient Persian impostor at best, or a much younger poser who handily connected the dots between the Persian and Roman deities in an effort to appear older than he is.

Mithras is a god of war, feasts, and fertility, and these attributes reflect in ceremonies dedicated to him. His followers engage in war on Mithras' enemies, the feasts hosted in his name are extravagant and lavish, and loyal followers are permitted to Embrace — the only act of fertility available to Kindred — as a reward for their service. These acts further the cult's secular goals, but above all they channel the divine. Proper worship prepares a Kindred's body, and the blackened remnants of their soul, to receive the true secret of Mithras — for he was once a companion of Sol Invictus, and still keeps the Sun's secrets.

Patres tell stories of Mithras acting during the day without any of the usual sluggishness, and even walking in sunlight. While these gifts are Mithras' by divine right, he lost them at the hands of Veddartha and spent long centuries regaining them. They say Mithras achieved Golconda, a state which allows him to reclaim his place at Sol Invictus' hand, and *this* is the final secret he will teach his acolytes. If so far none have actually attained this, it is surely a failing on their part — they *were* born mere mortals — rather than a refutation of the Patres' claims.

Religious texts dating back to ancient Persia further claim Mithra will save the world. While the Mysteries largely ignored this in favor of focusing on Mithras' fortitude and prowess, the story received traction in the midst of the Beckoning and the Second Inquisition. Neonates believe Mithras is a messiah who can save them from new calamities. Duskborn note their own resistance to sunlight, and believe Mithras can teach them to fully harness this power —

though they don't know if this would make them a vampire god like Mithras himself, or let them return to a mortal state. The rumors of Mithras as savior even find purchase with ancillae who find themselves out of their depth with the upper echelons of vampires depleted. Had the cult better leadership, it could easily grow to rival any methuselah cult or even the Church of Caine.

## An Underground Religion

The Mithraic Mysteries suffered persecution at the hands of Christianity, both as genuine religious warfare and as a way for Mithras' enemies to undermine him. The cells learned to hide early on, and do so well. Mithraea are underground, physically hidden from public sight. Ironically the oldest and most prominent Mithraeum in London has since been discovered by mortals and turned into a museum, but many more remain hidden. Their access points lie in elite clubs founded by merchants, illegal fighting clubs, occult shops, and even pubs.

The cult is not just physically hidden though. Recruitment and initiation are similarly obfuscated, with a cell's Pater and Heliodromi selecting new recruits and then sending the Corax — the lowest ranking members — to assume the risk of actually inviting them. Acolytes are taught a variety of secret codes, depending as always on the individual cell. Rich merchants might identify themselves by wearing a specific lapel flower, or a secret handshake. An anarchistic cell sends out instructions through the deep web or street graffiti. The Mysteries use some symbols near universally, such as the sun or bull, but only Mithras knew every code.

## The London Uncertainty

Even as Mithras' fate languishes in uncertainty, with rumors claiming his soul was diablerized, his old vassals conspire to resurrect their god. Their work is shrouded in mystery, gears moving within gears, but one key component may be missing: faithfulness.

Gwenllian Arwyn long served as Pater in London's largest Mithraic cell, after the former leader — Roger de Camden — was believed destroyed. Her loyalty now turns from the ancient. Once an enemy of Rome, Arwyn was brought to heel by Mithras, and in his disappearance she sees a renewed chance for freedom and independence. If she takes the leap and betrays Mithras, the largest of the old cells finally falls. Arwyn might even scuttle the resurrection plot completely. The ancient has contingencies in place for that eventuality though, and he's already grooming a new Pater from Soho to replace her.

## Celebrating the Bull God

Each cell has its own approach to worship, but some aspects are near universal.

### Bull Running

Initiates wear down their enemies in a ritual called bull running, which can conclude in a single night or take years to complete. Sometimes, if acolytes seek appeasement in a symbolic ritual, this enemy is an actual bull. More often though, the Pater names a mortal, ghoul, or Kindred as the bull. Mithras himself chose the targets when he was active, but now faithful Patres make their own judgment as to which enemy of the cult must be removed, while disloyal Patres send acolytes after their personal enemies.

While the Pater chooses the target, the initiates themselves decide if an enemy must be killed, or can be defeated through other means such as social disgrace or financial ruin. Bull running is a favorite practice among Soho's mortal acolytes, who delight in bringing down the powers that be. Rose isn't fully focused in selecting targets, and often strays from bull running that

serves Mithras in favor of protecting her community. So far, Mithras has allowed this in the name of good practice, but he intends to correct her upon his return.

## Fertility Feasts

The traditional fertility feasts seemed poised for obsoletion, as few modern mortals are willing to conceive a child as part of a cult initiation. The feasts made a comeback as mortals became increasingly sexually liberated though, and "fertility feast" was reinterpreted as "sex acts." Some cells see a couple performing an act predictably named "mounting the bull." Other cells engage in grand orgies where participants of all genders are welcome. Likewise, one cell might sate the room with a thick opium smoke, while another forbids drugs entirely as it believes all sensations are to be experienced without barriers. The purpose of all feasts, however, is to channel the divine fertility of Mithras.

If a Kindred acolyte is granted the right to Embrace, they do so during a fertility feast. Kindred fertility feasts rarely host any vampire-on-vampire sex, as the chances of someone biting and becoming Blood Bound to another acolyte instead of Mithras are too great. Instead the Kindred joins the mortals' fertility feast, in whichever form it takes, and quietly steals their intended childe away for the Embrace during the feast's climax.

## The Blood Equinox

Mithraists fast in late Spring, then hold a grand feast on the summer solstice. While for mortals this might mean no alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs, for Kindred it entails a literal fasting — feeding *just* enough to keep the Beast at bay. The purpose of the summer feast, for Kindred, is to inspire a divine frenzy which channels the warrior spirit of Mithras. Frenzying during the fasting period indicates a lack of self-control, while not frenzying during the Summer feast means the acolyte didn't push themself far enough in spring — both disgrace the acolyte and, in higher ranks, might lead to a demotion.

The meal during the feast can be anything from an animal — bulls are popular for obvious reasons — to mortals or even other vampires. Only Mithras may assign the right to Amaranth however, so the latter fell out of practice with his disappearance. The Soho cell, however, plans to hunt down one of Mithras' Kindred enemies as their sacrifice.

## The Blooding

The Blooding sees select Kindred bathed in the blood of their Pater and Mithras, denoting them as elite soldiers in Mithras' army. Back in the old nights, Patres carefully guarded a chalice of Mithras' vitae for this ritual. Now, however, most chalices are long empty or the Pater is too terrified of Mithras' enemies to remove the holy vessel from its hiding place. Until Mithras' return, this ritual remains in disuse.

> Ascension through Loyalty, Duty, and Servitude
>
> Compared to the Church of Set's doctrine of elevation via freedom, the Mithraist view of obeying one's elders, taking the Blood Bond to grow closer to Mithras, and sacrificing oneself to form a gestalt divine entity seems murderous, arcane, and a hell of a lot less glamorous. Despite this, many vampires are drawn to structure, codified goals and measurements of success, and the number of stories told by Patres of vampires reaching glorious levels of power through loyal servitude is addicting. Unlike the Setites, who abandon or conceal their failures, the Mithraists hate the stain of failure to the degree they'll do whatever they can to rub it out and make it clean, including attaching a Mawla to a failed initiate until they make it. Giving up is not an option in the Cult of Mithras.

The cult's loyalty, especially within respective cult cells, is almost fanatical. Mithraists have a genuine solidarity through shared rituals, secrets, and faith in Mithras as a figure to aspire to emulate. The Blood Bond also helps enforce this feeling, of course.

## Seven Steps to the Sun

All Mithraic Mysteries follow the Seven Steps to the Sun, which sees the initiate rise closer to Mithras and by extension his solar patron. Most cells welcome mortals into the lower steps, then force them into becoming ghouls, or Embrace them as they prove their worth. On the flipside of this belief that vitae is a reward for worthy mortals, all Kindred initiates automatically started as Miles in the olden nights. The modern era saw a rush of Kindred joining the cult for secular reasons though, most seeking to be close to Mithras as Prince of London, rather than out of sincere religious belief. To combat this, many modern cells "ease" a Kindred into the cult by starting them as Corax. The Soho cell specifically did this with its Duskborn, not as a mark against them but rather to hail their potential as a rare Kindred who could walk *all* seven steps. Hyde, and Rose's lover and ghoul Noelle, both act as Soho's Heliodromi, while Rose serves as the cell's Pater.

Kindred initiates take an oath not to Embrace, lest they dilute their devotion to Mithras, or spend their time teaching when they should be learning. The cult does not begrudge them existing childer, and encourages the initiate sire to recruit these too.

### The First Step: Corax, the Raven

The raven serves as messenger in the Roman legend of Mithras. The Corax initiate is both the recipient of a message — the invitation to join the cult — and bearer of a message when they're sent to invite someone else.

The Raven associates with the element of air, as does the Pater to bring the Seven Steps full circle. Air is the element of mental clarity, and of cutting bonds as the initiate foregoes old baggage upon entering the cult. This is both liberating, as a Corax might finally flee their abusive family, and, as cults are wont to do, isolating.

A Kindred joining the cult in any rank must bow to the divinity of Mithras' blood. In practical terms this means obeying Mithras, descendants of his bloodline, and the Patres who carry his vitae.

The Corax wears a raven mask during ceremonies.

### The Second Step: Nymphus, the Bride

The bride(groom) has proven their worth and enters a spiritual bond with Mithras in a binding ceremony. The Pater leads this ceremony, and a relic takes the place of the absent Mithras. The Nymphus' task is to learn all they can about Mithras' enemies, and they often serve as spies.

The Nymphus' element is water, symbolizing a coming together as the initiate becomes a drop in Mithras' ocean. Nymphi pledge their voices to Mithras by singing or rapping during their initiation, and swear to tell no secrets of the cult.

The Nymphus wears a veil, which covers both their head and body, during ceremonies.

### The Third Step: Miles, the Soldier

Mithras is a war god, and his chosen are soldiers. Where once the methuselah scorned anyone who did not partake in actual physical combat, passing centuries have led the broken cult to reconsider — there is value in fighting investment bankers, politicians, and socialites who get

in Mithras' way. With Mithras seemingly returned, however, even Kindred armed with briefcases may be expected to pick up the sword or javelin.

Once a Kindred achieves initiation as Miles, they must preserve their purity by making every kill a tribute to Mithras — this absolves them of the moral implications of the kill, and bestows Mithras' blessing on them. However, they must not kill if the target would make an unworthy sacrifice.

For mortal initiates this stage is represented by the element of fire, and they are branded with the mark of Mithras. While this used to be an actual fire brand, modern cells opt for a tattoo bearing Mithras' symbol. For Kindred, however, earth represents the soldier's element and they are reburied before emerging as a Miles.

The Miles wears a wreath, which represents both Mithras' blessing and dominion over them.

## The Fourth Step: Leo, The Lion

The Leo represents purity. They must never act out of individual interest and, in recognition of how confusing the world can be, have most of their actions dictated by a Pater. Leones serve largely the same task as Milites — to combat Mithras' enemies — but are sent after larger and more dangerous targets. They also serve as messengers to Mithras' Kindred allies, often traveling from London to other domains with all the dangers this entails.

A Kindred reaching Leo initiation must pray to the sun nightly, though they may choose whether to pray at sunrise or sunset. They must also recognize fire as purity. These initiates build resolve by fire leaping and, in extreme cases, branding rituals. Their self-control and mental acumen becomes just as important as their physical prowess, and a Leo's calm and clarity gives them a trustworthy air.

The Leo wears a lion mask during ceremonies to show their strength and ferocity.

## The Fifth Step: Perses, the Persian

The Perses serves Mithras in his aspect as fertility god. They are the keepers of Mithras' fruits, often represented symbolically by honey, bull semen, or the treated vitae of cult elders. Mortal initiates are tasked with growing Mithras' influence in the city, whether that means starting a new cell, financing a movie hailing the deeds of Mithra, or doctoring a new drug that uses Mithras' vitae to Blood Bond mortals en masse.

The Persae see a division between Kindred initiates. Some are chosen for the Blooding ritual, which marks them as elite soldiers for Mithras. These are given an item ostensibly belonging to Mithras to keep. The item is usually symbolic and false, but Persae who prove themselves dedicated and resourceful find their fake relic replaced by one of actual value.

Kindred not chosen for the Blooding are finally granted permission to Embrace, so long as they immediately bring their new childe into the cult. No one but Mithras, and any Patres he wishes to tell, knows what criteria determine the difference between the two classes of Persae.

When Mithras still ruled London, Persae killed by his command. The cult provided them with anything they needed to leave the murder site unscathed, from alibis to secret identities. If that failed, Mithras would still pardon them — though he preferred to maintain plausible deniability.

The Perses carries a sickle during ceremonies to signal their task of growing Mithras' crops.

## The Sixth Step: Heliodromus, the Courier of the Sun

The Heliodromus relays Mithras' commands — often as given by the Pater — to the rest of the cult. They suggest new initiates, determine who is worthy to rise in the Seven Steps, and help the Pater select enemies for bull running. As the Patres are all Kindred, the few mortal — though usually ghouled — Heliodromi also serve as the daytime face of a cell.

The Heliodromus is also responsible for preparing the summer feast, whether they're a mortal bringing fruits and the occasional sacrificial bull, or a Kindred bringing mortals and the occasional sacrificial Kindred. All Heliodromi, Kindred and mortal alike, are Blood Bonded to Mithras, and what little of the methuselah's vitae the Pater still has goes to bonding new Heliodromi.

The Heliodromus carries a whip during ceremonies, as they are an extension of Mithras' commands.

## The Seventh Step: Pater, the Father/Mother

The Pater oversees a Mystery cell as deputy of Mithras. All Patres are Cainite, and worthy mortal Heliodromi are Embraced upon their elevation to Pater. The Pater seeks out Mithras' enemies, mortal and Kindred alike, and sets the rest of the cult upon them. They also choose areas ripe for the Mysteries to expand, whether kine slowly return to ancient pagan religions, or the Beckoning leaves Kindred searching for spiritual guidance.

They also guard the vitae of Mithras, given to them in a vessel to use in Blooding rituals. With Mithras absent so long now, unscrupulous Patres filled the vessel with their own vitae to Blood Bond acolytes. Meanwhile loyal Patres fiercely guard the last droplets they have. Many Patres willingly met the sun when they could no longer feel Mithras' presence following his diablerie.

Some Patres take charge of entire nations, while others claim only cities. Some lead cults directly, and others stand alone following the religion's fractures. Mithras expects Patres to become Princes if the standing Prince does not abide by Mithraic worship.

The Pater bears a ring and a staff to represent their authority over the cell and fealty to Mithras.

> Cult of Mithras Convictions
>
> The Cult of Mithras' adherents firmly believe in the benefit of order and aspire to control. Mithras is one of the grandest examples of a vampire who was able to straddle the line between god, vampire, and emperor, and with his dominion over Britain for a millennium, he exercised influence on a scale rarely paralleled within Cainite society. Many Mithraists, in emulation of their god, attempt to uphold the same Convictions as Mithras:
>
> - **Always have a say in the governing of your domain**
>
> The Mithraists may operate openly or in secret within Kindred society, but they are compelled to influence the domain government in some meaningful way.
>
> - **Never abandon your allies**
>
> Brotherhood and sisterhood within the cult is important. You are never alone when you are a member of the cult.
>
> - **Accept no disparagement of Mithras' name**
>
> Mithras is your god, and through his will you fall under his protection and prosper from his benevolence. If you hear of anyone insulting Mithras, you must draw their blood.

- **Always put the weak in their place**

Weakness does not deserve a place in Mithras' church. If you find a cultist to be weak, beat them, hector them, and ridicule them until they improve. If you find a weakling outside the cult, make sure they're aware of their lowly state so they might better themselves.

- **Protect the pregnant / newborns / fresh Embraces**

Mithras is a fertility god, and his cult advocates the protection of the young and pregnant. This is not through altruism; Mithraists should protect and cultivate the herd.

- **Immediately punish chaos and misrule among your servants**

The cult can only function if the hierarchy remains in place. Accept no rebellion among your servants. Punish it severely.

## Mithraeum: Edinburgh

An old faith in an old city, the Cult of Mithras is nevertheless new to the domain of Edinburgh. Long under the control of Brujah and Toreador interests, nominally independent from the reach of Mithras' London even when he was declared Prince of the British Isles, Edinburgh has finally fallen to the Mithraists following the cult's core migrating north from London. Shortly before the Second Inquisitions systematic assault on London's Kindred, Mithras found a way to communicate with his Seneschal and cult Pater, Roger de Camden, and commanded him to take the cult's elite with him to Edinburgh and set up a new regime in the Scottish capital. Never one to refuse his god, de Camden did just that. Kindred the world over are hearing the tale of how London's Kindred fell to the Second Inquisition, but none are speaking about how Edinburgh's Kindred fell to the Mithraists.

The invasion of Edinburgh was swift and bloody. De Camden and his cohort didn't take the time to negotiate their presence or opt to exist in exile. The cult had long kept Edinburgh — and a couple of other potential domains — as possible cities for retreat. They observed every Edinburgh vampire, keeping mental notes on practices, habits, and havens, so when it came time to take the city they could do so with minimal resistance. While some of Edinburgh's Kindred survived the onslaught, no vampires of title escaped with their unlives.

Edinburgh is a display of what the Cult of Mithras can do when challenged. The cult is an army waiting for orders, and whenever they receive them, they strike with little reservation. Now, the Cult shows what a traditional Mithraic domain is all about: competence, reverence, war, and fertility. Under de Camden's command, the Mithraists Embrace fledglings into their ranks, showing them that true power lies in the hands of vampires willing to fight for their existences. De Camden declared the city Camarilla — though the Justicars suspect this was to prevent the sect's reprisals — and himself Prince, as there was no obvious replacement for the fallen one. The city has swiftly changed from one where old vampires pursue petty aspirations toward wealth and influence, into one where Mithras' might deserves regular worship and sacrifice, so you too might benefit from his hierarchy and spread your reach to other domains. In many ways, it's shaping up to be the perfect Camarilla city, as the fingers of vampires who callously manipulated mortal interests were severed and replaced with the grip of those trained, practiced, and capable of doing so with the same discretion Mithras used for a millennium across an entire country.

For now, the Cult cements its rule over Edinburgh. De Camden isn't interested in murdering every non-Mithraic vampire in the city, as every court needs peasants, yeomen, and traders. He and the rest of the former London core, numbering around a dozen vampires with firm

influence over different mortal sectors, including police, telecommunications, and city transit and drainage, want to show other Kindred how service to Mithras can enrich existence through duty and purpose. They want others to see how being warriors in a surviving, millennia-old army is glorious. The Mithraeum de Camden's cult have constructed beneath Greyfriars Kirk — a church in the city center — is open to all who would partake of the cult's vitae in search of enlightenment, with the promise than as the cult rejuvenates and spreads, these new converts will find positions of power in other domains.

## Perspectives

**Queen Anne Bowesley:** *Usurper. Cannibal. Coward. She got what she deserved. The Unconquered Sun's throne must remain empty until his return.*

**Hecata:** *In one hand I hold a coin, in the other a blade that stabs into my flesh. The Hecata have served this cult so loyally in times past, but just as soon bite the hand that feeds them. I know we will not admit any Kindred with the name "Giovanni" in these nights.*

**Clan Tremere:** *Mithras has long hated the Tremere, almost as much as he despised the Church of Set. We believe they are intent on destroying our cult once and for all, to rid themselves of a potential enemy. Maybe what we need to unify us is a good, active enemy.*

**Clan Ventrue:** *Are they truly the Clan of Kings? Certainly, they seem to spawn more leaders than any other clan. And yet, these modern nights have seen them fall into a horrible trend of white-collar rulership. Long gone are the nights where a Ventrue deserved the title of "god," excepting Mithras, of course.*

**The Church of Set:** *Our greatest enemies. Fire to our water, chaos to our order. Do not suffer a temple to this god to exist in a city where you hold dominion.*

# New Powers

The Mithraists possess some unusual powers connected to their fallen god-emperor, in some cases passed down through Mithras' vitae, in others taught by vampires of higher rank within the cult.

# Dominate

## Level 2

### Slavish Devotion

**Amalgam:** Presence 1

Those already under the mental dominion of the vampire find their minds strengthened against interference from other Kindred.

**Cost:** No additional cost

**System:** Any attempt to mentally coerce a character already under the influence of the vampire's use of Dominate has its Difficulty increased by two. The Difficulty cannot rise above 7.

**Duration:** Passive

## Level 4

### Ancestral Dominion

**Prerequisite:** Mesmerize

**Amalgam:** Blood Sorcery 3

Vampires of great age and potency find it possible to exert their will via the Blood, without the traditional need for eye contact and verbal communication with their target. This power enables a Kindred to compel a descendant to take an action on their behalf, even if it's one the target would normally be opposed to. Vampires instinctively know an ancestor is manipulating them, when subject to this power.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Manipulation + Dominate vs. Intelligence + Resolve

**System:** On a successful roll of Manipulation + Dominate, the victim acts to fulfill the dominating vampire's request, providing it doesn't entail harming themself. For every generation beyond the first one separating the user of this power from their target, the resisting vampire gains an additional die to their roll. For example, when a Fifth Generation vampire attempts to use this power on a Seventh Generation descendant, the Seventh Generation descendant gains one die in defense. An Eighth Generation descendant would gain two dice. If the number of dice in the resisting vampire's pool would exceed ten, the power automatically fails. On a total failure, the vampire cannot use this power on that target for the remainder of the chapter.

**Duration:** Whichever comes sooner: until the compelled action is taken or the scene ends.

# Fortitude

## Level 4

### Shatter

**Requirement:** Toughness

When a fist hits concrete, it's usually the fist that breaks. So it is with this power, where a vampire turns a blow against the one delivering it. This power has been known to break weapons and shatter bones.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Stamina + Fortitude vs. Stamina (+ Fortitude, if the attacker is attacking unarmed and possesses Fortitude)

**System:** With this power active, the next unarmed strike made against the vampire (whether a punch, kick, bite, or any other form of attack without a separate weapon) results in the vampire's player making a Stamina + Fortitude roll against the attacker. Each success nullifies a point of damage from the attack and turns it into a point of Superficial Health damage against the attacker. If the attacker uses a melee weapon, the player still makes a roll to see how many points were nullified, and if the successes match or exceed the total damage dealt before nullifications, the weapon breaks (unless it's magical, holy, or breakage is otherwise improbable). On a critical win, the attacker gains a broken limb or joint (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 303) if they attacked unarmed, or breaks even a magical weapon used in the attack.

**Duration:** One scene (or until hit)

# The Nephilim, Children of the Angel

*"Our world was once perfected and it can be again. Cast aside your petty concerns, sleep and dream the dream of Michael the Archangel, become one with the perfect beauty of his great vision."*

— "Ana Tolya," Bloodline of Michael, Clan Toreador

The Dream of Constantinople is well known among Kindred scholars as an ideal for a perfect Kindred society. It was a goal pursued by the three rulers of Constantinople, known as the Trinity. When they each fell from the pages of history, their followers scattered and the great hope of a generation of Kindred was lost.

Lost for all save the Nephilim.

Known to those who have encountered them or to the few who actively seek them as the Children of the Angel, the Nephilim are a society that wishes to embody perfect beauty in all things. From art and architecture, to the honing of the body, to refining and improving in whatever task they pursue. The Nephilim seek to be angelic and divine in every outward respect. Many shun them and curse them as hedonists and degenerates, some see them as a Toreador plot to subvert the iron grip of the Ventrue on the Camarilla, and others still as little more than a distraction for immortals seeking a night of pleasure. For each Kindred who turns away from their promise of perfection and pleasure, there is always one who turns back, curious and allured by the orgies and the lavish lifestyles the members of the cult pursue.

The Children of the Angel are certainly one of the most open and popular of the Kindred religions, and it is easy to see the attraction. However, the draw goes far deeper for some and the rewards can be far more life changing.

The Nephilim don't just offer perfection; those who have served the cult the longest embody it without exception. Kindred whisper of cultists whose appearances alter as they make more and more trips to their local temple. Their skin becomes clear, soft and radiant. The color of their eyes sharpens and brightens. Their hair becomes shiny and lustrous. Moreover, they become confident and self-assured within the love of the cult and its revelers. Abandoning worldly pursuits, they turn to more aesthetic, artistic, and spiritual endeavors, often turning over their businesses and properties to the use of the society and to fund the spectacular parties their new siblings host to celebrate their great becoming.

A large, hedonistic, sex-crazed cult full of beautiful people requires very little selling to most. However, when one gets past the sheen of glory, the practices of the Nephilim are found to be far from altruistic.

## The Unending Dream

The Nephilim originated in Constantinople as a hedonistic society of Toreador directly descended from Michael, the self-proclaimed Archangel. They spent their time seeking to perfect the outer beauty of the world. In the old city, they commissioned glorious monuments, renovated old buildings and laid ugly slums to waste to replace them with far more pleasing aesthetics. Their quest for perfection led to great purges of the unwashed and the unworthy from the streets of the city as they might offend the sight of the Angel.

Their philosophy of personal improvement did not entirely revolve around the pursuit of physical beauty. The childer of Michael competed among themselves to be the most pleasing to their great ancestor, to prove they were worthy of the blood of heaven. Within this selfish game, many mortals and Kindred alike were ensnared, moved as pieces on a board to enhance the image of their Toreador masters in the sight of Michael. They were forbidden to fight among themselves, though discord was invited from outside their ranks to test the strength of the Dream against alternative ideals and improve it accordingly.

However civil they were to each other in the open, their jealousy of one another was beyond compare. Many believe it was partly their hidden war that finally brought about the collapse of the great society itself. Others say the influence of malefactors from jealous clans outside of the benevolent guidance of the Trinity caused the fall. Whatever the case, the Dream was dashed to nothing and the childer of Michael fled the city in despair.

It was not until centuries later that they began, as though guided by some hidden hand, to seek each other out once more. As the modern nights cast a new darkness over the world and consigned the old to history, the Beckoning summoned still more of them together. United as one for the first time since the fall, the childer of Michael looked upon each other and knew they were the last scions and the last hope for the survival of his great plan.

All of the world would come to recognize him for the divinity he was. All would bow their heads gratefully in the sight of endless cathedrals and brazen statues of gold bearing his image. All would be reshaped in his likeness. They began to summon to themselves the first of their followers.

## The Seeds of the Garden

> *"Take unto your lips the chalice. Feel the blood of the Angel coursing through the paltry clay of your imperfect form. Let it guide you, let it change you."*
>
> — Andreu La Torre, Bloodline of Michael, Clan Toreador

The Children of the Angel started as an almost exclusively Toreador affair and enjoyed a relatively steady pace of growth, given their pleasurable practices. When word began to spread of how these Nephilim could alter and beautify the normally static and unchanging Kindred, many interests were piqued, particularly some of the more desperate members of Clan Nosferatu. Rumors persist that many members of that clan who fully embraced the love of the Nephilim have reverted to a more human appearance, albeit still ugly in comparison to vampires of other clans and the divinely beautiful Nephilim themselves.

The seeds of this rite lie in the Blood Bond to a true Nephilim, a descendant of Michael. Imbibing the vitae of a Kindred separated from the Angel by no more than three Embraces will beautify the drinker, subtly altering their physical appearance to an angelic form. Their skin softens and takes on a glow, their eyes glisten and imperfections and blemishes fade. Their teeth become the purest white and gleam in the light, and their bodies become toned and lean. While this is a poetic way of saying that, essentially, "it makes you look nicer," the fact that it can even make the usually monstrous Nosferatu appear more like they did as mortals is a great attraction, and the clan does its best to stifle such rumors.

Due to the price of each drink, the Nephilim and their servants keep the secret power of their vitae hidden from outsiders. Those who submit themselves willingly to the Nephilim are certain to become little more than adoring slaves in their great plan. It is not just their faces and bodies that change; they lose all thought of their own personal pursuits and become almost mindlessly obsessed with pursuing the goals and desires of their Nephilim overlords. Unlike other Blood Bonds, it seems to be a servitude that cannot be broken by the mere passage of time and many who have been forcibly separated from their masters for even years at a time continue to cry out in the night and beg to be returned to their side, often calling out the name of Michael or Mary.

The thought of their entire clan falling prey to this predation disgusts and terrifies any Nosferatu who becomes aware of it, though Clan Toreador remain, perhaps not so strangely, aloof on the matter.

With word of these glorious miracles spreading, the Nephilim have gone from a petty underground orgy society to a well-established religion in their own right.

> The Power of Michael's Blood
>
> Drinking the vitae of a Fifth, Sixth, or Seventh Generation Nephilim conveys the Beautiful Merit, or if the vampire already possesses it, the Stunning Merit (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 179 for both). If the vampire already possesses the Stunning Merit, they gain an additional die to all uses of the Presence Discipline. Nephilim vitae waives the effect of the Ugly Flaw. These Merits are temporary, with the benefits fading after a chapter of the story.
>
> Nephilim vitae has an unusual effect on the Repulsive Flaw or any Nosferatu. It does not make the vampire appear more attractive, but does convey an additional die to all Obfuscate, Subterfuge, and Performance rolls used when attempting to look like someone else. Again, this benefit fades after a chapter, after which time more Nephilim vitae is required.

## The Basilica of the Archangel

The Children of the Angel, despite their chaotic appearance, exist in a strict social hierarchy that feeds down from Embrace to Embrace. They refer to this as the Basilica, represented by a segmented drawing of a cathedral's facade. Occupying the apex of the Basilica are the true Nephilim themselves, direct descendants of the Archangel separated from him by no more than three Embraces. Below them are the frescoes and artwork adorning the Basilica's frontage, their own childer. Not true Nephilim as they do not carry the blessing of Michael within their very vitae, nonetheless they still bear his legacy into the modern nights and the knowledge of the modern world back to the true Nephilim. Below this stratum stand the pillars of the Basilica, the adherents brought in from outside of the Blood of Michael. They feature both Toreador converts and those of other clans, save for the Nosferatu. The lowest members, columns, are the ghouls and mortal servants of Nephilim. Nosferatu adherents are the foundations of the Basilica, represented by the steps leading up to it. Their Blood prevents them from ever attaining the true beauty demanded by the Nephilim. However, they have at least chosen to walk the path of penance for their great sins against the beauty of the world. They are the foot soldiers, spies and some of the most firebrand preachers of the Nephilim to outsiders, but within the cult itself they remain second class members and are often treated no better than servants or beasts of burden. Only the mortal adherents who attend a temple but have not been inducted fully into the faith are beneath them; such kine have not yet earned a place within the Basilica.

All of those mentioned are in a far loftier position than that in which those outside the grasp of the Nephilim are viewed. While they treat others with a form of kindness and attempt to attract them into the Temple, those who have taken the blood of the Nephilim into their unbeating hearts see those who have not as little more than ugly, unworthy stains on the perfection of the world. If they show no interest in improving themselves, then they are not even worth sneering at.

## Lex Sanctorum Decis Angelorum

Known usually in short form as the Lex Angelorum, the Law of the Angels is the only code that matters to the Nephilim. It is learned by rote by all members and they can recite its seven tenets at a whim. They are as follows:

- Thou shalt obey the Children of the Angel in all things

- Thou shalt not sow discord among thyselves
- Thou shalt tolerate not the ugly nor the wicked in the sight of the Nephilim
- Thou shalt seek to bring all into the light of the Angel
- Thou shalt not compromise the perfection of a Tabernacle or Temple
- Thy Angel is thy savior, revere above all the one who brought you into the light
- Thou shalt not expose the nature of Angels to the mortal world, lest thee be purged by the fires of day

Many of the followers of the cult revere these laws even above the Traditions, though their overseers in the faith do well to keep such talk within their own temples and domains and out of Elysia.

## Places of Worship

The Nephilim, when operating in any city, immediately begin by purchasing a suitable property which, once they have occupied it, they initially dedicate their time and resources to converting into a veritable Garden of Eden, fit for the nightly revels of the Nephilim. They call these locations tabernacles. Once the cult becomes more established, other properties, often including popular night spots, fall into their hands and take their places as temples of the faith in turn.

The tabernacle within any city is always the seat of a true Nephilim and always receives far more attention and spending than any other dwelling the cult operates.

The first and most sacred tabernacle is the one established in Istanbul — still referred to as Constantinople by most vampires, who hold the old city name sacred due to its association with the Trinity. The Constantinople tabernacle is said to hold a vial of earth that soaked up the blood of the Archangel himself. Only Michael's direct childer are permitted within, and none are known to be active these nights.

Temples and tabernacles are always renovated and constantly kept clean to an obsessive degree. When the nightly debauch is concluded, foundation members immediately set to work preparing the premises for the following night. Column ghouls continue this work by day and ensure the place remains in pristine condition inside and out. To fail the inspection of a temple's curator or the Nephilim inside of a tabernacle could result in a swift end for the people responsible.

## Rites of Pleasure and Perfection

The most outward-facing levels of the Nephilim are designed to draw wary outsiders in to progressively deeper degrees. On the surface, the cult seems like it wants to help Kindred to improve themselves. Once a Kindred is deep enough to know better, it is often too late. Their relationships with others have been severed and replaced with attachments to other cultists. They fear to lose what progress they have made into the Temple of the Archangel and are soon addicted to the aloof and distant leaders of the cult via the heady draught of their ancient vitae.

In the most carnal and secretive circles of the Nephilim organization, where only the most trusted go, it is said the oldest among the Children of the Angel feed on the blood of their own followers rather than the ready supply of mortals at their command.

While the Nephilim are legendary among young Kindred for their rites of carnal lust, many of their temples are also places where instruction in the arts both martial and aesthetic can take

place. Gymnasiums and studios are common properties for cult members to hold or havens for them to inhabit.

## Limited Scope?

The goal of the Nephilim is to enfold all the world in their arms and guide it toward a shining and glorious future, following the vision of Michael. Some Kindred fear they can make this happen as more and more young vampires, seeking respite from the crushing weight of their condition, find solace amid the writhing seas of bodies that often cover the floors of the cult's temples. Many others point out that with only so many childer of Michael to go around, the chances of their members bringing all Kindred into blood servitude are exceptionally small. Most see them as little more than a slightly troubling distraction for the young or for desperate Nosferatu seeking to escape some of the terror invoked each night by their own ravaged faces.

## Enemies

The Nephilim have not yet cultivated any true enemies; however, senior members of Clan Nosferatu are already eyeing the Children of the Angel with great suspicion. Others whisper in the dark of what they might be able to do if they could get their clawed hands on some of the Nephilim's legendary vitae.

## Artifacts and Symbology

The symbols of the Nephilim vary wildly. Most feature images of angels or divine beings. Stained glass windows, statuary and paintings have all been commissioned by the cult's members to try to embody the majesty of the Dream, but only the genuine conversion of the world into that image could satisfy the true Nephilim as a symbol of Michael's radiant glory.

The only true image that could be seen to represent the cult is the Basilica, and it is drawn differently depending on the artist. Many renditions of it exist.

Some of the cult's members carry a set of small, polished silver knives, which they use to draw blood from vessels or simply to cleanly cut their clothes off. They believe biting a victim to feed reveals their snarling, bestial nature, and should be avoided at all costs.

## Mortal Adherents

The Nephilim do not welcome mortals into their number; however, they do welcome them into the outer circles of the cult if only to convert them to their ways before the Embrace. The idea of living forever as a beautiful and perfect being is appealing to some.

Without fail, mortals targeted by the Children of the Angel for membership are physically beautiful in the eyes of whichever member identifies them. They are often people working toward some aspect of physical or artistic perfection. The cult is also extremely attractive to people who are vain, conceited or consumed with vices of lust and lechery.

This heady cocktail makes for an interesting ride to anyone in the outer circles of the cult. While some of the adherents seem to have the ra-ra attitude of summer camp counselors or fitness instructors, others are narcissistic hedonists or even sadists who want nothing more than to be surrounded by beautiful people.

> Nephilim Convictions
>
> Michael's children focus predominantly on self-elevation and experience, maintaining a veneer of civility and class despite many of them being egomaniacs or lust-driven degenerates. Maintaining their Humanity would be a

challenge, without Convictions allowing them to justify some of their behaviors to themselves:

- **Always obey Michael's direct descendants**

Michael's vitae is divine. Never deny the will of his children; they are your saints.

- **Do not consort with the hideous**

Ugliness has no place in the cult or your existence. Avoid disfigurements, disease, and ugly behavior. Hideousness is more than skin deep. There is no beauty in monstrous actions.

- **Never tolerate the desecration of a thing of beauty**

Artifacts, temples, artistic creations, and so much more require preservation and development. You serve Michael by protecting these things.

- **Always cultivate your own beauty**

Your appearance and behavior are important as a standard for the cult and in emulation of the divine founder. You must always strive to look and appear your best. Let nobody witness any inner ugliness.

- **Reinvent yourself for every audience**

So few vampires exhibit the ability to change with the times, but you will be the exception. Attending Elysium in the same outfit, always speaking with the same people, always drinking from the same blood doll, are all bad behaviors.

- **Delve into every sensation to expand your awareness**

Pleasing or painful, experiences enlighten us and improve our understanding of the world. Both are important for empathy.

## Nephilim Dreams: Johannesburg

A city of culture and street battles, of integration on one street and apartheid on the next, of opulent mansions in one quarter and gang-invaded tower blocks in another: Johannesburg is more than an Anarch domain — it's a permanent warzone between Kindred, kine, and other, stranger creatures, and the Second Inquisition have yet to even touch the surface. In the thick of it, the Nephilim have dreams of making this city a new bastion of their faith, but it's an uphill struggle. They view Jo'burg much as they once did Constantinople: as a place where hundreds of viewpoints can come together in peace and every philosopher can reach a new state of enlightenment under the beneficent rule of Michael, or one of his descendants. Their cause is in vain, however, and their efforts may destroy the cult.

Under the leadership of the Toreador named Pakourianis, sometimes titled "the Dove," the city's Nephilim guide the "cooperation zone" (what constitutes an Elysium in this domain) to different spots in the domain each fortnight. Under his governance, the cooperation zone exists to highlight the city's beauty, and that of the vampires within it, when forced to inhabit parts of a domain and interact with individuals they'd barely ever stop to observe otherwise. On one night the Nephilim might set up a cooperation zone on Constitution Hill, and on the next occupy the Mandela Museum or the shanties in Soweto. To entice other vampires, the cult makes it clear everything in the cooperation zone is to be sampled freely, whether in the form of art or sustenance. The half-dozen Nephilim in Johannesburg keep the peace at these gatherings, pushing the vampire attendees to appreciate the world around them and the company they're keeping.

Pakourianis wants to shepherd the city's Kindred, watch them, learn from them, and from their assorted views and disagreements form a philosophy that will make Johannesburg a domain of mixed but harmonious viewpoints. When blended together, with some edges shaved off and a little bit of Michael's Dream added to the mix, he and the rest of the cult believe they can create a new utopia for Kindred in South Africa, and a possible template for further domains. The view is a grand one, despite the Dove's prejudices against all who are, to his eyes, ugly in personality or features, and his consideration that they are some of the "edges" in need of shaving.

Just as Setites and infernalists helped bring down Michael's Constantinople, Pakourianis' Johannesburg has saboteurs chipping away at his grand plan. Due to Pakourianis' status as a direct childe of Michael, if he fails, the entire faith may fall with him. That is of no concern to the Church of Caine, however, as the Gnostics in Jo'burg consider Pakourianis' cult a foul heresy. They take exception to the view of Michael as keeper of the Trinity, savior, or guiding light for Kindred. There should only be one angel in their view, and that angel is Caine. Led by a priest named Jabulani, the Gnostics aim to poison other Kindred against Pakourianis, citing his sire's infamous fall, the Dove's own predilections for feeding from other Kindred, and stoking the existing fires of conflict that Pakourianis just keeps below the surface. The Gnostics aren't above enlisting mortals to disrupt cooperation zones so the Nephilim lose all trust.

## Perspectives

**Anarchs:** *Villains. Michael believed all Kindred must be welcome in a domain for true enlightenment to ever exist, but I make exception for these saboteurs. They know only how to destroy.*

**Camarilla:** *They have a strong sense of what can be achieved with application and dedication to a cause. I just wish they had a sense of what it is to actually experience the world.*

**Clan Nosferatu:** *Our gifts could lessen their disastrous curse, if they would but listen to Michael's words. Malachite was of their clan, do not forget, so the Nosferatu may make firm disciples yet.*

**Clan Toreador:** *If there truly is a clan not cursed but blessed, it is the Toreador. To share the vitae of Michael and become ever-more enthralled by the beauty that exists and might yet exist in the world is a true blessing.*

**Hecata:** *Their morbid fascinations blind them to the beauty that exists in every waking step we take through the night. Why focus on the end when the present can be so much like heaven?*

> **Heresy: The Angels of Vengeance**
>
> There are those within the Children of the Angel who do not wish to share the Dream with those who, both previously and now, only seek to corrupt and destroy it. These are known, among themselves, as the Angels of Vengeance. While they practice many of the same rites as other Nephilim, they view anyone who refuses to live within the Dream as dangerous and a stain upon the world. While the majority of the cult's zealots and leaders are content to wait until these subversive elements either fall in line or can be quietly disposed of, the Angels are not content to wait. They offer outsiders service only once and refusal means death.

Rumors of ritualistic killings and group suicides all around the world, marked with a common symbol, have begun to spring up in conspiracy theorists' blogs, each one noting the image of a blood red sword with a winged crossguard being discovered at the scenes.

The main body of the cult dismisses any link to these atrocities, laying them at the door of some other crazed blood cult, likely remnants of the bestial Sabbat. The truth is that the cult's leadership is well aware of the activities of the Angels of Vengeance and, while they do not openly support them, are content to allow them to continue.

More than this, the Angels of Vengeance wish to eliminate all those involved in the fall of Constantinople and their descendants, as well as Clan Nosferatu in its entirety. They even desire to purge Nosferatu members of their own cult, though those in servitude to the Dream will be the last against the wall.

The Angels of Vengeance are zealots beyond compare. To them, the Dream does not need to be tested against outside beliefs, it must simply replace them. All who question the greatness of Michael's vision must die in order for the world to be beautified by his light; there is no other course. Like the flaming sword of heaven they will sweep away the unclean and the unworthy. Only once there is not even a single thought out of tune with Michael's divine chorus will the whole world be in harmony.

## Anna Balakhnichev "Ana Tolya"

**Epitaph:** True Nephilim

**Quote:** *"I am the last of my line. My childer will not bear the blessing of the blood, but they will bear the promise of the Dream."*

**Clan:** Toreador

**Mortal Days: Prima Donna**

Anna was the only daughter of a minor aristocrat and a dancer in the Russian Ballet. Her earliest memories of childhood are watching her mother perform. She would twirl and leap through the air in a way that seemed to defy the laws of nature. Anna believed that there was nothing her mother could not do. One of the things she was unable to do, however, was prevent the swelling discontent among the people of her country toward the ruling classes.

Her father was certainly not a humble or pious man, but not the monster that many of those denouncing him from their pulpits made out. He couldn't cast down the Tsar and undo centuries of tradition just to appease a mob.

Anna remembers being scared in those nights and trying to soothe her mother's terror by learning to dance. Instead, she found herself engrossed in the music to which the dances took place. Her father had tutors brought in from around the country and Anna proved prodigious, with a voice as clear as an angel's bell. Her performances provided a stay of execution and she became known as the "Songbird of St. Petersburg." For a time, publications spoke of her as the Russian Mozart, saying her music could unite the nation.

With the assassination of Tsar Alexander, it became clear this would not be. No matter how talented she was, she could not sing away the reality in her country. She yearned for a way to save her parents but also to heal her wounded nation. A vampire offered her everything she wanted, at the cost of her life.

**Kindred Nights: Awakening to the Dream**

He introduced himself to her as “a Spaniard” but she came to know him as Andreu La Torre. With his exotic accent, devilish charm and handsome looks he seduced and Embraced the young Anna, giving her the power to enthrall and entrance the crowds.

Her abilities soared, though her parents and some others noticed how pale she had become, and how she was never seen during the day. Word spread among the people of the city and, before long, the Bolsheviks were decrying her father as a demon worshiper who had made pacts with devils.

The family home was burned with her parents inside. Only Anna was spared and spirited away by La Torre to his home in Spain. The journey took them across the Eastern and Western fronts of the Great War and Anna hoped things would get better once they reached Barcelona. While their first years in Spain were relatively happy, she quickly lost the interest of her sire. La Torre became more interested in the politics of the city than he was in his young charge. The rising tensions of Franco’s civil war convinced her to abandon La Torre in search of peace in which to live with her art.

It seemed war and destruction followed her; Europe was on fire. She moved from Spain to Italy, then to Greece and finally Turkey. She adopted the name Ana Tolya, in homage to the beautiful land she now called home. She lived as a hermit songbird, going from town to town, entertaining, gaining what nourishment and money she could before moving on. It was a transient existence, but also her calling.

Ana found her way to Istanbul, arriving at what would become the first tabernacle of the Angel. Something in her blood called her to enter the sanctum and, once inside, bid her stay as others, including her sire, began to arrive.

Those who had gathered questioned the reason why. They discovered that they all had one thing in common: their link to the ancient known as Michael the Archangel. As they spent their time there in contemplation, each vampire received the same vision, of a light piercing the sky, a guiding hand reaching from the past and pointing the way to a glorious destiny.

“Go forth,” it seemed to say, “bring my truth to the world!”

In that first conclave, the Nephilim were forged. They put aside old enmities and spoke of a hope and a restoration of what had once been. Ana would play her part, she would be a guiding light, leading the world to the place she had always wanted to live.

**Plots and Schemes:**

- **Bring About the Dream:** Ana is a true Nephilim, revered by the followers she has gathered to herself. She will stop at nothing to turn the whole world into a reflection of the beauty she finds in song and dance.

- **Pleasing La Torre:** Ana herself is still enthralled by her sire and often takes on tasks, projects or performances aimed at pleasing him. She watches for any change in his whimsical mood and alters her appearance to suit. Any she thinks are stealing away the spotlight he shines upon her will earn her ire.

- **Bloodline Search:** Her followers have spoken to her of Kindred known for their enchanting, perhaps hypnotic singing voices. Ana is interested in any mention of these reclusive and enigmatic vampires. What she wants with them is anyone’s guess.

**Domain and Haven:**

- **Nephilim Tabernacle (Haven 4, Herd 4, Influence (Artistic Community) 4, Resources 3, Retainers 4, Status 2)** Ana’s haven is a large concert hall that holds

performances of orchestras including operas and ballets. Its sprawling antechambers, side rooms and backstage areas provide a fitting venue for the more esoteric rites of her religion. The rear of the auditorium is occupied by a large pipe organ over which a permanently illuminated, stained glass representation of Michael the Archangel hangs, with a golden city at his back. Many of the employees of the auditorium are also members of the cult. She allows its use as an Elysium if required, earning the respect of the Camarilla.

- **Nephilim Temples (Domain 3, Herd 2, Retainers 2)** The various other temples of her cult include a 24-hour gym, a youth center offering various voluntary classes, an exclusive watersports club and a small, family-run restaurant. The adherents who operate these establishments are ghouls of hers, bonded to her will.

**Thralls and Tools:**

- **Adherents of the Angel (Adversary 2, Herd 2, Influence 3)** Through her many followers, Ana can direct a great deal of influence in her chosen city. While she defers to Princes and Primogen where appropriate, those in power understand and respect her pull and her word goes a long way at court. At least one of the Primogen of the city is growing tired of her.

- **Potential Childer** Ana openly screens several of her adherents for the position of her childe. As a test of their unity, she names the candidates and watches them closely for any violations of the Lex Angelorum. These are her most loyal and devoted followers and would kill to earn her Embrace.

- **Prodigious Talent (Resources 2)** Ana acts as patron to up-and-coming talents. The cellist, Bertrand Phelan, is garnering a great deal of interest and attention. His performances are a big draw at her concert hall and his performances elsewhere also bring potential new recruits to her notice.

**Kindred Relationships:**

- **Andreu La Torre (Changeable)** La Torre has always been pleased with his choice of childe, even when she struck out on her own. The problem is that he is often too wrapped up in his own magnificence to pay much attention to her. He forgets to respond to her correspondence or simply can't be bothered. Despite this whimsical nature, he remains a core focus of her quest for perfection. If he were to be destroyed, she may lose faith in the Dream as her forebears once did.

**Whispers:**

- **Solace of the Monstrous:** Rumors of the mysterious qualities of Ana's blood have reached the local Nosferatu and have set their minds racing with possibilities. Some wish to submit themselves to her, others wish to take her gift by force. Such an assault would not be easy.

- **Hatred of Bolsheviks:** Ana's past has made her incredibly distrustful of Bolsheviks. She will subtly attempt to undermine and oppose anything that indicates support for the works of Lenin. Many observers have noted the color red is never in her ensemble, never part of her multicolored hair, and absent from the décor in her haven.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Ana is phenomenally beautiful. Even before her Embrace she was the belle of St. Petersburg. The vitae of the Nephilim flowing inside her keeps her features vital and alive. Each night, she dedicates an hour to preparing her appearance. Her hair is dyed a multifaceted array of glittering colors that seem to shift as she turns her head. Her body is

scented with bespoke perfumes that beguile those who come near her. Everything about her is unnervingly divine, and all find themselves dumbfounded upon first viewing her.

- Ana's dress changes with her mood and the situation, which often makes her tardy for appointments. When she arrives, however, she is always on point for the mood of the event.
- Though she speaks many languages from her upbringing and travels, Ana still maintains a Russian accent. She can mimic other accents very effectively if the fancy takes her.
- Ana always introduces herself as Ana Tolya to Kindred. She refers to herself and is referred to as "The Diva" by mortals. Some Kindred find her way of referring to herself in the third person as rather annoying, but others find it humorous and charming. "Ana" acts as a weak disguise, but it has held up so far (**Mask 1**).

**Sire:** Andreu La Torre

**Embraced:** 1881 (Born 1860)

**Ambition:** Sing the dreamers to the Dream

**Convictions:** Make the world into the heaven I imagine; Be a worthy childe

**Touchstones:** Bertrand Phelan — Virtuoso Cellist; Sandra Dawn — Sound Engineer

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 7th

**Blood Potency:** 4

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4; Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 8

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Craft (Instruments) 2, Firearms 1, Melee (Fencing) 3, Stealth 2; Animal Ken (Horses) 3, Etiquette (Elysium) 3, Insight 3, Intimidation 1, Leadership 4, Performance (Opera) 5, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 4; Academics 2, Awareness 3, Finance 3, Occult 2, Politics (Camarilla) 4, Technology (Sound Production) 2

**Disciplines:** Auspex 3, Celerity 3, Presence 4

**General Difficulties:** 7/4

# Minor Cults

> *"And some that were burying a man, saw the rovers, and cast the body into the sepulcher of Eliseus. And when it had touched the bones of Eliseus, the man came to life, and stood upon his feet." (4 Kings 13:21, Douay-Rheims Edition)*
>
> — Nuno Domingo de Madrid, Lasombra Governor of Lima, final words

Up to a hundred Kindred cults exist in tonight's World of Darkness, though few are as impressive in strength and size as those mentioned earlier in this chapter. These other cults predominantly form around worship of a methuselah or Antediluvian, or around a concept such as the Beast, Golconda, or the Amaranth. Many have fallen into memory due to persecution, their membership being annihilated, or their long-lived members simply moving on to other pursuits and philosophies. Others are localized, and so only affect their domain, or are new to the night.

The most peculiar of these minor cults are those that emerge from the pages of history without any of their original members. Vampires are creatures of ritual, placing great importance on ancestry and myth, yet it is an oddity to see a religious order spring up in an apparently random domain in worship of an until-recently forgotten methuselah. Perhaps, muse some, these cults manifest when those methuselahs stir in their torpid slumber, or worse, when they wake.

## Amaranthans

Worshipers of the ancient Toreador named Amarantha, the purported first victim of diablerie, the Amaranthans have existed for millennia as hunters of vampire cannibals, operating without sectarian authority in their pursuit of diablerists. Established by Amarantha's lovers among Clans Brujah, Nosferatu, and the Banu Haqim, the cult still largely consists of Kindred from those clans, few of whom remain in one domain for longer than it takes to kill their target and acquire a new one. The process of joining the Amaranthans isn't one usually undertaken by choice, with mortals Embraced by members of the cult immediately indoctrinated into an existence of hunting vampire sinners. In that regard, there are few murder cults quite so driven as the Amaranthans.

In past centuries, the cult's coteries would gravitate toward rumors of diablerie, investigate, and then execute the guilty without trial. In these nights they follow similar practices, though many among them find satisfaction in a secondary role as bearers of their victims' final messages, harbingers of their last wills (providing they don't run counter to the cult's objectives), and have even granted mercy on a handful of occasions.

### Current Goals

The Amaranthans have been tolerated among the dominant sects for centuries due to Kindred society's widely attested distaste for diablerie. As long as these Amaranthans commit their murders quietly and move on, they're creating spaces in the hierarchy previously occupied by murderers, so most Kindred take the view that they're a kind of religious pest control. This view is gradually changing, however, since whereas the Amaranthans used to primarily target Sabbat vampires, with that sect out of the picture and the cult having no desire to follow them on their Gehenna Crusade, they've since taken out a few high-profile Camarilla targets, including an Archon and two Princes.

The Amaranthans are dedicated to their goal even though they know it's one without end. If their practice was a disincentive to commit diablerie, it surely would have stopped diablerists by now. The current objective of the already small cult is to survive renewed Camarilla and Anarch scrutiny while furthering their more esoteric aims, which if rumors are to believed, involve the diablerie of some of their most dangerous targets. Supposedly, the Amaranthans believe they can free or merge with Amarantha if they can finally consume her murderer, but that would entail consuming that vampire's descendants, all of whom show a similar dedication to cannibalism.

## Cleopatrans

Nosferatu tell tales of the wise, beautiful childe of their progenitor, named Yima, who was Embraced before Absimiliard — the clan founder — was cursed. She rode out God's great storm and Caine's ire through charm, love, and honesty.

Other Nosferatu tales tell of Yima being the one Nosferatu who stood between Caine and the Antediluvian, bearing the full brunt of the clan's monstrous bane as Absimiliard only took a fraction of the blow. Her love for her sire was such that she would die or be forever mutilated on his behalf.

Rather than receiving her sire's affection and care, Absimiliard abandoned her to her monstrosity. Or, her beauty so awesome in his sight, Absimiliard could no longer bear to look upon her. The tales are contradictory, but what is known, is Yima became the clan's holy grail as a figure of sympathy or aspiration.

The cult known as the Cleopatrans of Yima, or just the Cleopatrans, formed at the height of Caesar Augustus' Rome, with rumors of Yima spreading widely in the wake of Cleopatra. This pharaoh, more powerful than any man, beautiful and deadly, bewitched the Roman Nosferatu imagination, and parallels were drawn between her and ancient Yima.

The Nosferatu started adorning their hideous faces and bodies with paint, baubles, masks, and elaborate outfits, to accentuate beauty and prove their purpose as more than horrors and lepers. The Cleopatrans selected only the canniest wits to make their cult of advisors and leaders, creating a bubble in time between the 1st and 4th centuries CE where Nosferatu occupied rare places of prominence throughout Europe and North Africa. Every third domain held a Cleopatran in a place of importance. It was a rich time for the clan.

The Cleopatrans were only powerful for that duration, however. With the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the cult dissolved, and tales of Yima and Cleopatra disappeared with them.

### Current Goals

In the early 20th century Kindred society observed a convulsion in Clan Nosferatu, as once again the Sewer Rats started adorning themselves as lords and ladies, perfumed, well-dressed, and far above the station the Camarilla had assigned them for the first four centuries of its existence. This trend hasn't disappeared, with "Cleopatras" appearing in random domains, sometimes among the ranks of resident Nosferatu, other times as outsiders freshly visiting a staid city. As they did almost two millennia before, these Cleopatras (dropping the "n" as the majority don't recognize their cult as one of worship or lineage) attempt to seize roles above traditional Nosferatu standing. For many, their mix of self-belief, delusion, and confidence is enough to put them in positions of Herald, Primogen, or Sheriff. While no Cleopatras have become Princes yet, many believe it's just a matter of time.

Kindred scholars debate whether simply dressing up and taking on a sound-alike epithet is enough to constitute a revived cult, or a cult at all, but what none outside the most successful Cleopatras know is they've been receiving communal dreams, including images possibly sent to them telepathically, of a great, gorgeous nude woman who caresses the Nosferatu, mending their disfigurements with her palm, before ordering them to take command of all Kindred. These vampires receive subsequent visions guiding them on how to exploit the weaknesses of local rulers, with most guidance proving successful. It seems the Cleopatras have a patron, though it's too soon to tell if it's Yima, a poisoning of their Blood sent down from Absimiliard himself, or some Toreador messing with each of their heads for one big elaborate joke.

## The Cult of Isis

The Cult of Isis has undergone several transformations in the years since its founding, revering Isis as Lilith, Isis as Hathor, Isis as Mary, Isis as Aquarius, and Isis as countless other deities or deific female figures. All celebrate fertility, life, and ceremonies of joining, making them an ostensibly strange cult for Kindred involvement, and indeed, for centuries they've operated with minimal vampiric intervention. Only now, with the open resurgence of Kindred faith, have vampires once again flocked to a religion that preaches veneration for health, magic, and marriage.

From its early days to tonight, the Cult of Isis is a religion of empowerment. The cultists don't recognize Isis as an individual so much as a concept, with many mortals focusing on Isis as nature and femininity, and vampires identifying Isis as the meaningful, compassionate Embrace, and guardianship over sacred and magical places. In the latter respect, the Cult is fiercely militant, protecting with homicidal ferocity those areas where mages can more efficaciously practice their arts, where the Shroud (see p. XX) thins, and where the supernatural struggles to exist. They disdain areas of religious importance, however, reviling holy land and artifacts as much as any vampire.

### Current Goals

While the Cult of Isis' cells have a shared name and agenda, little communication exists between the religion's various groups. There is no central authority, and hierarchy changes from cell to cell, though some branches emulate the Bahari scale of seed, maiden, mother, and matron. Though some cells restrict membership based on gender, others find this attitude radical or outdated, leading to one of the only divides in the cult that causes inter-cell conflict.

The Cult of Isis' goal has broadly extended to the protection of abandoned fledglings, leading to a surge in Caitiff members. Unintentionally, its reverence of youth (in mortal and immortal terms) and the potency of Blood has created a swell in membership for this cult, and the elder members aren't sure how to utilize this new army of angry youths, who all seem ready to fight someone or something. The cult has been based around protection and reaction to attacks on sacred places and people for so long, that the idea of dispatching a militia to take a site or eliminate an enemy is new to them.

These nights portend interesting times for the Cult of Isis, as they could prove to become kingmakers or domain breakers, depending on how they use their swathe of new recruits.

## Eyes of Malakai

An ancient cult of bizarre, destructive belief rarely seen in the modern nights, the Eyes of Malakai are often stamped out as soon as they appear, usually by Malkavians driven to oppose the cult without knowing their reasons for fighting against it.

The Eyes first emerged millennia ago, supposedly as worshipers of Malkav's twin sister — a vampire, god, or demon named Malakai. In legend, Lilith Embraced Malakai, and according to Cainite theory, she would be of similar potency and age to her brother, were the two active and stable enough to pursue singular courses. Nobody is alive to know the truth of the Malakai tales, however. If she exists, she's so old or torpid as to be unreachable in any meaningful way.

The Eyes *do* exist, however, and to a single vampire, they're terrible, vicious predators with what appear to be few coherent motivations.

### Current Goals

Regardless of Malakai's status or whereabouts, the vampires who become Eyes have appeared every few decades each century. These cultists were usually presentable, functioning members of Kindred society. Then, they undergo an awakening. Some Kindred theologians believe Malakai visits these vampires — often Malkavians — and provokes their existing conditions to a state of permanent mania. Others guess the Eyes' Blood revolts in their bodies due to their Antediluvian's sins. It's all guesswork, however, as the Eyes of Malakai don't know why they do what they do.

The awakening rapidly changes the Eyes. It would be incorrect to consider their change a devolution — some Eyes are wights, most are not — but they suddenly lose their sense of attachment to Touchstones and fellow Kindred, and become entirely predatory. Some start spying on and stalking former companions, others hunt solitary vampires and diablerize them as soon as they gain the opportunity. Some Eyes make copious notes on local Kindred society before burning the notes in a ritual fire, and then throwing themselves into the flames. These are all recorded behaviors of the Eyes, but none of their actions explain their objectives.

When vampires question the Eyes as to the meaning behind their new behaviors, they either lash out or passively respond they're "the Eyes of Malakai," apparently lacking the capacity to conceal their condition. Some vampires call them "incarnate madness" or "infected vitae." The word "Eyes" makes other vampires assume these vampires are spies for someone, presumably Malakai, but the Eyes often enough just try to make other vampires' existences miserable, or conspire to sabotage the Camarilla in a domain, making their ambitions something grander than just observing for a third party.

The Eyes of Malakai appear infrequently enough to become vampire folklore, but when rumor enters a domain of Eyes emerging to spread ruin, it's enough to mobilize Kindred into forming a hunting party.

## Gorgo's Nest

Gorgo's Nest, the Children of Gorgo, the Daughters of Gorgo, or simply the Gorgons, have pursued a path of eliminating tyrants, murderers, rapists, and monsters for centuries. They only have one restriction on whom they target: they are the slayers of men. Gorgo's Nest formed around the stories of a Nosferatu methuselah who may have been the Medusa of Greek legend or the famed Queen of Sparta, who was killed by a mortal hunter or the Nosferatu Antediluvian when he tried to eradicate his childer in a fit of rage. Whatever the genesis, Gorgo no longer exists, but her followers, not all of whom are Nosferatu, believe sincerely in avenging her and using their immortality to prevent men like Perseus, Absimiliard, and even Caine, from visiting harm on others.

There is no compassion among the vampires of Gorgo's Nest. They have never attempted to save, aid, or care for victims of abuse. The vampires of this cult are almost all of a low Humanity and disconnected from Touchstones, pursuing the kill above all else. Their crusade continues when they become wights, with Gorgo's Nest staking members fallen to the Beast, only to release them when they can be placed in a location rife with male targets.

### Current Goals

Most Kindred believe Gorgo's Nest possesses a firebrand agenda, which is misplaced, misguided, and ultimately destructive. This view isn't exclusive to male vampires, as Gorgo's Nest dispatches killers to slay vampires guilty of the Embrace, over-feeding, or maintaining a retainer for too long, making their standards for elimination highly subjective.

Vampires in Gorgo's Nest detest comparisons to the Bahari. They maintain they *are not* lilin, and in fact their view of the Bahari is aggressive to the point of frenzy. They hate sharing a space with the lilin, and commonly war with the cult whenever they share a domain. These battles have gone on for centuries, and Gorgo's Nest is the cult that has taken the most grievous injuries in the contest. These nights, Gorgo's Nest is a shadow of its former self.

The reasons behind the conflict between Gorgo's Nest and the Bahari aren't widely known, but consume the Gorgons' modern agenda. In truth, the cult split off from the Bahari three centuries ago due to a bloody, personal feud between a Gorgon (one of the Nest's high priests) and a matron of the Bahari. The feud spread to their followers, their companions, and

eventually, their wider cults. Since then, all because of a disagreement over whether a mortal under the Bahari's protection should be pushed into an arranged marriage to a powerful nobleman, the cults have been at war.

Gorgo's Nest have lost sight of their initial, murderous objective, and now persist in sabotaging Ba'ham Gardens. Vampires join the cult because they're already rage-filled, so the cult directs them against the Bahari some nights, and men the rest of the time. When not delivering death, the sorority of the cult seeks to stabilize members at risk of succumbing permanently to the Beast, but this is sadly a latter concern these nights. To compound matters, the resurgent Lamiae also go by the title "the Gorgons" and take pleasure in sabotaging this cult when they can.

## Los Hijos de Si

Los Hijos de Si, or "The Children of Si," is a Kindred cult operating throughout Peru and Bolivia with a history stretching back nearly 1500 years to its founding by Illari, a Moche priestess of the moon goddess "Si." Los Hijos have been active of late, quietly recruiting new members and expanding their influence. They seldom participate in the Gehenna War or the meaningless bickering of the Camarilla and Anarchs, their gaze firmly fixed on the moon above as they await the soothing darkness of salvation.

Los Hijos serve the Machukuna, or "Ancient Ones," revered entities from a prior age whose spirits persist into the present. The cult believes the Machukuna inhabit a shadowy parallel reality and were born of a nocturnal age lit only by moonlight. Their species died in fire upon the birth of the present age, but many endure, their ageless and desiccated bones concealed from the sun's killing light in deep caves and lake bottoms. Only the Machukuna know their origins with certainty and Los Hijos are not inclined to doubt them.

The cult believes the Machukuna are avatars of the moon goddess Si, who holds the key to escaping the Kindred's endless Jyhad, and perhaps reality itself. They defend the Machukuna's ancient bones, bear their sacred word, and satiate their unquenchable hunger for blood, passion, and offerings. In return, the Machukuna provide wisdom, access to the potent dust of their bones, and the promise they will lead Los Hijos safely into an age where Si rules the skies alone, unencumbered by the sun.

Until recently, the childer and descendants of the cult's founder Illari made up the cult's Kindred contingent. This changed with the induction of new coteries from the recently vacated Sabbat stronghold of Lima. These Kindred and their mortal counterparts work vigorously to fortify their Machukuna wards against time itself, always present, but seldom seen. They perpetuate false legends of the Machukuna, reducing them to folk tales easily explained away by mortals, defend their bones, and make sure their masters are well fed, cajoling humans and Kindred to propitiate them in return for Los Hijos' favor.

The Machukuna are the sacred beyond compare, creatures of darkness from a more perfect age, representatives of a better road forward than that offered by meaningless faiths, or seekers of Golconda. They are always watching, always waiting, and always pushing Los Hijos to greater acts of devotion, for they are the Si-given signposts on the road to salvation. A road every Hijo intends to walk.

### Current Goals

Los Hijos' goals are a balance of reconstruction and expansion. The cult took significant losses in the centuries where the Sabbat were dominant in Lima, stretching its ability to protect the Machukuna. Illari and her childer actively seek to Embrace new Kindred to restore their numbers in addition to inducting new Kindred from afar.

In addition to replenishing her ranks, Illari places renewed emphasis on security. The Second Inquisition haunts Peru, thin-bloods walk the streets of Lima, and She Who Screams in the Forest is active in Brazil. The signs of Gehenna are everywhere and Los Hijos prepare to weather the storm. Lima's Nosferatu erase electronic records of Hijo activity and have fortified the cult's mines with an astonishing array of defenses, transforming them into tunnels of death rivaling the Amaganti Warren of Brasília.

As always, the cult seeks to accumulate additional power, food, and security for the Machukuna. High Priests Don Esteban and Giuliana work vigorously to expand their influence among the kine, while Illari's childer walk unnoticed among the sick and poor mining communities of Peru, trading the vitae necessary to keep them alive in return for a steady supply of blood when demanded. They also ensure that the miners and villagers of the hinterlands leave proper sacrifices for the Machukuna and their servants. What the Machukuna do with cigarettes, liquor, and food is unknown, but these offerings are stacked neatly before their desiccated skeletons deep underground and vanish before the Hijos return.

## Sons and Daughters of Helena

The essence of a methuselah cult dedicated to the accumulation of wealth and influence, the Sons and Daughters of Helena pay tribute to their legendary icon, the vampire known variously as Helena, Helen, Helene, or — to those few who know her modern-nights Mask — Portia, in exchange for her blessings, direction, and supernatural aid. Structured as a pyramid of worship, adherents are lured in with tales of Helena being the undead Helen of Troy: a figure of supreme beauty, intellect, and wit. They're told tales of how she's survived for millennia, manipulated armies to further her goals, orchestrated the fall of Carthage, and is now the most powerful vampire in the USA. How much of this is true is debatable, but the Sons and Daughters use their Presence to attract recruits, make their words believable, and foster adoration from fresh initiates.

Helena is indeed the individual prominent in the tales of the Trojan Wars, and she is the schemer and beauty icon her cult purports her to be. She's even present in the United States and influences a small army of followers. However, these followers are not the Sons and Daughters, over whom she has minimal control and about whom she has little interest. Elders of Clans Ventrue, Toreador, and Brujah with no attachment to Helena formed this cult in her name to exploit the myths surrounding her and profit from fledgling gullibility.

### Current Goals

A vampire pyramid scheme, the Sons and Daughters' elder council sends abstract messages and puzzles to the lower level adherents, requesting they perform tasks on the cult's behalf while intimating that by performing well, they'll please Helena and earn her favor. The missions they set usually center on eliminating the cult's enemies, obtaining or laundering money, seizing territory for higher ranking members, or expanding the cult. The initiates at the bottom are expected to dedicate their time to serving Helena, send tribute up the chain, and in return — if they please "her" — a nice bauble comes back down. Usually this takes the form of the elder council recruiting other initiates to perform a task for the previous group, or more rarely, the elders might send down a vial of treated, potent vitae with the message to "use this only in times of extreme duress." The vitae usually comes from the body of another captured vampire from outside the cult.

To the Sons and Daughters, their religion is a mystery cult from which they obtain more wisdom and enlightenment the more they dedicate themselves. To anyone who delves deeper into the cult's inner workings, it's about as mundane a cult as vampires could form. Yet, as with many con jobs, as long as the marks don't realize they're being milked for all they're

worth, the sense of belonging, purpose, and belief is enough to keep them from slipping to the Beast. The cult's dissolution would lead to many vampires greeting the dawn in humiliation and despair.

What little Helena knows of this cult amuses her, so she's content to let it persist at least until it tarnishes her reputation. If that time comes, she'll make a grand show of annihilating the elder council and stepping in to address the Sons and Daughters as their grateful goddess, picking up the cult's devoted scraps.

## The Meneleans

A confused cult with no leadership in these modern nights, the Meneleans were once dedicated to rebuilding Carthage anew, revering the wisdom of the Brujah methuselah who unknowingly founded their order, and fighting the servants of the Toreador methuselah Helena. In their recorded history, the Meneleans read stories of the frequent clashes between the vampire known as Menele or Menelaus, and his rival Helena. The two fought using thousands of mortal and undead proxies for millennia before finally reaching the United States, where the two reached an ostensible stalemate and the war went underground.

In part dedicated to freeing vampires from elder subjugation and manipulation, while advocating closer bonds with the kine to help ground the cultists, the Menelean faith is one that's not outwardly destructive like that of many cults. Aside from Helena's cultists, the Meneleans had no natural enemies. They furthered a cause of freedom without the vice of worshiping Set, spoke in favor of domains drenched not in bloodshed but in understanding, and strongly believed the pathway to Golconda was through perfect assimilation into mortal life. The only price was drinking a dose of Menele's vitae every decade.

Then Menele disappeared, probably Beckoned, and a hundred bonds snapped.

### Current Goals

The great fraud of the Meneleans was that Menele enforced his will through his vitae. The cult operated so successfully, and appeared so uniformly altruistic, because Menele wished it so. Whenever a cultist tried to pursue their personal interests, he or one of his childer intervened to correct the course through the Blood or destroy the bug in the system. Undoubtedly, the cult's followers achieved many great things in Anarch and Camarilla domains alike, encouraging vampires on the cusp of becoming wights to fold into mortal society, softening a Prince's tyranny, and influencing the building of new cities such as Milton Keynes in the United Kingdom and Songdo in South Korea specifically to cater to Kindred needs. However, this was only sometimes the will of the vampires involved. Most of these schemes filtered down from on high.

The question many free Meneleans now ask is whether they would have pursued the same goals were Menele not involved. They also want to know how much control Menele had over their pursuits, as for all they know they could have been receiving subtle pushes from Menele's dreams, or dictates from a tyrant methuselah. The cult is in disarray, with their ancient grudge against Helena's followers even put to the side as Meneleans come together and discuss how they're going to act without their master's vitae.

## The One True Way

A pamphlet occasionally appears in haven letterboxes, trampled on the street outside Elysium, or folded between two books in a Tremere chantry. This pamphlet, printed like a flyer for a Christian group meeting that invites its readers to "join and share over drinks and honesty to discuss Golconda," is titled "The One True Way," and has been banned in domains far and wide for what Princes perceive as a Masquerade risk, and others consider an

obvious trap designed to lure vampires into a cult. In this respect, the word “cult” is used with all negative connotations.

Perhaps due to its negative reputation, vampires seek it out. If it’s caused such a stir, there must be some validity to its words, right? Kindred track down the community centers, scout huts, and church halls advertised in the pamphlets and find themselves in the company of other interested vampires, creating a sense of camaraderie. After a brief wait, a speaker emerges and talks at length about the one true way to Golconda, the steps one must take to reach the enlightened state, and after the speech — sometimes accompanied by PowerPoint presentations and team building activities — attendees are invited to share, without judgment, activities they’ve pursued that cause them shame or horror. The speaker then gives guidance from the certified one true way, which promises to help them in the future. The group disperses and most Kindred never return. Some, however, do. They buy in. They take the first step on the one true way to Golconda.

### Current Goals

The One True Way is a Golconda cult established by a mysterious vampire going by the title “Master of Ravens,” not that many of the cult’s adherents ever encounter him. He might show up to impart wisdom directly if a powerful cult member experiences second thoughts, or to rally followers against an enemy that wishes to destroy the cult, but for the most part he works in the background.

The vampires who give themselves fully to this cult eventually find the group meetings are just the first step on a program. They then lead their own sessions, gathering secrets from confessing, troubled Kindred, and use them to pursue the cult’s ends. The Master of Ravens expects the cult leaders to use these disclosures to elevate their own status too, however, as he uses the cult’s accumulated knowledge against his own ancient enemies, including at least one Antediluvian.

Meanwhile, the One True Way’s veracity is debatable. Long-term cultists exhibit a changed persona, but this could be learned behavior as easily as it might be a radical change based on Golconda. These upper level cultists, commonly titled “Ones,” appear to gain impressive control over their Beasts, extending to their direct communion with the internal, hungry voice, but some Kindred report the cultists allow their Beasts to take over in unmatched displays of violence and sadism. The Ones explain the Beast cannot be snuffed, only silenced for a time, and that they have learned how to release it at opportune moments. It so happens these opportune times always occur around the cult’s most vehement enemies.

## Servitors of Irad

According to Noddist history, Irad was the most bloodthirsty warmonger of his time, his prowess on the battlefield and in commanding men earning the respect of the first murderer, and Caine’s Embrace. Irad joined the ranks of the Second Generation and led Caine’s armies for an unrecorded number of centuries, always loyal to his sire and kin, as long as the battlefield could slake his unquenchable thirst.

Something changed in Irad when the Antediluvians rebelled against the Second Generation, however, with the handful of accounts from vampires who claim to remember the war agreeing Irad turned his armies to oppose Enoch, Zillah, and a controversially vague number of other Second Generation vampires. His motives for doing so are unclear to this night, though some posit he felt the Third Generation could bring him the blood he so craved in greater quantities than his sire and siblings, while others believe Caine snubbed him as nothing more than a killer, goading Irad into showing him what a killer he could be.

Whatever the case, Irad wasn't exempt from the Third Generation's attack on the Second, though some believe he fell last, his denouement coming as a surprise after everything he'd sacrificed for them.

The cult that emerged in the millennia that followed openly claims to serve the will of Antediluvians, which strikes Cainite scholars as odd, given their epithet as "Servitors of Irad." The cultists respond that Irad is emblematic of all blood shed in glorious battle, crimes of passion, and subtle assassinations. The individual matters less than their service to the true warmongers — the Antediluvians — and just as Irad served them to drench the planet in blood, the Servitors shall do the same.

## Current Goals

The Servitors of Irad have ever waxed and waned in power and popularity, drawing Kindred who see themselves as divine killers or who lack purpose beyond destruction. During times of great war between the kine, the Servitors emerge to ride the tide of battle and drive increasing numbers of mortals into the jaws of death. During times of peace, they attempt to provoke war or needle vampires into territorial disputes, sectarian conflicts, or religious crusades. They are ever on the lookout for the grandest buffet, which inevitably follows chaos and battle.

The Gehenna Crusade has revitalized the Servitors of Irad, who join the fight from every conceivable position, whether as manipulators pushing political buttons or as warriors in the field. The more philosophical branch of the cult wishes to consume a host of methuselahs while summoning their Antediluvian masters. The more politically motivated Servitors want to deal a grievous blow to the Sabbat, who they feel are still rank amateurs at war when compared to the clan founders.

For obvious reasons, Servitors of Irad rarely declare their presence or openly recruit in peaceful domains, though with the Sabbat's absence in many of its former domains, they look to propel the Camarilla and Anarchs into a fresh conflict absent for so many centuries.

# The Cult of Death and Undeath

*"You may ask yourselves, why us? Why not any of the other sects who might embrace you to their bosom? Ask yourself this instead, could any of those peons understand you like we do?"*

— Excerpt from the introduction of the Capuchin to the Anziani Council

The Clan of Death is one of the biggest cults in the world, dedicated to the study, manipulation, and mastery of death and the dead. It is not the only clan to possess coordinated ambition or hierarchy, nor is it the only one to possess an almost religious philosophy or indoctrinated loyalty among its constituent members, but what the Hecata have, is freedom. They are without sect-mates or permanent rivals. They are the only independent clan, and therefore are well-placed as both a family of vampires and cult of eschatologists to pursue their aims and tip the scales of power as they see fit.

## One of Us

*As spoken by Accorri Giovanni, Famiglia Giovanni of the Hecata. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.*

Let's get this started; I don't have a lot of time, but I was "asked" to speak with you. What? You wanted to talk to Isabel? Well, that's unfortunate. The Ministry has her. You get me instead. Aren't you the lucky childe?

Let this be the first among the many lessons you will learn with us: It's about the family. We keep family close, some may say too close at times. It's about what the family needs, not about what you want. The blood is important. It's a lesson the Giovanni, we who remain, are relearning now that we are a part of — a vital, important part of — the Hecata.

Not many on the outside will know, or care, about the difference. Use that. To those on the outside we will be the Clan of Death; they might even call us Clan Giovanni until the new or, rather, old, branding sticks. A wise childe will use that. There is a reason our name carries weight. No matter what you might hear from our cousins in the Harbingers, the Samedi, or even the fucking Cappadocians, the Hecata, and therefore our mutual survival, would not be possible without us. The Giovanni. They may be the branches of this new family, but we are the trunk. *We* are still Giovanni. Even if your last name is Dunsirn, Pisanob, or Milliner. Even if we call ourselves "of the Hecata" now. We won't forget where we came from, no matter where it is we may be going.

The Clan of Death has always been one of, oddly enough, change. The fucking Cappadocians? Yes. I did mention them. Yes, I did use an expletive. Now shut up and listen. Take them as an example. They killed themselves, we killed them, they came back.

The Cappadocians, the holder of the Clan of Death title before the Giovanni, enveloped our family for our acumen with the dead. We helped to further the study of death and the dead for them. We helped them increase both their temporal power and their power over the dead. We have always been merchants, either in coin or in death. They were, in the past, advisors and scholars extraordinaire. We, eventually, got tired of playing second fiddle and decided to bite the hand that fed. Literally.

While you may be new to the night, and the Hecata, even you have heard of us. The Venetian necromancers, the Merchant Lords, the Devil Kindred, and less savory things as well, I would imagine. Most of it is true. We are all of those things and more. We have been the masters of the dead since before 1444. That's the year our founder, Augustus Giovanni, wherever he is now, took the big bite out of the founder, known to some as Cappadocius, of the previous Clan of Death and ate his soul. Then we killed them all. Or so we thought. Some of our cousins hold to different versions of this event. Some even believe Augustus didn't finish the job properly.

We were officially recognized as the Clan of Death in the form of the Promise of 1528. It was an agreement between the then nascent Camarilla and Clan Giovanni to not get involved in each other's affairs. The Camarilla agreed that we weren't Sabbat and helpfully turned a blind eye while we hunted down the "last of the Cappadocians." The Promise lasts into this night, but some claim the terms are up soon. Did you know that? By the way, I highly suggest you not bring this particular event up to whoever you speak to from our relatives in the Harbingers. It's a particularly sore point and they still despise the Camarilla for not having their backs.

Hated and needed in equal measure, the Giovanni have been around for ages and we will be for ages to come. We can trace our family line back to the Roman Empire where we were known as Jovians. We were skilled in the manipulation of coin and the dead. We Giovanni have always venerated our elders and speaking to them from beyond the *sudario* wasn't as stigmatized then as it is now. We have always kept close ties with family.

Now, with the tragic loss of so many of our elders in the Giovanni, who are we in these nights? I don't know. Maybe you do. Now, what else do you want out of me?

### The Underworld

What's the *sudario*? I suppose the term is heading out of vogue among our young. It is the skin between this world and where the dead dwell. You will sometimes hear it referred to as the Shroud, in English. You will certainly learn more about it the further into your studies you wade.

Our art has been called many things over the years, but it all comes down to using our secret ways, combined with the Blood, to command the dead.

With Augustus no long in the picture, having failed the Clan of Death, and having held our many enemies on the other side of the veil captive with his power, we will need this art, and each other, now more than ever. We are beset, and even though we are not bound to the Camarilla, we understand the importance of hiding. It just wouldn't do to have angry ghosts coming after us in public, now would it? And they are coming.

You have taken enough of my time, I should think. I am late for a meeting with my childe Kay. One last lesson from your uncle Accorri. One he had to learn the hard way. One that his own uncle Diego taught to him. Listen well: We're all family in the end. We don't have to like each other, we can even hate each other, but we are still family. Remember that, nephew. Now get out of my sight.

## Masks and Murder and Plot

*As spoken by Marchesa Liliana, Wearer of the Triple-Faced Mask, member of the Harbingers of Skulls, now the Harbingers. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.*

Yes, I will speak with you as I have been requested to. No, removing my mask will not make me "more comfortable." Comfort is not important for us. Nor should it be important for you. There is little comfort among the dead.

You wish to know about our branch of the family, do you? You know nothing of the Harbingers of Skulls, but I will teach you in what time I have. I shall provide answers, for the Hecata would not be without us. This all grew out of the rich soil the ashes of our hate nourished. We must be quick about it for there are whispers beyond that there will be a breach in the Shroud near Delhi soon, and I will need to be there.

Harbinger is what they call me, and Harbinger is what I am. We are the speakers to the dead and the rulers, conveying whispers to and from the former and the latter, throughout the ages. We, when we were whole, provided counsel and solace to the powerful, standing at the side of princes, bishops, kings, and gods. Some of us still do even in these nights.

We were always a part of and apart from the Cappadocians, our original clan, before our Father locked us away in Kaymakli, before the Giovanni drank our Father and slaughtered us, before the Camarilla turned their back on us, and before the Sabbat left us behind. To ask those of the original brood of the Cappadocians that somehow remain, we still are Cappadocian. An argument can be made for it. Death always comes in threes, after all. But, as I have told neonates before you, and will after, my truth is that I am a Harbinger. I am of the Hecata now, yes, but always a Harbinger.

I told you the Hecata would not exist without our hate, and I meant it. We Harbingers hate. We are very good at it. We have every reason for it. Masks and murder and plot. We have nurtured that hate through every stage of our existence and survived to see our will done. We have survived every purge and were the instruments of the latest one. When our Father locked us away in that vast underground city, summoning the whole of the clan, not all of us answered, though most did. Those of us that did, he found wanting and sealed his failures inside. It was known as the Feast of Folly. Instead of withering away, we used our hate and our sadness to rip open ways into the lands of the dead and escaped. The mysterious Capuchin showed us the way, or so I am told. I have trouble remembering.

Not all our kin had the mastery, but we spent untold centuries among the dead and found time to learn. We found our way back, ready to take revenge on the Father who hated us so. We found that our time in that place left its mark on us and our faces had become as skulls. Yes, hence the masks. Thank whatever god holds your fancy that we no longer pass this affliction on with regularity to new initiates of the Hecata. I have long felt it is time to move on, decay and renew, and the Blood seems to agree.

Those of us who emerged from our mass grave at the first possible opportunity arrived just in time to see our Father's favored children, his pet project, the Giovanni, drink him down and slaughter our kin. Some of us turned to the Camarilla for protection, but the Giovanni reached them first and convinced the new sect to turn a blind eye to our extermination. Again, we were left with nothing, so some of us retreated to the Underworld while others flocked to the Sabbat.

And then the Beckoning called that sect away to its damnable Gehenna War. A Beckoning we do not feel. You can ask others about why that might be. I have my theories but do not have the time.

We were adrift until the Capuchin came back to us and presented us the key to our vengeance. To make us the knife that would cut out those who had been poisoning our Clan of Death. It is we Harbingers who took away the obstacles to progress, the elders of Clan Giovanni who would not bend after Augustus Giovanni fell to our fangs, finally after all these years. We made way for the new growth, a return to old ways, and offered the Giovanni a measure of forgiveness to pair with our vengeance.

You neonates will carry us forward into that future with the wisdom and support of the past. We come together, Samedi, Harbingers, Lamiae, Cappadocians, and even the Giovanni. Death has many names and comes in many forms. Our clan has a face for every manner of death, and more than I can list without boring you.

Nevertheless, we are all Harbingers still. Harbingers of what, now, remains to be seen.

> The Beckoning
>
> Why the Hecata are immune to the Beckoning is a matter hotly debated within the clan. Some Necromancers theorize it's because they're the only line to successfully destroy their Antediluvian, but others retort Cappadocius went on to exist as a spectre and may still do so, so that claim is as arrogant as it is false. Others believe the clan's routine internal purges have annihilated dozens or maybe hundreds of their methuselahs and elders, and this practice has resulted in insufficient vampires remaining to call their descendants. Another faction believes the Capuchin enacted a ritual to still — or kill — the clan's Blood, disconnecting it from the source. This would go a long way to explaining the sterility in some Cappadocian and Harbinger vitae, but could the mysterious Hecata be that powerful?
>
> Whatever the truth, few Kindred outside the Hecata know the clan did not succumb to the Beckoning, and the Clan of Death is happy to leave it that way. The Necromancer mindset is "let them think we're weak" as they use their peers' underestimation to further their ambitions.

## …That You Do So Well

*As spoken by Josette, Speaker for the Baron Samedi. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.*

Welcome, welcome. Yes, I know who you are. You have come a long way to meet with me, and travel is risky in these nights. The Baron has given me leave to speak with you on behalf of the Samedi and he would have me tell you of us. Kreyol pale, kreyol komprann.

I see you blanch at my appearance. It is fine. I am used to it. We are marked by the loa, and there are so many loa these nights. Our flesh rots, yet we abide.

The Samedi have been around for a long time, not as long as some of our fellow members of this cult we call the Hecata, but long enough. Many of our cousins probably have many theories and stories about where we come from. But you? All you need to know of our origins is that we owe our existence to Baron Samedi. We are his and he is his own. It is by his word and the will of the loa that we are part of this, and the Hecata would not exist without the Samedi. It is our relationship with the loa that keeps us ahead of the turmoil on the other side of the Shroud.

We Samedi ruled the islands and spread around the world, because we know there are things that need to be done that others haven't the strength to do. We took on the trappings we needed to get the job done. Vodun, Christianity, Noddism, and the rest. We ingratiated ourselves with the underbelly and used our power to speak with those departed on behalf of those that couldn't. We understand that the loa are ghosts, but not all ghosts are loa. We use honey over vinegar. We understand the deep secrets of the dead that even our cousins, who dismiss our knowledge because of their youth, do not understand. We are here because of them.

Augustus is gone. So many loa are freed. There is trouble across the divide and so many of the loa have invited us home.

We need each other, simply put. Look at me. We cannot hide in plain sight. The Hecata gives us protection and in turn we give them our knowledge and connections on the other side, from the ones who rest deep. How do you think we found the Giovanni elders in their holes? The Baron tells me this audience is at an end. There is work to be done.

## Death Always Comes In Threes

*As spoken by Amr Salib, Hecata childe of an unknown Cappadocian. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.*

I have to say, antimi, it is good to spend some time with someone my own age, so to speak. I have spent much longer than I would like these past years among the truly dead and half-dead. My sire asked that I speak with you as she is still, I suppose the best word would be, "shy." I am to be her bridge into the modern night. She has told me of our history and I am honored to be a part of such a storied line as the Cappadocians. She teaches me much and I, in turn, get to delight in watching her marvel at my cellphone, even if she does call them "devil-squares." I will now read a letter she penned for you, chronicler.

"The Cappadocians have known, we have always known and we prepared. We didn't flee to the other side. We resisted the call to Kaymakli. We threw our invitation to the Feast of Folly away. We did not become Harbingers. We did not orchestrate wars and plagues, advise Princes, and hate as they did, though we understand their hate. We did not become con artists, and oracles, and mercenaries as our Samedi cousins did. We did not consume and strive and barter as Augustus Giovanni and his brood did. Instead, we hid among the graves and the dead, as we always have. We threw some of our brethren who could not see the future clearly into the maw of the Giovanni and we faded from memory. We studied. We waited. We watched. And when it was time, we returned.

The others have probably told you how each alone is responsible for the Hecata, how it would fall apart without them and their particular skills. They are all correct. This is how we survive the sects that would see us falter and fall. We will weather the fires of the Second Inquisition. We come together as the last truly independent clan, because we must. The Feast, The Promise, The Reunion. Death, Rot, Rebirth. The Three Faces.

We survived and now we become what we always were.

The Hecata. The Clan of Death."

## The Family Reunion

*As spoken by Monica Giovanni of the Hecata to her Great-Great-Uncle Ignazio Giovanni*

I can see why you'd be confused, Ignazio, why all of this happening now might surprise you. And you have every right to be afraid. But this is what happens when you ignore your young and your different for so long. When punching down becomes a way of unlife. Sometimes they start asking questions and punch back.

You see, we talk. Not through the dead where you can hear us. We meet up in person, we chat, we gossip, and we share secrets. Some of us even dabble with encrypted emails. Even the young Samedi, Harbingers, and Cappadocians. There have been a few new ones in the modern nights who reached out to us. Fancy that, huh? And do you know what we all asked each other? We asked why we must carry the grudges of our elders. And do you know what we came up with great-uncle?

We said we don't fucking know.

> Eat the Rich
>
> For centuries the Giovanni have kept tight control over the process of the Embrace through the practice of the Proxy Kiss, a process of selecting favored children from the various families under the Giovanni purview and forcing them to become thralls. Councils of elders have controlled the process for a very long time, deciding who among them deserves the Embrace. Over time it became political and the abuse, and sometimes outright murder, of others' prospective childer weakened the bonds of trust between sire and childe.
>
> This breach of trust and ensuing discontent led many young Giovanni to throw off the shackles of the old ways of thought and tradition of their elders. They struck out on their own, and many of them made contact with the younger members of bloodlines and families who used the darker arts of the dead. Who better for a necromancer to commiserate with than other necromancers?
>
> This led to long-held prejudice being challenged, and young Giovanni from every family of the clan coming together with members of the Samedi, the Harbingers, and some of the more obscure lines such as Cappadocians, Lamiae, and Nagaraja who came out of the darkness to make tentative contact with their cousins.
>
> With new perspectives came new anger, new rage. It started a fire within the Giovanni as a whole. This fire was stoked by a combination of the elders of the Samedi, Harbingers, Cappadocians, and even some Giovanni into an inferno that would burn out those in all factions who did not belong in the Clan of Death.

Besides, we had to come together for protection — or did you miss all the fucking spectres that have been coming after all of us that have touched death?

Augustus is gone. All the angry spirits he held in captivity for his great work, they've come after all of us. His Endless Night, his grand quest to tear down the barrier between this world and the next? It's over. From what I hear, Uncle Auggie didn't work fast enough.

The Harbingers, the Samedi, and those Cappadocians who escaped probably killed him. They're definitely killing most of your generation. Kind of a nice one-two punch, huh? Did you notice how so many of your contemporaries didn't show up last April 4th? Or did you just not talk about it like an awkward mortal Thanksgiving?

And your precious Promise of 1528? You fuckers never told us it had a time limit. Five hundred years is what we're all hearing. Our non-aggression pact with the Camarilla runs out, and what with kicking the Anarchs out into the cold and all of the clans clustering together under one banner or another, we had to band up.

You see, if we Giovanni were together as a family like we should have been, we could have taken them. If we didn't shit on the Dunsirns, the Pisanob, and even the fucking Putanesca, this never would have happened. We would have stood against this tide of death. We're Giovanni. We can do any goddamn thing if we're together. We could have done what you elders should have done so long ago: killed them all. But we weren't together. And it's your fault. Now we're doing it this way.

So, while we're talking, my coterie is killing all your ghouls and your favorite childe. Elders with a fucking head on their shoulders from the Giovanni are finally getting the recognition and power they deserve in the clan. The Samedi are crawling out of the woodwork because their loa told them to or some shit and boy do they have some things to teach us. They don't command their ghosts, like we've always been taught. They let their loa ride them and commune. Their loa have taught us a few new things about how the other side works. Shit we've been trying to figure out for centuries. They can party too.

Same with the Harbingers. They just walked over on that side for years and years, alternating between running from us and attacking us from the shadows. Hooked up with the Sabbat for a while too. They know how to dig into spirits to get what they want. Even heard that one or two can feed on a ghost. Some of 'em can do some of that messed up shadow stuff I heard the Lasombra can do. They say it all comes from the same place, basically. I can't tell if they're old or not. I can't tell any damn thing with those masks. Probably for the best. Some of 'em still hate us. Hell, they might **all** still hate us, but we can work together. We have to.

And the Cappadocians? I haven't met any of the original ones, yet, but some of their new childer. What they are calling their "tethers." They seem good, if a bit haughty. They have learned more about our dark art in the span of a few years than I have in decades. Can't wait to meet some of the old ones, but I'm sure they're gun shy. Can't blame them. We did try to kill their whole clan.

And you know the funny thing? Most of the rest of the Kindred, from the Cams to the Anarchs to the Ashirra, probably aren't even going to notice anything has changed. To them we'll always just be the Clan of Death, or the Clan of Bankers, or the Clan of Gangsters, and I'm fine with that. They don't care if their necromancer wears a mask, a white top hat, a robe, or a suit. They just want us to do our thing and get out. They'll learn in time.

So, this is happening, great-great-uncle Ignazio. It's the end of you fucks. You, and the rest of you sycophants to Augustus who hated to see anyone else succeed, who hated anything new or different. You're done. You failed the family and the family took note. The young lit the fire and our grandparents came back to give us their guidance and their wisdom, and the aunts and uncles who remain are stepping aside. Whatever is calling the elders of the other clans away doesn't seem to be affecting us. But we, the young, run the show. We've got the energy for it. The drive. We are all coming together. It's our own little family reunion and there is no place at the table for the hardliners. No place for you.

Oh, scratch that, I forgot. I did meet one Cappadocian. I met the one called the Capuchin. He's the one who told me what you'd done to my sire. He's the one who told us where to find you. He dredged up our original name and gave it back to us. Hecata.

Now that I think about it, Uncle Auggie did bring about his Endless Night, in a way. It's us. We are of the Hecata, now. **We** are the Endless Night.

Goodbye great-great-uncle.

## The Other Side

*A letter from Casius Aubespin, Haiti, 1999*

My Harbinger friend, you of the Mask of Cerberus, I have walked as you taught me on the other side, but in my own way. The land of the loa. They called and I took its hand and stepped into the puddle and my world turned upside down. It was beautiful and terrible, as you said. The land before me was bare, but there stood buildings I had not seen in centuries. The loa who walked with me was made of shadow itself, wearing the face of a child. It asked me to walk deeper and I said I would.

It took me to a place of perpetual storm and howling. It hurt. We did not stay long. I saw things in the mist and the rain made of glass and memory that will haunt me for the rest of my days, and I am of the Samedi. I look like a walking corpse.

The loa asked if I wished to go deeper, and I could not stop myself. I said yes.

We were then in a place of twists and winding tunnels that bent my brain in a thousand ways. Angry ghosts harried us, whispering sins I had long forgotten, and the loa protected me. It told me this maze was woven as much to keep things in as it was to keep things out. It was a place of terror, and madness, and pain. The loa asked if I wished to go deeper and I asked it what could be past this. It said, revelation.

It told me we could walk to where the light of the world ends and can go no further. It would take me to the last place that exists before the end of all things. The infinite abyss that yawns before Oblivion. Its home. Its prison.

Gods help me, I said yes. And the loa took my hand again and dropped its protection for the barest moment. I, blessedly, cannot remember what I saw, for I saw nothing in that place. I heard whispers, I think, whispers from all around. And one unending scream, stretching into forever. Cold. There was no light, no energy. It wanted me to just give up. To let go. I have had associations with the Lasombra, been struck by them and their shadows. It felt like that, and they describe their power much the same.

The loa came back then. I asked if we were to go deeper still and it told me, no. We cannot, for past the Abyss is Oblivion, and it wants us. It wants us all.

To put it as best I can, it's like a black hole with a will surrounded by an infinite abyss (to continue the metaphor, mortal scientists would call it an accretion disk) of infinite depth and proportion, which contains beings trapped there in the absence of light. Trapped between being and non-being. It is all contained by a maze so twisting and chaotic and elaborate that it almost made me mad. And above all of that a perpetual storm and the echoes of cities and people and things where the dead dwell.

It bade me return and tell my new clan about what I saw here. I woke then this night and started to write this letter to you. I do not know what it meant by new clan, but I find myself with one word echoing in my head from this dream, Hecata. Does this mean anything to you?

With respect, I'll not be using that ritual again, either my way or yours. I do not know if there is any real truth to what I saw, or if I failed the ritual and this was simply a dream, but I suggest you teach it to no other.

## The Capuchin

*As spoken by Adisa, Lilin of the Hecata, sworn to Cerena St. Cyr, Cappadocian of the Hecata. Recorded by Quinn Winters, Hecata fledgling, at the behest of his patron.*

You come to me to ask my patron about the Capuchin? She has no time for you. You may speak to me, you bold little one. There are few better teachers than a Gorgon, and I agree to teach you. Though I fear you may leave here less than satisfied.

Now, the entity known as the Capuchin is one shrouded in mystery. However, the Cainite — how I loathe that word — in friar's robes is more active in the night since the formation, or reformation, of the Hecata.

If you ask the different families of the Hecata about this creature you are likely to receive several different answers. Ask the Harbingers and he is a savior, the wearer of the Capuchin mask. They will say he led them into the Shadowlands circumventing their imprisonment in the underground city of Kaymalki by the Father, the Antediluvian known as Cappadocius. Ask the Samedi and he is a long-standing rival, friend, and confidante to their leader, Baron Samedi. They have tales of the Capuchin trading stories and knowledge with the Baron long into the nights. Ask the Giovanni and he is either a demon come to harry them, or a dealer in antiquities who once traded Vatican tomes and secrets for necromantic ones. Ask the dead, and the dead suddenly find themselves with somewhere else to be. The remaining Cappadocians are all too happy to gossip about the Capuchin's identity, should you be able to find them.

He is a figure relatively unknown to the younger of the Hecata, I would wager. But make no mistake, his anonymity has only ever been his ally. The Capuchin helps to guide the Hecata in the modern nights and, I suppose, is the closest thing we have to a leader in place of that wretch Augustus, though it is said he listens to the counsel of the infamous pioneer of necromantic rites and ceremonies, Ambrogino Giovanni. The Capuchin is the voice in the shadow, guiding from the background. He offers advice, the location of a rival, the haven of a traitor or anything else the Hecata may need.

Whispers are traded around about the Capuchin like goods in an open-air market. Some believe him to be Lazarus, who was the first of Cappadocius' direct childer to reject the invitation to the Feast of Folly. Some believe he is a creature from deep in the land of the dead or an agent of some other unknowable thing. A few believe that it is simply a title traded about by several figures in the Clan of Death's history.

One of the most popular current stories is that he is directly responsible for the death and diablerie of Augustus Giovanni, the patriarch of the former Clan Giovanni, who is currently missing. This would make the Capuchin accountable for unleashing the storm of souls partially responsible for bringing the Clan of Death together.

Yes, I understand you are leaving here with more questions than answers. I did warn you. Dissatisfaction is pain of a sort, one that might drive a soul forward to seek answers. You are most welcome for the lesson.

> The Beckoning and the Blood
>
> Since the Family Reunion, the Blood has been acting strangely in the Hecata. In the modern nights, the childer of members of the various bloodlines that the massive death cult comprises have found that several new fledglings do not suffer from the same curses, afflictions, and Banes as their sires. The Samedi are walking corpses, the Harbingers have no faces, and the Cappadocians suffer from a deathly pallor and otherworldly presence that frightens the living. However, some of the childer they Embrace are hale and whole, albeit suffering from a bite that does not bring pleasure, only pain. This was once known as Lamia's Kiss, the curse of the Giovanni, and spreads to most new Hecata. Along with this, these new Hecata find themselves struggling to find the fires of passion. It is as though their feelings are deadened.
>
> The elders of every clan, and even the rare Caitiff of thickened blood and low generation, find themselves pulled by mysterious forces from across the Earth in a phenomenon that has come to be called the Beckoning. Not so for the Hecata.
>
> Many think the Beckoning signifies the Antediluvians calling their clans to them. That Gehenna, the vampiric version of apocalypse, is here. Elders of the Hecata who subscribe to this thought, especially the members of the Giovanni family, believe that the Clan of Death is the only clan with a truly dead Antediluvian. Cappadocius is said to have fallen to the fangs of Augustus Giovanni in April of 1444 as the Giovanni are very keen to remind everyone.
>
> The Harbingers believe that there is no Beckoning for the Hecata because they already had a Beckoning in the Feast of Folly. The Clan of Death has purged enough.
>
> The Giovanni believe it is because their founder, Augustus Giovanni, is on the run and does not need to call his children to him, as they are the ones hunting him.
>
> Some surviving members of the Cappadocian line tell stories about how their founder's soul was fragmented into three parts, one in Augustus, one which plummeted to the depths of the land of the dead, and one contained in a vessel, hidden somewhere on Earth.
>
> If this is truly Gehenna, some of the Hecata figure it might be a good idea to find the fragments and restore them. After all, if the Antediluvians **are** waking, the Clan of Death should have one of their own if they want to survive. And what is dead to the Clan of Death, really?

# The Giovanni Role

*As spoken by Euan Dunsirn, of the Family Dunsirn*

Welcome to the Council, cousin. I know there are many here who have awaited your arrival with great interest. Let us waste few of our precious seconds on introductions. I am Euan Dunsirn of

the Lairds o' Stirling. Aye, those Dunsirns. My Dunsirns. I'm here to give you the introductory information on our new alliance and our role within it.

The Giovanni are, simply put, the acceptable face of the Clan of Death. Of course, this seems obvious, given that we have far more acceptable faces than our contemporaries. However, the truth goes beyond that. Many of the bloodlines that form our new family of clans are mere rumor among Kindred society at large. Their names are spoken of as bogeymen or even simply tall tales from fledglings who were spooked at the sight of their first Nosferatu. If it can be said that Clan Giovanni has one thing that the other branches of the Clan of Death truly lack, it is brand awareness.

Clan Giovanni is considerably more populous than the other clans, dominating the Hecata in terms of numbers even after the purge. It has been said that around half of Hecata Kindred hail from Giovanni ancestry, but take it from me, those may be conservative estimates designed to keep their new allies from feeling intimidated and outnumbered. The Giovanni are still the cocks of the walk around here and that's how it'll stay as long as we're smart. These others are in the club, but they're not VIP members yet, most of them.

## The Purge

Within the family itself, the shakeup has been far more widely felt. Without Augustus ruling the roost, pointing out that your surname is *actually* Giovanni, Giovani, di Giovanni, or whatever, is suddenly not the great decider it once was. As the clan's activities began to rotate more around the financial centers of the world, the Italy-based Giovanni found themselves more and more distant from where the real business was being done. Those of us closer to London, New York, those sorts of places, made a killing; literally in some cases. You'd be surprised how much death there is around making money. Death, decay, the whole lot.

As you'll no doubt be aware by now, those of us in the outer circles of the major family were suddenly given a bigger role in what was being done in Venice in our name. Augustus was a legend to us until then. What a fucking disappointment. We could see what his cronies couldn't, that he was holding the lot of us back and that he was the reason so many of our newfound brethren were actively trying to put us on the other side of the Shroud. They had to go. Best not to ask how, it's worked out pretty well for you. All that matters is that we knew new thinking was needed at the top or the bottom might just fall out, and some of us have been around long enough to have an idea of how that pans out.

## A New Broom

It might surprise you to know that many of us had carried on under-the-table communications with hiding Cappadocians for a while. Some of us were even hiding them. Samedi were in negotiations with the Council over some artifact or other they claimed to have, Harbingers wanted us dead. Right? Of course, they only wanted some of us, the ones they stupidly thought were running the show around here. Well, we taught them better and now I'm teaching you.

The Promise of 1528 wasn't just a promise we made to the Camarilla and they made to us. It was a promise that Augustus made to those of us who believed he wasn't just a fat, bald fool with a God complex; those of us who knew he had the knowledge of the arts to maybe pull off what he claimed he could. But 500 years is a long time to wait to be proven wrong and we didn't fancy him as the man to secure us the clout we need with an increasingly paranoid and fractious Camarilla or whatever will be left of it in the next ten years or so.

That's when the Capuchin turned up again. Always seems to turn up at the right time, that one. I'll let one of the record keepers bring you up to date on what the Capuchin is; needless to say that it's a better option than the fat load of nothing Augustus was offering.

This isn't an empire, like he thought. This is a consortium, a company, a concern. This is the oldest and most powerful bank in the world. Not just one of money but of souls, spirits and secrets. The time has come to sweep out the old and bring in the new.

## The Establishment

Now, don't be put off by all this talk of big changes and kowtowing to these up-jumped necromancers. We're not kneeling to everyone with a skull face and a few parlor tricks. They offered us knowledge and secrets we've been working to uncover for hundreds of years but, don't forget, they embraced us because of what we knew that they didn't. We let them think of this as a return to how things should have been, a rebirth of our great founder's ancient vision or simply an end of hostilities for a common good. What it really is, is consolidation. We've lost a whole load of useless clowns from the books and brought in people who have survived against all odds and who have skills and knowledge we didn't have access to before.

In return? Well, look around you. Where are we now? Whose hierarchy is it they're hoping to climb? Whose house is it they're living in… or underneath in some cases? They might have brought some innovations to the table, but we're the establishment. If this is a merger, we're the ones doing the buying. They can carry on under the umbrella we're holding, but they know we could take it away.

Sure, one of them is the figurehead now, but you'll come to understand how things work around here. Like I said, this isn't an empire.

## The Family's Goals

Now that we've fixed our immediate problems, we go back to work. With so much of our estate now up for the claiming, we have a whole load of childer to bed-in to their new roles. The Camarilla might have questions, but until the term expires we don't really need to worry about answering them, and our new situation makes us, I believe, the only clan in the night who is not actively at war with anyone else.

War, all around us. Endless, undead war. Sounds like something that might interest you, my friend? It certainly should if you're half the Kindred your reputation suggests. Wars bring two things, death and profit. We need you and your, I'm sure, very capable progeny to find the ways to profit from the conflict in your own area.

Be careful who you trust, even among your own. If they think they can step into your shoes just by bumping you off then they will. Keep their eyes on the mystery box. There's a plan bigger than all of us out there and now we have the means to unravel its purpose, that sort of thing. They're on a need-to-know basis, got it? As for you, do business with those people out there, let them know that we're still a name they can trust and we'll work with whoever runs things wherever we go. We don't take sides unless we're attacked. We don't break a deal once it's made. We do what we say we will do.

That, my friend, is why our name still means something in Kindred society. It's the name that lives on, it's the name that people remember and it should always be associated with promises kept.

Of course, while that's going on, we continue the great work of the rot and the renewal. Do you think you'll be there when it all comes to an end? I don't yet know how to perceive the action of entropy on something the size of the universe, but I know when I'll be going at least.

## Family Business

Our new associates will be joining your concern in the next week or so. I'll need you to pass on the instructions as to how Hecata moving through the territory can reach you; obviously they need to make contact with you before they go through any Princes or whatever there is out in that featureless wilderness you hail from.

Now, remember, these new folks are a bit weird. They're not entirely like us. They won't likely offer much on the business front, in fact you'll probably have to keep them under wraps to some extent, but that's for you to deal with. Treat them right and make use of what they bring to the table. As for your guys, they'll be expected to carry out the traditional roles, making sure the local operation is well funded, housed and protected. If you have anyone working in the arts, any proteges you happen to be molding out there, they can probably learn a lot from our allies. Get them working closely together — if this all goes tits up, we want to get out with as much of their knowledge as we can. Until then, we proceed in good faith. Consider them part of the family for the purposes of *Omertà*. They don't need to be locked out of the ritual chamber and kept away from the obsidian supply.

## Dealing with the Authorities

As for introducing your new guests to the powers that be, you'll need to observe the rules of whoever that is. If you somehow happen to be in one of the places the Sabbat's still holding, they don't seem too bothered now the Harbingers are in the tent with the rest of us. As for the Camarilla, you'll have to do the song and dance with the Prince. I always liked to introduce my new Embraces and arrivals together and travel as a group. Having said that, don't take more than three at a time to Elysium with you; we don't want them worrying about the numbers game. I hear they're all excited about how we seem to be in decline and retreat from some of the old strongholds. I envy you, you'll get to see the look on the old Princes' faces when you break it to them that it was just a short hiatus.

Official line with them is that it's business as usual. We're still providing the standard services in finance and security as well as help in tracking down things, or childer, they've misplaced for whatever fee seems best to you. Make yourself useful to them and don't become too much of a thorn. You know the score, you've been at this long enough to get a seat on the Council.

When the question is asked, and it will be, you play it with a straight bat. This is the way things are, they're part of our arrangement and always have been, just now they're more… what should we say… public facing? You'll figure it out. You know the local yokels better than I do, I suspect. If they give you any trouble, we'll try to shuffle the deck a bit, can't have you getting embarrassed after making the big step up. It's always fun to watch how a Prince reacts when the Hecata in their domain one night are different from the Hecata in their domain the next.

No, don't worry about it. I look after my friends well and my family even better. And we are family, right cousin? Now, I've got a few more people to introduce you to before we can move in to the crucible. Don't worry about them though, you're here to keep faith with me. Don't you forget it. Don't forget who put you here, cousin.

# The Harbinger Role

*As recorded by Roger de Camden, Prince of Edinburgh, Pater of the Cult of Mithras, Wearer of the Death's Head Mask*

My line — sometimes known as the Harbingers, other times known as the Cappadocians, though one is truly a subsect of the other, and I can say that with all expertise — should be dead. Don't let arrogance convince you otherwise. If we were of any other line, we would be naught but ashes now.

That's the wisdom we need to retain to have a function in this new Hecata. The concept of "Hecata" is not new, however. If you believe our first clan name was "Cappadocian" or that Father's name was truly "Cappadocius," you're a fool. Everything changes. Everything cycles.

To an outsider looking in, the Clan of Death's hierarchy is a shambles, and never more so than in the Middle Ages, when we looked like a collection of unaffiliated scholars with a messianic father figure perched over us like a vulture in a tree. What the outsiders couldn't see, is we've always had structure. Once, it was schools of philosophy and later, proto-guilds, if you like. The Harbingers were councilors and saboteurs, their ambition one of disruption and misrule in service to delivering death in a myriad of ways. Plagues. Mass murders. Sieges that led to rulers more to our liking taking charge, and so on. You may ask, "I struggle to maintain my control and only feed when I must, so how could Harbingers even practice their trade and not devolve into wights?" and I must point out mortal politicians, generals, and religious leaders as evidence that it is easy to manipulate conflict without getting one's hands dirty, and thereby maintain a veneer of morality.

Yes, we have a history of dealing with death. Allow me to tell you about how we function in these nights.

## The Timeline

I was never of the Sabbat, and I cannot speak as an expert on their current activities. What I can tell you, is the Harbingers joined the Sabbat largely in an effort to destabilize the Camarilla, but also to punish the Giovanni. I am often asked by younger Hecata such as yourself, "if the Harbingers were banished to Kaymakli by their clan founder, why were they so outraged at the Giovanni for killing him?" The answer is complex, so I will explain to you, little neonate:

- The Harbingers were a favored Cappadocian faction of politicos, assassins, and saboteurs well before the Giovanni Embrace. Few could match their mastery over widespread and intimate deaths designed to alter the course of monarchies, empires, and the fates.
- At some point, the clan founder (or his childer) decided the Harbingers (and other Cappadocians) weren't worthy of the Blood any more, and decided to banish them to the Underworld.
- Some Harbingers accepted the punishment, others fought, some never turned up for the hearing. In all cases, our resentment toward Father grew.
- The Giovanni, upon hearing how Father was prepared to punish even his favorite descendants, made plans to guarantee their survival. Namely, his death.
- The purge commenced, starting with Cappadocius. The Giovanni then turned their gaze toward the rest of the non-Giovanni Cappadocians.

- The Cappadocians (and some of the surviving Harbingers among them) turned to their long-time allies among the Ventrue and other founding Camarilla clans for protection. The Camarilla instead shut their doors to the Cappadocians, turning a blind eye to the internal conflict within the Clan of Death. Some Cappadocians banished themselves to the Underworld for protection, in exactly the same place Father banished their clanmates centuries before.
- (Some cynical Hecata might believe Father deliberately banished the vampires he did to protect them from the Giovanni's future actions, but that gifts an abusive, manic Antediluvian with a great deal of foresight and benefit of the doubt)
- The Giovanni ruled the clan for close to half a millennium, before numerous Harbingers emerged from the Underworld, hungry for revenge. They wanted revenge against the Camarilla for abandoning the clan, they wanted vengeance against the Giovanni too, but not for hunting the Cappadocians to near-extinction. Remember most of the Harbingers were seen as failures to the wider Clan Cappadocian and they did not mourn the deaths of their clanmates. No, they wanted to persecute the Giovanni for destroying Cappadocius before they could.
- The Family Reunion took place after the Harbingers launched a devastating assault on the Giovanni holdings in Venice, and surprisingly, enlisted many young Giovanni to aid them.

So you see, this timeline (which I believe is as accurate as any you'll ever see or hear, though Marchesa Liliana disagrees on some points) leads us to tonight. All families have black sheep and all families have skeletons in their closet. The Harbingers are both, and only now making firm bonds with their wider clanmates despite historic enmities.

How does this lead in to our role now, though? How does a clan so long kept in the dark achieve relevance tonight?

We use all our old gifts. Politics. Assassination. Mayhem. Epidemics. Choose one of the Four Horsemen and start riding with them. Tactics that worked well in centuries gone by still work damn well now.

But a further question. How does this apply to the fledgling Harbinger?

## New Blood in an Ancient Clan

For a long time, the Harbingers could not Embrace new childer. Their vitae had gained a selective sterility after their long exile in the Underworld. As decades have passed since their emergence, however, the Blood is once again invigorated, and you see new members of the clan. Fewer take on the name Cappadocian than they do Harbinger, and even more classify themselves as Hecata without any of the bloodline confusion, but the good news for the clan is fresh blood now enters play.

The kind of existence a fledgling or neonate Harbinger faces, however, is an unusual one. There's a wider gulf between this clan's sires and childer, in terms of age, than perhaps any other. Therefore, the clan commonly Embraces those with a certain detachment from empathy and compassion (though not always, as it can make for an interesting case study), in order to utilize these new tools — sorry, childer — in ways appealing to the Harbinger ethos. That ethos being the study, mastery, and delivery of death on a grand scale.

Not all Harbingers are sociopaths and murderers, however. We know as well as any Kindred how easy it is to lose oneself to the Beast. We target pathologists, surgeons, soldiers who struggle to fit into everyday society, magnates, career criminals, and yes, the religiously-inclined.

Occultists these nights are hard to find, but any of the aforementioned professions tend to draw individuals well-suited to our aims.

The relationship between elders and new blood within the Hecata is a strangely joyous sight, I must admit. For so long believed incapable of siring, the older Harbingers shower their young with care, tutelage, and firm direction as fresh vampires. This can edge into coddling, making for some frustratingly entitled fledglings, and has from time to time entered into obsession, but for the most part the sire-childe relationship within our clan forms an impressive bond.

I mentioned our aims before, so let's move on.

## Dead Aim

Apologies for the apparent contradiction, but the Hecata's Harbingers don't just go around killing people, planting bombs, and spreading illness. If we did that, the other clans would have every right to destroy us. Perhaps that's why Cappadocius was so unhappy with our actions in the Dark Ages? Who knows. He's not around to answer questions, and believe me, plenty among us have tried to ask his spectre.

No, the ambition of the Harbingers is one of subtlety. We know what the Giovanni excel at, and now that we're working together — except in those cases where old vendettas cannot be settled — we come in from an opposite angle. The Giovanni are perfect mercenaries, independent researchers, and frankly, unparalleled necromancers. The Harbingers are still chamberlains, spies, and agitators, though these nights one might simply call them — or us, as I have been granted the Harbinger epithet despite never having received their curse myself — advisors to Princes.

The Camarilla and many Anarchs know the Giovanni. They know what to expect. They do not know what to expect from the Harbingers. When we enter their domains with secrets surrounding undeath, the Sabbat, and their enemies of the moment, and act as neutral parties for mediating conflicts… why, it's almost as if we're back to our old tricks, sitting beside or behind thrones.

For all that the Tremere are powerhouses of knowledge and the Ventrue are political masterminds, they do not know the inner workings of the Hecata. So pose as Caitiff, or even speak to a particularly aged Ventrue and remind them of their once-reliable Cappadocian regent, and get into their good graces. Work for them. Humble yourself to them. Speak to the Anarch Baron like they're an old friend and you'll bend over backwards to ensure they never suffer the crushing heel of the Camarilla again. Sprinkle your offers with enough truth to be believable, and worm your way into courts, Elysia, and powerful domains. *They* do not know we are aligned with the Giovanni. *They* barely remember who we are.

Use that. Use them. Feed whatever information you can find back to the clan, and where possible, start a war without leaving your fingerprints on the documents.

## Factionalism

It is healthy for the Clan of Death to possess factions. We were always most functional when compartmentalized, and expecting a clan of individuals to march to the beat of a single drum is idiotic. Compare the Clan of Death to death's many ways of touching people. When I ask you how your loved ones died, did they all go the same way? Or did they each have their own

peculiarities, which made the events as distinct as they were memorable? So it is with the faces of our clan.

### Plans for the Giovanni

Let's allow the Giovanni the numbers and the leadership role. They've held it for this long, why change now? But just as we put down roots in foreign domains and counsel Princes and Barons, we counsel our new Giovanni friends. We whisper words in their ears.

I cannot guarantee the status quo will remain as such for long, but what I can say is I've never anticipated such a productive future for our clan as I do tonight. "Productive" may not sound glamorous to one such as yourself, but what we intend to produce is a world better suited to our kind, and that includes the Giovanni.

We must be careful to not fall into open war with ourselves so soon after cessation of hostilities. All childer must be educated that no matter what they might hear from their elders, they are not to attempt clandestine murders on another Hecata's behalf. That is not how one achieves status within this clan. I understand Venice intends to mandate that killing on behalf of another Hecata will soon result in torpor or final death, and that if a vampire of this clan truly does have a seething grudge in need of settling with violence, they must be prepared to wield the blade, gun, or torch themself. It's an effective way of preventing clan disunity, and surprisingly it was a Harbinger who proposed this in-clan law.

### Plans for the Samedi

Our relationship with the Samedi is a curious one, as depending on whom one might ask, they are vampires who fled the Feast of Folly, thereby making them close kin to the Harbingers; vampires who fled the Giovanni purge, likewise creating common cause; vampires native to the Caribbean and Central America, with an unknown lineage; aberrant descendants of Clan Nosferatu — which I know is a long-shot, but many believe it; or not even vampires but corpses with spectres propping them up.

As scholars of death we wish to study the Samedi, but as they possess the ability to reason and say "no," they tend to resent being poked and examined. Due to their centuries-long agreement of peace with the Giovanni and all Kindred sects, while acting as effective mercenaries, they may well be pioneers of the Hecata way. They didn't become so obsessed with vengeance or greed as the Cappadocians, Harbingers, and Giovanni, and instead pursued a way that strengthened their line and their studies.

They must be respected, and it is to be expected that they maintain their mysteries, just as we do ours, and the Giovanni do theirs. I recommend befriending one of these rotting bodies, however, as loyalty to coterie tends to trump loyalty to bloodline, even among the Hecata.

## Hierarchy and Strains

We adopt much the same family hierarchy as exists within the Giovanni, it should be noted. We always called Cappadocius "Father," and many Harbingers (and those still clinging to the Cappadocian name) use Latin or Ancient Greek terms, such as soror, pater, avus, and so forth. The religion to which I proudly subscribe makes similar use of the ancient tongue, and it also confuses the kine. Dead languages suit the Clan of Death, after all. We don masks for Harbinger-exclusive ceremonies, with more elaborate masks being awarded to Kindred of significant status,

while fledglings wear simple death masks. It's a funny form of pageantry, but it's one of our oldest customs.

Our reliance on old parlance, rituals, and frankly the majority of our bloodline being considerably older than those of most clans, strains the first few months or years of a Harbinger's vampiric existence. It's one thing to have a sire who barely knows what the internet is, it's another to have one who's still amazed at the concept of steam power.

Despite the earlier mentioned close bonds between sires and childer, I do wonder at the break that might occur soon, if our elders can't keep up with modernity or if more childer are not created to form kin for our fledglings. In the meantime, we pair our newcomers with young Giovanni and Samedi, and sometimes with vampires of the Lamiae or even the Nagaraja. There is something to be said for communal suffering and trauma creating a firm bond between victims. Individuals who were mortals last week and have now been told "you're undead and can manipulate death with your fingertips" struggle, when not paired with fellows who received the same lecture.

# The Samedi Role

*As explained by Lenelle, Mambo of Birmingham*

Ignore the chatter about "three faces of death," mate. That's just a neat and tidy way of cutting out all the other faces. You'll have read more than three names, but it's the bosses who want you to think there are only three in charge. Giovanni. Harbingers. Samedi. Look, I ain't arguing that it's a plum position to be in the big three, but let's get real: the Hecata's one big stew, and at any time, a different face of death could rise to the surface.

## Setting Down Religion

If you have to stick with the trinity, because we know humans and loa both love putting things in threes, let's say the Giovanni are the heart, the Harbingers are the skeleton, and the Samedi are the spirit. Hell, they'd probably shift it all around if they could, but sticking us with religion makes sense.

The Giovanni are sacrilegious, holy icon-fucking bastards who will fold into whichever faith gives them the greatest access to spirits and bodies. They're the heart because they're defiant, ballsy, and willing to do anything to get what they want.

The Harbingers, or Cappadocians, if you want, are pretty irreligious too. Oh, you probably heard about the ones who didn't believe in God getting sealed up in a cave? I bet you £10 you don't even know which God. Neither did they. They were less likely to abuse religion than the Venetians, but more likely to shift with the winds and support the faith that most appealed to them at any given time. Whichever one offered their precious answers.

Now you come to us. Samedi. Vodun. Vodou. Voodoo, if you've been watching too many movies. We're about more than just dolls with pins in them, and face paint come time for a parade. But what we do have, is a deep-rooted faith. We believe in the loa. The loa speak to us. We've believed in them for centuries, and yes, it's all married to the Catholics, but we can see what awaits vampires on the other side. We *know* what's waiting for us in the Underworld. The loa help protect us in exchange for sacrifices, partly because they want the rich tidings we send their way, partly because we're the only vampires who talk to them regularly, and also, I suspect, because they know what shit awaits us when we die.

While the Giovanni and the Harbingers campaign for the end of the world (or at least it seems that way), we're laying down honest to goodness faith for our childer. We teach them to respect death and the dead, to always placate the spirits with gifts and occasionally blood sacrifice, and to fear the retribution of those you kill. As vampires, we stand to make a lot of angry spirits. The loa offer us some protection, but it's better to win their support than piss them off with one drained vessel after another.

I'm happy to say that many of our clanmates among the Hecata have adopted our practices in recent years. I suspect pragmatism drives them to it more than any pure belief, but I'm not complaining and neither are the loa. They don't grow in power through faith alone: they want relics from our world passed through to theirs. In return, our existences become a lot easier.

## Religious Practice

We Samedi have a few rites we practice with regularity. Trust me: doing these will make your unlives better, the dead happier, and might even draw some vessels to you when they think you're fun or mystical or whatever.

### Sacrifice

Killing animals, drinking their blood, then cooking their meat for sustenance is common among our mortal servants. Some of us can obviously indulge in animal blood, if we're new to this undeath, while others make the sacrifice more… bipedal and sapient. Needless to say, making a murder of anything into a ritual, where you celebrate the meaning and importance of its death and dedicate its passing to another force, always goes down well with the loa.

### Veves

This is a rite I recommend all Samedi practice, as well as our brothers and sisters among the Hecata. Veves are inscriptions, sometimes called holy symbols, wards, summoning signs, or other carvings of importance to the dead. You mark them on your floor or your wall in the correct colors, materials, and depth, and the loa you're calling will enter your body and take a ride for a while. Seems simple, but make sure you've placated this spirit first. You're not going to enjoy playing host to an angry Papa Legba, but you might love it if you've shown him some love first.

### Celebration

A lot of folk associate us with some kind of 24-hour party culture, and I can only blame New Orleans for that. A lot of us are a little more introspective than that, and so much of itis blatant commercialism these nights. No, I recommend you celebrate the dead on the regular, but do it in a way that feels important to you. It'll help soothe your soul, and if they're out there and listening, it'll soothe them too. Being dead is no picnic, so to have one of the living or undead singing songs for you, pouring out a drink, or telling tales of your living exploits, makes a friend of someone behind the curtain.

### Service

We exist to serve. This applies to the living and the undead. We owe a hell of a lot to those who passed before us, so when a spirit makes the effort to ask a favor, you damn well better be sure you're going to do it. And turning it down is better than accepting the task and then backing out of the deal. As long as you treat the dead with respect and do as they ask, they'll tell you so

many secrets and come to your aid when you need it the most. Trust me. I didn't become a mambo by pissing the loa off.

## New to the Rot

You're never going to be regarded as much more than a distant cousin to the Giovanni. Yeah, most of you don't come equipped with the necrosis the older Stiffs exhibit, but the beliefs, the long-time removed nature of our line, and the fact our leader, the Baron never kneeled to Augustus or any of the rest of the Venetian Mafia (a ridiculous concept, by the by), makes the Famiglia look at us like we're wild horses ready to bolt or buck at any second.

They're not far off the money. The Harbingers, the Cappadocians, the Giovanni, the Lamiae… they've all been connected like the big incestuous freaks they are since time immemorial. Us? We've always been the outsiders. I guess the Nagaraja are too, but I can count the number of them in the Hecata on my fingers and toes and still have change.

Where does this leave you, new blood? It leaves you serving the valuable purpose of neutrality in times of conflict, of spiritual counsel in times of crisis, and of murder when one of the families is getting out of line. If they wanted to, they could all rise up and crush us. But they don't, because they know this wedge between them is valuable.

But you were just a priest when you were alive, weren't you? Or a therapist, an undertaker, a bodyguard, or a good old-fashioned owner of a curiosity shop. How can you be expected to administer balm to feverish vampires when you're so new to the Blood yourself?

With force of personality, my friend.

We're not "there, there" hand-patters, we're not going to tell them everything's going to be all right, and we're not going to offer them some sublime outcome like the Ministry, Bahari, and the rest of those charlatans do. We tell our charges where they fucked up, then we offer them a way of fixing it. If it requires hot words, we'll speak them. If it requires a new start, we'll arrange it. If it requires a bullet, we'll fire it.

This is who you are now. You're a step closer to death than any other clan, so you can witness it, touch it, wield it. You can face the end with certainty, and make everyone else's denouement so much worse.

Being a Samedi means being on the outside, but it also means surety of purpose and not having to kneel to Venetian or Camarilla pricks.

## Shifting Tides of Necromancy

Reaching into the Underworld and hurling what you grab at an enemy is a good way to lose your hand to the great unknown. Don't do that. The best necromancers take their time to know the world beyond their own.

That raises an interesting topic though. There's lots of shades of necromancy. The Giovanni have always been obsessed with spirits. The Cappadocians of old were more focused on the flesh. The Harbingers had some obsession with making dead bodies take on the traits of the living. We would raise the dead as our servants. Yeah, *Dawn of the Dead* kind of stuff.

Necromancy comes in a ton of flavors, and you're never going to experience them all. With the consolidation of the Hecata though, the different families have taken to sharing a little more than we used to. Now, a Samedi might have a Rosselini as a Mawla. A Harbinger might join the same

coterie as a Milliner. We exchange secrets and suddenly, our clan is stronger. Working together has benefited us! Who'd have thought that possible.

Now, there's some interesting developments in the realm of the so-called "dark arts." We've cultivated a ceremony that allows any Hecata with the right components and tutelage to take on one of the loa. We Samedi are becoming a little more interested in the spirit — as my talk earlier probably implies — than shambling corpses. The Giovanni are all about binding the dead, which greatly piques the Harbingers' interests. Likewise, the Harbingers have taught others how to consume the stuff of ghosts when blood just won't suffice.

Yeah, I can't advocate that one.

My point is, as new schools of thought open to us, our clan changes. And so the merry-go-round goes round and round and up and down, and the Clan of Death becomes something new, and exciting, and dangerous.

Yeah, being undead sucks sometimes. But I'd rather know death personally, than stumble blindly into his grasp some night like an idiot from some other clan.

# The Role of Others

*From the words of Zelda Booke, Lilin of the Lamiae*

You've read the perspectives of members of the Giovanni, Harbingers, and Samedi, and I'm sure you feel at least somewhat educated on the structure of this clan of ours. Giovanni on top directing operations, Harbingers wielding their ancient might and fraying enemies' powerbases, and Samedi on the outside, providing sage counsel and ceremonial wisdom.

Where does that leave the rest of us? Allow me to fill in the blanks.

## The Lamiae

In times past, we were the Clan of Death's bodyguards. None of us male, all of us descended from the vampire Lazarus dubbed "Lamia." Our prestige came through dedication to the clan, its principles, and our discovery of how humours in the blood might affect a vampire drinking them.

Yep, that was our discovery. It's no hollow boast.

In any event, the Giovanni destroyed the last of us several centuries ago. The Lamiae were out of the picture for at least 200 years, maybe longer. It's difficult to tell sometimes, when ancestors pop out of the ground only to be destroyed sooner than they can leave a note to say "hi, I'm here!"

The question is, how are we here now, and what purpose do we serve?

You might say we're proof of the resurrecting power of vitae and Lazarus' beneficence, or his dedication to whatever plans exist in his ancient skull. Before his vanishing (and the Giovanni maintain the Clan of Death does not feel the Beckoning), he Embraced another, a high priestess of the Bahari, and through nuance of the Blood we were born anew. All of her childer were mortal lilin, and all of their childer were likewise, and so on. There aren't many of us at this time, and we're far less inclined to act as unquestioning bodyguards to this clutch of necromancers, but our founder… well, she says she's in communion with the spirit of Lamia herself. In turn, she says Lamia has a purpose for us. We're to strengthen and fight against those who would control us. For now, that does not include the other Hecata, but it does mean we often

act as hired guns for the Hecata against Sheriffs, Archons, Princes, and other assholes with god complexes. You know: The Camarilla.

We're the part of the Clan of Death that emphasizes rebirth. That part of the cycle is important, even if the other necromancers focus too heavily on the death and decay. We have to continue to develop our minds, motives, and activities if we're to avoid stagnation, because trust me, in the locker room with the other members of the squad, the stink of rot is bloody overpowering.

I suspect one part of the Clan of Death needs to make common cause with the Anarchs, or House Carna, and I can't imagine a better faction than our own to do the job. We've many things in common with both groups, and a union of Anarchs, House Carna, the Lamiae, and the Bahari, with the Hecata profiting sounds like it may suit Lazarus' goals too.

## The Cappadocians

The Harbingers would have you believe that they represent all Cappadocians and that the Clan of Death we once knew has changed nameplates or merged with their political, formerly Sabbat brethren. This ain't the case. I mean, not entirely.

Cappadocians separate from the Harbingers still exist. Studious, morbid vampires, rarely bothering to use the Blush of Life to even imitate mortality, I wonder at how long these Kindred can survive in these modern nights. I believe when the Hecata formed, some benevolent-feeling Harbingers and Giovanni woke these Cappadocians from torpor, hoping to introduce them to a brave new world. Instead, these shell-shocked Graverobbers found a world in which they were forgotten, their name scrubbed from all records, and their methods of necromancy hopelessly outdated.

One could feel pity, or consign them to the fire, but I've got a feeling the entire idea of Cappadocians-as-reclusive-hermits is one hell of a good con. These vampires have lost none of their intellect, their skill in meddling with the Underworld and turning living flesh into crumbling ash. They're waiting, they're observing, and they're calculating whether to depart the Hecata in favor of the Camarilla or launch a coup against the Giovanni in retribution for centuries of persecution. My spies tell me they're feverishly researching necromantic arts, and they're not inclined to share their results. One informant even believes they're responsible for Augustus' disappearance.

One thing I know for certain, is the Cappadocians who Embrace share the Harbinger devotion to schooling their childer, and it's here that you recognize the fire of passion. These Cappadocians need a cause, a purpose, and following de Camden's lead, some even position themselves in titled roles within the Ivory Tower. Maybe forging their own, separate path is what's best for them.

In the meantime, of the Hecata's lines, the Cappadocians cling pretty closely to the Harbingers. As far as I'm concerned, they're one and the same, and most of my kin agree. They're appearing more and more in Hecata and Camarilla domains, so it'll be interesting to see how their role shakes out.

One thing worth noting: it was a Cappadocian, Serena Praha, who proposed the idea of the Hecata being representative of a cycle, though typically, every bloodline interprets the cycle theory differently. Most — sometimes called "Hecata Truists" — see the Cappadocians as death, the Giovanni as decay, and the Hecata as rebirth. The truists are a pretty firm cult within a cult

and they're the drivers behind a lot of our actions tonight. Others (mostly of my line) say the Lamiae are the rebirth part. Others still — we call them "the eaters" — say the cycle is Cappadocians as feast, Giovanni as promise, Hecata as reunion. Then you've got the real activists called "Hecatites" (I know it's confusing, but that's philosophers for you) who say the Cappadocians somehow represented life, with the Giovanni as death, and the Hecata as rebirth! It's a mess, and if Serena was still around tonight, and not off doing whatever the hell she's doing in Jerusalem, maybe we could ask whether it was a musing or a deep thought on her part. As it is, no Kindred volunteer to go to that part of the world. At least, not right now.

## The Nagaraja

There's not much I can tell you about these flesh-eaters. I'm not even sure they're a part of the Hecata, as they've never shown much of any interest in affiliating with the Clan of Death, beyond the occasional trade of secrets.

What I do know, is the Nagaraja have a greater presence in Asia than they do any other part of the world. Asia is a large continent, of course, but as the Giovanni and Harbingers have struggled to make a foothold in India, China, and Japan, to name but a few great nations, it's pretty common that the Hecata come to blows with these cannibal Kindred when wishing to explore mass grave sites, ancient temples, or even claim territory near hospitals, morgues, and cemeteries — our usual feeding grounds.

Unlike the rest of us who suffer from the agonizing bite, the Nagaraja — who do share our weakness — can't even hide it behind a smile. Some have teeth like those of a shark or alligator, while others have teeth resembling needles. There are many reasons these bogeymen among necromancers are uncommon in Camarilla and Anarch domains, with horrific appearances and a predilection for eating their victims chief among them.

Consider all lines of the Hecata from a mortal perspective. Mortals understand family and hierarchy, so the shock of becoming Giovanni is lessened. Mortals understand plotting and vengeance, so Harbingers are at least somewhat palatable. They understand reverence for the dead and celebration of life, so the Samedi's activities make sense. Then look at the Nagaraja. Which mortal, Embraced into this line, could maintain their human core for long while resembling a dire beast and obliged to devour their victims?

If you are to deal with a Nagaraja, for the love of Lilith take backup. These vampires terrify even the coldest, most iron-willed among us.

## And More Besides

A scholar of Kindred ancestry looks at the Ventrue, hums and haws, fills in some names on a family tree and feels satisfied. That same scholar looks at the Gangrel, realizes there's too many blank spaces to bother, and considers that clan a worthless study group. Then, the scholar moves on to the Hecata.

The scholar has never felt so confused.

Maybe a score of families, not all with the same progenitor, each with different preferences and practices, each with respective feuds. Somehow, the Clan of Death is the one most burgeoning with a form of life. Untangling our roots is an impossible task, so don't bother. My clanmates often say "there are as many clans of death as there are ways to die" and they're correct.

Beyond the ones you've already heard about, there are lines such as the Impundulu and Mla Watu, largely dominant in Sub-Saharan Africa. They're not officially members of the Hecata (not that we have membership cards), but I'm not denying their affinity for death magic.

The Unhudo of South America resemble corpses much like the older Samedi, though theirs is a mummified appearance. Perhaps they're also distant cousins to our clan. They remain common south of Nicaragua, though I've heard of some appearing in Phoenix in Arizona and one acting as a Sheriff in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

I wouldn't be surprised if further faces of death show up periodically, some ancient, some new. There's a delightful irony that perhaps the most fertile of clans is the one so preoccupied with life's end.

# The Family Hierarchy

*"Uncle Ranald, the affairs of the Chamber have kept me long overdue, though I hope I won't miss you at full Council next week. The landscape has changed, as you predicted."*

— Euan Dunsirn to Ranald Dunsirn

Those Kindred who trace their siring back to Clan Giovanni have always existed in a structure all their own and continue to do so. With that in mind, it was natural this system would continue on and become the basis of the nascent Hecata. While the other offshoots of the Clan of Death were far less formally structured, this convocation of clans, this reuniting of the disparate parts of Cappadocius' ancient blood, required something more rigid to hold it together. As the most numerous of the survivors of previous purges of the unworthy from the Clan of Death, it is the structure of Clan Giovanni that was adopted when the agreements were made.

For some of those outside the family, such a change is difficult and seems like an impinging upon their previous freedoms. Though, for many more of their clanmates, the rules and traditions of the Giovanni offered safety and a more elevated lifestyle. For the Giovanni themselves, casting off their previous management is not a call to cast off their traditions; traditions that they hold as dear as the Camarilla holds theirs; traditions based on bonds of blood beyond vampiric vitae, based as much on who gave birth to you as who sired you.

Unlike the Camarilla, the Giovanni family's hierarchy is formalized not by domain and praxis, since they may not be present in every city in a country. It is far more linked to those who wield control of the family's influence in an area. What form that influence takes is dictated by the desires of the Capuchin, the 1444 Chamber and the Council of Anziani. The exact names of the "ranks" are referred to in many ways by the various families and locales in which the Hecata operate. While the Putanesca cling to the terms familiar to their criminal past, such as Don or Soldato, others have their own regional versions and quirks. Above all of that, though, is the more rigid structure of those who fulfill what the clan sees as its true purpose: the study of "The Rot and the Renewal," and the mastery of "the Arts," or necromancy.

## Who's Your Daddy?

Hecata Kindred place a great deal of emphasis on trust and loyalty. After all, when you have as many skeletons in your closet as these depraved vampires, literal skeletons in many cases, it pays to be able to keep secrets. For example, Clan Giovanni is more than just a loose association of Kindred with a common sire whom most of them don't even know. They are a culture, one

steeped in the history and traditions of their bloodlines and of peoples that existed long before many modern nation states, and even before Augustus Giovanni was offered the Embrace.

Those Embraced into the Hecata are often prepared for the event, even if they themselves did not know it. The vampires who grant them the so-called "proxy kiss" of ghouldom, or who actually Embrace them, will often be figures from their past who they have likely been aware of for much of their lives. For that reason, they will often continue to use those familial terms like Mother, Father, Uncle, Aunt, Niece, Nephew and Cousin when referring to one another, since that is what they are to each other.

Childer in Clan Giovanni are extensions not just of their sires, but of the parents who begot them, a quirk some members of the other Hecata bloodlines have begun to adopt themselves. Those born of outsiders, who were not bathed in the culture of the family from birth, whose loyalty and competency is not completely beyond question even before the Embrace, are regularly looked down on in favor of those with more rarefied breeding. Often, they are treated as outliers, relegated to performing menial tasks such as bodyguarding more important Kindred or simply providing a very specific boon to the local family.

## The Families

Originally only Embracing from within the Giovanni family itself, the clan was broadened with the inclusion of many others from near and afar. Their competitors both in mercantile ventures and the pursuit of the dark arts of necromancy, the Rosselini family were brought into the fold in the 16th century, with some even having been Embraced by Cappadocians prior. The Sicilian Putanesca, whose criminal activities lend both muscle and a mafioso mask to the clan's true intentions were added much later. The cannibalistic Dunsirns of Scotland were brought into the clan for their trade links to the New World and their knowledge of the entropic mysticism of the Nagaraja, an Indian bloodline with ties to the Ministry and the Underworld. The clan's arrival in the United States eventually saw the financiers and political legacy of the Rothsteins and the Bostonian Milliners added, and the growth of Kindred influence in the burgeoning superpower has seen those families rise to greater prominence despite their younger membership. Tales from the conquistadors exploring South America told of the walking corpse that was Pochtli and led to the addition of the Pisanob family; expanding into the Far East were the Jesuit Della Passaglias of the earliest trade missions and the dynastic Weng family. In West Africa, the Ghiberti were long-term agents of the Giovanni, brought into play for their long-standing loyalty and the influence they garnered in the continent.

All of these families and more have been blessed with the vitae poured down through the Giovanni family, and each has expanded their influence across the mortal and Kindred world. In these nights, the stranglehold of the Giovanni family has given way to a more mixed leadership at the top of the rotting tree. Indeed, a new wave of families from across the globe are being considered as new additions to the reborn Hecata.

Behind the closed doors of their manor houses and crumbling mausoleums, Giovanni boast of the young girl they have coming up through their ranks. "Why, she's the great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Evangelista diGiovanni! She's been raised from birth to understand her family was different! She's been taught all she needed to be taught to prepare her for this moment! She's going to set the night on fire and bring just the spark the local family is looking for, all she needs is a sponsor to bring her into the fold!"

Like an ancient statesman or merchant family looking to seal a merger or alliance, the Giovanni trade their children to each other for an Embrace that will ratify a pact, and write the blood of their own children on contracts that never end, promising unchecked familial loyalty until the end of the world.

With the addition of their old foes and former clanmates, the Giovanni talk of "expanding the gene pool." Now when people encounter the Clan of Death, it is not just the faces that have changed, taking on an often more hellish and undead façade, but the names. While before some Kindred would have only dealt with a Giovanni or a Rosselini, they will now hear far greater variation. While such change draws questions from observant outsiders, the Hecata are not interested in answering them, especially when a clanmate changes their surname to "Cappadocius" or "di Cappadocian." To the outside world, the Giovanni present a show of unity and continuity. Not only is this the way it is, it is the way it has always been, others simply did not have the wit to notice it.

### Coterie or Family Tree?

While coteries form out of necessity, mutual need or simple safety in numbers, Hecata coteries are often based around years-old friendships and alliances, ties to common sires, grandsires or even more ancient progenitors, or quite literal family ties. With the amount of inbreeding and interbreeding in the Giovanni families, almost any member of the clan is a blood relative to another.

Within the Hecata, the Giovanni are the most populous and prolific of the clans and also those with the most temporal power and wealth. They often act as the glue binding the disparate branches of the Clan of Death together, providing a haven and a mask of legitimacy that hides the terrifying studies and experiments that the members of a coterie conduct within. Members of the Hecata will very rarely seek to align themselves with those outside on a basis other than the purely mercenary. While they may be happy to extend their protection and hospitality to any Kindred they encounter, such services are always for a price and the relationship remains strictly business unless sealed with a Blood Bond to ensure the loyalty of the supplicant. The code of silence, or Omertà, that surrounds the family's practices forbids submitting to Blood Bonds or sharing the deepest secrets of the clan with outsiders.

## Outward Facing Operations

Their position as the only independent clan of note in tonight's Kindred society places the Hecata in a dangerous, yet potentially profitable position. While a portion of the clan faces inward, studying philosophy and ceremonies relating to their death magic, the Underworld, and their unhallowed ancestry, another portion looks outward at the world and takes note of where it can capitalize.

The Hecata are, as well as the Clan of Death, a family of mercenaries. By the Promise of 1528, they cannot officially involve themselves in the Jyhad between sects. Plenty of Necromancers test this, such as Roger de Camden, as Prince of Edinburgh, and Carlotta Rosselini, Baron of Naples, though to date no Giovanni hold such title. With the exceptions aside, the Hecata's neutrality places them in prime position to act as mediators, advisors, and killers, all impartial to the conflicts around them, of course. The only restriction is they may not benefit *politically*. They can, however, benefit monetarily, through favors to be repaid in the future (the Hecata shy away from the formalities of Boons, as these entrench them too deeply in Camarilla society),

with unclaimed territory handed over to them, and through access to artifacts, sites, and people who might further their understanding of more esoteric matters.

The Hecata position makes them an easy target, as they have no official allies within the sects. It might seem strange then, that few coteries receive word from on high to assault the clan's holdings. Neonates may wonder at the "why," given the Necromancers are apparently vulnerable. Mawlas with any wisdom tell them, "Attack an Anarch domain and you'll get pecked at by a few angry, but disparate Brujah and thin-bloods. Attack a Hecata domain and you'll have an entire, united clan bearing down on you for years afterward. Just leave them alone." The Camarilla or the Anarchs could surely crush the Hecata if they could all pull in the same direction for more than a single night, but to date, such a united front seems unlikely. Meanwhile, the Hecata are always primed to fall into lockstep and counter-attack, though such skirmishes are rarely profitable.

Other than working as hired guns and diplomats, the Hecata field a wide array of experts on matters of money, death, and the dead. While the average Hecata knows little of the Underworld or its inhabitants, plenty come from moneyed families and can act as lenders and sponsors for other Kindred activities, whether in the form of a long-term investment or short-term heist with quick returns. Others act as mediums when vampires want to speak with ghosts, enlist the dead as spies, or more rarely, as exorcists when Kindred want to banish a bothersome spirit. Of course, anything a ghost spy sees when in the employ of the Prince goes straight back to the Hecata as well as the domain ruler.

## The Venetian Ladder

*"Our society is not so different from yours. We all want to take that next step. Sometimes it's knowledge, sometimes it's an artifact, a company, something the family needs, sometimes it's just someone who needs to be stepped on."*

— Lia Milliner, Money Launderer for the Boston Hecata

All childer Embraced into the Clan of Death are brought in with one thing in mind: to climb the Venetian Ladder. Only the most long-lived and storied necromancers in the clan may take their place as one of the respected elders, the anziani, whose guidance helps establish the policy of the entire organization. Such Kindred may not even be seen as the "leading" members of the clan in their area by those outside, but those within know the value and respect of Venice is won not with the grandest tithes, but with breakthroughs in the arts.

The doors of the Mausoleum of Venice don't open to just anyone with the right surname. To gain access to the inner sanctum of the Family requires acts of sacrifice and heinous depravity in the name of the greater cause that would shame even the most ardent cultist into fleeing their faith in terror. The Kindred within these walls are cold, callous monsters without exception. While they may present themselves as "refined" or even gregarious and friendly, their goals are always aligned with those of the Hecata in general: to gain increasing influence and power over others, Kindred and kine alike, and to further their understanding and study of the Sudario, or Shroud, and the bizarre dimension beyond, the Shadowlands, the realm of the dead. To these individuals, nothing else matters and any Kindred would be wise to remember this when dealing with those who have climbed to the top of the Hecata's ranks.

Gaining the attention of an anziani is a great boon for any Hecata looking to advance their station within the Clan of Death. However, it comes at a cost. While the missteps, mistakes and failures

of less celebrated Kindred are treated with a sort of benign neglect, those who have shown promise are doubly punished when they fall short of what the clan expects of them. Just as the Cappadocians of old punished their kin by entombing them for centuries, the Giovanni have their own ways of handling failure.

## The Anziani Council

Foremost among the elders of the Clan of Death, the anziani sit in a great conclave within the Mausoleum and there set the policy the whole clan pursues. This gathering of ancient blood once represented those who had contributed the most to the Giovanni family's great plan. It has now become a broader church, incorporating the overall leadership of the entire Hecata family.

The council has many groups within it and small pockets of collective influence, though they are forbidden from working openly against each other. What the Hecata have that other clans lack is a certainty in the unity of their purpose. While they have pursued disparate aims in the past, their ultimate goals were always unified within the teachings of the Clan of Death itself.

Some whisper of the Beckoning and question why so many of the older Kindred within the hallowed halls of their Venetian fortress remain. Is it due to the demise of their Antediluvian? Is it that they are disconnected from the true power that guides the other clans? Some Kindred scholars have speculated that the unification of the Hecata itself seems like a Beckoning of sorts, though others point to the great purges and schisms that have played out throughout the history of the Clan of Death for those who chronicle such dark matters.

Whatever the case, these elders remain undisturbed by the plagues that have beset their contemporaries, and continue to offer guidance to their branches situated around the world. Even the local Dons, whose power and wealth can seem obscene to an outsider, dream of holding a mere fraction of the influence held by the anziani.

## The 1444 Chamber

Among the many groups existing within the Anziani Council, there is one whose membership is prized above all others. Nobody truly knows who the elite Kindred of the clan are, who hold their conclaves in the fabled 1444 Chamber, deep in the heart of the Mausoleum. The members of this group were once esteemed as Augustus' most trusted advisors and the closest to him in necromantic power. Some even say they were his peers or his betters, depending on who you talk to.

In modern nights, the Chamber represents the true leadership of the Clan of Death. It is they who, in frustration with a leader who promised them absolute mastery over two worlds within 500 years, have enacted the great change that brought the legendary Capuchin to the fore and united the Hecata in its newly minted form. It is they who smelled the tide of revolution among the disaffected and disillusioned Dons below, threatening their very own Anarch-style schism.

The members of the Chamber are shrouded in mystery even among anziani. Few have openly spoken to others of their position and those that have, only to their most trusted family members. To ascend to the Chamber is recognition that one is among the most powerful necromancers who ever lived. Many think of them as the Board of Directors. They are the final arbiters of the Chairman's performance.

## The Endless Night

It has been whispered throughout the history of the Clan of Death that they intended to bring some great catastrophe down upon the world and subjugate all their peers. Most Hecata would laugh at such rumors and dismiss them as the paranoid prattle of those who simply do not understand what it is the Hecata do. After all, their goal is simple, to study and understand death. Sure, it's macabre, but is it dangerous to other Kindred? Not especially.

Of course, that is what they would tell you. Indeed, the various branches of the Hecata have hatched various plots to kill or enslave all other Kindred, kill themselves, and even kill God. In the realms of doomsday plots, they are past masters. However, the modern Hecata sees such grandiose posturing as merely the rantings of a few mad-eyed elders with deity complexes. If there is an "Endless Night" to be achieved in these nights, it is simply the continuity of the Clan of Death's original purpose. Understanding death, life and what passes between those two states is not just a voyage in pursuit of power, wealth and influence, it is a voyage of self-discovery for a Kindred. Hecata know the answers to questions that plague all Kindred. Those with the stomach to look deeper soon learn, their lavish lifestyles and ghastly, death's-head visages are merely masks behind which a truth is hidden. The Hecata are a cult of death and undeath.

The Hecata do not simply watch the dead and dying or fuck lifeless corpses with organs that no longer function. They worship death as a concept, they praise it as the ultimate reality. Through ritual and their Discipline of Oblivion, the Hecata have peered into the futures of countless lives, even their own, and they claim they have seen an end. What many of them want, including the Chamber, is to witness the ending of the world and the death of a universe, and what they believe to be its perfect rebirth as the precursor to aeons-long decay. They want to experience the ultimate expression of the infinite cycle of life as no mortal can.

To do so, they must traverse every night until then in an endless cycle of morbid survival that can only be halted by the termination of existence itself. The Hecata are pursuing the Endless Night. The Hecata are the Endless Night. Ironic, since it is only their most wise and powerful members who truly feel the end coming and rejoice that in the immortal span of a Kindred existence, that moment of their becoming one with the death of all is only a stone's throw away.

### Perspectives on Kindred Religions

As the Clan of Death is itself a cult, its members have a unique perspective on the many spiritual movements that have sprung up as the modern nights have progressed. These fictions that less enlightened minds cling to in order to justify what they are, what they are becoming, and the bizarre and terrible acts they perform are always of great amusement to the Hecata. The clan's members love nothing more than to hear tell of the latest preachings of the new Kindred messiah or hear what some methuselah is saying to stop his own clan from gathering together to do unto him what they have done to each great leader that thought they could personify their followers' entire being.

Followers of cults concerned with a prophesied doomsday or apocalypse event are of particular interest to the Clan of Death. Records of such movements are highly prized by the anziani and they look kindly on those members who procure this information for them.

## A Unique Cult

The entire Hecata clan is built like a cult, though unlike most religions, most of its adherents don't realize they're worshipers, and worshipers of one of the largest ancestor and death cults in the world at that. The Hecata teaches its clan members to respect their elders, so one day they too

might be worthy of respect and reverence. This isn't so different from the Camarilla's way of dangling bait above its neonates' heads, except the elders in the Hecata are often blood relatives, or have direct influence over the lower level cultists, who happen to be their descendants via vitae. The path to power is clearer within the Hecata, or at least the backs one needs to scratch are highly visible.

A vampire doesn't choose to join the Hecata. This isn't a religion Kindred adopt based on the appeal of doctrine or reward. The family chooses the cultists, rather than the other way around. A vampire — or indeed, a mortal — within the Hecata gains a family so tightly bound that they'd kill to protect their own, and interrogate the attacker's corpse to find out who hired them. The vampire gains access to knowledge forbidden or unknown among most clans, but most importantly, gains purpose in unlife. The clan seeks power in many forms, whether through wealth, influence, spreading the family line, the dark arts, or simple understanding. Depending on a Hecata's area of expertise, they might find any of these avenues open to them, and often have a Mawla to guide them to the path, if not down it.

Of course, the Hecata comes with its share of drawbacks. Just as the family is protective, it's obsessive about not letting its children fly the coop. Hecata cannot just leave the clan and join a sect like the Anarchs. Even those rare Hecata with titles outside the clan are reporting back to the family or serving their Blood in some way. Betraying the clan in any way is a death sentence for most Kindred. Exile is never an option, as the Hecata's secretive nature would not see the benefit of releasing a vampire or calling them Caitiff. When assessing one's place within the Hecata, it's the old decision of security versus liberty. If the first one is more important to the respective vampire, then they might feel at home among their kin. If they desire freedom more than anything else, they might enjoy it when working as envoy to a Camarilla domain or explorer in distant lands, seeking a necromantic relic of some description, but eventually they always have to come back and report to mommy and daddy. Freedom is an illusion the clan extends only as much as is useful.

## Hecata Chronicles

As with any clan, the variety of stories available to players of Hecata vampires is vast, though due to the clan's structure, sometimes these tales work best when all players take on the role of a Hecata — whether all members of the same line, or a mixed coterie containing a Harbinger, Giovanni, and Samedi, for instance. This is not a limitation, but an opportunity to explore the importance of lineage in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, among many other themes and concepts. Story types might include:

- A story in which the coterie hunts down an artifact significant to the clan, or a dead individual of importance.
- The experimentation and mastery of new Oblivion Ceremonies, in the fringe territories of an Anarch domain.
- The unearthing of a Hecata ancestor, who is unfamiliar with the clan's new structure.
- A chronicle starting with a Prince's promise to the coterie that they may claim part of the city as neutral domain if they perform one service to the Camarilla.
- An exploration of a forgotten branch of the family, consisting entirely of black sheep the Hecata wish to forget.

- The enrichment and growth of Hecata territory in a domain, in which the coterie need to involve themselves in seizing influence over the city's crime, finance, and dead.
- The important role of grooming mortals for Hecata sires not in the coterie.
- A story where the coterie must investigate and put down a suspected rebellion within the family.
- Keeping the clan's mortal connections and relations in the dark as to the "family business" while still keeping them close enough should they be selected for the eventual Embrace.
- Visiting punishment on an entitled Camarilla coterie who saw fit to assault some young Hecata, due to their fear of getting involved in the sectarian Jyhad.
- Brokering peace between Camarilla and Anarch war parties, while still trying to turn a profit for the clan.
- Assassinating the Prince's ghoul so accomplished Necromancers within the clan might interrogate their spirit for secrets.

The Hecata also work well in a coterie containing Kindred from other clans. Contrary to appearances the Hecata like to maintain, they are not entirely insular and incestuous. To profit from the world, they must branch out, interact with other vampires, and make themselves useful in any domain. Stories involving the Hecata in these roles might include:

- Working as hired guns to eliminate the enemies of a Baron who frequently hires the coterie.
- Extending a service to a mostly Camarilla coterie, in exchange for future favors due to the family.
- Simple companionship outside clan lines, maybe forged while still mortal or rank fledglings, or directed by a Mawla within the Hecata.
- An undercover operation where the clan has permitted the Hecata Kindred to act in furtherance of a Prince or Baron's interests, so long as they don't reveal their actual clan.
- Finding common cause with another cult group, as both of you desire the truth behind some Noddist mysteries concerning your clan and others.
- Digging through the wreckage of a fallen Sabbat domain with Camarilla vampires, under the agreement that whatever each of you finds belongs to you.
- Offering protection to the mortal contacts and companions of Anarch vampires, when the strict Baron told their followers they needed to let these kine go.
- Using your ostensible neutrality to assist Anarchs in planting a bomb in a Camarilla domain. A hefty payment is of course required.
- Working with Camarilla Kindred and telling your Hecata Mawla "you're trying to find out the sect's secrets," when really you just enjoy their company.
- Offering to defect to a sect or other cult and provide Hecata secrets, but only if they serve you in some way first.

- Befriending vampires of another group to gain a greater understanding of the Jyhad and the wars between sects.
- Volunteering to assist in "Second Inquisition proofing" a Camarilla domain, to protect their interests and your own.

# New Coterie Types

As the only clan independent of the sects, the Hecata often form their own kinds of coterie. Though they're perfectly capable of blending in with Camarilla and Anarch groups, many vampires in the Clan of Death prefer to stick to their own.

## Family

*"No matter how much I hate you right now, you're my brother, and nobody does that to you."*

The family coterie is one of reliance, connection, and support networks. Vampires within this coterie may be related in a mortal sense as well as through the Blood, and they likely recruit mortal members of their extended families to assist them in their plans.

- **Domain:** Chasse (•), Lien (•), Portillon (•••)
- **Ally:** (•) (a connected mortal family member)
- **Contacts:** (••) (family, extended family)
- **Resources:** (••) (cash and assets on loan from the family)
- **Enemies:** (••) (one or more mortals who oppose the family business)

**Possible extras:** Herd (extended family members), Influence (family business), Mawla (vampire within the same family), Retainers (a family ghoul), Fame Flaw: Dark Secret (family criminal connections)

## Gatekeepers

*"Our friends straddle the boundary between life and death."*

The gatekeepers coterie utilize their skills in communion with (and potentially control over) the dead to establish a type of coterie common among the Hecata and other Oblivion users, providing spiritual aid and counseling to some, spectral assaults and sabotage against others. They are prestigious users of animated corpses and ghosts as servants.

- **Domain:** Chasse (••), Lien (•), Portillon (•)
- **Contacts:** (••) (graverobbers, morticians)
- **Resources:** (•••) (stolen from the dead)
- **Retainers:** (•••) (a wraith servant and spy)
- **Enemies:** (••) (a vampire hunter who recognizes the coterie dealing with the dead)
- **Status Flaw:** (•) Notorious (dealings with dark entities)

**Possible extras:** Mawla (accomplished necromancer)

# New Predator Types

The Hecata have their preferred ways of feeding, passed down from sire to childe. With their Bane (see p. XX) preventing an enjoyable Kiss, the Clan of Death are forced to find other methods of extracting blood. While some become baggers (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 176), other predators arise among the Necromancers.

## Extortionist

The extortionist likes to force their victims to bleed for them. Ostensibly, the extortionist acquires blood in exchange for services such as security or surveillance, but as many times as the need for protection is real, it is just as often a fiction engineered to make the deal feel acceptable.

- Add a specialty: Intimidation (Coercion) or Larceny (Security)
- Gain one dot of Dominate or Potence
- Spend three dots between the Contacts and Resources Backgrounds
- Gain the Enemy Flaw: (••) The police or a victim who escaped your extortion and now wants revenge

## Graverobber

Graverobbers often feed from fresh corpses, but despite their name, they prefer feeding from mourners in cemeteries and sad, frightened visitors and patients in hospitals. Melancholic Resonance in a victim's blood appeals more than any other humour. This predator type often requires the vampire to hold a haven in or connections to a church, hospital, or morgue.

- Add a specialty: Occult (Grave Rituals) or Medicine (Cadavers)
- Gain one dot of Fortitude or Oblivion
- Gain the Feeding Merit: (•••) Iron Gullet
- Gain the Haven Advantage: (•)
- Gain the Herd Flaw: (••) Obvious Predator (your cold nature makes you act in a deeply unsettling matter when hunting)

# Mortal Cults

*"As a boy you burned ants with a magnifying glass and stomped on snails, yes? This is how you should now think of the kine. They are pests, curiosities, and distractions."*

— Mason Ha of Clan Tremere to his new childe Joseph Dominguez

Humans have long sought the comfort of religion in the wake of death, and the newly Embraced are no different. Their catastrophic change in condition leads many a young lick to question the beliefs they held in life, and reach for new answers to provide solace and direction. When other Kindred can't provide camaraderie in shared belief, the kine will do in their place, and the power of the vitae in their veins makes amassing followers a simple task for many a young, spiritually syncretic vampire. These heterodox groups can be nihilistic or joyful, cruel or cooperative, but beneath even the kindest vampire-led religions the Beast is waiting, ever hungry for the congregation's life-giving blood.

To some Kindred, religion is more tool than calling. Many spiritual belief systems have promised what they themselves already have: life beyond death, reincarnation, immunity to the ravages of time. The more direct Disciplines can be dressed up to look like miracles, proof of a connection to a higher power or an enlightened state of being. Subtler arts like Presence sway a crowd regardless of proof. To an enterprising lick, creating a cult of adoring human worshipers looks almost too easy: make up some sermons, use a dose of vitae, and desperately hope your elders and betters don't kill you on the spot for breaching the Masquerade. It's only that last caveat that prevents vampire cults from proliferating out of control.

Finally, the Kindred aren't the only ones who have discovered the utility of faith. The first Inquisition was founded within a religion, one that kept its followers zealous in their task. While the modern intelligence agencies of the Second Inquisition prefer to skirt the issue of the supernatural, shrouding every phenomenon in science on their official reports, cults can be a useful tool in the war against the blankbodies. Whether they're turning existing groups into deniable assets, tracking vampires through their human followers, or creating entirely new cults, the Second Inquisition is well versed in using people's faith to serve their own ends.

# The House of Anteros

*"There's no force in this world more powerful than true, radical, selfless love."*

— The Eaden Family

The House of Anteros advertises itself as a "self-help group phenomenon," and offers free seminars and paid workshops on their radical philosophy. Followers are taught that love is the key to happiness, and that true love is completely selfless. Beautiful retreats, healthy food, and simple spiritual ceremonies make learning about love enjoyable, and initiates are given ample praise and a strong sense of community from existing members. As recruits are drawn deeper into the philosophy, the community becomes more and more encompassing. Members are encouraged to hand themselves over completely to the House, forfeiting personal possessions, identity, and eventually the very blood within their veins.

## History

Virginia and Leonard Eaden were both born in the 1910s. They grew up together, fell in love together, and died together, Embraced on the same night by members of the same coterie after short mortal lives full of dancing and saloons. Officially bowing to the local Camarilla, the two young licks stayed out of politics, preferring each other's company to the complex treacheries of the court. This reclusive behavior was as much necessity as choice: the two vampires formed a mutual Blood Bond almost immediately, and they were proud of it. Lacking understanding from their fellow Kindred, they sought like-minded souls among the kine instead. By the 1960s, they had established themselves in a small domain, and began building a herd for indefinite sufficiency without needing to involve themselves in Elysium's games.

The House of Anteros was founded on Virginia and Leonard's personal spiritual beliefs, though both would admit to having dressed up the truth to make it more palatable to prospective members. In the 1960s, they used the language of free love and peace, giving their followers flyers to hand out at concerts and nightclubs. Free "sharing circles" run out of cheap rented spaces within the vampires' domain let them solidify a group of kine followers who could serve as both food and messengers, bringing their doctrine of love across vampiric borders.

In the '90s, the House of Anteros evolved to target unfulfilled white-collar workers, nihilistic college students, and bored couples, advertising on the early internet and through word-of-mouth. Having fully embraced technology, Virginia and Leonard are always looking for new ways to grow and change with the times, making the House of Anteros stronger and more flexible with every passing decade.

## Doctrine

Love is everything: power, happiness, and spiritual enlightenment all rolled into one. Learning how to love properly is the most important thing anyone can do with their life. Love is also a sort of divine force, not quite a god but often spoken of in similar terms.

The truest love is the most selfless, the most freely shared, the most devoted. You must be willing to do anything for the one you love, leaving all your own wants and needs behind, to make the world and the lives of others better. Love that is in any way limited or conditional is, at best, a pale shadow of the real thing, so share it. At worst, inhibited love makes a mockery of the term, and isn't really love at all.

The Blood Bond is the truest form of love in existence, perfect selfless devotion enforced by spiritual power that makes it unbreakable, and thus stronger and better than mortal love. To be part of a one-sided Blood Bond is a wonderful thing, to be part of a mutual Blood Bond is a state of virtue that cannot be equaled.

Love conquers all. Failure, illness, and unhappiness stem from an inability to love completely. Perceived failure from someone in a mutual Blood Bond must be victory in disguise.

### What is Love?

The House of Anteros sends a mixed message regarding love, preaching freedom to love whom one wishes, while advocating for true love, devotion, and servitude through love. They praise monogamous as well as polyamorous relationships. They treasure intimate unions between two individuals and revel in wild orgies. As more than one cultist has asked the Eadens, "what is love?"

The truth is impossible to define, and the Eadens know it. They tailor their message to their followers, but they really do believe their own tract, citing how love is different for all but the constants show that love emboldens, empowers, and triumphs. The meaning of love may vary from person to person, but so long as a cultist carries love in their heart and openly shows it, they're welcome to participate in cult practices.

## Activities

The House of Anteros has branches in Chicago, St. Louis, Phoenix, Houston, New York, and Salt Lake City, five of which are staffed entirely by mortal followers. These distant offices focus on earning money from expensive weekend "wellness retreats," funneling profits back to headquarters at the Anteros mansion, a huge suburban complex in Arizona with several buildings located in the middle of the Eadens' domain. Retreats, and the group's general philosophy, are advertised at free seminars open to the public; most hosted by senior members, with the Eadens going on tour once a year to speak in person across the country. Most House events are held in rented auditoriums or campgrounds, but the group owns two retreat properties outright: one in the Midwest and one near the US-Mexico border.

Most people leave an Anteros workshop, either rejuvenated or ripped-off, and return to their daily lives, but a few come back again and again. These regulars are nudged toward meeting the Eadens in person, and encouraged to drop all their external ties and move into the communal mansion property. Houses and cars are sold, and money is moved into the House's bank accounts, an act of selfless, trusting love that pushes acolytes further toward enlightenment. Recruits who hesitate or refuse aren't pushed or punished, just quietly ostracized by House friends who are disappointed at their lack of selflessness. The House claims to want love that's freely given, but the Eadens expect more than just affection if they're providing protection and homes to their lovers.

Those who accept are introduced to the idea of blood drinking slowly and carefully, first through bloodletting rituals held between mortal members. Offering your blood to another is discussed as another way to devote yourself to them completely, and acolytes living at the mansion are encouraged to make small cuts on their arms to be licked clean by other followers, who will offer blood in exchange. Only one among a number of rituals that the outside world would deem distasteful, few acolytes even think about vampire myths when participating, even when presented to the Eadens for the first time. Members practice blood-sharing for decades before they learn about the Eadens true immortal nature, by then a glorious extension to everything they've already internalized.

Barring emergencies, the Eadens feed only in their main house, well within the official domain as granted by the Camarilla. They've also negotiated for feeding rights at the House's two campgrounds: they are off-limits to other Kindred, in exchange for a few won't-be-missed attendees getting plucked off and delivered to local Princes by the senior members hosting retreats. Disowned college students, down-on-their-luck unemployed singles, and people struggling with mental health are targeted for these disappearances, with House money used to cover them up and bribe local authorities into keeping the camps' reputations untainted.

## Future Plans

More than power, wealth, or even stability, the Eadens crave family. The House of Anteros isn't just their belief system and their herd, it's a method of searching for someone who shares their

values, who can understand love on the same level that they do. Both vampires hope dearly to find such an individual and turn their paired bond into a three-way partnership, each Kindred bonded to the others. From there, they could become a quartet, and so on, spinning an ever-wider web of perfect, immortal love. They've had dozens of potential candidates over the years, but none who have lived up to the couple's zealous scrutiny and obsessive need for perfect adoration. A third member of the Eaden family would share in every aspect of the House's business, with full access to its bank accounts and larders.

In the meantime, the cult continues to expand. Though the Eadens have all the blood and money they need for a comfortable eternity, the House of Anteros is a true religious mission. Inserting themselves into more cities is a top priority, even if over-extension means increasing the risk of discovery. Two more facilities are planned in smaller North American cities, one in a city that has recently fallen to the Anarchs. The Eadens are also planning a trip to Europe, hoping to scout out a new location and handle the associated Camarilla politics in person. They're bringing a small army of followers with them: ghouls and blood-slaves to provide comfort, protection, and potential bribes to those they seek to court.

## Annabelle Jones

Annabelle joined the cult after her messy divorce. Once a fierce corporate lawyer, she now uses her law degree to protect the House's interests. She fell in love with the feeling of being utterly worshiped, but had a hard time understanding the joy of selfless giving until her first experience with the Kiss. Now she's hooked, but quietly frustrated that neither of the Eadens will share their blood with her in return.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 4, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Drive 4; Insight 5, Persuasion 7; Finance 6

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Jacob Wrightson

Jacob looks incredible for a man of sixty-five, since he's been a ghoul for the last twenty years. A top international recruiter, he runs seminars around the world and occasionally plays interference for the Eaden couple in Kindred society. More interested in free love than true love, his high position in the House is due to hard work and natural charisma, not any deep faith in the group's beliefs. The more he learns about wider vampire society, the more he yearns to be Embraced himself, but knows his current masters are unlikely to grant him that privilege.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 5, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Etiquette 6, Leadership 6; Finance 4, Politics 5

**Disciplines:** Presence 1

**General Difficulties:** 3/1

## Alyson King

Alyson has only been with the group for a year and a half, but she's already been introduced to the blood rites and spends hours most days alone with the Eadens. She's a true believer, young

and optimistic, and a promising candidate for induction into the House's highest circles. Her worried parents have contacted the authorities over her apparent cult brainwashing, a potential threat to the House if words like "blood" and "immortality" ever make it into the federal investigation reports.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 4, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 4, Willpower 8

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Etiquette 5, Insight 6, Persuasion 5; Academics 4, Occult 4

**General Difficulties:** 3/2

## The Eaden Family

Virginia and Leonard are both Kindred of Clan Ventrue, and have lived lives so intertwined that separating them out into two individuals is nearly impossible. They sleep together, feed together, finish each other's sentences, and come up with the same plans without saying a word. They even look alike: both pale and strong-boned, with jet black hair. In public appearances, they cultivate two identities: the original Eaden couple who founded the House, made up to appear to be in their mid-sixties, and their own now-adult twin children. Both like to present themselves as compassionate and caring people, invested in cooperating with anyone who doesn't actively threaten them or their cult. They might even believe their own line, but they're quick to turn against anyone they perceive might betray their generosity, with or without evidence. Those who know them well might notice that Virginia takes the lead in long-term planning, while Leonard tends to speak first in social situations.

### Virginia Eaden

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Sire:** James Acker

**Embraced:** 1933 (Born 1910)

**Ambition:** Don't let other Kindred discover the cult

**Convictions:** Always defend your loved ones; Never turn down a new experience

**Touchstones:** Andrew Eaden — Virginia's now adult son; Jacob Wrightson — sexually spectacular lover, and her favorite cultist

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 12th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 5; Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 9

**Skills:** Melee 2; Insight 3, Leadership 3, Performance 3, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 3; Academics 4, Awareness 3, Finance 3, Occult 5, Politics (Southwestern United States) 5, Technology 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Dominate 2, Fortitude 1, Presence 3

**General Difficulties:** 5/3

### Leonard Eaden

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Sire:** James Acker

**Embraced:** 1933 (Born 1912)

**Ambition:** Expand the cult to new domains

**Convictions:** Never refuse someone's affections

**Touchstones:** Nadia Eaden — Leonard's now adult daughter

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 12th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 8

**Skills:** Brawl 4; Insight 4, Leadership 5, Performance 4, Persuasion 4, Subterfuge (Cult members) 2; Academics 2, Awareness 3, Finance 1, Occult 3, Politics 2

**Disciplines:** Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Potence 1, Presence 4

**General Difficulties:** 5/3

**Special:** Both the Eadens suffer from a unique Codependency Flaw; when separated, they lose two dice from all actions that don't directly assist them in being reunited. They are both Consensualists and their Ventrue Bane manifests to reinforce this, preventing them from drinking from anyone who doesn't give their blood freely.

## Story Hook: Love in Death

The PCs find the House of Anteros hosting self-help sessions on their territory, but without the presence of the Eadens or any undead involvement. For an enterprising Kindred, the cult presents an opportunity to gain retainers, the procurement of a herd, or — if feeling savage — a one-stop shop for an indulgent night of feeding.

Unless the PCs scare the cult away, they return night after night, drawing a larger and larger crowd mainly consisting of single individuals on low income, who all leave feeling happier. The House acts as a form of Resonance alteration chamber, shifting the melancholic into the sanguine.

The further the PCs probe into the House of Anteros' activities, the more likely it is the Eadens will take notice and take action. If the characters have been respectful and show interest in the group's message, the Eadens may attempt to lure the vampires further into the cult. If they've been nothing but predatory, the Eadens will not stop in their attempts at visiting vengeance on their cultists' abusers.

**[LAYOUT: PAMPHLET]**

## Do you HATE yourself?

Many of us do. Life is hard, you don't earn enough, and you've just seen another relationship fail. You blame yourself. So many of us blame ourselves.

**We** have the answers. This isn't a scheme you have to pay into. This isn't therapy. It isn't religion. What we offer is an ear for your problems, understanding, and acceptance. We've all been where you've been. It might not comfort you to know it yet, but we promise you, none of us hate ourselves now.

Come by Starlin's Gymnasium on 33rd Avenue on Tuesday 3rd and we'll teach you the first steps toward stopping the hate and starting to love yourself. If it doesn't work out, we promise, you will never hear from us again.

But it will work out. You have our word.

**The House**

**[/PAMPHLET ENDS]**

# The Church of Means

> *"Do you believe in a higher power? Is your faith strong enough to put it all in His hands? Then you might be destined for RICHNESS ON THIS EARTH. Ask us how to become one of the prosperous, and LIVE FOREVER as a MILLIONAIRE."*

Only a few years old, the Church of Means is reaching an international audience through live internet broadcasts, a strong focus on proselytizing to friends and family, and the inhuman charisma of leader Joseph Dominguez. Presenting itself as a "nondenominational understanding of the divine and its plan for humankind," the Church's doctrine places a strong emphasis on the happiness derived from material wealth. Of course, to make money you have to spend money: new converts are expected to buy into the church, paying for pamphlets and workshops and proprietary devotional symbols. Successful recruiters take home a share of the proceeds generated by those they register, a pyramid scheme gilded in faith. Slowly numbed to the atrocity of conning desperate people out of their money, top earners are encouraged to commit greater crimes, eventually luring people to the Church's lavish enclaves as slaves and blood dolls. Eternal life, presented to recruits as a metaphor for success, is eventually revealed as the ultimate reward for those who serve the leader best, though their eternity as ghouls gives their master one more string on his leash of control.

## History

Joseph Dominguez was a young vampire with a low generation and high ambitions. Not yet dead fifty years before his sire was called to the Gehenna War, he was left in a very unpleasant position in Kindred society: too potent to be ignored, but too disposable to stay out of the cross-hairs of his sire's enemies. He needed to find a way to protect himself, make himself invaluable, and quickly.

He found it in his voice, his sire's accumulated wealth, and his old life's history in advertising. With charisma, good business sense, and a thorough understanding of human nature, he began the Church as a means of assembling a loyal herd and a vast fortune as quickly as possible. The judicious application of Presence made finding converts easy, the trick was keeping things subtle enough to avoid breaching the Masquerade. Joseph copied heavily from the doctrines of kine

churches and cults while creating his own, hiding himself in plain sight as just another fringe inspirational speaker. He used his seed money to hire a team of human assistants, including a convincing body double for daytime appearances, and let natural human greed replace the use of disciplines in almost every recruitment event. In many ways, the Church of Means was barely a vampire cult at all, though hints of Joseph's personal beliefs about immortality inevitably colored the doctrines he wrote.

The Church of Means prospered quickly. Members were split evenly between those who were emotionally and spiritually moved by Joseph's doctrine, and those who saw the Church as a chance to make money. The most ruthless congregated at the top, earning the title of priest, and forming a powerful and vicious inner circle of ghouls to protect their leader and exemplify the wealth he offered.

## Doctrine

There is a Higher Power, who is conflated with the highest force of every major world religion (the Abrahamic God, the concept of nirvana, the Supreme being, and so on.) This Higher Power is benevolent and wants everyone on Earth to be happy, but He also believes in free will; humans must choose to be happy for the Higher Power to act upon them.

Choosing to be happy involves signing up for the Church of Means and completing the exercises detailed in the books you buy from them; opening yourself to prosperity through meditation, mantras, and the like. After that, the best way you can signal your readiness to be happy is by recruiting others to the Church, sharing the good news. Their attempts to be happy will magnify your own.

Some techniques of the Church are secret, for the safety of the world at large. New initiates aren't spiritually advanced enough to understand everything about how the Higher Power works, and learning about everything the priests do before understanding all the basic material could be harmful to your physical and emotional well-being.

Money can buy happiness, but only if it comes from the will of the Higher Power. If you complete all the exercises correctly and do everything in your power to recruit others, you will become both rich and happy. If you aren't rich and happy, you've done something wrong, and you should return to the Church of Means' teachings and redouble your efforts.

Eternal life will come to those who are open to the Higher Power by way of good luck and medical advances. Though the Higher Power takes care of the faithful in the afterlife, His greatest gift to humanity is their time on Earth, and maximizing that time is what He wants for people.

## Activities

The Church is still expanding rapidly, keeping its operations lean and flexible by renting space and working with third party manufacturers for publication and shipment of their devotional materials. Independent members buy in to become preachers, proselytizing to local crowds around the world from auditoriums, coffee shop open mic nights, dingy apartments, and street corners. Hired risk management staff and programmers work on algorithms to target preachers who are ready to pay more or considering leaving, minimizing drop-outs and maximizing profit per worshiper with an ever-improving blend of hope and pressure. Most invested members of the Church are at or near the poverty line, if not when they start then certainly after a few months of

trying to buy their way up to priesthood. When a priest notices someone at the bottom of the pile has lost the support of all their friends and family after sinking themselves too deeply into the Church, they see an opportunity to pick that won't-be-missed preacher up and quietly deliver them to Dominguez himself, earning further favor.

Like any good pyramid scheme, risk flows downstream and money flows upstream, fueling the decadent lifestyle that the priests live as an example of what adhering to Church doctrine can bring; penthouse apartments and luxury villas, extravagant parties full of beautiful people, fast cars, designer brand clothing, and all the sex and drugs money can buy. Spending money freely isn't just allowed by the church, it's actively encouraged as a way of demonstrating devotion to the Higher Power and giving thanks for the good things with which He has provided you. The Church's website and promotional videos put all these amenities in the spotlight, selling a vision of a bacchanalian heaven on Earth that anyone can be a part of with enough hard work and faith.

New priests are ordained every few months, in an elaborate ceremony broadcast to every member that focuses on their life stories, how they've risen out of nothing and become millionaires through the Church's teachings. The truth about Joseph's vampiric nature comes after the ceremony, once he's sure they're in too deep to run. The revelation gives them a new goal to chase: true immortality and superhuman power, through a taste of their leader's blood. Only the best of the best are granted ghoul status, and those who have achieved it know their domitor can take it away, encouraging competition at every rung of the ladder. At the top, looking down, priests inevitably realize the truth: the only Higher Power granting them happiness is Joseph Dominguez, and everything they've earned will be lost if they turn against him.

Dominguez himself participates in almost none of his supposed luxury life, sending subordinates and body doubles to events where his personal oversight isn't required. With fame and fortune, Dominguez has put himself in the spotlight; he's playing a dangerous game and knows it, so instead of having fun, he's investing in security. Much of this investment goes to paying off the Princes and Barons of the cities where he lives, flitting from one to another to avoid accumulating grudges. So long as he can arrange for an Elysium night full of beautiful snacks and top-of-the-line security, and so long as his mortal fame makes taking him out a potential breach of the Masquerade, Joseph believes himself relatively safe from vampiric retribution. The Second Inquisition is another matter, one he handles through several layers of natural and one layer of supernatural security. Money buys him the best private army, security technology, and bribes to keep the feds away. Meanwhile, he trains his ghouls in secret to fight for his life, quite prepared to feed them to the wolves if he ever needs to get away.

## Future Plans

Joseph Dominguez is beginning to experiment with his power among the Kindred, trading favors here and there to see just how much a young upstart like him can get away with. The old ways are crumbling, and the places at the top of the new order will go to whoever can take them first. Potent blood and low generation were the tools of the old Princes and Barons, but Dominguez is wondering if his hired guns and herd of followers might be even better. All he needs is the right target, a city in the throes of a civil war calling out for a natural leader to take the reins. With all the traveling he does, he's bound to find one sooner or later.

Financially, the cult is looking to diversify. Real estate has been an obvious choice, and Church money has flown into a skyscraper of condominiums aimed at "night-shift workers," with state-

of-the-art UV and light-blocking window controls and facilities that operate on an after-dark schedule. Dominguez is quite interested in backing other vampiric endeavors, bringing start-up money to businesses that can't go to the bank for funding. A small consulting firm of trusted mortal and ghoul cult members can even help older vampires adapt their ideas to the modern world of algorithmic advertising and innovative technology. If his resources help him gain more allies among the Kindred, backing his future bid for power, then all the better.

## Millicent Jarvey

Millicent likes to think of herself as a strong woman who's broken into the boys' club, a role model that other people should follow. She was one of the first to start kidnapping people for Joseph, and alleviates her guilt by imagining they would have done the same to her if they could. She's at the top of the class learning how to use firearms, and expects to lead the team in taking down anyone who threatens their leader, and her immortal life with him.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 4, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Athletics 6, Firearms 7, Melee 6; Intimidation 5, Persuasion 6; Occult 4

**Disciplines:** Celerity 1

**General Difficulties:** 4/1

## Morgan Brant

Morgan joined just a little too late to be a founder, and has regretted it ever since. Now well into his sixties, he bought his way up the ladder with his life savings, chasing dreams of enough money to ensure his children and grandchildren could always afford the best healthcare. The whole family is involved in the Church now, but only Morgan has been made a priest, and thus made aware of the cult's true intentions. He's shown no remorse for the people he's climbed over to succeed, convinced he's doing what's best for his family and that's all that matters. The next step is earning ghoul status for himself, and eventually his descendants, ensuring their prosperity for all eternity.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 2, Social 5, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 7

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Drive 3; Etiquette 6, Persuasion 7; Investigation 5, Politics 6

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Malik Lugo

Malik is the Church's newest priest, the model of a Means success story. Born into poverty, he worked his way into business school, and used what he'd learned there to buy into the cult and recruit through networking and conferences. He thought of the Church as a company like any other, an amoral entity he would work for blamelessly; if what he did was wrong, there would be laws against it. Now that he's found out about the vampire behind the scenes, he's starting to realize what he's gotten himself involved with, but now there's no way out: the cult owns his wealth and reputation, and if he tried to leave he'd surely run afoul in some "unfortunate accident." His plan is to keep in the boss's good books and look for an opportunity to escape without raising any red flags along the way.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Firearms 4, Survival 4; Insight 6, Leadership 6, Persuasion 6; Finance 7

**General Difficulties:** 4/1

## Joseph Dominguez

Joseph is a handsome, athletic Spanish man who looks to be in his mid-forties. He's of Clan Tremere, though not adept at the bloodline's famed sorcery. Ambition and paranoia war within his heart, making him dangerously unpredictable: expanding into new territory one night, retreating to his private penthouse and avoiding all outside contact the next. He speaks with a stammer he's had since childhood.

**Clan:** Tremere

**Sire:** Mason Ha

**Embraced:** 1989 (Born 1962)

**Ambition:** Locate a domain in the throes of civil war

**Convictions:** Never show fear to an aggressor

**Touchstones:** Millicent Jarvey — cultist and adept kidnapper

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 8

**Skills:** Brawl (When Cornered) 2, Firearms 4; Etiquette 4, Insight 2, Leadership 4; Academics (Economic Theory) 2, Awareness 4, Finance 5, Investigation 1, Occult 2, Politics 3, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Presence 2

**General Difficulties:** 6/2

## Story Hook: Financial Drain

Many people show a marked dislike and distrust of the poor, obliging those on low income to take out loans, remortgage the house, and see bankruptcy as a real option, because in truth, there's no other way out. When one of the PCs' Touchstones comes to them, cap in hand, they explain they've lost everything: the job, the house, the savings, even the kid's college fund. At first the Touchstone is reticent to explain why and mutters that it was a gamble. With a push, they admit they invested in a start-up colleagues recommended, led by a city success story named Morgan Brant.

If the PCs show concern toward the Touchstone and help them out of their financial bind, they willingly take the coterie to Brant's building, which has since closed down without leaving a forwarding address. The investigation leads to the truth behind Morgan Brant running a multitude of pyramid schemes throughout the city. If the PCs try to get the police involved, Joseph Dominguez reaches out and explains they're interfering with his influence. He won't offer the return of any lost funds, but will offer them an investment opportunity.

**[LAYOUT: FLYER]**

## Don't Believe Everything You Read

So many people will tell you "this is how you make more money," "this is where to invest your cash," and "trust me with your savings, I'm a banker." Don't believe everything you read or hear. These shysters will rob you blind and leave you destitute. Every recession to date has been the fault of greedy brokers who don't care for their clients' wealth so long as they take home fat bonuses.

Luckily, there's another way.

Since time immemorial, the Church has been a safe pair of hands. The Catholics haven't lined the Vatican with gold because they're poor. In fact, they've been rich for 2000 years. That's longer than any other single group in the world. So, it's time to open the doors and allow people to once again invest in religion.

We are the Church of Means. We emulate the Catholic Church's methods of sponsorship, slow investment, and quick growth. We know we can make your money grow because we've seen our own money grow. Don't believe us? Stop by Campbell & Campbell on Lake at any time between 9am and 8pm, and we'll open our accounts for you.

We won't ask you to trust us with your money. We won't tell you to believe everything you're reading here. We definitely won't ask for thousands of your hard-earned dollars. What we will ask, is you hear us out. Come to Campbell & Campbell, and if you're interested, drop as little as $10 and we'll make your money grow in a week. That's our guarantee, or your $10 bill goes right back in your hand.

We hope to see you there and make you richer.

**[/FLYER ENDS]**

# Leah's Circle

*"Only monsters can give other monsters something to fear. Our dark angel can give you fangs, and together we will take back the night."*

In smoky clubs and dingy theme bars, alt fashion scene kids and occult enthusiasts meet with a purpose: saving the world, one act of vigilante justice at a time. They are creatures of the night, but not of evil, the chosen few empowered to protect the weak and innocent from those who would murder, rob, or violate those who walk the city streets after sunset. At their center is the dark angel Leah, a vampire abandoned by her sire, a blood-drinker with a noble heart.

What no one in Leah's circle knows is just how much they have all come under her thrall. As she feeds her blood to her friends to give them the strength to fight by her side, she's turning them into puppets who can't help but agree with her every plan. While she wrestles with her new

bestial nature, she has unknowingly turned everyone close to her into a blood-slave, and the truth could destroy her carefully manufactured self-image as a righteous, avenging angel of the night.

## History

Born Lilah Hawkins, the young girl who would become Leah was a weird kid. Introverted and philosophical, she started her goth phase young and never looked back, finding peace in the ability to express the darkness she saw in the world through music and fashion. She was never one to seek the spotlight, but people in the local scene saw Lilah as a friendly and helpful pillar of the community, the sort who would welcome in newcomers without passing judgment. She was also quite bright, earning a scholarship to the local university and pursuing a Bachelor of Social Work, hoping that helping others professionally might provide her with a sense of purpose in a world she so often found depressing. She was turned by mistake a year before graduation, by an inexperienced vampire who hadn't sought his Prince's permission, and abandoned as soon as she rose.

Awakening with no idea what had happened to her, Lilah had both the knowledge and the imagination to put two and two together and come up with "vampire." She also knew better than to tell everyone what had happened; if the supernatural was real, but hidden, there must be a good reason for it. But being a vampire felt good, better than anything she'd ever felt before. She finally had the strength to enforce her will upon the world, to make a real difference, and it changed her. Lilah chose the name Leah, angel of the night. She began piecing together a personal mythology through trial-and-error experiments, gut feelings, and a fair dose of pop culture that felt "right" enough it had to be true. A few weeks later, she introduced herself to some of her old friends, explaining what had happened: she was a vampire now, and she planned to use her powers for good, but needed their help to stay connected to humanity and feed without getting someone killed. A few more experiments, non-lethal largely by luck, taught her how she could share a portion of her own power with her friends through letting them drink her blood too.

The group has continued to grow, but slowly, hindered by a healthy sense of paranoia about being discovered. Each new member is vetted carefully over several months, exposed to various vampire media franchises, and questioned about how they might react to meeting a real one. The city's active goth scene provides the circle with natural camouflage, a community of people who see talking about real vampires as only mildly eccentric, a fun game of what-if to pass the time and inspire interesting narratives.

## Doctrine

Vampires are real, natural creatures of the night. Their appetites tempt them toward evil actions, but they are not inherently evil themselves.

Good vampires are natural protectors of humanity, active at night to best defend against wicked people and monsters who would use the cover of darkness to harm the innocent.

Vampires and their friends must remain hidden from the world. Humanity isn't ready to know about their existence, and would react with fear and hostility. Other supernatural forces might also want to hunt any vampires who make themselves known. Exposing a member of the group to outsiders is tantamount to murder.

If you drink the blood of a willing vampire, you become a “half-vampire,” still alive but with some of a full vampire’s power. The effect wears off after a while, so becoming a half-vampire is harmless and completely reversible.

It’s possible to become a vampire by drinking vampire blood while close to death, but only a small percentage of humans are capable of rising again, everyone else simply dies. Leah, a full vampire, is rare and special.

## Activities

Leah’s circle have a mission: protect the city at night from those who would do harm to innocents. Inspired by superheroes and vigilante pop culture vampires, they primarily patrol the clubs and back alleys where their goth scene congregates on Friday and weekend nights, sometimes venturing further afield to known dangerous neighborhoods. Elaborate makeup, outfits, and codenames help them hide their identities, to prevent retaliation and police reports. When they spot someone acting suspiciously, half-vampire circle members decide whether to interfere themselves, or contact Leah for help.

Most of the time, the circle intervenes with a few thrown fists and a demand to get lost and never try something like that again. Repeat offenders, and those the circle have deemed extremely dangerous, are dealt with more permanently by Leah. She hasn’t consciously noticed how all of her half-vampire followers are always willing to help her hide a body, while her human friends are a lot more unsettled, but she’s still taken to keeping the murderous side of her activities away from those who haven’t tasted her blood.

On weeknights, when patrolling isn’t as necessary, the circle meets as friends and to discuss strategy. Leah is always at the group’s heart, adored to the point of near-worship by her ghouls. She’s tried to stay humble, but nearly everyone close to her is supernaturally bound to her will, and she doesn’t even know it. New doctrine is forming among the circle, fed by half-vampire devotion and Leah’s growing ego. It’s only a matter of time before she becomes less of a leader, and more of a god.

## Future Plans

As the group grows, security is becoming more of a concern among Leah and her circle. The group has already gained some notoriety within their community; no one knows exactly who their new “night guardians” are, but the club scene is taking notice of a substantial drop in muggings, sexual assaults, and other violent crimes. Other people, like the local police, are noticing an uptick in missing persons among the career criminals who prey on the drunk and disoriented after the clubs close. This recognition is all the more threatening because Leah knows she’s ignorant of what forces are out to harm her. Do the police know that vampires exist, and do they have agents trained to fight them? If vampires are real, what other monsters are real too? Leah plans to direct resources away from her vigil and toward finding her sire, or anyone else who could help explain how this supernatural world really works.

While Leah is looking for vampires, other vampires are looking for her. The city’s Sheriff has guessed that someone is hunting in the rack without permission, but would rather track down the perpetrator herself before mentioning the matter to the Prince. The sire who abandoned her is now realizing just how stupid it was to leave an illicit childe running free, one who could identify him by description. It’s a big city, and Leah is cautious about where and how she shows her face, but she’s determined enough to make a difference that she is bound to be found eventually.

Whoever finds her first will also have to deal with her circle, an unexpected army of well-equipped ghouls who have devoted themselves to training for a fight against any evil, supernatural or otherwise, that might want to harm their angel of the night.

## Jake “Diabolic” Martins

Jake used to date Leah, back before her death and resurrection. Chronically obsessed with coolness, he’s leveraged this tenuous connection into a position as second in command. Being able to beat people up and get praised for it suits him very well, and Jake lives for his half-vampire life as Diabolic, daydreaming through morning shifts as a line cook. He’s become convinced that he could survive the transformation into a full vampire, and has petitioned Leah to try, but so far she’s been too afraid of failing to grant his request.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 4, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Athletics 6, Brawl 8; Intimidation 5; Investigation 4

**Disciplines:** Potence 1

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Mika Bittermann

Mikah was a friend of Leah’s back in college, a horror and occult movie fan who’d always daydreamed about meeting a real vampire. He’s been acting as the group’s administrator since the beginning, but a childhood accident and amputation left him without a right leg, or much interest in learning how to fight. As one of the only circle members who doesn’t regularly drink Leah’s blood, he’s starting to get worried about how everyone else is starting to act, but isn’t sure how to bring it up with the vampire without upsetting her.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 4, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 4, Willpower 7

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Craft 4; Subterfuge 5; Academics 6, Occult 6, Technology 6

**General Difficulties:** 3/2

## Melissa “Razor” Thomson

Razor has been chasing new thrills since she was a teenager. Drugs and warehouse raves gave way to kickboxing and roller derby as she grew up, finding steady employment as a personal trainer. The rush of endorphins and power that comes from Leah drinking her blood, then offering blood in return, is the best of both worlds, a drug-like high and the adrenaline she needs to feel alive. Razor leads the charge among the half-vampires, the first to get into fights and the one who’s teaching everyone else how to win them.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 6, Social 3, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 7, Survival 7; Intimidation 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

**Disciplines:** Celerity 1

**General Difficulties:** 4/1

## Leah

Leah is too short and freckly to resemble the classic expectation of a vampire, though she does keep her hair dyed raven black and her eyes filled with red contact lenses. She's clanless, not that she knows what a clan or a Caitiff is. A once-shy girl with newfound confidence, she's prone to indecision, and overcompensating when she feels she's made a mistake. She cut off all ties with her family after death, fearing for what they'd think of her, and now couch-surfs with the members of her circle, feeding off their blood and their money to fully immerse herself in her nocturnal life.

**Clan:** Caitiff

**Sire:** Unknown

**Embraced:** 2010 (Born 1991)

**Ambition:** Find my sire

**Convictions:** Always protect the innocent

**Touchstones:** Mikah Bittermann — friend from school and cultist

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 13th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 2; Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 3, Insight 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership (Goth Subculture) 3, Persuasion 3; Academics 2, Awareness 2, Investigation 1, Occult 2, Technology 1

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Potence 1, Protean 1

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Story Hook: Mugging Gone Wrong

In the middle of a chronicle the PCs are pursuing, a ghoul or mortal they've met in the story's course fails to show up to a rendezvous. Investigating why, the PCs discover the individual was hospitalized in the early hours of the morning, apparently mugged. If the PCs visit the individual in hospital, they explain that the muggers started threatening violence if they didn't disassociate from Kindred society. Not fully grasping the situation, the victim told the muggers to "fuck off," at which point the circle beat them severely.

The circle soon shifts their sights to the PCs. They saw their target meeting with the characters and have been following at least one of them back to their haven. The PCs should have the chance to detect they're being followed. If they interrogate their pursuer and find their way back to Leah, the young Caitiff expresses honestly that the mugging went too far, and the circle is mostly interested in protecting the innocent while punishing the wicked. The PCs may see a possibility to influence or punish the hopelessly naïve vampire for her circle's actions.

**[LAYOUT: CHAT LOG]**

**DIABOLIC SIGNED IN**

**Diabolic:** come on come on

**RAZOR SIGNED IN**

**Razor:** Just got your message. What's up?

**Diabolic:** got a bead on a real bad cat who ferries victims to a drinker

**Razor:** Where?

**Diabolic:** often makes the drop off on the park southside near the fountain

**Diabolic:** think we need to teach them the difference between good and bad

**Razor:** Okay have you ran this by Leah?

**Diabolic:** nah going to deal with this ourselves earn our stripes ok?

**Razor:** I don't know. She should be told.

**Diabolic:** come on raz where are your balls??

**Razor:** Yeah yeah. I know. All right. I'll meet you. Where and when.

**Diabolic:** if it's good enough for them the fountain at 4?

**Razor:** 4AM? Fuck off man I'm asleep then.

**Diabolic:** these bastards come out at night come on

**Razor:** No way. Maybe if Leah's there, but 4AM is well past my bedtime.

**Diabolic:** ffs i'll do it myself

**RAZOR SIGNED OUT**

**Diabolic:** pathetic

**DIABOLIC SIGNED OUT**

**[/CHAT LOG ENDS]**

# The Dread Cult of Eligos

*"Blood for Eligos, blood for Eligos, blood for Eligos. Praise the dark master, worship the dark master, fear the dark master."*

Eligos has walked in darkness since before the dawn of written history. He drank from those who built the Parthenon, fanned the flames of crusade and grew bloated and content upon the blood that ran through the streets. He taught the infamous Countess Báthory the ritual of eternal youth, gave Vlad III the strength and cruelty he needed to crush his enemies. To the herds of humanity, Eligos is a nightmare incarnate, the immortal monster who has spawned so many vampire myths. To the enlightened few who have chosen to worship him, he is a demanding taskmaster, but capable of granting his chosen few a portion of his power. Under the shroud of night, his cabal of followers meet in secret, receiving orders from their dark master through a chosen few disciples before dispersing to commit the evil deeds their demonic king commands.

Fortunately for everyone involved, Eligos does not exist.

## History

Only months after the Second Inquisition began, specialists within the Newburgh Group began to notice a pattern among the blankbodies: many were found surrounded by willing humans who had been convinced to become blood donors and even bodyguards through promises of power, ecstasy, blankbody transformation, or spiritual enlightenment. Project Cathedral was created to study this phenomenon, determining how much influence blankbody mind control had on such groups, and how much was simply human nature. To this end, they created a cult of their own.

The Dread Cult of Eligos worked almost too well. Targeted ads on fringe websites focused on European and North American white males ages 18-32 with a prior interest in violence, self-sufficiency, or the occult. Honing in on disenfranchised, angry candidates with no other form of social support, the initial three agents were able to initiate twenty adherents after only three months. By the time the original timescale of the project was running up, Project Cathedral had made itself a real army, hundreds of adherents across three countries who were willing to do more-or-less whatever they were asked, all in the name of a fictional elder vampire.

After reassessment panels and some serious ethical debate, Project Cathedral was given the green light to continue its experiment, assessing the limits of what humans could be convinced to do in a cult-like environment as a control group to measure against blankbody mental influence. The risk to the lives and mental well-being of the cult's followers was deemed acceptable, and agents who disagreed with that assessment were quietly reassigned. Remaining agents were given permission to use the cult to further other SI goals; no sense letting a good brainwashed army go to waste.

## Doctrine

Might makes right, all other ethics are petty human contrivances of the weak and fearful. Working with others for mutual benefit is useful, but in the end it's every man for himself.

Eligos is the mightiest being in the world. To follow him means gaining a portion of his power, to disobey him means death.

Eligos speaks through his High Priests, with whom he has shared a portion of his power. They can read minds and perform magic spells through blood rites.

To become a High Priest, you must obey Eligos and his speakers' commands. He will only share his power with those who know how to serve him, for to do otherwise would be to risk his own downfall.

## Activities

Recruitment is an ongoing concern for the cult, who lose members to dissent and death at an unfortunate rate. Most new members are recruited from message boards and private email lists associated with a series of conspiracy theory and occult websites. Agents of the Newburgh Group pose as cult members online, answering questions and showering new members with attention and validation. Once someone has become part of the online community, they're encouraged to join the group in real life, and those who pass on the opportunity face social exclusion. Liaisons with the local police department and MI5 keep civilian investigators at bay, even when a stray member reports the group's obviously threatening nature.

Once made loyal, each member is given a task by the High Priests of the cult once every few weeks. Most tasks are small and only vaguely menacing — listen to this television channel at 8:00 PM on Monday for two hours, get your boss's phone number and home address, deliver a parcel from one end of the city to the other. These jobs are a mix of busy work and real spy work that benefits the Newburgh Group, though the latter assignments tend to go to members who have a positive track record with meaningless tasks. Sometimes, a member is asked to do something obviously illegal — steal something, gather blackmail material, poison food at a grocery store, or commit murder with a provided weapon. These are part of agency tests to see how far a civilian will go when subjected to mundane religious brainwashing, as compared to the supernatural influence of the blankbodies. While most are carefully controlled, set up to prevent any real loss of life, Project Cathedral has been called on to take illegal actions against known blankbody collaborators, working in conjunction with FIRSTLIGHT to coordinate their attacks. Members who succeed at their tasks, only to find their theft or poisoning or murder unreported on the news, are told the cover-up is the work of Eligos' high-level influence on world events.

Church meetings are held every week, at secret locations that change frequently and are communicated through code on various conspiracy sites. Attendees engage in prayer, and trained members extract the blood of supplicants with sanitized needles, an offering to Eligos. The High Priests forward donations to blood banks through back-alley channels, reserving only a small amount for ritual use. New tasks are given out to members privately in small confessional booths, and those who were previously assigned a job report their success or failure. The final phase of the meeting is a lavish dinner provided by the cult, a gift from Eligos to the loyal, but mostly a chance to make members socialize. Friendships and networking are encouraged, to better socially isolate anyone who decides to leave.

## Future Plans

Three months ago, the cult's primary site received an anonymous letter, warning it to cease and desist due to something called the "Masquerade." Though the correspondence has not been traced, contacts within FIRSTLIGHT believe it may have been a genuine attempt at communication from a blankbody, or more accurately a society of blankbodies. Has Eligos managed to fool even the real undead? Fearing a trap, the Newburgh Group has been reluctant to pursue contact, but the agents of Project Cathedral think it's worth the risk. If the blankbodies think they're writing to one of their own, how many secrets might they be tricked into revealing?

In the meantime, FIRSTLIGHT has asked for a contingent of cult members to complete tasks in America, and perhaps even set up a branch of the cult somewhere in the States. Less interested in the science experiment than in the potential source of devoted off-the-books followers, the international organization is eager to adapt the model to multiple new countries. There's also talk of training FIRSTLIGHT agents to better mimic real blankbody cult leaders, hoping to infiltrate their society deliberately through posing as one of their own.

### Amy Montague

Amy is the agent who came up with the Eligos myth, and put together most of the symbolism and rituals. A trained intelligence operative with a dark creative streak, she's secretly enjoying her role as High Priestess far more than she should be. She sometimes likes to pretend she really is a sexy, immortal vampire, controlling her adoring masses with unnatural powers instead of technology and psychological tricks. It's fun to see just how far she can push her slavish followers and get away with it, all in the name of "research." An honest psychological

assessment would make even the Newburgh Group's dubious ethical advisors take her off the project in a heartbeat, so no one can ever find out how deep she's sunk into the mythology she created. Within the cult, she's known as High Priestess Jezebeth.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 5, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 7

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Firearms 6; Leadership 7, Performance 6; Investigation 5, Occult 5

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Jaden Michaels

Jaden was one of Project Cathedral's founders, a trained psychologist brought in to monitor the mental state of cult members and assist with efficient recruitment. He did his job well, but when it came time to extend the project, Jaden dissented. Going any further was unethical, he argued; they had to deprogram their recruits and help them return to society. A week later, he was "laterally promoted" to a cushy position in MI5, with a nice pay raise and very few responsibilities. He's tried to keep his head down since, but what he did with the Dread Cult of Eligos still haunts him, and he lies awake at night wondering if blankbodies are really more monstrous than the people sworn to fight them.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 4, Social 5, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 8

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Firearms 6; Etiquette 6, Insight 7, Subterfuge 6; Science 6

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Franklin Bryant

Franklin was numb to atrocity long before he joined Project Cathedral. An expert in "enhanced interrogation techniques," he'd been torturing civilians for decades for the DIA before FIRSTLIGHT headhunted him, trading him across the pond to work on the cult project. Aside from acting as a High Priest, he serves as the head of security within the cult, assessing risk to agents and coordinating assault missions carried out by the group's members. Within the cult, he's known as High Priest Agramon.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 4, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6; Insight 5, Intimidation 6; Investigation 5

**General Difficulties:** 3/2

## Rupert Brant

Rupert was one of the cult's first recruits, having found the group through one of the conspiracy websites set up to attract members. He's a dedicated true believer who's taken the "might makes right" doctrine thoroughly to heart, spending every available moment outside his desk job and his cult activities training in martial arts and firearm use. Though he's devoted to Eligos, he's starting to get fed up with the High Priests. It's high time an exemplary member like him got to meet the dark one in person, and gain access to the real power.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 4, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Firearms 5, Survival 4; Politics 4

**General Difficulties:** 3/2

### Teresa Miles

Teresa joined the cult for the sake of her girlfriend, the 300-year-old Sheriff of the city who wants to know what the hell is going on. The 50-year-old ghoul has slipped in unnoticed with a fake identity that hasn't been checked too hard, but the longer she stays the more likely someone will check her history and discover it's not all there. Until then, she plays her part, and tries to figure out just who this Eligos person is, and where he'd been hiding before his cult sprang up.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 6, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 8

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Stealth 6; Insight 7, Subterfuge 7; Investigation 4, Occult 5, Technology 6

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

### Story Hook: Eligos' Breach

Word reaches the PCs of a new vampire in the city making waves, and the ruling vampire is less than happy. Apparently, this Kindred named "Eligos" is having their retainers draw blood from hapless vessels in church halls and other rented spaces, in a way that implies a very callous master with Bagger tendencies. They ask the PCs to investigate who this Eligos is, and if they can find this Kindred, bring them to the court — willingly or staked, whichever is easier.

As the PCs look into the cult's activities, they spot another of the city's Kindred hovering around the group's fringes. In a case of mistaken identity, it's possible the PCs believe this vampire is "Eligos" and attack them for their perceived Masquerade breach. In reality, the vampire is just as concerned about the cult's activities, especially as they're taking place in a location this vampire considers their territory.

**[LAYOUT/ART: BANNER AD FROM A WEBSITE]**

We're not alone in the dark. You know it. We know it.

It's time to find out the truth. With whom do we share this world?

Are you between the ages of 18 and 35? If so, contact us:

dreadcultofeligos@sunburst.com

No more secrets.

**[/BANNER AD ENDS]**

## The Order of the Broken Branch

"Incendo flammam veritatis*; let the fire of truth burn bright, and the demons of Ignorance will fall by our torch and blade."*

Before modern Greek fraternities, American university students formed all manner of secret societies. The Order of the Broken Branch is among the oldest, one part social club, one part exercise in getting away with something you're not supposed to be doing. The secret society has always had an interest in mysticism and the occult, ostensibly as metaphors and tools for philosophical enlightenment and intellectual growth, which made them an early target for the Society of St. Leopold. Hoping for real vampire facts, the hunters instead found a team of smart, cooperative, semi-brainwashed student members, a small army just waiting for instructions. The Order was infiltrated and transformed, its largely harmless members turned into unwitting servants of the cause. Some Society members find it distasteful, turning innocent college kids into assassins, but a cardinal somewhere up the chain has decided that their lives are a small price to pay for ensuring human security.

## History

Founded in 1835 by a group of bored Classics students, the Order of the Broken Branch was set from the beginning on maintaining the "secret" in secret society. Unlike other organizations that had been discovered, or even made their presence known on campus, the Broken Branch charter specified that the group was to remain hidden, and members were commanded to deny any knowledge of it when questioned. While not completely effective, the Order has managed to remain a rumor, oft-repeated but only sometimes believed.

Much of the group's doctrine comes from that original charter, which shrouded the Order's goals in poetic, Latin text. The struggle to gain knowledge and expose lies is described in metaphor as an army of knights-templar fighting an army of ignorance. The founding generation was quite satisfied with their writing, and spent years holding meetings in living rooms and bars, debating literature and politics and congratulating each other at the end of the night for a "fight well-won" with the demon Ignorance.

In the '70s, members began to direct the club's activities outward, organizing war protests and civic action campaigns. To justify the new approach, leaders cherry-picked journal entries from the founders, reimagining them as activists themselves. Historical revisionism continued into doctrinal belief, with the metaphors of fighting ignorance being reframed as a command to act up and change the world. Blood ran hot, but as the decades went by and freshmen recruits gradually stopped remembering the '70s, future cohorts were never able to recapture that same fervor. Photos of protests and guerilla anti-government action were carefully preserved alongside the Order's charter, oft-imitated since but never matched.

The Society of St. Leopold became involved with the Order only a few years ago, when an alumni member got in touch through the right priest to ask about the potential for the Order to help their cause. Hunters young enough to pass as students joined the group, and were soon able to take over leadership as older members graduated and left. The active fervor of the '70s was stirred again, but this time with a new enemy: literal demons, evil creatures of the night who have tried to keep humanity ignorant of their existence since history began. Just like previous generations, the Society borrowed from the charter to support their cause, suggesting a new reading that posited the founders as the first demon hunters, and challenging current members to live up to their calling.

## Doctrine

Ignorance exists in the world because of the forces of evil, manifest as demons who must be fought. The secret Order of the Broken Branch was created to lead that fight.

The Order's fight is of utmost importance to humankind: without them fighting back Ignorance, everyone would become slaves to the demons. Sacrificing yourself in the name of the Order is the greatest good you can do with your life.

The Order of the Broken Branch must remain secret in order to carry out its mission. When asked, members must deny the existence of the Order. Those who break this edict are forever outcast.

The Order must always be led by current undergraduate students, though graduate students and alumni may participate in many activities. This keeps the organization young and focused, better able to hunt, and less likely to fall prey to ennui.

## Activities

The Order keeps up some of its old activities as a smokescreen, discussing literature and current events academically with other members at weekly or bi-weekly meetings held in reserved library corners or dorm rooms. Anyone curious enough to try and track down the Order of the Broken Branch usually finds only one of these meetings, and walks away disappointed that the famous secret society is just a bunch of undergrads talking about books. These weekly get-togethers are open to all members, past and present, allowing undergraduates to meet and network with successful alumni and securing the Order's success through a chain of well-connected generations. Each weekly meeting opens with a reading from select portions of the charter, call-and-response between a meeting leader and the attending members. New members are expected to memorize these responses within a month of joining, internalizing them in the process. Food, wine, and an atmosphere of colloquial collaboration help cement ties of loyalty and friendship, to other members and to the Order at large.

Real meetings are held off campus, at office space rented out for the Order by well-to-do alumni. Scheduled sporadically via coded emails, texts, and word-of-mouth, each meeting is run by a current undergraduate leader and is planned to address a single issue or project. All current members are expected to attend each meeting, but alumni members are invited only on a case-by-case basis, involving only those who are necessary for that particular engagement.

With the Society of St. Leopold controlling the Order from within, these special meetings usually involve a hunt for a particular Kindred or Kindred organization. Facts about the supernatural menace are passed on by the Society to the students, who are then asked to come up with ways to use that knowledge to hunt them. Often, alumni members — usually trained government agents and sometimes priests in disguise — carry out the student plans, reducing risk and casualties while still benefiting from the free student think-tank. Undergraduate members are only called upon for fieldwork when the Society needs an extra level of plausible deniability. Guerilla assaults on respectable demon-owned homes and businesses are planned out as home invasions, with the perpetrators trained to give alternative motives to the police and media; political dissent, personal revenge, or whatever other story suits. Although the Society tries to protect these student soldiers from capture, those who do get caught are expected to deny the existence of the Order and go to jail quietly, comforted by the knowledge that they've made the world a better place.

## Future Plans

Due to the Order's organizational structure, Society personnel working as undergrad members can only lead the project for one or two years, and finding experienced members who look young enough to be undergrads has become harder and harder. The current leader of the Order has stayed on for four years, taking a second undergraduate degree to meet the requirements, but dissent is growing among members who feels this violates the spirit of the charter. The easiest solution would be to change the Order's rules for leadership, allowing a single agent to stay in charge indefinitely, but that idea is wildly unpopular among current and alumni members alike, who see it as disrespecting the club's oldest tradition. Since the Society of St. Leopold usually regards this ingrained loyalty as a strong positive, dissolving it in this case will have to be done carefully.

The utility of the undergraduate members as a secret think tank had been underestimated, until recent creative hunting designs were presented to Society leadership. A group of physics students have a prototype device that can perfectly mimic sunlight, while a team of computer science and history majors are working together to sort through old documents and cross-referencing the names, locations, and physical descriptions of supposed historical "monsters" with modern social media data, rooting out suspected immortals. Creative, interdisciplinary innovation is hard to foster within the confines of the Catholic Church, even within secret societies such as the Society, so student ideas are starting to get more than a cursory glance. With more funding, perhaps the Order could extend itself to additional campuses, targeting the best and brightest for recruitment worldwide.

## Margaret Thales

Margaret used to be president of the Order, until she graduated three years ago. Now working on her Master's in Engineering, she's stayed involved with her old club and outwardly supports its new direction. In private, she has serious doubts. Overheard conversations and unusual phone calls have her suspicious that one or more fellow alumni might be trying to turn the Order into government agents, masking acts of home-soil terrorism as "demon fighting." She'd love to put a stop to it, but first she has to prove it, and then find out who she can trust to help bring them down.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 4, Willpower 8

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Stealth 5; Etiquette 6, Leadership 6; Science 6, Technology 7

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Samantha Watts

Samantha gave up a promising career in the Vatican to work for the Society of St. Leopold after encountering a vampire firsthand. Her baby face got her into the Order as a "freshman" seven years ago, and she's led the club since her third year back at school. Though she knows she's doing good work, pretending to be a twentysomething student is draining, and not what she signed up for. She'd much rather be in the field, fighting the monsters who once stole her blood and her dignity.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 6, Social 4, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Intimidation 5, Persuasion 5; Investigation 6, Occult 6

**General Difficulties:** 3/2

## Edward H. Sullivan

Edward is quite certain that the Order of the Broken Branch is real. After all, he helped found it. He was Embraced long after graduation, brought into eternity as a man in his early seventies. Over nearly two centuries, his youthful misadventures founding a secret society had been all but forgotten, until reports started coming in about students from his old *alma mater* working for the Second Inquisition. An affable Nosferatu, well-liked by Kindred society, Sullivan is tracking down old haunts and history, trying to discover what's happened to his old Order and how he can stop it.

**Clan:** Nosferatu

**Sire:** Hedwig

**Embraced:** 1823 (Born 1749)

**Ambition:** Discover what became of the Order of the Broken Branch

**Convictions:** Always fight ignorance

**Touchstones:** Lars Magnusson — faithful mortal servant for the last 20 years

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 10th

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Brawl 3, Craft 3, Larceny 4, Stealth 4; Animal Ken 3, Etiquette (Kindred) 3, Insight 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 3; Academics 3, Awareness 2, Finance 1, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Politics 1, Science 2

**Disciplines:** Animalism 1, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2

**General Difficulties:** 6/3

## Story Hook: God's Weapons

Just last night, some well-meaning cops interrupted a trade between high-up members of the Order of the Broken Branch and the Society of St. Leopold held in a mobile office at a building site outside of town. The cops saw lights on at the abandoned site, and suspecting a drug deal, commenced a raid on the office. As the protesting cultists were led away, one of them coincidentally possessing a small bag of marijuana in their pocket, the cops left the most important prize: a sunlight caster. This device was constructed by student members of the Order of the Broken Branch, and now sits in a bag kicked into a cupboard in the mobile office.

The entire event would have passed Kindred society by, were it not for a nomadic Kindred who saw the whole thing go down, and who at Elysium now laughs about the sight of a few priests and some students being led away by the city's boys in blue. The event might draw the coterie's

curiosity, especially as the building site sits in unclaimed territory. Of course, eventually the Society or the Order is going to return to the building site to claim their device, capable of casting a beam of light said to be as potent against Kindred as the light of the sun.

**[LAYOUT: TRANSCRIPT]**

*Recording Number: 1190*

*Subject/s: Human*

*Pertinent Notes: Catholic order of blankbody hunters, the SoSL*

**RECORDING STARTS**

**Voice 1 (Father Harry Grainger, Suspected):** — won't fly any more.

**Voice 2 (Unknown, Female?, Late 20s or 30s):** I'm sorry. I really am sorry. I know how important it was that we get it, but the cops.

**Voice 1:** Where is it now?

**Voice 2:** Best guess is it's still there. We can send someone to retrieve it now, if you give the word.

**Voice 1:** No. Todd says he saw a figure watching as he was led away. Maybe an undead set the police onto the entire operation.

**Voice 2:** If they're aware of the Order, then we need to close up shop. Immediately.

**Voice 3 (Margaret Thales, Confirmed):** Father, how have you been?

**Voice 1:** Margaret! My goodness, I didn't see you there. I'm well. I'm well. And have you met [indiscernible noise].

**Voice 2:** A pleasure.

**Voice 1:** We were just talking about some equipment we lost. A stupid thing.

**Voice 3:** Lost? Where?

**Voice 1:** A building site. Here. Let me show you the map on my phone. Here. One of our students dropped something of importance. Something the college owns. But the student can't go back there because they've headed out of town.

**Voice 3:** Do you need me to go out and get it? I don't mind. It's not that far from where my boyfriend lives.

**Voice 2:** That would be wonderful. Thank you so much, Margaret!

**Voice 1:** You are an angel.

**RECORDING TERMINATES**

**[/TRANSCRIPT ENDS]**

# Other Cults

**The Black Blood Seekers** believe in the historical truth of vampires. A loose network of jaded historians, conspiracy theorists, and people seeking an outlet for their darkest imaginings, the Seekers have communicated over the internet since the earliest usenet groups. According to their

research, vampires ruled much of the Western world before a series of human uprisings wiped them out in the 12th-14th centuries. The blood-drinkers were highly intelligent philosopher kings with centuries of accumulated wisdom, beneficial to humankind even though their existence required the frequent sacrifice of less worthy lives. Whether or not any vampires survived the culling is a matter hotly debated between the Seekers, and members who do manage to make contact with a real one have never managed to produce enough proof to convince the group at large. Modern Kindred looking for a neatly prepackaged cult of supplicants nonetheless eye the Seekers with deep suspicion: a group that open about their theories on the internet has surely attracted the attention of the Second Inquisition, to whom the Seekers' obsessive combing of news articles and rumors for evidence of vampire activity is a useful spot of free manpower.

**The Temple of Endings** was created by Yong-un Hong, a Seon Buddhist before his Embrace. Dying transformed him from vaguely religious to utterly devout, and he soon fixated on the vampire myth of Golconda, believing it to be a form of buddhahood achieved by the undead. He resolved to become an ascetic as the first step to achieving this enlightenment. Knowing he could not walk the Eightfold Path alone, he turned to the local Buddhist community, his blood-laced tongue easily talking many into following him. As an undead creature, he argued, he was closer than many to enlightenment. His baser human desires were gone, replaced with a simpler Hunger that could be more completely understood. He preaches long fasting and hours of meditation to his students, and tries to follow his own advice. Unfortunately, a vampire fasting for too long leads to undesirable consequences, and more than one private meditation ceremony has ended with blood on the walls and a supplicant dead at Hong's feet. Such accidents are regrettable, but Hong soothes himself with the belief that his victim's *karmaphala* will be a pleasant rebirth, since their sacrifices have aided his quest for nirvana.

**The Church of Nigel, Reborn** is a tiny, accidental movement that has sprung up around Thin-Blood vampire Nigel Hunt after he rose from the dead in the middle of a protestant church sermon. His pastor and a group of church elders have decided he was sent by God, and Nigel doesn't want to disappoint them. He is capable of doing some pretty amazing things now, and the pastor seems to think that the bite marks he leaves on parishioners to perform miracles are a form of stigmata. In his small church, people are lining up to see him, offering their blood in exchange for happiness and healing, the latter of which he has no idea how to provide. Though the only evangelizing the Church of Nigel does is through local word-of-mouth, the group is getting popular enough that the Second Inquisition can't be far behind.

**The Order of St. Rose** broke off from the Society of St. Leopold centuries ago, over a divine revelation received by their original leader and rejected by the main church. The Order believes that spilling the blood of the undead upon the Earth serves only to corrupt the planet, transmuting the evil of the vampire into a cloud of darkness upon the souls of all humanity. Of course, they still mean to hunt, just with careful rituals around blood contamination and clean-up. Ideally, they capture vampires alive, and take them to a specially equipped facility where they can be drained dry into a consecrated silver basin, a process that takes hours of excruciating pain. The blood is then preserved in containers and prayed over daily to prevent it from infecting the Earth. Rumor among the Kindred holds that the vitae the Order preserves actually retains its power indefinitely, acting just like the fresh lifeblood of a vampire even when consumed months later. Once a year, a priest of the order is chosen to drink all the blood that its knights have accumulated, then set himself on fire at dawn. The priest's burning death and the cleansing sunlight remove the dark taint of the executed vampires from the world for good.

# Cult Construction

*"As I entered church today, I heard a few of you bemoaning your lack of cash. Your scarcity of capital. Your absence of money. Well let me tell you, my friends: money does not occupy these seats. Money does not fill a heart. Money cannot hear my words. More important than money is the soul. And I see a lot of souls out there tonight. Your souls are ripe and full of love and aspiration. Souls are all I need!"*

— "Coach" Tyrone Soros, Motivational Speaker, Ministry, Indianapolis

The majority of this book revolves around cults already in existence within the text of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. These are only a small fraction of the cults within the world, however. Small circles of Kindred, ghouls, and humans form their own religious movements that either grow or splinter off into tiny subsects that eventually die. People ask themselves what the meaning of life is, and turn to charismatic leaders and mystery rituals to find the answer. Cults give people a sense of purpose — and since there are seven billion people on the planet, there are as many types of cults as there are stars in the sky.

This chapter gives you the tools you need to create your own cult, religion, or organization, as well as cult-related coteries. Note that this chapter deals with in-character perceptions of cults, as well as discussions of love-bombing, grooming, and abuse.

## The Act of Creation

One could describe an organized religion as a cult that's received formal recognition. In truth, there's little to divide the two, beyond the word "cult" becoming dirtier as organized religions consumed the world. Neither cults nor religions are two-dimensional clubs for wayward hobbyists. They're families bound together by belief, values, and ideology. Over the past thirty years, Kindred society has seen a glut of individual churches rise to the fore, which has created a sea of competing faiths. Players are encouraged to build their own coteries, cults, and spiritual covenants. The following material helps customize a methodology and system to put meat and flesh on the bones of an idea. In order to get started, the players can ask themselves several crucial questions:

- What are the core tenets of this faith? What are its central mandates?
- What is the structure of the cult?
- How does the cult recruit members?
- What rituals, rites, ceremonies, and sacraments enhance the faith?
- Are there any revered texts or protected relics?
- Are certain holidays or specific dates honored and celebrated?
- What symbols and colors represent the cult?
- Where does the cult meet?
- How do cult members live night to night?

A discussion or exploration of answers to these can turn a whisper of an idea into a three-dimensional organization with previously unimagined motivations. With each added layer of detail infused into the creation of a religious organization, storylines, chronicle hooks, and coterie possibilities emerge on their own.

This can also help Storytellers create a framework that remains consistent despite the questions or challenges characters encounter. The more specific players are in their answers, the easier it is to understand what is and isn't acceptable and who does or doesn't call the shots in any given situation.

# How to Build a Cult

Like any stable group, a cult requires three things: people, money, and time. In order to have a flock of fanatical worshipers, you need people to convert. You need time to convert those people, and rewrite their thought processes to be more in line with your doctrine. Finally, you'll need money in order to house, feed, and clothe those people, and advertise your new group. It's a lengthy process, and many find themselves without enough of one of the three resources listed above to complete it.

Vampires, however, have access to as many people as they can get their hands on, all the time in the world, and plenty of ways to get money. Most don't tend to play nice with others, but some decide to spread their reach and form cults, both to gain more mortal and Kindred followers, and to genuinely worship. A Vampire is a selfish creature, and so if she is devoted to an entity worthy of worship, others should be too. After all, who better to judge the situation?

Vampire cults are often stereotyped as the flock of blood dolls and ghouls eagerly awaiting their turn on the St. Andrew's cross or the operating table, opening their veins and wallowing in depravity. While this is certainly true for some vampiric cults, others are not quite so gauche. Some Tremere chantries manage cults of eclectic occult practitioners, who they use to do research they don't have time for and groom new members of the clan. Ventrue host cults of superstitious tech developers, fostering atheist discussion circles and solstice rituals without a focus, channeling that energy into themselves and their projects. There are dozens, maybe hundreds of iterations of the cult model all across the world.

## The Basics

Whatever the cult's use of money, people, and time ultimately looks like, there are several characteristics that all cults share. These are, according to the International Cultic Studies Association, in no particular order:

**The leadership dictates what members do, where they go, who they marry, and more.** This may be small, such as recommending members only live in a certain part of town or telling them not to get involved with another race, gender, religion, or tax bracket. On the other end, it may involve arranged marriages, communal housing, disposal of all non-cult items, and scheduled mealtimes and meetings.

**The group claims an exalted or privileged status in the world.** Cults often claim to offer secret knowledge, the key to happiness, immortality of various kinds, and a place to belong. Humans, ghouls, and Kindred who feel lost, abandoned, or spiritually hungry are drawn to cults by these inducements. Some even receive what the cult promises.

**Everything is presented as "us versus them."** The cult's dialectic resembles battlefield strategy. It's a way to get one over on those outside, those who don't understand and who persecute the cultists because of it. A cultist is convinced she knows "what's actually going on" and she has to keep that secret from the undeserving. The cult defines the in-group, or the people inside, and the out-group, the people who are not members of the cult and therefore are evil.

**Doubt, dissent, and questioning are discouraged, violently if necessary.** In mainstream religions, there are ministers whose job it is to counsel the doubters among their faithful. If someone is a member of a cult, however, she is right, with a capital R. Questioning is not normal in a cult, it's a sign of weak faith. Weak faith means the cultist has the potential to defect, and that cannot be tolerated. Leadership makes use of shame, withholding food or sleep, physical punishments like beatings or kneeling for hours, emotional abuse, and other methods to keep everyone in line. Anyone who questions is part of the out-group, and might poison the in-group. This cannot be allowed.

**The cult is the cultists' world...** Long-term members of a cult cannot think of a life without it. All their time and energy goes into the cult's activities: promotion, worship, work, punishment. Even leisure time is spent doing cult-approved and cult-related activities. The outside world is full of sin and suffering, so why go out there when you can just stay in here? Even if all of her money and time is going toward the cult, a cultist sees it as a necessary sacrifice for whatever the cult promises her.

**...but not so for the leadership.** Leaders of cults often hold some sort of mystical, even messianic, standing among the membership. They hold all of the wealth and power of the cult in their hands, and it's not long before they're using it to fuel their own vices. Some cults have true believers as leadership; some Bahari cults, for example, channel that centralized power into acquiring more knowledge and better teachers for their fellow cultists. Others, especially in more famous mortal cults, spend their followers' money on drugs, booze, seventy-bedroom mansions, swimming pools, and all sorts of other luxuries while their flocks live in squalor, seeing it as a divine hardship.

**Cults do not think of themselves as evil.** It is easy to judge a cult from the outside, to say that they're all brain-damaged or pathetic or sadists. The truth is, cults are as complex as any other group of people, living or otherwise. Recruiters prey on the lost, the damaged, the lonely, and the depressed — what they, themselves, once were. Cults are insidious in that they build a space for people to feel accepted and part of something greater, a feeling they might not have had before. All the work they do, all the crimes they commit, everything they sacrifice is for this group that has shown them love and acceptance. That's just human nature.

This is a difficult mindspace to get people into, especially in Western societies. Many American and European cultures have a strong thread of individualism running through them, and in any "normal" religious relationship, telling a devotee she can't leave the church home except during certain times or she can't speak to her family any more sparks outrage and backlash. There are some exceptions to this, monastic orders for example, but in that case the power relationship with the religion is consensual and up front.

Cults recruit using a technique called "love-bombing." Essentially, they find people who are struggling, lost, lonely, or grieving, and provide them with a space that unconditionally affirms them. As the potential cultist is drawn further in, this affirmation slowly gives way to rules, demands, and punishments. The cultist craves that love she had been given, and so she acts in

accordance with the cult's rules, hoping to receive it once again. When she is in this space, she is the perfect adherent: fanatical, refusing to care for herself, and sublimating her needs into serving the greater whole.

It's important to note here that, once again, cults do not think of themselves as evil. While they may very well be, their members see love-bombing and punishments as necessary steps. Many cults use terms such as "religion," "faith," and "order" to reassure followers and themselves. Very few people want to be the next Charles Manson, nor do many people want to join the next Manson Family. New cultists are shiny and innocent and should be treated with kid gloves, but members who have been in the cult for weeks or months and still manage to commit transgressions against its doctrine, leadership, or other members need to be shown the error of their ways. It's just a necessary cycle of love and punishment.

> Cults and Religions
>
> As mentioned in the text, there is little to no difference between a cult and a religion beyond the veneer of respectability and accepted practices. The public see cults as groups of brainwashed fanatics in service to some esoteric or violent purpose. The public see religions as groups of individuals who have made the choice to commit to faith, and while they may not understand the faith, they might respect the choice to follow it.
>
> This chapter makes some rigid definitions of what a cult is or could be, but those definitions can apply equally to many religions. While many find comfort and cause within belief, others find control, deceit, and horror. We use the word "cults" because to some vampires, when freshly Embraced, these faiths represent exactly those horrifying, alien belief systems they've heard about. But one vampire's cult soon becomes another vampire's religion, faith, or church.

# Belief

At its core, a shared system of belief binds a group together. Be it religious, ideological, or philosophical, this belief defines the identity of the organization. While mortal society may claim a difference between saintly churches and deviant cults, Kindred society makes few such distinctions. When it comes to "churches" and "cults," the terms are largely interchangeable.

## Ancestral Worship

The vast majority of Kindred cults worship a specific methuselah. Some followers seek to emulate these blood gods, while others commit themselves to the role of useful pawn. In general, Kindred suspect they are unknowing tools in a greater Jyhad, but members of an ancestral cult are voluntary tools, working on behalf of a single, ancient Kindred. Such cultists offer patronage to their church, hoping to appease their god and earn their attention. The most common list of deified methuselahs include:

- **Banu Haqim:** Mancheaka, Tegyrius, Ur-Shulgi
- **Brujah:** Altamira, Menele, Uga Dugud
- **Gangrel:** Enkidu, Matasuntha, Mictlantecuhtli, Odin the All-High
- **Hecata:** Augustus Giovanni, The Baron, The Capuchin, Japheth, Lamia, Lazarus

- **Lasombra:** Boukephos, Montano, Sybil
- **Malkavian:** The Eater, Malakai, Nissiku
- **Ministry:** Nakhthorheb, Set
- **Nosferatu:** Azazel, Gorgo, Yima
- **Toreador:** Amarantha, Beshter, Helena, Michael
- **Tremere:** Goratrix, Meerlinda, Tremere
- **Ventrue:** Hardestadt, Mithras, Artemis Orthia, Tiamat, Tinia

### Secular Values

Some churches center less on a specific individual and more around a particular concept. The Amaranthans hunt down diablerists. The Eyes of Malakai believe madness is the only way toward absolute truth while the Nosferatu Cleopatras of Yima attempt to regain their beauty. There is no founding blood god to guide these churches, but rather a prime value crucial to their identity and unique to their organization.

### Heresies

Even among Kindred society, tolerance has its limits. Many circles tolerate cults like the Bahari or the Church of Caine. But other cults, especially those Gehenna cults who preach the end of the world, are too radical in the opinion of these same circles. At best, Kindred discourage these cults, or purge them outright at worst. Such organizations exist on the fringes of vampire society. They gather in secret behind closed and guarded doors. When discovered, these heresies suffer swiftly and publicly, though more than one Prince has persecuted a local cult less on grounds of security and more out of political expedience.

## Mandates

Religions have commandments. Governments have laws. Sects have the Traditions. Every major organization, religious or secular, has a specific list of rules or forbidden actions to solidify their character.

### You Shall…

A well-crafted cult has at least one mandate which helps define who they are, what they want, and what they represent. These rules are very personal, and players should customize them for their cult. A good rule of thumb is to ask what each faith believes in and why. The cult of Mithras, for example, has deified the most powerful and famous Ventrue Prince in Kindred history. As a result, Mithraists place the honor of the lineage, or the greater community, above their own. Meanwhile, the Meneleans honor the memory of Carthage and have sworn vengeance against the Toreador whom they believe betrayed them during the Punic Wars.

### You Shall Not…

By contrast, a cult should have at least one sin or prohibited action, but may have many, many more. A cult succeeds based on the amount of control it has over its members. So, a cult likely has a long list of “do’s” and “don’ts.” Some of these rules can be minor infractions requiring repentance and absolution if transgressed. Violating other rules might be impossible to forgive and demand the ultimate retribution. These directives may or may not conform to the sins of a

given sect, so part of the fun in creating a cult is the Kindred involved may need to tread very carefully when navigating these two worlds at the same time.

### The First Rule of Vampire Club

The first rule of **Vampire** is don't get caught. A Kindred can get away with anything they want until someone else catches them. That's when consequences come knocking. Do they list this rule explicitly in the vampire handbook? No. Or at least, not as such. This is an implicit rule or a cultural norm, meaning there can be completely unwritten rules for a cult as well.

These unwritten rules are mandates everyone seems to know, but usually have no idea where they came from or how they got started. Phrases like "it's always been this way" and "we don't do that here" are good indicators of cultural norms based on tradition rather than anything to do with faith or doctrine.

## Hierarchy

The following groupings only serve as an example because terminology may change from cult to cult. But, most have roughly the same hierarchical structure. A single leader commands and the masses follow. Those masses are part of a ladder leading ever upward, elevating members based on merit, devotedness, seniority, education, charisma, gamesmanship, and other manipulations. Some churches focus on dedication of faith while others honor ability. Regardless of what promotion is based on, which is usually a combination of factors, the further someone climbs the ladder the more they are able to peek behind the curtain. Through their elevation, they gain greater understanding of the cult's inner workings and, at times, its hypocrisy.

### Laity

Laity are members of a religious group who are not an ordained part of it. "Lay members" often refers to people who participate in a field without being professionals in that field. This can include volunteers and hobbyists.

In relation to cults, these are the outermost ring of involved individuals. Time and circumstance, along with their doubt, misfortune, or naiveté has led them to it. Laity may still have misgivings, questions, or reservations with one foot in and one foot out, but for the moment, they are curious enough to contribute. For them, the cult represents a chance at peace, purpose, and community. There must be appeal or advantage to their participation for people who the cult often tasks with the most menial chores and obligations.

These members are the weakest links in regard to security and secrecy, but are often the best vectors for pulling more people into the cult. They participate because of their love for the deity or passion for the espoused ideals of the organization, and their enthusiasm draws others in. Keeping these members happy (or seemingly so) with real or imagined benefits is important to the success of the cult.

### Initiate

Inducted Initiates are the general rank-and-file within the cult. They understand the basic tenets of the faith and are both able and willing to carry out the commands of their superiors. Initiates have committed themselves to the cause, and while they may have lingering concerns or questions, they are generally smart enough not to voice them openly. Initiates focus only on the positive aspects of the cult and tend to ignore or deny any doubts voiced by others.

Initiates who have committed to the cult's agenda usually perform essential nightly tasks to keep the belief machine running. Some function as preachers and messengers, traveling between cities in order to recruit new members and pass along communiqués from their superiors. Others participate in internal ceremonies, assisting leaders in their religious services. Finally, Initiates may serve as soldiers tasked with guard duty, city patrols, or offensive attacks.

### Acolyte

Acolytes are the most fanatical members of the cult. They have followed its precepts, participated in its rites, and have been rewarded for their devotion. They spearhead short-term missions or coordinate some aspect of the cult. When a cult needs to get its hands bloody, an Acolyte tends to lead the charge. They are the first to volunteer their services and the first to put down dissent. For them the cult is their entire identity and the only real source of purpose in their life.

Specialized Acolytes take on specific positions ranging from shock troops to secretaries. They are the bread and butter of the cult. These people support the cult because they have tied their lives and livelihood to it.

### Clergy

Clergy are leaders. They are the shepherds to the sheep. They can perform all of the major rites, handle internal disputes, and conduct religious services. Smaller cults may have a single Clergyperson who serves as the right hand of the highest authority. Larger cults may have more, with each focusing on an aspect like financial, organizational, or spiritual matters.

They can also function as an advisory council to the cult leader. Given their role and their understanding of the cult's inner workings, they are also the most likely to use it for their own personal agendas. A cultist who is the equivalent of Clergy likely has their life and the lives of others dependent on the successful execution of the cult's objectives. Because of this, they can be enforcers of doctrine, the secret police, or propaganda artists who maintain the status quo.

### Prophets

Prophets are the people at the top. They are the charismatic cult leaders, the CEOs of the brand, and the visionaries who inspire a movement. Unless there is a particularly wily member of the cult or the structure is something other than a hierarchy, Prophets set the agenda for the cult. They can inspire or manipulate their followers because they are the heart of the cult and control the power it can wield. And, they use everyone underneath them. They make the decisions or set the goals those lower in the hierarchy execute.

Whether a rousing preacher, an inspirational thought leader, or the Pater of a blood cult, often they *are* the cult. Likewise, when something decapitates the cult by taking out the head, the whole organization can crumble. This is why cult leaders surround themselves with true believers and people who would give their lives to save them.

## Cult Practices

Strict rules often govern the night-to-night practices of a cult, but this is not always the case. A sense of community and rigorous indoctrination might be all anyone needs to remain dedicated to a cause. Indoctrination can come from techniques like brain washing and induced dependency, but followers can also come together because of the culture or lifestyle the cult provides.

Religious practices are the building blocks of a cult's culture and community. To some extent, everyone in the cult participates in its practices. From the prayers they recite to the clothes they wear, these aspects create a group's spiritual identity.

## Scripture

Not every religion has a single holy book, but many have stanzas, prayers, and songs. Scriptures capture key occasions, either developed over centuries or recorded by the faithful in the presence of their god. They can take the form of ancient tales passed down to form a kind of living history. Cultists may, for example, base their prayers, what they do or don't eat, or what they do on a particular day on such historical manuscripts.

Scriptures are for teaching, but the documents themselves can become holy relics. Holy books, sacred texts, and ancient tomes can become as important for their pages as for what those pages say. A cult that venerates knowledge might preserve books simply because they are books. Another cult might protect a letter written by the founder because they believe it has magical properties.

## Relics

Along with sacred texts, objects and artifacts can become holy relics. The ashes of a great Kindred, a sword once wielded by a blood god, or the home of a founder are all examples of relics. The most prized are the most protected. For many, being in the presence of a relic makes their worship feel more real. In a cultist, an object can inspire a feeling of connection to their leader or god and remind them of their faith.

## Services

While some more devout members may actually live in the temple, others may be more infrequent visitors, only attending on holidays or during major events. Determining when the church gathers helps determine how active and cohesive its membership is. A regular worship service every month or every week creates a dependable schedule that followers can rely on.

Nightly activities, such as recruitment drives, training, and social events may not be religious services, but they do help solidify a group and assist in the overall growth of the cult. Meanwhile, weekly feasts may become formal occasions, with an additional half dozen holidays to augment the year.

## Apparel

Not every cult has strict mandates when it comes to clothing. Some churches need to blend in with their surroundings to avoid drawing unwanted attention to themselves. Others are quite brazen in their faith, traveling together in groups wearing the same garments or color scheme. Clothing (or the lack of it) can easily become another one of those unwritten rules. But mostly, for the purposes of the cult, wearing the same clothes or having particular vestments adds to the overall indoctrination of followers.

## Rituals

Acts of adoration, veneration, and homage are the cornerstones of any faith. To believe in a deity is one thing, but to properly express belief is something else. Cultures throughout history have developed intricate methods of worship and Kindred cults do the same. Rituals can be small

nightly actions cultists take, like saying a prayer or lighting a candle, or larger ceremonies combining the magical will of the group to perform massive feats.

**Blood:** The primary ingredient in the rites of most Kindred cults. Consuming blood during feasts and sacrifices isn't uncommon, nor is painting sigils of protection, baptism, or curses in blood.

**Fire:** Given the destructive nature of fire, Kindred cults tend to use it only on rare occasions. Conversely, the use of fire can be a punishment for wayward followers.

**Incense:** Burning something to honor the gods is no new concept. Most use it as a means of purification, suffuming a room or person with smoke from frankincense, myrrh, and benzoin.

**Construction:** Creating works of art or feats of engineering are common enough shows of worship. Faith inspires many cultists to use their talents.

**Sacrifice:** To prove their dedication to their ancestor, many cults conduct blood sacrifices. But sacrifice doesn't have to be bloody. Rumors suggest the followers of Helena create works of exquisite art only to sacrifice them to her.

## Holidays

Nights set aside for religious observances, holidays serve specific customs within a given cult. Used to celebrate or commemorate an event, holidays hold traditional significance. For vampires, holidays and religious observances come in several different forms.

### Lunar

In many vampire cults, holidays are associated with the lunar calendar. Given their nocturnal connection, the moon not only represents shifts in time, but also has specific meanings depending on its given phase.

**The New Moon:** As the sun shines against the far side of the moon, new moons represent moments of renewal.

**The Waxing Moon:** As the moon grows each night, so too do intention and preparation to act. Nights under the waxing moon are about growth and building.

**The Full Moon:** Full moons are powerful, ceremonial, and climactic. Kindred cults might use the full moon for Embraces, coronations, and initiations into the cult.

**The Waning Moon:** Sliding back toward the new moon, waning moons represent times of healing, self-reflection, and the end of something.

### Historic

Some cults might center holidays on key events. As many practice some form of ancestral worship, the majority of these historic events focus on the progenitor's birthday, death day, or in rare instances, their true death day. Other holidays celebrate key milestones such as praxis seizures, founding dates, and major victories.

**Birthday:** Kindred largely ignore mortal birthdays. Ancestors tend to have little connection to their mortal mother or father, placing their vampire sire above their blood parents. Some methuselahs are so old they pre-date even the Julian calendar, making their actual date of birth difficult to pin down. But, without birth, no Kindred would exist.

**Death Day:** Dates of Embrace are more impactful the older the Kindred. The Embrace can be an occasion of celebration as much as horror, but it is a defining night for any Kindred.

**True Death Day:** Methuselahs do not die often, but when they do, it reverberates throughout Kindred society. Such true death days can be solemn occasions, marked by commemorations, sacrifices, and remembrances.

**Major Events:** The most common kind of historic holidays commemorate major events. The blood cult of Ur-Shulgi marks the moment Haqim created Alamut, home of the Banu Haqim. The Meneleans remember the date Carthage fell to the Romans.

### Seasonal

Those Kindred cults closely tied to nature often use seasonal festivals to highlight their beliefs.

**Midwinter:** The winter solstice is the longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the shortest in the Southern Hemisphere.

**Vernal Equinox:** The spring equinox takes place in March in the Northern Hemisphere and in September in the Southern Hemisphere. During the equinox, day and night are of equal length.

**Midsummer:** The summer solstice is the shortest night in the Northern Hemisphere and the longest in the Southern Hemisphere.

**Autumnal Equinox:** The fall equinox, like the spring equinox, is when the day and night are equal. It takes place in September in the Northern Hemisphere and March in the Southern Hemisphere.

## Methods of Recruitment

With a combination of charm and intimidation, a recruiter taps into a person's fears, hopes, and dreams, and lures them into a belief system. Be they the desperate, the driven, or the indulgent, vampire cults capitalize on those in search of something more than a solitary life provides.

### The Desperate

Kindred existence is often a lonely affair. Ennui grows, causing a vampire to become bored, listless, and disillusioned. After someone has fallen in love with someone or something, only to see it die with age, repeatedly over centuries, it's understandable for a vampire to fall into despair. It's a muted existence wrought with atrophy.

For these individuals, a Kindred church can provide new meaning, purpose, and a family. It's an appealing prospect to a Kindred in pain. The leader who can take away pain, even for a moment, earns true loyalty in return.

### The Driven

Some Kindred join cults not out of desperation but out of drive. They seek to join a group larger than themselves either for protection, camaraderie, or power. They play the game and they play it well, rising high enough in the ranks of the cult to use it for their own ends. Drawn more toward dominion than dogma, they must strive to stay atop the proverbial ladder.

### The Indulgent

Finally, Kindred with beliefs, tastes, or indulgences considered too deviant for polite society conduct themselves in secret far from prying eyes and always with one glance over their

shoulder. They are often lonely creatures, angry at the world, or view themselves as morally superior. For such hedonists, certain cults represent a welcome release and an opportunity to express their true selves. These groups can also delve into the darker aspects of Kindred society, performing blood sacrifices and worshiping creatures deemed heretical to the undead community.

## Places of Worship

While the internet has allowed individuals to come together in massive numbers without actually ever being in the same room, cults require direct contact. Though they come in various forms, a physical place is necessary for meetings, religious services, and emergencies.

### The Temple

Those who choose to call a place their temple gather in a safe building, using it to pray, commune, or perform their religious rites. It's a secure location, purchased outright and free from outsiders. Most cults utilize remodeled buildings or churches large enough to house their flock but small enough not to attract unwanted attention. Cults usually want to keep their prayers, blood rites, and other practices discrete. Temples also often serve as hostels for the cult, requiring multiple sleeping quarters and daytime security systems.

### Historic Site

A historic location connected to a cult's deity is of personal value to the parishioners especially if it's a place of ancestral significance. Perhaps it's the place where their methuselah was born, Embraced, or killed. Perhaps it's the former home of their progenitor or where they won a great battle. Cults can view such locations as vital to their identity, going to great lengths in order to financially secure them.

### Anywhere and Nowhere

Not every church needs a permanent location. Some transient cults are more nomadic. Rented spaces or temporary ones fill this need. Some examples might be a high school gymnasium after hours, a rented mortuary, the backroom of a bar, or a converted slaughterhouse complete with folding chairs and linoleum floors.

**[LAYOUT: THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER FROM PERSON A]**

### A Letter from Laylah Froud of the Bahari

Khal,

I've been thinking a lot about last week's discussion on the differences between a witch and a priest, how each has different duties and methods. While I agree with you that the witch grows and prunes and the priest codifies, I think there's a great deal more fluidity between the two roles than you allow. I am well aware that the Church of Set requires, well, set roles for all things, but there is no reason a priest couldn't receive visions or a witch couldn't set canon.

I suppose it's our difference in upbringing, so to speak. I know the Church has the Order of Taweret, what I would call a Bahari sect within the Church itself. As a follower of Lilith, I find myself at home with your witches in the Order, the Kindred who mix growth and law. In a sense, you could say they are the counterbalance to the larger church, the life to your god of death.

(Let it be known, of course, that I do not revile Set in any way. Set is simply a new frontier, held by a masculine-presenting force, that I have yet to explore!)

I look forward to hearing more of your thoughts on the subject. I know you're busy, so take your time in getting back to me.

Yours sincerely,

Laylah Froud

**[/LETTER]**

> Grooming, Love-Bombing, and Disciplines
>
> If you and your fellow players decide to tell a story about your coterie being inducted into a cult, be sure everyone knows what they're getting into. Read over the rules for considerate play in **Vampire: The Masquerade** and use them as needed. Be ready to pull back on scenes if they are too much. Love-bombing is similar to partner grooming, and can be part of abuse patterns.
>
> If you do decide to play a game like this, consider how Disciplines could be used to assist in love-bombing new members. Presence and Dominate are the obvious ones, but what about Animalism to win over their pets or Auspex to sense their motives before they realize them? Give it some thought — and again, be mindful of your players' boundaries and desires.

# Quick Cult Creation

Below are tables for rolling up your own cult. Use these for random rolls, or pick what you like from the tables and use them as inspiration. There is no wrong way to use these resources.

## Backgrounds

Cultists all need certain Backgrounds to make sure their cult is functioning as it should. Below are suggested uses of the some of the Backgrounds within a cult context.

### Allies

• A cult recruiter who is willing to take care of you when you're hurting, but needs you to also recruit new members of the cult.

• One of the cult's cooks who has access to the food supplies and knives.

•• Two mortal cult members with whom you're close.

•• A landlord who is a new member of the cult, who lets the cult get away with not paying the rent in exchange for free counseling and protection from their shady past.

••• A new member of the cult, who has a certain amount of influence within the local city's politics.

••• An established cultist, fanatically loyal to the religion but less than functional in the outside world.

•••• A ghoul or prestigious mortal within the cult who would die for you.

•••• The cult's elite members who will defend the organization to the hilt.

## Contacts

• A cultist from another branch of the order.

• A new member in the cult with a decent grasp of the occult.

•• A police dispatcher in a town unfriendly to the cult.

•• A ghoul researcher with a sizable library on the occult, willing to look things up for you.

••• The leader of another branch of the cult, or a second-in-command of the local cult.

••• A cultist well-placed in the city emergency services.

•••• A celebrity who vocally supports the cult in a way that doesn't damage the Masquerade.

•••• A cultist with impressive influence over the running of the city.

## Influence

• (Church) The cult holds meetings at a local house of worship, claiming to be a self-help group like Alcoholics Anonymous.

• (Street) The local gangs leave the abandoned home the cult squats in alone, unless they need something.

•• (Bureaucracy) The cult can get forged IDs once every couple of months for members who have gotten in trouble with the law.

•• (Transportation) Some of the cult members work as taxi drivers for extra money and don't charge fellow cultists fare.

••• (High Society) Several celebrities are members of the cult and promote it whenever the cult tells them to.

••• (Media) The cult has contacts in several local (or one national) news outlets that allow them to run ads, and also be interviewed in special segments, on the regular.

•••• (Industry) The cult makes and sells a product that has made them a formidable force in the market. Several high-up members of the cult are also infiltrating competitors to try and either force a merger or drive them out of business.

•••• (Police) The cops look the other way when the cultists drive drunk or people and animals go missing near the compound. It's too much trouble to get involved.

••••• (Politics) One of the members of the cult is a regional governor or involved in the country's legislative branch. They push really hard for legislation that benefits the cult, and manage to get funds directed to the cult.

••••• (Underworld) The cult has designated hitmen who take out their enemies, as well as money launderers, spies, and other criminals at their disposal. Some of them may even be members of the cult. They control the equivalent of a big mafia family's territory.

## Haven

• An abandoned house in an inner-city block. No running water or electricity, but room for all of the cultists.

• Tents in the woods of a national park, moving whenever you're discovered.

•• A nice two-bedroom apartment with crash pads on the floor and a futon for cultists, and the beds for leadership.

•• Rented space at a campground, held indefinitely.

••• An apartment building full of studios, with the cult's sanctuary on the ground floor. The building is managed by the leadership.

••• A full campground owned by the cult, with a lodge and tents. Most of the space is rented out to families and backpackers, who you try to indoctrinate.

•••• A suburban development owned by the cult, with the cult's center of worship either in the community center or housed in its own building.

•••• A mountain lodge with cabins. Full amenities, so long as the members of the cult behave themselves.

••••• A massive house of worship situated downtown in a major city. There are public spaces, of course, but the private spaces are heavily locked down and controlled.

••••• A network of comfortable safehouses throughout the country, all heavily decorated with cult iconography and things that can be used as weapons. Each safe house has an alarm system.

## Mawla

• A Kindred cultist, one step above you in the order.

• A vampire who has been studying the cult from the outside.

•• A vampire well-practiced in recruiting for cults.

•• A vampire who holds title in the cult and the local Kindred government.

••• A Kindred member of the cult who has magical aptitude and has taken a shine to you.

••• A vampire who used to belong to the cult, and still knows many of its old secrets.

•••• A Kindred member cultist with wealth, influence, and magical aptitude who will teach you some of the mystic secrets of the cult.

•••• A vampire Osiris who can find you teachers, allies, contacts, and other useful people and things in and connected to the cult.

••••• A vampire within the inner circle of the cult, who has taken you on as a special project. Their combined resources and connections are formidable.

••••• The Kindred behind the cult, who sees more use for you than others do.

**[LAYOUT: THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER FROM PERSON B]**

## A Letter from Khaled al-Fakhani of the Church of Set

Honored Laylah Froud,

As much as I appreciate your views on the Walid al-Set, I think you lose something from not having a formal education within the ranks of the faithful. There is much to be found within the exploration of pain, but you are not bringing your work to the great scholars and either letting it stand up or watching it crumble. To be frank: you have no network of orthodoxy to fall back on,

no one to objectively say that your communications with Lilith have been, indeed, with Lilith. That is why you don't understand the priesthood.

I don't mean to say, of course, that I disbelieve in the Typhonic Mother. Quite the opposite. One would be a fool to think that an entity called Lilith does not exist in some capacity. It would also be foolish, further, to think that this entity has not been speaking to you through some means. Looking at you with enough Auspex clears that up immediately. This letter is not about diminishing your own faith within the Order of Taweret, but you did ask for my thoughts, and unfortunately they come with a preamble.

Let us look at the largest religions in the world as of right now: Christianity and Islam. Within Christianity, the largest denomination is the Roman Catholic Church. In Islam, the Ahl as-Sunnah, or the Sunni Muslims, are almost 90% of the population of the faithful. Why is that?

I posit to you it is the strong network each denomination possesses. You were raised in the United States, so perhaps Catholicism will be an easier comparison for you. The priest guides the spiritual well-being of his flock. The bishops guide their flock of priests. The cardinals guide their bishops, and the Pope is the Shepherd of all Shepherds, the throne of God on Earth. Doctrine is passed down from hand to hand, solidified and codified through the repetition of the faithful. There is, of course, personal gnosis, but you know when that revelation comes from your god — there are hundreds of texts and mountains of theology to look to.

This brings me to my second posit: a priest is a link in this network. To keep the faith strong and stable, to express the faith outwards and help others seek the truth — that is the duty of a priest.

This of course does not mean that witches don't have their faith. A priest is meant to pull from the theology and canon set down by other priests before him. So it is in Catholic Christianity with the Bible and papal letters and bulls, so it is in Sunni Islam with the hadith and the Quran. A priest is a conduit for the faith as it is. A witch goes into the spirit of the faith itself and pulls out new meaning for herself and others. She may not always be listened to — she may even be a heretic, and burned for it, as so many were — but a witch wields the power of the faith and grows it, whereas a priest tends to the faithful and the doctrine. A faith that is all witches is a philosophy, a faith that is all priests grows stagnant.

I hope this helps with your confusion. I remain, as always, your faithful friend.

In Set's shadow,

Khaled al-Fakhani

**[/LETTER]**

## Cult Names

Naming things, especially groups, can be extremely difficult for even the most experienced storyteller. Below is a mix-and-match table of cult names. Add or remove prepositions and conjunctions, and pluralize as necessary.

**[BEGIN TABLE]**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Church of | The Light | Journey |
| Congregation of | The Darkness | Pilgrims |
| People's | The Garden | Service |

First The Three Angels Slaves
Heaven's Caine Servants
Children of Lilith Bound To Serve
Family Arikel Worshipers
Temple of Ishtar Disciples
Dominion of Absimiliard Faithful
People of Haqim Apostles
Garden of The Crone Witches
Tree of Veddartha Saints
City of Tremere Citizens
Earth's Zhao-lat Corpses
Death's Saulot Spirits
Servants of Enoch Freedom
Slaves of Irad Revolutionaries
Lilith's Zillah Lovers
Caine's The Lovers Warriors
The Abyss's The Martyr General Soldiers
Repentant Ennoia Children
Penitents of Malkav Literalists
Precious Ravana Scholars
Community of Set Gardeners
Songs of Troile Singers
Order of Brujah Dancers
Local Ilyes Teachers
Disciples of Al-Mahri Warlocks
Fundamentalist Nergal Of the Garden
World Ninmug Of the Abyss
Unification Loz Of the Light
Mission of Lucian Of the Undying
At the Heart of Mekhet Of the Word
Fiat Laodice Of the Umbra
Fidelity of Dracian Of the Roses
International Society of Temple Of the Mother

Yearning for Group Home Of the Father
Foundation for Candlelight Of the Blood
Ancient Mystical Order of Vigil Prayer
Apostolic Malakai
Guardians
Brethren of Insight Of Enoch
Darkness Song Of the Second City
Cyber- Blood Of the Third City
Esoteric Promise Of the First Garden
Insight Sin Of the Second Garden
Monastic Order of Redemption Of the Third Garden
Movement of/to Prayer Devotions
Moral Worlds Fundamentalists
Blood of Martyrs Community
Hands of Thorns Church
Nation of Knives March
The New Ashur
Promises
The Promised Immortality/Immortal Secrets
House of Spirit/Spiritual Coven
Pilgrims of Saint Covenant
Saint Purity/Pure Circle
Shepherds of Mourning/Mourn Rebirth
Dancers of/in Morning Sect
Blessing of Evening Religion
United Midnight Union
One Daybreak Consecration
Two Resurrection Bond
Three Open Healers
Four Special Brethren
Five Chosen Fraternity
Six Sacred Sorority
Seven Holy In Silence

Sunrise Royal In Suffering
Sunset Imperial In Love
Valley of Suffering In Truth
Society of Empathic In Beauty
Holy Service/Serving In Knowledge
The Way of Kingdom Triumphant
Sacred Principality Princes
Consecrated Nation Saints
Bound Shining In Blood
Happy Repentant Family
Neo- Wild Blood Brethren
Cainite Raging Movement
Kindred
Untamed Philosophy
Ghoul Fallen Army
Shadow of Silent Heathens
Covenant of Reborn Heretics
Traditional Welcoming Proclaimers
Traditions of Warm Believers
Syncretic Cold Society
Heretical Golden Anonymous
All Silver Order
Circle of Scarlet Identity
Alliance of Dark Theism
Reformed Pale Anchorites
Saints Crystalline Mystics
Council of Final Mediums
Marriage of Apocalyptic Psychics
Gateways to Starlight/Starlit Celebrants/Celebration
Final Umbra/Umbral Thought
Beginnings of Singing Universal
Home of Quiet Academy
Antinomian Still Reason

High Low Transcendence

**[END TABLE]**

## Symbols

While not every church has a symbol, many do, and the following tables offer some basic meanings for colors, objects, and creatures. Storytellers and players can use them in combination to create a quick flag, crest, or icon as well as incorporate them into rituals and practices. For example, a cult dedicated to peace and integrity might use a combination of doves in blue and white, while a cult dedicated to war and victory might showcase a ram and arrow in black, red, or gold colors.

### Colors

**[THIS IS A TABLE]**

Black Authority, Darkness, Death, Elegance, Formality, Power, Sophistication, Strength

Blue Coldness, Emotion, Honor, Integrity, Loyalty, Melancholia, Peace, Trust, Water

Brown Confidence, Earth, Endurance, Nature, Reliability

Gold Achievement, Success, Triumph

Green Balance, Calm, Growth, Honesty, Money, Nature, Relaxation, Safety

Grey Intelligence, Neutrality, Seriousness, Tradition

Orange Communication, Creativity, Optimism

Purple Elegance, Imagination, Magic, Mystery, Royalty, Sophistication

Red Action, Ambition, Anger, Courage, Determination, Energy, Love, Passion, Romance

Silver Emotions, the Moon, Mystery

White Innocence, Peace, Perfection, Purity, Winter

Yellow Comfort, Cowardice, Energy, Impatience, Intellect

**[/TABLE ENDS]**

### Objects

**[THIS IS A TABLE]**

Air Communication, Imagination, Intelligence, Perception, Travel

All-Seeing Eye Higher Knowledge, Inner Vision, Insight, Spiritual Sight

Apple Immortality, Knowledge, Luxury, Peace, Sexual Awakening

Arrow Flight, Knowledge, Masculinity, Mortality, Power, Swiftness, War

Bell Signals, The Expansion of Consciousness, The Mind, The Voice of God

Book Education, Faith, Knowledge, Learning, Secrets

Caduceus Authority, Harmony, Health, Infinity, Medicine, Supernatural Forces

Candle Benevolence, Life, Light, Truth, Vigilance, Wisdom

Chalice Communion, Femininity, Forgiveness, Sacrament, Sharing, Water

Circle Femininity, Magic, Perfection, Protection, Sacred Space, Unity, Wholeness

Compass Balance, Direction, Perfection, Spirit, Time

Crescent Moon Dreams, Intuition, New Beginnings

Crown Authority, Loyalty, Power, Royalty, Superiority, Wealth

Earth Dependability, Material Wealth, Orderliness, Prosperity, Sustenance, Wisdom

Egg New Life, Resurrection, The Moon

Feather Air, Balance, Communication, Flight, ice, Truth

Fire Anger, Creativity, Destruction, Knowledge, Transformation

Fruit Earthly Pleasure, Overindulgence, Sexuality, Temptation

Heart Charity, Compassion, Love, Mercy

Horseshoe Fortune, Good Luck, Protection

Hourglass Death, Rebirth, Time

Key Access, Freedom, Initiation, Spiritual Knowledge

Ladder Ascension, Fulfillment of Potential, Transcendence

Lotus Flower Beauty, Enlightenment, Purity, Reinvention

Lightning Bolt Boldness, Energetic Action, Power, Salvation, Strength

Mirror Awareness, Gateways, Reflection

Scepter Authority, Control, Royalty, Wealth

Scythe Collection, Death, Harvest, Loss, Ruin

Shell Journey, Pilgrimage, Resurrection

Star Fame, Inspiration, Majesty, Spirit, Triumph

Sword Defense, Protection, Safety, Security, Strength

Water Intuition, Life, Purification, Reflection, Transformation

Wheel Change, Destiny, Fate, Luck, Motion

Wings Flight, Release, Weightlessness

Wreath Conquest, Success, Triumph, Victory

**[/TABLE ENDS]**

## Creatures

**[THIS IS A TABLE]**

Bear Healing, Introspection, Strength

Buffalo Courage, Endurance, Sanctity

Butterfly Hope, Resurrection, Transformation

Crow Death, Prophecy, Wisdom

Deer Gentleness, Nobility, Power

Dove Peace, Tranquility

Dragon Luck, Nobility, Power, Strength

Eagle Divinity, Integrity, Nobility

Elephant Loyalty, Power, Stamina, Strength

Fish Fertility, Purification

Fox Agility, Cunning, Intelligence

Griffin Boldness, Courage, Strength

Lion Leadership, Nobility, Strength

Mermaid Emotion, Independence, Mystery, Perceptiveness, Seduction, Untamed Emotion

Mouse Innocence, Scrutiny, Survival

Ouroboros Continuity, Eternity, Motion, Purity, Rebirth, Renewal, Wholeness

Owl Fertility, Magic, Mystery, Wisdom

Phoenix Immortality, Resurrection, Victory

Rabbit Fertility, Serenity, Virtue

Ram Force, Glory, Innocence, Power

Scorpion Death, Protection, Transformation

Snake Creation, Death, Power, Transmutation, Wisdom

Sphinx Guardian, Riddles, Wisdom

Spider Construction, Divinity, Femininity, Patience

Tiger Power, Protection, Royalty, Unpredictability

Unicorn Harmony, Innocence, Integrity, Purification, Truth, Wisdom

Wolf Education, Guardianship, Instinct, Loyalty

**[/TABLE ENDS]**

## Basic Cult Descriptions

Use these as the basis of a cult and build from there. These descriptions do not include any mechanics, so feel free to customize them as you like.

- A Bahari cult. They grow urban gardens and provide job education for mortals, but they are also notorious for their less-regulated “education.”
- A heretical Ministry sect. They believe that Set’s murder of Osiris was not necessary, but is something that needs to be atoned for. This cult has its fingers in various funeral homes and performs strange rituals on the dead.

- A Gehenna cult. They believe the Red Star event is a reminder of things to come.
- A cult of Arikel. Consisting of Toreador and their loveliest ghouls, this cult dedicates itself to physical perfection, reasoning that the struggle to attain the highest form of aesthetic attraction reflects itself in the soul.
- A cult of Oblivion. They practice various shadow arts and blindfold themselves to worship.
- A cult of vampiric reason. Based on the writings of Dr. Netchurch, they seek out the scientific explanations for vampirism and vampiric Disciplines, and perform horrific experiments on nonbelievers.
- A cult of the Typhonic beast. They run underground fight clubs and sell highly-trained human combat ghouls, but also rescue dogs.
- A cult completely made up of humans who worship a Ventrue elder. They take "business acuity" classes and dress in rigid business formal every day.
- A teenage cult. They talk a big game about sacrificing animals to Satan, but honestly they love their cats too much. Their leader is very disappointed.
- A cult that runs a vegan pop-up restaurant to find clean blood for their rigorously health-conscious undead members.
- A sex cult with regular masked orgies.
- A cult of Ravana. Its members practice strange uses of Presence and Obfuscate alongside other Disciplines in the hopes of finding a way to bring him back.
- A cult of ghouls who take a blood sacrament. They are all unbound to any one Kindred and swear allegiance only to each other.
- A cult of singers who meet in unlit places at night to placate Oblivion with their songs.
- A cult of elders who only drink blood from those with True Faith, in hopes this will cure their curse.
- A cult dedicated to the three angels who visited Caine: Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel. They hope to be forgiven one day and raise their Humanity as high as possible in order to do so.
- As the cult of the three angels above, but they seek to destroy or diablerize the three angels.
- A cult of personal transcendence that is really just a front for seeking out ideal candidates for the Ministry Embrace.
- A Brujah cult based on the Cult of the Supreme Being, with Troile as the Supreme Being. Virtues include honesty, physical prowess, and purity of intent.
- A cult that seeks to corrupt society at the highest level through needless things and billionaires' fear of the poor.
- A UFO cult that believes the antediluvians were beings from another planet or a higher dimension and not the childer of the biblical Caine.

- A cult of news nightcrawlers who sell the information they gather to flood the media with material to help fill time and distract from vampire life. They obsess over the coverage they get and feel touched by humanity from the stories they share.
- A cult of former sun worshipers who miss dearly the light they once loved so much. They work to recreate their precious sun-soaked days with white linen outfits, bright lights, and sandals.
- A cult of personality around a single vampire. He gives his worshipers occasional blessings or gifts, but mostly the cultists serve him in any capacity he desires.
- A group of vampires obsessed with eating (in the mortal sense) even in unlife. They go so far as to willingly make themselves sick eating normal food just to get the taste. Less extreme members mix alcohol and herbs with their blood, or deliberately feed off people who have been fed strong-tasting food.
- A cult of neonate vampires who worship the thrill of the hunt. They dress impeccably and treat feeding like British nobility treat foxhunting.
- A cult of vampires who worship the 1950s nuclear family and go so far as to have mock wedding and birth ceremonies. They're extremely gendered and insist they draw power from that binary.
- The Patmostine Order believes the Gehenna event was the evangelical Christian Rapture, and that no one was found worthy. They work to prepare Kindred society to be saved, whether they like it or not.
- The Diamond Thunderbolt is an all-Kindred order that practices self-sacrifice and self-abnegation to bring forth a rain of "spiritual nectar" to bless and uplift the souls of humanity. They are divided as to whether or not this will extend to vampires.
- A mysterious Nosferatu cult that believes it is their mission to mutate humanity to a higher state of being through disease and culling of weakness. Some of their more fanatical members also create blood plagues.
- A cult of blood dolls who dress modestly and bleach their skin. They believe they honor their undead gods by doing so.
- An Anarch cult that tries to find the common thread in all human religions. They seek to free themselves from the Beast by rigorous study and unlocking the riddle of unfettered spirituality.
- An offshoot of the Church of Set, populated mostly by members of the Clan of Death. They perform elaborate rituals which follow the journey of Osiris and Sutekh through the underworld, sometimes even sailing on literal rivers in total darkness on flimsy barges.
- A wild, hedonistic mystery cult of blood dolls and ghouls who dance themselves into unconsciousness so their regnants can feed on them. They say they have visions from the ecstasy.
- A Gangrel cult whose members sacrificially and nonfatally immerse themselves in sand, the ocean, swamps, and other natural features to meditate.

- A cult that only has one member in every city. They are meant to represent Caine, wandering in the wilderness with no friends.
- A Bahari cult that follows the *Revelations of the Dark Mother* to the letter. They believe Lilith wants the unworthy dead, and so they steal knowledge and kill those who held it.
- A Banu Haqim cult that focuses on hand-to-hand combat. Their philosophy suggests that is the only way to truly grapple with your demons. They diablerize everyone they kill.
- A Clan of Death cult whose members spend all of their time preparing mortals to become powerful wraiths once they are inevitably destroyed by outside forces.
- A vampire cult that ghouls only children to keep them in their state of innocence. They almost exclusively feed off these children.
- A cult of Tremere who worship Thaumaturgy as its own entity. They feel blessed to be chosen by the god they channel. Other Tremere think of them as fanatics at best.
- A cult of twelve vampire elders who believe themselves to be the fallen twelve gods of Mount Olympus. Their servitors worship them with mystery rituals and blood.
- A cult of Malkavians who view trauma as the only true method of growth, and so regularly perform nonconsensual exposure therapy on themselves and others. They have keen Auspex senses that reveal strange beings.
- A ghoul cult within the Church of Set that practices snake-handling.

## Sample Cult Members

Below are a smattering of potential members of your cult. Whether human, ghoul, or vampire, they are all devoted to the cause.

### Mortals

- A ghoul who does the cult's laundry and is privately a deep fanatic.
- A human blood doll who wears his multiple sacrificial scars with pride.
- A human who manages the weapons storage for the cult. She says she's former military, but the branch keeps changing.
- A ghoul who tortures misbehaving human cultists. She's very pleasant to talk to when off the job.
- Members of a revenant family who act as sextons and housekeepers for the cult.
- A human celebrity who talks up the cult on daytime TV. Somehow he maintains his charisma.
- A single middle-aged human woman who flirts with all of her fellow cultists and then shares their secrets with the leadership.
- A grandfatherly type with a violent streak.
- Children of human cultists. They have wide eyes and are constantly on alert.
- A human who keeps a vampire's schedule, drinks blood, and only eats raw meat. Their hair is falling out and their scalp is swollen, but they seem happy.

- A former teenage runaway who has become a prize ghoul.
- A ghoul with a “sacred familiar”: a snake, a raven, or something else.
- A blood doll who plays at being modest and shy to be seen as worthy of being fed on more.
- A cultist at any stage of life or undeath who refuses to leave the compound, citing that “they” will get her.
- A human cultist who feels that the cult justifies the conspiracy theories she clings to.
- A human member of the cult who ran away, came back, was punished, and holds her faith closer than ever.
- A ghoul and a vampire who are deeply in love. It’s unclear who was in the cult first, but one of them pulled the other in.
- The cult’s online recruiter who is not particularly good at his job — he uses too much jargon.
- A human who holds down odd jobs when she’s not working for the cult for free. She doesn’t get enough sleep and her eyes are bloodshot.
- A ghoul who “collects” foster children to induct into the cult. Some of them go missing.
- The human Sunday school teacher who takes care of the children and liaises with the adults.
- The ghoul chef who cooks for the humans of the cult and looks down on them.
- The human former therapist who constructed the cult’s regimen of love-bombing and gaslighting.
- The former investigator who tried to remain detached but fell into the cult’s arms.
- A human who claims to be a psychic and medium. Maybe she is, maybe she isn’t. Her “channeling” is always incoherent and esoteric.
- A ghoul who always seems to get blamed for the problems in the cult.
- The husband of a human cult member who seems terrified of everyone else in the cult. He takes great pains to be seen as a “normal” cultist.
- A ghoul who only wears clothing she’s made and will only eat raw food.
- A blood doll who resents anyone the leadership talks to and jealously guards her access to them.
- A human cultist who was born into another cult, and as a consequence, clings to this one as part of her adult identity.
- A wild-haired, wild-eyed older human cultist who cheerfully explores the darker beliefs of the cult and talks about them as though they are normal and fine. He occasionally has seizures, though whether those are “normal” or supernatural, no one seems to be able to tell.

- The animals of the cult. They are very suspicious of newcomers and seem to have minds of their own. Some might be ghouls, some might not be, it's difficult to determine with the naked eye.

### Vampires

- An ancilla cultist who recently joined after escaping their abusive sire, she has all the desperate zeal of a new convert.
- A neonate who was Embraced into the cult and knows nothing else.
- Twin Malkavian neonates who refuse to be farther than ten feet away from each other at all times.
- A Toreador who has taken a vow of silence.
- A Tremere ancilla who only believes in practical research, not theory.
- A former teenage runaway who is now an ancilla with a youthful face and a saintly disposition.
- A vampire neonate who keeps notes on everything everyone says.
- A vampire from the Clan of Death who is always playing with tarot cards, ouija boards, pendulums, etc.
- A Toreador who makes the cult's sacred icons in exchange for blood and spiritual counseling.
- A neonate who struggles with the cult's doctrine even though she truly believes in its mission.
- A vampire ancilla who uses the human members of the cult as personal servants.
- The childe of the vampire who founded the cult. She is less devoted, maybe even heretical, but she is still part of the cult and she is treated either like royalty or with resentment.
- The former Primogen who struggles with letting go and letting her faith carry her along with the cult's practices.
- The cult's resident vampire pyromaniac and fire-dancer.
- A member of the Ministry who seems to link the cult to the story of Sutekh at every opportunity. Leadership tolerates him.
- A vampiric spiritual counselor who practices Oblivion to lend an air of legitimacy to her sessions.
- A self-abnegating neonate who strives for both physical and spiritual perfection in odd and concerning ways.

## Sample Cult: The Order of Taweret

**Description:** The Church of Set is one of the single largest (perhaps *the* largest of) Kindred faiths, spanning clans, age categories, and political groups. It is a wealthy institution and a powerful one, and some groups attach themselves to it out of convenience, safety, an agreement in doctrine, or a mix of the three. As a result, there are, of course, disagreements with the mainstream stance.

The Order of Taweret are one such group. Founded by a Ba'ham who fled to the Church of Set for protection, the Order are nominally followers of the Church's doctrine — but they focus on Lilith as Set's progenitor, and not on Set himself.

In Egyptian mythology, Taweret is a goddess of childbirth (specifically of the struggle and pain of childbirth) and funeral rites. She is a liminal goddess, and one who guides humans through the two most potent transitions in their short lives. Taweret is also represented as a hippo-woman, and the mother of various Egyptian gods, including, in some cases, Set. Her links to growth, the Underworld, the river Nile, and children make her an obvious avatar of Lilith — at the very least for the hybrid Bahari who revere her in this form.

The Order of Taweret is an odd construction. While they do keep the Oath of Lilith as described in the *Revelations of the Dark Mother,* that is about the extent of their adherence to "typical" Bahari doctrine (if anything can be described as typical when it comes to the followers of Lilith). Order devotees keep urban gardens, usually on empty lots or in their apartments. They assist their Church of Set fellows in judging the ethos of humanity — but through this harsh and unforgiving judgment, they find those who have been chosen to walk the Path of Lilith. This is their strongest divergence from Church orthodoxy, the idea that those who suffer in their own imperfection can find a way out, instead of dying in it.

Order members are spiritual midwives, torturers, shepherds, and psychopomps. Pain and love are both gifts to be given, and Order members only offer them to the genuinely willing and able. They offer spiritual counseling to members of the Church of Set as well as unaffiliated vampires, keep tabs on the Church's targets to see if any of them are worth rebuilding, and tend gardens, both physical and emotional. They also shepherd the Embrace, encouraging it, grooming kine for rebirth into undeath, and making the entire process ritualistic.

It is extremely rare to find more than one member of the Order of Taweret in any given domain. Sometimes they meet in person, but most often they leave markers on sites related to maternity, such as hospitals and orphanages, to say whether they're present in the city or when they departed. As Lilith and Taweret walked their paths alone, with brief respites for company, so too do Order members.

**Concepts:** Undead midwife, dictatorial project manager, urban gardener/farmer, fanatical Harpy, ceremonial Elysium Keeper, graffiti artist, millennial burnout hungry for more

**Recommended Backgrounds:** Mawla, Influence (High Society), Influence (Politics), Influence (Bureaucracy), Mask, Status, Haven

# New Coterie Types

Over the last two decades, Kindred society has experienced unprecedented tectonic shifts. As Anarchs are routed and as Camarilla cities fall, the Second Inquisition makes short work of wayward Kindred who travel on their own. In response, Kindred have found strength in numbers, forming coteries for the purposes of self-interest, shared beliefs, and mutual survival. Within those Kindred communities of faith, cohorts and coteries have taken on additional functions. Cerberi, Champion, Nomad, and Watchmen coteries are common, as are the examples below.

## Envoys

*"We may view the world differently, and we may worship different gods, but working together, we have a chance at survival. I want to turn our differences into collective strengths."*

This group serves on diplomatic missions, functioning as negotiators and mediators between disparate parties. Most often, envoy coteries form in the wake of conflicts between warring factions. When two or more cults come to a compromise, they sometimes task their younger members with forming such a coterie so shared service and common causes can transcend old grievances.

- **Domain:** Chasse (•), Lien (•••)
- **Contacts:** (•••) (mortals from diverse backgrounds and professions)
- **Resources:** (••) (pooled cash and assets)
- **Status Flaw:** (•) Suspect

**Possible extras:** Mask (cover identities for different domains), No Haven (always on the move)

## Think Tank

*"Okay, but I'm gonna have to see the books."*

Consisting of old and more established Kindred, think tank coteries are advisors, strategists, and researchers for a given cult. Preferably, they are a small group of individuals who are part of the membership, but leaders sometimes hire think tanks when they are trying to take their faith to the next level.

A think tank can take a small cult and grow it into a powerful entity through their expertise. They tend to research the best ways to recruit in a particular city, how to disseminate information, and how to use the local laws to the cult's advantage. They have almost unlimited access to the logistical aspects of the church so they can create new procedures or policies for the benefit of the leadership.

Most think tanks are long-standing allies who have spent years working together, but some come together for a specific task and dissolve once they complete their goal. Members of think tanks are often procedural specialists, efficiency experts, former bureaucrats, marketing geniuses, or experts in a subject critical to a cult's interests.

- **Domain:** Chasse (•) and Lien (•••)
- **Allies:** (•••) (analysts, bureaucrats, soldiers, etc.)
- **Haven:** (•) (small office as base of operations)

**Possible extras:** Resources (profits made from selling their services), Retainers (librarians, scholars)

**[LAYOUT: THE FOLLOWING IS A LETTER FROM PERSON A]**

## An Accord Between Faiths

Khal,

I admit, it took me three fucking readings of your letter to read it without getting pissed. Being told I don't know what I'm doing is a good way of getting to me — but I think you knew that

when you wrote that letter. I would expect nothing less from a Priest of Set, especially one who knows I prefer to learn through, shall we say, visceral methods.

I agree with you that a religion which is all witches is more of a philosophy. Some people who read Dolium's *Revelations of the Dark Mother* mistake the Bahari for an organized religion with pointlessly sadistic methods. Those people are fools. Each Ba'ham is a witch and a religion in her own right, her own temple and pope and sacred scripture. To destroy that is to destroy a precious resource. A cult of Bahari is like several different sects trying to work together on a long-term interfaith project. It can work, of course, but eventually we will leave to seek friends elsewhere. There is only so much one person can teach us — luckily I have a lot more to learn from you!

There is gnosis to be had here, and to be had elsewhere as well. A human can never fully know themself and their own depths — but as vampires, we have infinite time. I mean to learn and learn and learn until my very body is torn away and all that remains is the glory of the garden of knowledge that I will become. I understand that priests cannot have this experience, and for that I pity them.

A priest must be solid and stable. I cannot follow that route. I have never been able to follow that route, and I do not look nor hope to at any point. If I am to take on an apprentice or an acolyte, I might do that, but then they will change in their own way, and their faith will not be the same as mine. To see you with your childer is to watch you shaping clay, and while that is beautiful, I would much rather be planting and growing a tree. I want to see that life that they take on without me, without my name attached.

As always, thank you so much for allowing me a position within the Church of Set to continue practicing and discussing my faith in safety. It means so much more to me than you know.

I look forward to seeing you again next Elysium.

Yours sincerely,

Laylah Froud

**[/LETTER ENDS]**

# Hecata

## The Clan of Death, Necromancers, Graverobbers, The Family, Stiffs, Corpses, Devil-Kindred, Lazarenes

You feel it, don't you? Just like all Kindred, you died and came back. But when you died, your soul resisted a little longer than that of your neighbor. You felt the pull of Oblivion, and it fucked you up. You struggled with the return to the mortal shell and you're not sure you're happy to be back. You're less and more than all your undead kin. You already understand what it is to be dead, to experience the end, to know the fear of the great nothingness. Welcome to the family.

You're one of us. You're my cousin, his sister, and her daughter. We're connected not only by blood, and by vitae, but by that first-hand knowledge of death. Consider yourself awake now? When you died, you nearly stayed dead and you're terrified. But I bet you're turned on by the thrill of it too. How exciting, to feel death and evade it. It's like looping a belt around your neck and jerking off while hanging in a wardrobe, and God you want that feeling again. It's enticing, isn't it, to know now you can commune with death like its your brother, your aunt, or your father?

Mystery. It's a gorgeous word. The mystery of the missing treasure. The mysterious Mr. X. The murder mystery. The mystery of life after death. The greatest mystery of God in heaven.

You'll work on studying and solving the darkest mysteries, and forming new, forbidden ones. You belong to a family who want all the answers, because we're greedy, and once we have them, we'll use those answers against our enemies. You'll gain mastery over the dead and the living. You'll possess a power no other vampires have the balls to harness.

You're now of a family, a clan, and a religion dedicated to enriching our lives, such as they are, and those of our mortal kin. Every member of this family is determined to master death. Maybe you'll want to stave off the end for your loved ones, perhaps you'll want to become a notorious necromancer and revive your dead girlfriend, or maybe, just maybe, you'll want to feel more potent than you ever did in life.

This didn't happen by accident, okay? You were chosen. Keep that in mind when you feel isolated from other vampires. You were selected for the Embrace because we know you're capable of making your family prouder dead than you were alive.

Listen, just like every family, there's going to be those you see every week, some you see every year, and some you only hear of behind closed doors. The ones not invited to parties. The black sheep. Well to some of us, you'll be one of them. But to others, you'll be closer than a living relative.

We're going to accomplish so much together, you know? You really are going to make your family proud. Do right by us and we'll take care of you.

The rest though? All those pricks of other clans and sects?

Fuck them. Fuck anyone else breathing or not breathing, if they're not of our Blood.

**[LAYOUT: TYPEWRITTEN LETTER]**

This is a time of great change, mother. Our family is larger now. No less dysfunctional, but larger. Safety in numbers becomes important when the Camarilla say, "You're with us or against

us, but you? You can never be with us." Safety in numbers becomes important when vampire killers are looking for companies, properties, and accounts made in the name of some dead Giovanni or Dunsirn. The family comes together to outlast the winter storm.

But just as the seasons change, death has many faces, as our cousins always say. Put aside your historic enmity for the Venetians, pocket your distrust for the Samedi, and recognize that death, no matter the mask it wears, is still death. We are death. We always have been, and always will be.

Remember, mother, how it feels the moment life leaves a victim. Their last gasp and rattle. Remember also how it feels to cheat fate and bestow your vitae unto another. Finally, remember how it feels when you speak with the dead, and they tell you the secrets of the Underworld. Our existences are ones of rich exploration and dark arts others fear to study.

I understand you must feel disorientated, waking up to such a changed world. Just remember that your new family will help you become acclimated, will introduce you to whichever courts you need to visit, and will protect you against any outside knives stabbing in.

We still represent all that is glorious and squalid in death. We might counsel a Sheriff on methods of execution, solve a murder through interrogation of the victim, use the dead to spy on our enemies, celebrate the passing of a legendary vampire with the proclamation of memorial secrets, or have a spectre burn a Prince's haven to the ground while we lie safely ensconced in our tombs. We might even bind the tortured souls of fallen enemies, stuck in the Underworld.

Yes, the seasons change. It is winter for our kind. The Inquisition's fires burn. The Gehenna War rages. Kindred fall by the hundred.

Only one clan can stand to profit, and there's no shame in being a vulture or a rat on a battlefield.

This is our age. As once-unassailable vampires and their sects decay, death dominates all.

Roger de Camden, Prince of Edinburgh, Pater of the Cult of Mithras, Wearer of the Death's Head Mask

**[LAYOUT: TYPEWRITTEN LETTER ENDS]**

## Who are the Hecata?

Hecata sires favor mortals either from their own mortal families, or who provide links to outside families from whom the Hecata would benefit. They prefer kine of a morbid, black-humored, or pragmatic bent, due to the clan's death-dealing nature. They have little need for the compassionate or empathetic, unless it serves to satisfy a gap the clan — which in many ways is structured like an expanding corporation as much as it is a family — requires filled.

The Hecata Embrace those who show a resolute willingness to do what needs to be done, for the good of the family, their block, their community, or their society, ahead of their own interests. The family must always come first, whether or not your surname is Giovanni. There are no other "independents" these nights, so it's the Hecata versus everybody else. The Necromancers describe their Embrace tradition as "gifting the truly exceptional with membership in the most exclusive of households." Spontaneous Embraces are very much frowned upon by the wider clan, the members of which favor the ritualistic approach of observing, grooming, and voting on which mortals deserve immortality.

Kingpins, self-starters, individuals who have faced or dealt death, and those with medical or occult knowledge all appeal to the Hecata. Anyone with a true, scientific interest in death, the afterlife, and religion stands a chance of being approached for the Embrace, though academic theologians are more likely recipients of the bite than the blindly faithful. Many become vampires dedicated to serving the family, expanding its interests, and researching new mysteries associated with the cycle of life and death. Different fledglings set to work handling the living, the dying, the dead, and the rotting, in the form of nurses and carers, morticians, and of course necromancers. Each adds something to the clan.

The Hecata look for many childer among miscreants of all kinds. Though they do not control any widespread mortal crime empires, the clan appreciates the practiced killer, the cold-blooded money launderer, and the charming con artist. Their roles continue on once they receive the Embrace, complementing the clan's legitimate businesses — investment banks, trading conglomerates, and private hospitals and care facilities — with a steady flow of illicit cash and bodies.

# Hecata Archetypes

## Champion Bullshitter

The Hecata may wave the banner of independence, but they still require vampires who can break bread with Camarilla courts and Anarch packs. This character could have been anything from a con artist to a diplomat in life, but the crucial thing is they know how to sell a deal without showing their entire hand to the outsiders. The champion bullshitter was Embraced for their ability to charm the doubters and present a believable façade for the clan's activities.

## Forensic Specialist

The Clan of Death lives up to its title, with a great many of its members schooled in the passage of life to death. In the last century there's been an upsurge in nurses, surgeons, and laboratory staff being Embraced, with a special place set for medically trained individuals in law enforcement. This character was always one of the first to crime scenes, and was able to alter evidence, misfile reports, or spin a narrative of death that protects the family, all while coming face-to-face with death on a regular basis.

## Natural Necromancer

Necromancers are pretty uncommon among the ranks of mortals, even those with blood connections to Clan Hecata. When a vampire from the Clan of Death finds a mortal with a genuine interest in, and aptitude for, death magic — whether through practice of seances, ghost hunting on vlogs, exorcisms, or study of occult rituals — they rarely go without long-term observation and the potential for an Embrace. These individuals sometimes harbor deviant practices, or an ethical remove when it comes to handling corpses and treating with the dead. The Hecata see this kind of behavior as ripe blackmail material, so if the necromancer is unfit for the Embrace, they'll serve as a mortal retainer.

## Prodigal Child

The Hecata have a blind spot when it comes to their mortal descendants, sometimes Embracing inept family members simply because they share the same name. However, characters such as this one stand out, prove themselves to the clan, and end up with multiple prospective sires fighting for the right to Embrace. The prodigal child is often seen as a rising star, fit for

important responsibilities within the family and clan. Growing up in such a twisted family has a way of fucking up such a mortal's sensibilities and boundaries, however.

### Unscrupulous Banker

As far as the rest of Kindred society is concerned, the Giovanni — and more broadly, the Hecata — are the bank. They're Switzerland. They act as the neutral party, perfect for mediation and guaranteed to protect assets due to their unswerving dedication to non-involvement in the Jyhad. This character would be targeted for their willingness to do anything to cut a profit, whether that means investing in unethical concerns, accepting laundered funds, or playing guard to investments most banks wouldn't touch — including blood, special kine, or torpid Kindred.

## Disciplines

**Auspex:** The power to receive visions of fate's intentions and speak without moving one's lips. The Hecata believe fate has grand plans for their clan, and they do so enjoy meddling in the fates of others. They might predict a mortal's death and prevent it, or they might hasten someone's departure. The Hecata use Auspex to plan their moves — for this clan is cautious, and rarely strikes on impulse — and to catch glimpses of the restless dead, enabling the dread arts for which the clan is known.

**Fortitude:** The ability to resist blows, bullets and fire. The Hecata believe they are closer to death than any other clan, and the way in which they manifest this Discipline may lend credence to that claim. They absorb injuries as a corpse might, without feeling or consideration. As fists and blades rain down on them, the Necromancers shrug off such harm, inexorably approaching their target. Their minds are likewise resistant to meddling, detached in a sense from mortal fragility.

**Oblivion:** The ability to commune with, manipulate, and control the energies of death and the dead. This power is among the most mysterious of Disciplines, as it reaches into the occult territory of the afterlife. Through its use, the Hecata might interrogate a spectre or set it to attack a rival. They might rot a mortal's flesh with a touch or practice a foul ceremony designed to drive a meddling kine to their just reward. Oblivion stains the user's soul, but the Hecata see it as a necessary evil for understanding the mysteries of life, death, and undeath.

> Shifts in the Blood
>
> The Hecata have long been interested in the malleability of the Blood, and how their favored Disciplines in these nights differ from those of their ancestors, and their ancestors before them. While they speculate it may be due to the formation of the Hecata and destruction of many Giovanni elders in recent years, Necromancers still guess at why some Giovanni favor forceful Disciplines, with Dominate often in the place of Auspex, and Samedi favor subterfuge, with Obfuscate in its place instead. Why the ability for heightened senses is the power so often lost, even the most accomplished Necromancers cannot say.
>
> At the Storyteller's discretion, Hecata of the Giovanni line may replace Auspex with Dominate, Samedi may replace Auspex with Obfuscate, Lamiae may replace Fortitude with Potence, and Nagaraja may replace Fortitude with Dominate. Note that making this choice may nullify benefits from some loresheets found in this

book, so the default treatment and amalgams common to the Clan of Death treat Auspex, Fortitude, and Oblivion as their clan Disciplines.

## Compulsion

### Hecata: *Morbidity*

The Hecata are possessed of a peculiar curiosity paired with detachment from compassion and empathy, likely due to their frequent dealings with corpses and the wraiths of those who died tragic deaths. Their Blood urges them to study the individuals around them for signs of illness, frailty, or impending death. Until they have either predicted a death or solved the cause of a local one, the vampire suffers a three-dice penalty to other rolls. Note that their conclusions do not need to be absolutely correct, but should stay within the boundaries of the possible.

## Bane

Steeped in death, the fangs of the Hecata bring not bliss, but agony. Victims caught unawares will violently resist unless restrained, and few people submit willingly to the torture that is the Hecata Kiss.

The pain from the Hecata bite varies depending on the Hecata's Bane Severity. When drinking directly from a victim, Hecata cause additional Superficial Health damage equal to their Bane Severity for each level of Hunger slaked. Unwilling mortals not restrained will try to escape, and even those coerced or willing must succeed in a Stamina + Resolve test against Difficulty 3 in order not to recoil. Vampire victims of the Hecata bite must make a Frenzy test against Difficulty 3 to avoid falling into a terror frenzy.

### Feeding Methods

To circumvent their bane, some Hecata feed from blood bags and fresh corpses. Others develop methods of extracting blood from their vessels without the need to use their fangs, such as with a needle, or through bloodletting, neither of which are guaranteed to be pain-free. The Hecata habit of feeding on herds formed from members of their own family breeds a great deal of resentment and fear between vessel and drinker.

In recent years, the Hecata have formed a special bond with the Circulatory System — a network of human traffickers servicing Kindred appetites — and commissions the delivery of mute or comatose vessels so they can't cry out in pain during the feed.

## Oblivion

*Lia wasn't an accomplished practitioner of her clan's art, by any means, but she knew a master when she saw one. Delivering the brown parcel to Ambrogino, the elder Hecata stared blankly at the young Milliner and stroked the parcel before speaking. "You didn't open it, did you?"*

*Lia shook her head. She knew better. While she considered herself above the role of messenger, she wasn't going to steal a look at this Giovanni's mail. "No, it's exactly as Josette left it when it came to me."*

*"And are you curious about its contents?" The fingers on Ambrogino's twisted and decayed left hand tapped on the heavy, wooden desk, creating a rhythmic drumming.*

*Was this a test? Should she express curiosity or respect for her elder? Again, honesty among family seemed the best course. "I would be interested to find out what I've traveled across the world to hand deliver, yes."*

*Ambrogino slid a knife into the edge of the parcel, parting the seams. His healthy hand extracted a small clay sculpture. Though far from an expert, to Lia it looked Egyptian. Ambrogino held the sculpture in the light. "This is what's known as a fetter. It binds a spirit to this mortal plane. If I were to destroy it, it might destroy the spirit. If I were to lock it away in a vault, the spirit might choose to owe me something in the future. If I were to threaten it, however…"*

*The Necromancer cut his thumb, and ran his own vitae over the sculpture, chanting in a dead language. He snuffed out the lights in the room with the press of a button. Lia stood there, awaiting some grand arrival. Instead, she heard a shaky, frail voice emerge into the room.*

*"Please, my childe… Please. Leave me be. Please. Do not harm my link. Please. I'll serve you again."*

*Ambrogino smiled, his perpetually rotted teeth a mix of yellows and blacks, contrasted against his purple lips and pale skin. "If I were to threaten it, Lia Milliner, I can get the spirit to do whatever I want."*

**Nicknames:** Obtenebration, Necromancy, Shadowboxing, Abyssal Mastery, Tenebrae Imperium, Mortis, the Dark Arts, Black Magic, Entropy

Oblivion is a mysterious, unpalatable power that most vampires rightly fear to use, witness, or fall victim to. Only vampires of Clans Lasombra and Hecata wield it with any frequency, and even they do so tentatively. Oblivion requires cautious masters who know the power's risks, as no other Discipline reaches into the Underworld and allows its manipulator to extract tangible darkness or furious spectres. Oblivion is the darkest of arts.

Notably, while the Lasombra are prone to expanding their repertoire of Oblivion powers, the Hecata focus their energies on developing Ceremonies (see p. XX). Ceremonies take longer, but are required for communing with and making passage through to the lands of the dead.

## Characteristics

Oblivion allows for the manipulation of creatures and substances originating from the Underworld. When the Hecata use this Discipline, they tend to channel the entropic nature of the Underworld and its surroundings, decaying flesh, calling forth spirits, and posing a dangerous risk to the living.

Oblivion projections and spirits sustain damage from fire and sunlight, counting as vampires with Blood Potency 1 in this regard. They also take one level of Aggravated Health damage per round from bright, direct lights, and may also be damaged (Superficially or Aggravated) from blessed weapons and artifacts, depending on the strength of the blessing and whether the wielder has True Faith.

Oblivion's powers are ineffective in brightly lit areas. Daylight and rooms without shadows are prohibitive, preventing the Discipline's successful function, though ultraviolet light and infrared light place no restriction on the Discipline's use. Moderately lit rooms add one to the Difficulty of the Discipline roll involved.

The use of Oblivion negatively affects the necromancer's psyche, with many powers causing Stains as the vampire finds themself performing increasingly macabre acts in service to this Discipline.

**Type:** Mental

**Masquerade threat:** Medium-High. Spirits rarely show up well on cameras but are obviously unnatural if witnessed in person.

**Blood Resonance:** Psychopaths and the emotionally detached. Blood empty of Resonance.

**Note:** When making a Rouse check for an Oblivion power, a result of "1" or "10" results in a Stain, in addition to any Hunger gained. If the user's Blood Potency allows for a re-roll on the Rouse check, they can pick either of the two results.

# Level 1

## Ashes to Ashes

Destroying evidence of feeding is a common necessity among vampires who leave screaming, resisting vessels, especially when those same vessels end up dead. This power enables a vampire to destroy a corpse — fresh or long dead — by introducing their vitae to its body. This power does not work on vampires, but does work on animated cadavers.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Stamina + Oblivion (vs. Stamina + Medicine if the corpse is animated, with Fortitude added if the animated corpse possesses it)

**System:** The vampire makes a Rouse Check to expend vitae, and introduces the vitae to the corpse. After rolling Stamina + Oblivion (Difficulty 2, unless the corpse is animated as mentioned above) the corpse disintegrates in a number of turns equal to five minus the number of successes rolled. On a critical win, the corpse disintegrates immediately. On a total failure, the corpse putrefies but does not disintegrate, and is subsequently immune to this power from any user.

**Duration:** Variable (see Difficulty effects)

## The Binding Fetter

**Amalgam:** Auspex 1

The vampire can identify objects and locations important to ghosts. These "fetters" act as icons that bind the dead to their existence. Knowing if an object is a fetter allows a necromancer to better manipulate the ghost. Fetters emanate variable auras, some bursting with vitality and glowing gold light, others radiating decay, or odors important to the bound wraith, such as the smell of freshly baked bread, gasoline, or cigarette smoke.

**Cost:** Free

**Dice Pools:** Wits + Oblivion

**System:** After rolling Wits + Oblivion (Difficulty 3), a fetter emanates an aura for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled. While this power is in use, the necromancer is distracted from other activity around them, conveying a −2 penalty to Dexterity and Wits rolls.

**Duration:** Variable (see Difficulty effects)

# Level 2

## Fatal Precognition

**Amalgam:** Auspex 2

It is said by many necromancers that the Lady of Fate rules the Underworld through her Stygian servants, and through communion with her certain death-dealers have learned this power. Fatal precognition allows a vampire to scry any non-vampire and experience a vision of their impending death, whether it's due a minute from now or several decades away. The Kindred's eyes turn black and they stand, sit, or lie completely still as the fate plays out in their mind. Fate can of course be cheated, though there's a cost for doing so.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Resolve + Oblivion

**System:** The vampire must be able to see or hear their target when they use this power. After rolling Resolve + Oblivion (Difficulty 3 or more at the Storyteller's discretion), the vampire becomes paralyzed in place as the vision plays out, preventing them from any form of physical or social interaction for that turn. The more successes rolled, the clearer the vision. One success provides abstract clues, two successes allows sight of the corpse, but not the method by which the individual dies, three successes reveals the manner by which the person dies, and four successes and above allow perception of the time and place of death. A critical win on this roll grants the vampire a vision of crystal clarity, along with a sense of the motive, if the target is intentionally killed. A total failure renders the vampire blind for the remainder of the scene, and unable to use this power on the same target again.

If anyone attempts to subvert the fate observed in this way, they find everything working against their hubristic ambition. Add one to all Difficulties while working to directly circumvent the precognition as cars break down, storms erupt from nowhere, and people become hostile for no reason. This penalty applies until the prophecy is fulfilled or avoided, or the current story ends.

**Duration:** Until fulfilled, avoided, or the story ends.

## Where the Shroud Thins

Vampires with an affinity for Oblivion can sense locations where the Shroud between the world of the living and the Shadowlands thins. Though this Discipline doesn't directly tell a vampire *why* the Shroud between worlds is thin in a certain place, it may be due to a grisly murder that took place there many years before, or because necromancers have frequently used the location to summon spirits, or it might be a location of holy or unholy resonance, among other reasons. In locations where the Shroud is thinnest, mortal health suffers and use of the Oblivion Discipline becomes easier, if the vampire knows how to harness the gap in the Shroud.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Wits + Oblivion

**System:** Following a Rouse Check, the player rolls Wits + Oblivion (Difficulty 4) and on a success, can determine the Shroud's density, from thick all the way to completely absent. The power affects a 10 x 10 yard/meter diameter, centered on the vampire. On a critical win, this roll

reveals whether the Shroud's density recently changed. On a total failure, the power backfires and gives a false reading. Without use of this power, Oblivion users cannot benefit from a thinning of the Shroud.

The following table expresses the different degrees of Shroud density, and the effects they have:

**[THIS IS A TABLE]**

| Shroud Density | Possible Cause | Effect |
|---|---|---|
| Impenetrable | No deaths took place here, consecrated land | Vampires and wraiths cannot cross the Shroud here |
| Thick | Long ago a death took place here, a place of joy | No effect |
| Thin | A death recently took place here, melancholic mortals often pass through this place | −1 Difficulty on all Oblivion rolls |
| Frayed | A series of deaths took place here, necromancers practice their craft here | −2 Difficulty on all Oblivion rolls |
| Absent | A necromancer sacrificed an innocent here, spectres regularly pass through this part of the Shroud | −2 Difficulty on all Oblivion rolls, wraiths can freely pass to and from the Shadowlands, mortals suffer two Superficial Health damage in this area that cannot be healed until they depart |

**[END TABLE]**

**Duration:** One turn

# Level 3

## Aura of Decay

Kindred with a strong connection to Oblivion find the Discipline affecting the world around them, making plants wilt, animals and humans grow sick, and food go bad. Some harness this aura as a power, polluting vitality with rot, and speeding up the erosion of life. This power does not speed up the decay of dead bodies.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check

**Dice Pools:** Stamina + Oblivion (vs. Stamina + Medicine if used on mortals, with Fortitude added if the mortal is a ghoul or other supernatural creature that possesses it)

**System:** The vampire makes a Rouse Check. Following a Stamina + Oblivion roll (Difficulty 3), unintelligent organic and inorganic material within 5 yards/meters of them suffers — plants turn black and die, food rots in its packaging, and even bricks start crumbling. Material affected in this way can become toxic to ingest, if for instance this power is used in a kitchen or a water supply. Such toxic food and drink, if consumed, can be expected to inflict two Superficial Health damage in the following scene to the individual who eats it, and for each scene thereafter until treated with an Intelligence + Medicine roll (Difficulty 3).

If anything living is caught in the aura, it makes a Stamina + Medicine (+ Fortitude, if the creature possesses the Discipline) roll. For every success the vampire obtained above the victim's resistance, they suffer one level of Superficial Health damage. This damage is slowly

applied throughout the scene, and repeated applications of the power in the same scene have no effect.

The power is an aura that lasts for an entire scene or until deactivated, before it fades away. Anyone with a sense of smell can detect a rotting odor emanating from the vampire during the time the power is active, adding +2 to the Difficulty of any rolls the vampire's player makes in a socially positive or diplomatic context, if doing so in person.

**Duration:** One scene

### Passion Feast

**Amalgam:** Fortitude 2

The relationship between vampires and their need for blood as sustenance is well known, but when a vampire needs to spend an extended period in the Shadowlands, or wishes to torment a spirit, this Oblivion power allows them to subsist on the passions of wraiths.

Wraiths have no bodies, nor do they have blood. Instead, their raw emotions drive them. Love, hatred, greed, or even a need for vengeance might keep a wraith around after their former body's death. An accomplished necromancer can feed on these passions for a time, enabling them to survive without blood for longer than their fellow Kindred. The feeding manifests as a swirling vortex of power between the wraith and the vampire's maw, as the vampire doesn't need to actually bite down on anything to consume passions.

**Cost:** Free

**System:** A vampire with this power can drain a wraith of their passion, through close proximity (three yards/meters or closer) to the wraith. The drain inflicts one Aggravated Willpower damage to the wraith and reduces the vampire's Hunger by one step for the remainder of the night. That Hunger returns on the following night regardless of Rouse Checks, as the feeding is only a nepenthe to dull the vampire's hungry urges. Feeding from a wraith may merit a Stain, as the consumed passion dulls the wraith's reason for being, likely sending them down a path to self-destructive acts. The Storyteller determines the number of passions a wraith possesses, and may deem that the wraith becomes an uncontrollable, murderous spectre once all passions have been consumed.

**Duration:** Passive

## Level 4

### Necrotic Plague

Kindred scholars claim Oblivion pollutes everything it touches, with this power as a prime example. Through touch alone, a vampire might poison a mortal victim's blood, imbuing them with a disease that wracks and ravages their body. Most dangerously of all, this disease runs the risk of being contagious, and might inflict the same harm to other mortals.

Necromancers schooled in medicine have enough talent to make this power appear in the form of specific illnesses, sometimes including those that died out in decades or centuries past. Regardless of how it manifests, the symptoms will eventually disappear even without medical treatment, whether or not the victim survives.

**Cost:** One Rouse Check, Two Stains

**Dice Pools:** Intelligence + Oblivion (vs. Stamina +Medicine if used on healthy mortals, with Fortitude added if the mortal is a ghoul or other supernatural creature that possesses it)

**System:** The user makes a Rouse Check and then rolls Intelligence + Oblivion while touching their victim. If the victim is weak (a baby, elderly, unwell, recovering from an illness, dying, or with Health at 3 or lower), they are automatically infected. If the victim is healthy, they roll Stamina + Medicine (+ Fortitude, if they possess it), resisting the disease if they roll more successes than the vampire. The vampire incurs two Stains for using this power. This power cannot be used on vampires.

Victims of the disease take one Aggravated Health damage at the start of every scene following their infection. The victim suffers from the disease for a number of scenes equal to the number of successes the vampire's player rolled. The sickness cannot be medically treated, as it is supernatural in origin, but it is healed through drinking vitae.

If the player rolls a critical win when activating this power, they can choose to make the disease communicable via touch, with subsequent recipients suffering the disease for one turn fewer than the victim by whom they were infected. If the player rolls a total failure, the vampire's own vitae convulses as if poisoned. They suffer three Aggravated Health damage as the infected blood pours out of them and must make a Rouse Check.

**Duration:** One turn to activate, variable length of condition

# Level 5

## Skuld Fulfilled

Necromancers can be described as fate's greatest meddlers, as they have a way of interfering with the destined paths of lives and spirits. Occasionally, however, necromancers may seek to serve fate by punishing those who cheat it. This power enables a vampire to reintroduce illnesses to victims who recovered from them, break bones long-since healed, and eliminate the immunity to aging ghouls experience. While this power doesn't work on vampires, it is an effective way of cutting through their servants and ensuring debts to fate are repaid, without having to come into contact with the recipient.

**Cost:** Two Rouse Checks

**Dice Pools:** Stamina + Oblivion (vs. Stamina + Medicine, with Fortitude added if the victim possesses it)

**System:** The vampire makes two Rouse Checks as they expend sufficient vitae to coat both their palms and their face with blood as they recall the faces of their victims. After rolling Stamina + Oblivion vs. the victim's Stamina + Medicine (+ Fortitude, if they possess it) the targeted individual is affected by a serious condition they've historically suffered and recovered from, such as treated cancer, a broken bone, or a disease — including one gained through Necrotic Plague (p. XX) — with any debilitating effects from this condition occurring immediately. The condition's effects are for the Storyteller to determine, but they should be severe. If the victim is a ghoul, this power removes their immunity to aging and eliminates any vitae in their system, potentially resulting in older ghouls dying or even disintegrating where they stand. On a critical win, this power kills the victim by stopping their heart completely. On a total failure, the vampire cannot use this power against that individual again.

**Duration:** Variable, dependent on whether the condition is treatable

### Withering Spirit

This power channels raw entropy via rapid spiritual decay, affecting vampires as well as kine by targeting the victim's spirit. A vampire using this power risks Stains, as it can completely obliterate the victim's spirit, preventing return as a wraith.

**Cost:** Two Rouse Checks, Stains (variable amount)

**Dice Pools:** Resolve + Oblivion (vs. Resolve + Occult, with Fortitude added if the victim possesses it)

**System:** The vampire makes two Rouse Checks to expend sufficient vitae to coat both hands, and touches the victim. After rolling Resolve + Oblivion vs. the victim's Resolve + Occult (+ Fortitude, if they possess it), the victim suffers two Aggravated Willpower damage for every one of the attacker's successes. The attack erodes the victim's spirit until they're a broken husk.

Use of this power may incur one to three Stains for the attacker, unless they have Convictions to mitigate the cost.

**Duration:** One turn

> Underworld Nomenclature
>
> The lands of the dead go by many names, with terms such as "the Shadowlands," "the Underworld," "the Abyss," and "Oblivion" used frequently among wraiths and necromancers. The Shadowlands are the deepest level of the Underworld vampires can enter using the Ceremonies in this book. The Shadowlands are layered over (or under) the world of the living — sometimes called the Skinlands — and reflect a distorted version of our reality, with locations of spiritual and passionate resonance grander or more imposing, the opposite being true for places of no real importance to anyone alive or dead.
>
> The Underworld is where wraiths make their realms, known as necropoli. Vampires cannot enter the true Underworld (though they often refer to the Shadowlands as such) without incredibly advanced Ceremonies and wraith sponsorship. It's a place few return from, with Augustus Giovanni — the family patriarch — last known to have ventured into the Underworld before disappearing.
>
> Oblivion, the Abyss, the Void, the Labyrinth, and other such warm epithets are given to the absence of life that exists beneath and around the Underworld. Necromancers believe they harness their entropic powers from this realm of nothingness, but nobody knows for sure, as to enter Oblivion is to vanish from existence.

## Oblivion Ceremonies

Oblivion Ceremonies follow rules for casting similar to Blood Sorcery Rituals, as found in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 275. For Oblivion Ceremonies, the caster rolls their Resolve instead of Intelligence, as Oblivion pulls hard on the mental fortitude of the caster, who must often make a sacrifice for the Ceremony to work. Ceremonies each have a prerequisite Oblivion power. This requirement acts as a gateway for necromancers that blood sorcerers need not pass

through. As with Blood Sorcery, at character creation a player can choose one Level 1 Ceremony if they have at least one Oblivion power noted as a prerequisite for that Ceremony. Characters can buy new Ceremonies at the cost of the Ceremony's level x 3 experience points, providing they meet the power prerequisite as well. Learning new Ceremonies during play requires both experience and time, as well as a teacher who knows the Ceremony already. Expect a Ceremony to take at least the square of its rating in weeks to learn.

# Level 1

## The Gift of False Life

Through use of this Ceremony, a vampire can raise a corpse or group of corpses to perform simple, single or repetitive tasks.

**Prerequisite Power:** Ashes to Ashes

**Ingredients:** A human body (or multiple bodies), a small concoction of blood, phlegm, and bile.

**Process:** After applying the concoction to the corpse or corpses and performing the Ceremony, the affected bodies animate into a form of false life. They follow a single command from the vampire, providing it's simple and the corpse is physically capable of performing it, such as "sweep the floor," "hold this door shut," or "walk around the house perimeter." They have no ability to think or calculate, so more complicated commands such as "attack the next person to walk through this archway," "drive this car," or "build a shack" do not work.

**System:** The player makes their Ceremony roll and the number of successes rolled results in that number of corpses animating. The mindless corpse's animation ends when it is destroyed or it concludes its task. These corpses do not defend themselves from attacks, and decay as normal; the Ceremony does not grant them any form of immunity to the elements or time.

### Mindless Corpse

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 2, Social 0, Mental 0

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 4, Willpower 0

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Intimidation 4

**Special:** Mindless corpses take Superficial and Aggravated damage in the same way as vampires, except they are immune to sunlight. They cannot heal or mend damage. They cannot be mentally dominated or influenced as they are bound to their master. They do not react to motion, words, or interference from anyone but their creator.

## Summon Spirit

This Ceremony enables a vampire to summon a spirit from the Underworld.

**Prerequisite Power:** The Binding Fetter

**Ingredients:** One of the targeted wraith's fetters, a photo or other visual depiction of the wraith or their signed name, the caster's vitae.

**Process:** The necromancer pours their vitae over a wraith's fetter, and studying the picture or signature, calls out the wraith's name. The wraith feels their fetter's call, and begins a journey from their location in the Underworld to that of the caster. Though geography has differing scales in the Underworld, a journey may still take several nights if the spirit is on the other side

of the world. If the Shroud is thin enough in the summoning location, the wraith is pulled through the veil between worlds by the fetter's strength. The summoned wraith is under no obligation to serve the vampire upon being called and may act with hostility if they feel the vampire is threatening their fetter, which may be an object, a building, or even a person. Alternatively, the wraith may be grateful for the summoning and the possibility of companionship.

Wraiths summoned in this way do not manifest physically, but as shadows on the walls, quavering silhouettes of their living selves, from which voices might emerge. Wraiths speak the same languages they did in life, unless they've gone to the trouble of learning new ones in the Underworld.

**System:** The caster daubs the fetter with their vitae and makes an Oblivion Ceremony roll. The wraith cannot pass through the Shroud if it's impenetrable in the Ceremony location (see p. XX), and moving the fetter after the Ceremony doesn't help, as the wraith's ability to pass through the Shroud disappears if the fetter leaves the Ceremony site. The wraith disappears at the end of the scene unless a separate Ceremony is used to compel or bind them.

> Calling the Dead
>
> If all it takes to get a wraith's attention is to interfere with their fetter, why learn a Ceremony to call it? Wraiths cannot pass through the Shroud without a Ceremony pulling them through, or without one of their own powers allowing the same. In some rare cases, wraiths are grateful for the summoning as it enables them to escape aggressors on their side of the Shroud. Just as in vampire society, wraiths do not always make for best friends just because they've shared a communal experience of death.

# Level 2

## Awaken the Homuncular Servant

Necromancers use this Ceremony to create spies and stalkers out of body parts such as hands or skulls, or small dead animals like rats or foxes.

**Prerequisite Power:** Where the Shroud Thins

**Ingredients:** The required body part or animal carcass, the weapon used to sever/kill it, a small concoction of urine, fecal matter, and semen.

**Process:** The caster coats a blade (or other device suited to the task) in a gross cocktail of bodily fluids, and uses it to cut the targeted appendage off its root limb or body, or kills the small animal (which cannot be larger than a small dog and cannot fly, regardless of whether it has wings). After massaging vitae into the target, it comes to life as a homuncular servant, unfailingly loyal to its master. The homunculus can scale walls, hop (even if it lacks the limbs to do so), and hide effectively. While it cannot speak or perform tasks requiring deep thought, it can telepathically communicate single images to its creator.

**System:** The necromancer's player makes an Oblivion Ceremony roll, and after doing so, gains a homuncular servant that will spy, follow, or intimidate at the necromancer's command. If it strays farther than 100 yards/meters from the vampire, it falls inert, only awakening again once the vampire enters that range. Otherwise, it remains active for a number of nights equal to the

number of successes rolled. A critical win on the roll keeps the servant active forever, while a total failure destroys all components involved in the Ceremony.

### Homuncular Servant

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 0, Mental 1

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 3, Willpower 1

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Athletics 4, Stealth 6; Intimidation 4

**Special:** Homuncular servants take Superficial and Aggravated damage in the same way as vampires, except they are immune to sunlight. They cannot heal or mend damage. They cannot be mentally dominated or influenced as they are bound to their master. They do not need eyes or ears to perceive everything around them as someone with unimpeded vision and hearing might. They can telepathically broadcast a single image per night to their master.

### Compel Spirit

This Ceremony allows a vampire to bend a wraith to their will.

**Prerequisite Power:** Where the Shroud Thins

**Ingredients:** A wraith's fetter, the caster's vitae, an item (or threat) sufficient to damage the fetter.

**Process:** The vampire must be in close proximity to a wraith in order to use this power, typically through use of Summon Spirit (see p. XX). The necromancer casts a handful of their own vitae in the wraith's direction as they hold a destructive item to the fetter (a knife, a hammer, a gun, or potentially holding the fetter over a fire) or speak threatening words that the wraith believes. The vampire and wraith engage in a contest of wills. If the vampire gains domination over the wraith, the wraith must serve as the vampire decrees, at least temporarily. If the opposite occurs, the vampire is left mentally debilitated and the fetter disappears from their grasp.

**System:** The vampire's player makes an Oblivion Ceremony roll vs. the wraith's Resolve + Composure. If they have no way of physically threatening the fetter, the player must also make a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (Difficulty equal to the wraith's Resolve + Composure).

If the player rolls more successes than the wraith's resistance roll on their Oblivion Ceremony roll, the vampire can command the wraith to perform a number of moderately difficulty tasks (spying, research, answering questions truthfully, etc.) equal to the number of successes rolled. For every two successes, the vampire can instead command the wraith to perform a difficult task (such as attacking someone, doing something repugnant to the wraith's sensibilities, etc.). On a critical win, the vampire can demand any action from the wraith, and it will try its best to complete the task. The wraith remains in the vampire's service until the end of the chronicle or until it has fulfilled its master's commands, at which point it returns to the Underworld with an eternal enmity for the necromancer.

If the wraith rolls more successes on their Resolve + Composure roll, the vampire loses one Willpower for every success the wraith rolled more than the vampire's player. The wraith then re-enters the Underworld.

The compulsion placed on the wraith ends immediately if the vampire attacks them. If the vampire harms the threatened fetter, the wraith suffers between one and three Aggravated

Willpower damage (depending on the importance of the fetter) and the wraith is sent back to the Underworld to be tormented by, and possibly converted into, a murderous spectre (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 377).

# Level 3

## Host Spirit

This Ceremony allows a vampire to open their body to possession by a ghost.

**Prerequisite Power:** Aura of Decay

**Ingredients:** A gift to be made as tribute to a wraith (whether the wraith values it depends on the individual), a parasitic bug, two teeth extracted from the vampire's mouth

**Process:** The vampire must be in close proximity to a wraith in order to use this power, typically through use of Summon Spirit (see p. XX). The necromancer presents a tribute to the wraith, sometimes in the form of alcohol poured on the wraith's gravesite, or a bag of coins to be buried in the earth, or even the freshly decapitated head of one of the wraith's until-recently living enemies. The vampire then pulls two teeth from their mouth, usually with pliers, and bites into a parasite with their remaining teeth. The vampire then opens their mouth and the wraith can choose to jump inside, inhabiting the vampire's body.

The benefits of having a wraith ride one's body come in the form of an enhanced physique, access to whichever memories the wraith chooses to share, and the wraith's voice offering the vampire advice. The wraith *can* take complete possession of the vampire if they wish to, which some necromancers view as a blessing to be experienced, and others deem the main reason not to use this power. Allowing a wraith to control one's actions for a night is an effective way of confusing and mollifying the Beast, as well as demonstrating physical prowess and knowledges the vampire may not usually possess.

**System:** The vampire's player makes a successful Oblivion Ceremony roll. If the wraith agrees to the proposition, it then enters the vampire's body and can remain for a number of scenes equal to the successes rolled on the Oblivion Ceremony roll. With the wraith inside them, the vampire gains +2 dice to all Physical Attribute rolls and +2 Health until the wraith departs. The vampire can hear the wraith in their head, with its advice, cajoling, or supportive words provided by the Storyteller.

A wraith can choose to assert its possession instead of acting as a passenger. If the vampire resists, they make a Resolve + Composure roll vs. the wraith's Resolve + Composure. If successful, the wraith's influence is rejected. If failed, the wraith steers the vampire until the end of the scene, though it can't make the vampire do anything self-destructive. On a critical win, the wraith is ejected entirely and returns to the Underworld. On a total failure, the wraith can make a vampire harm themself, but returns to the Underworld after the first injury is sustained.

A vampire whose body succumbs or is voluntarily opened to the possession attempt finds all Willpower damage healed once the wraith departs, as the spirit subdues the Beast for as long as it is present.

## Shambling Hordes

This Ceremony enables a necromancer to raise a group of aggressive, walking dead minions.

**Prerequisite Power:** Aura of Decay

**Ingredients:** A human corpse (or multiple human corpses), a fresh human sacrifice.

**Process:** The vampire must have a separate corpse in addition to a human prepared for sacrifice. The vampire murders the sacrificial victim, spilling their blood on the corpse or corpses intended for animation. If the Ceremony is successful, the corpses stand (the recent sacrifice does not), revived with the fresh blood, and serve the vampire's commands, even moderately complex orders such as "kill everyone who enters," "groan if you see anyone pass this way," or "terrorize that neighborhood." Unlike the corpses raised using the Gift of False Life (see p. XX), these animated dead do not sit idle if left without commands, instead attacking anyone around them except for their master.

**System:** The player makes their Ceremony roll, most likely incurring Stains depending on the Chronicle Tenets. Due to the amount of blood spilled in this Ceremony, the caster must roll to resist hunger frenzy. For every success rolled on the Ceremony roll, one aggressive dead receives the gift of animation. Corpses animated this way do not decay and only enter repose if commanded to by the vampire, if the vampire meets final death, or if they are destroyed.

### Aggressive Corpse

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 4, Social 0, Mental 0

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 0

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6; Intimidation 5

**Special:** Aggressive corpses take Superficial and Aggravated damage in the same way as vampires, except they are immune to sunlight. They cannot heal or mend damage. They cannot be mentally dominated or influenced as they are bound to their master. They do not need eyes or ears to perceive everything around them as someone with unimpeded vision and hearing might. Bites from the aggressive dead inflict +2 Aggravated Health damage to mortals.

## Level 4

### Bind the Spirit

Vampires with access to this Ceremony have the ability to bind wraiths to specified locations and people.

**Prerequisite Power:** Necrotic Plague

**Ingredients:** A wraith's fetter, the caster's vitae, the sacrifice of an innocent human, sufficient salt to surround a property or individual. If the target for haunting is an individual, the necromancer must possess something of their body, such as fingernails, hair, blood, or skin.

**Process:** The vampire must already have a wraith under their control using Compel Spirit (see p. XX). The vampire kills an innocent human (though innocence is subjective, this tends to apply to the young, caregivers, and genuinely pious individuals) in or close to a location or person they want their wraith to haunt. Subsequently, they mix their vitae with sufficient salt to surround the target for haunting, and paint a circle with the mixture. The wraith's fetter is placed somewhere within the location or the target's possession. From this point, the wraith is forever bound to the target, unless the vampire cancels the Ceremony, the fetter ever moves from the location or individual's possession, or the wraith is destroyed. Binding also ends if the necromancer attacks the wraith. Most wraiths bound in this way are furious or melancholic about their plight, and

their mood affects the area around them. Many necromancers use this method to defend their havens or haunt their enemies.

**System:** Following the steps of the Ceremony, the vampire incurs at least three Stains from the murder of an innocent, unless Convictions allow otherwise. They make an Oblivion Ceremony roll that cannot be resisted, as the wraith must already be compelled for this power to work.

The wraith is bound in perpetuity to the location or individual targeted, with no duration applied to this Ceremony's effects. Any emotion the wraith feels intensely during its binding affects the inhabitants of the location or the individual to whom it's bound, with each person affected suffering −2 dice to all rolls made to resist acting or feeling the way the wraith feels. Therefore, an angry wraith may make vampires more inclined to frenzy, while a depressed wraith might make a mortal more likely to stop self-care. Bound wraiths have the same powers as spectres (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 377).

### Split the Shroud

This Ceremony allows a vampire to create a tear in the Shroud through which wraiths can pass and vampires with the correct Ceremonies can physically enter the Shadowlands.

**Prerequisite Power:** Necrotic Plague

**Ingredients:** A scalpel that's been used to cut into someone living, chalk or charcoal, a silk sheet, a human sacrifice.

**Process:** The vampire hangs a silk sheet over a wall in a place where the Shroud density (see p. XX) is standard, thin, or frayed. They then murder a human sacrifice against the sheet, usually via some manner of bloodletting, and as blood coats the sheet, cut it open with a scalpel. The Ceremony widens the portal between the world of the living — which wraiths call the Skinlands — and the Shadowlands. Wraiths who enter the Skinlands via this method take to haunting locations and people, indulging in their passions, and possess humans if their powers allow for it. Some treat the vampire with gratitude for splitting the Shroud, while others enjoy harassing the necromancer responsible.

**System:** The caster kills the human sacrifice, which may result in acquiring Stains depending on the necromancer's Convictions. When cutting the silk sheet with a scalpel, their player makes the Ceremony roll (with −1 Difficulty if the scalpel was used in the human sacrifice). Due to the amount of blood spilled in this Ceremony, the caster must roll to resist falling into hunger frenzy. For every success on the Ceremony roll, the Shroud's density reduces by a level, down to being absent.

Following this Ceremony, vampires can access the Shadowlands with Ex Nihilo (see p. XX) more easily, but importantly, if the Shroud rating is reduced to absent, wraiths can spill into the Skinlands as they see fit for the remainder of the chapter. Once the chapter concludes, a Shroud density of absent increases to frayed and the gateway for wraiths closes.

## Level 5

### Ex Nihilo

This Ceremony enables a vampire and their coterie to migrate into the Shadowlands, though doing so comes at great risk.

**Prerequisite Power:** Withering Spirit

**Ingredients:** Masks for each participant, a bowl containing sufficient quantity of the caster's vitae so each participant might coat the soles of their feet in it, two coins of any value per participant.

**Process:** Few Ceremonies of Oblivion come with as much doubt and fear as Ex Nihilo, the ability to migrate into the Shadowlands. This Ceremony enables a physical crossing into the lands of entropy. Vampires who physically enter the Shadowlands may interact with wraiths as if they were solid, but cannot carry objects with them, other than the clothes they wear. Vampires destroyed in the Shadowlands disappear in a vortex of blood and ash, sucked into the false earth beneath their feet.

Ex Nihilo appeals to a great many necromancers and mystics who want to study the Shadowlands without the impediment of a time limit. It's an unmatched method for interviewing ghosts and exploring the necropoli — the cities spirits inhabit. It's also incredibly dangerous, as many wraiths — especially spectres — seek to destroy vampires, draining them of their Willpower, and there's always the risk of meeting the ghost of someone the vampire slew years earlier. Such wraiths tend to hold a grudge.

The vampire must have used the Split the Shroud Ceremony within this chapter, in the location they're currently occupying, in order for Ex Nihilo to function. If the Shroud density is reduced to absent, the caster and any companions may enter the Shadowlands from that point, if they don masks to cover their faces, dip or paint their feet in the vampire's vitae, and carry a coin in each hand.

**System:** The user makes three Rouse Checks (sufficient to expend the required vitae) and spends a turn concentrating, expending a Willpower point to prepare for the crossing. They then make their Ceremony roll. If successful, the vampire, a number of companions equal to the number of successes rolled, and any objects on their person may then enter the Shadowlands.

The Shadowlands follows several rules that do not exist in the world of the living:

- Wraiths are capable of physical attacks on vampires (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 377 for an average spectre's stat block) but some are also capable of attacking a vampire's Willpower specifically, as they drain a vampire's passion. Defense pools against Willpower drain, which a wraith can attempt up to 3 yards/meters from the vampire, are made up from the vampire's Resolve + Composure, vs. the attacking wraith's Strength + Brawl. This attack inflicts Aggravated Willpower damage.

- Though there is no sun (and therefore no daytime) in the Shadowlands, the vampire must still Rouse the Blood every 24 hours. With no sunlight, they are able to operate without rest.

- Vampires in the Shadowlands cannot interact with the world of the living in a meaningful way. They can only touch or speak with living creatures by ending this Ceremony, which takes the expenditure of a Willpower point and another Rouse Check in a place where the Shroud isn't impenetrable. They can see snatches of motion through the Shroud, and a Discipline such as Auspex may enable them to spy from beyond the veil, but for the most part, anything viewed has a Difficulty 4 or more to perceive.

- Vampires can use their Disciplines in the Shadowlands just as they can in the land of the living.

- If a vampire is compelled to feed in the Shadowlands, they cannot obtain sustenance from wraiths without the Passion Feast power (see p. XX), but can feed from mortals or other vampires with them.
- Oblivion absorbs individuals who lose all Health or Willpower in the Shadowlands. They leave no wraiths if destroyed.
- Vampires cannot bring wraiths out of the Shadowlands without a Ceremony such as Summon Spirit (see p. XX), which must be used in the land of the living to have this effect.

**Duration:** Until the power is deactivated or the vampire is destroyed

### Lazarene Blessing

This Ceremony enables a necromancer to bring a freshly-dead body back to life, though not how its relatives and friends might remember it.

**Pre-required Power:** Skuld Fulfilled

**Ingredients:** One human sacrifice, incense, the heart of any mammal, powdered silver.

**Process:** The necromancer burns incense to perfume the air before performing an act of human sacrifice, cutting the heart of the victim out and replacing it with the heart of another mammal, though it doesn't need to be stitched in and working for the Ceremony to function. After pouring a bag of powdered silver over the open eyes of the dying or dead mortal, the vampire invites a wraith to take the deceased mortal as a host. Wraiths cannot be forced to possess a body, but few refuse the opportunity to walk around in semi-living shoes again.

**System:** Killing a mortal for this Ceremony likely incurs Stains, according to the Chronicle Tenets. If the replacement heart was likewise taken from someone the vampire murdered, that murder might also incur Stains. Following a successful Ceremony roll, a wraith can enter the freshly-dead body and live in it as if it were their own. The wraith must be present during the act of sacrifice.

The possessed corpse will wake bearing the wounds that killed it, though the replacement heart is functional (no matter its origin or placement) and the body recovers one point of Health upon possession. The remaining Health recovers with time. The body possesses the same Physical Attributes, Disciplines (if a ghoul), and Backgrounds it had in life. Social and Mental Attributes, Skills, and any form of morality rating match those of the wraith.

This possession lasts indefinitely, or until the possessed body dies again or the wraith is exorcised from the host. The body gains no special resistances to harm beyond Disciplines it might have possessed in life.

## Life in the Underworld

An interstitial zone between the Underworld and the Skinlands, the Shadowlands are a place ghosts visit to spy on their loved ones and those who they wish to harm. Some also come here in the hope of being summoned, so they might experience the world of the living again. Deeper in the lands of the dead, in the Underworld and further still, wraiths have little contact with mortals or Kindred.

Most vampires have few reasons to visit the Shadowlands, but for necromancers, it's a realm of opportunity and exploration. Here, they might interrogate former friends and foes, observe secret

meetings without fear of discovery, secrete items of rare importance, and fashion alliances with the dead. The world looks similar to that of the living, except the sun never rises, the moon and stars are absent, and the buildings, natural locations, and even people here are distorted through heights of emotion. A subway station frequently used for suicides might be awash with the shadows of blood and body parts, and the captured wailing of mourning relatives, while a church where lovers unite in marriage may exist in a permanent state of heady joy and excitement. This world is alien to vampires, governed by laws they struggle to manipulate. Indeed, the Kindred who try often find the wraith population meeting their interference with a severe backlash.

As noted in the Ex Nihilo Ceremony (see p. XX), the Shadowlands make for an effective temporary sanctuary or meeting place, but vampires must always be aware they are not the top predator in such a place. Here, mostly spectres, but even ghosts who haven't fallen to consuming rage, can sap living will, leaving anyone foolish enough to remain in this place hollowed or destroyed.

Though there are as many types of wraiths in the Shadowlands as there are living in the Skinlands, the following are examples of wraiths that might act as SPCs in your chronicles, to supplement the spectre (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 377). All of these examples abide by the same rules as spectres except where noted.

## Ghost in the Machine

These are wraiths who in the Skinlands prefer to possess objects, speaking through computer screens, short-circuiting electronics, and making elevators crash with mortals inside, among other activities. In the Shadowlands, they exist as quiet, almost shy wraiths, uncomfortable with being seen.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 3, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 4

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Craft 6, Drive 7, Stealth 7; Intimidation 5; Science 6, Technology 7

**Special:** These wraiths cannot possess people. Instead, they possess machines. They use a pool of seven dice (their exceptional Technology or Drive dice pool, depending on the machine) to influence devices from computers to cars and televisions to elevators. These wraiths can make such devices broadcast messages from the wraith (if the device is equipped to transmit), malfunction, overheat, or indeed drive or operate as per the wraith's will. If the machine is destroyed, the wraith is ejected.

## Poltergeist

Poltergeists feel perpetually downtrodden. To their mind, it's amusing to make life difficult for everybody else, because it's shit enough for them being dead. They don't have the patience to inhabit items or people, preferring to launch things around aggressively, write their names on the wall in scratch-marks or whatever fluid comes to hand, and terrify the inhabitants of old houses. In the Shadowlands, they're bombastic, often hurling insults laced with self-deprecating commentary.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 4

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Athletics 6, Brawl 7, Larceny 6, Stealth 7; Intimidation 6

**Special:** These ghosts cannot possess people. Poltergeists may physically influence the environment and any objects and people in it (by marking walls, assaulting people, or launching items, as examples) a number of times per scene equal to their Willpower. If they incur Aggravated Willpower damage, their number of actions decreases to match their current Willpower. These wraiths can attack using their own form, clawing with a pool of seven dice (their exceptional Brawl dice pool), dealing non-halved Superficial damage (+2 damage modifier). They can also use the objects in the room to inflict additional or halved damage (from flung knives, television sets, etc.) though thrown weapons use six dice (their exceptional Athletics dice pool).

## Puppeteer

Possession is where these wraiths specialize, enjoying the ability to enter the bodies of the weak-willed and pursue an ersatz life for a short while, before exorcism or the Shadowlands calls them back. Skilled puppeteers can imitate personality as well as controlling a flesh vessel, while wraiths newer to the calling make possessions inadvertently jerky and frightening. In the Shadowlands, puppeteers are deeply uncomfortable giving up control, and always attempt to negotiate from positions of power.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 4, Social 4, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Brawl 6, Drive 7, Stealth 6; Insight 7, Intimidation 6, Performance 7, Persuasion 6, Subterfuge 7; Awareness 6

**Special:** As with spectres, these wraiths may use the Possession Auspex-Dominate power, rolling eight dice in the attempt to take control. They steer their host freely, though the host is able to roll Resolve + Intelligence once per scene against the puppeteer's seven dice (their exceptional Drive dice pool), with the victim ejecting the ghost if they roll more successes. Each time the victim attempts this roll and fails, they incur two points of Superficial Willpower damage that cannot heal until the puppeteer abandons the host.

## Screamer

Mysterious and terrifying, the screaming dead are wraiths that manifest in the Skinlands as howls, roars, and groans, making houses weep, trees wail, and empty spaces shout insults at anyone who enters them. They aren't quite spectres, but are filled with so much anger or fear that they exude it. In the Shadowlands their screams turn to siren songs, making them among the most charming and sweet wraiths. Their warm personalities can flip on a dime, however.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Stealth 5; Intimidation 8, Performance 7, Persuasion 6, Subterfuge 6

**Special:** These wraiths cannot possess people. Their primary function is to terrify mortals with their screams, similar to the Dread Gaze Presence power (see **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 267). When a screamer uses this power, they roll eight dice (their exceptional Intimidation pool) against the victim's Composure + Resolve, with the results emulating those of Dread Gaze without the visual requirement.

# Bloodlines and Loresheets

*"Blood is everything, and we're the only family that realizes this fact."*

— Zelda Booke, Lilin of the Lamiae

## Bloodlines

Not all Hecata are made the same. The actions taken during the Family Reunion melded many disparate Kindred into a new whole, but some vampires retain their distinctive elements. Those who fully embrace the new unity become Hecata as detailed in this book, but other characters may seek to preserve some element of what they used to be.

Such Kindred can take a new Background called "Bloodline" to reflect this hybrid nature. It acts just like the Loresheet Background. Like Loresheet, you can only choose one Bloodline, although you can have one Bloodline and one Loresheet. Storytellers might decide that previously-published bloodline-related Loresheets (such as "Descendant of Hardestadt" and "Descendant of Helena" — **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 390-391) count as Bloodlines, allowing characters with those Loresheets to take an additional, non-lineage-related Loresheet.

> **Background: Bloodline**
>
> You have been Embraced into a distinct bloodline with unique qualities. This gives you access to a second Loresheet that only members of your bloodline possess. All other rules and limitations of the Loresheet Background (**Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 190) apply — "Bloodline" is a distinct Background, and as such you can possess an Advantage from both it as well as the Loresheet Background.

**[LAYOUT: CONSIDER PUTTING THE CLAN SYMBOL AS A WATERMARK BEHIND THESE. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE IS NOT HECATA BUT NOSFERATU.]**

### Bankers of Dunsirn

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

Sometime around the 18th century, the Giovanni wanted a foothold in the markets of the New World. But all of their attempts were constantly blocked by a Scottish family of bankers who owned several shipping ventures. Impressed by their financial acumen, the Giovanni investigated bringing the family into the fold. What closed the deal was the discovery that the Dunsirn were cannibals as well as financiers. It was the perfect balance of money, depravity, and ability to keep a secret.

For centuries, the relationship between the two families was clear: The Dunsirn made the money, and the Giovanni family spent it like water. Surprisingly, even though mortal members of the Dunsirn family still indulge in the occasional bit of "long pork," the Kindred don't show much aptitude or interest in necromantic pursuits. Prior to the Family Reunion, there was an effort to force them into learning the ways of Oblivion, but now the Dunsirns are happy to go back to what they do best: bleeding people dry.

And this time, they don't need to answer to the fucking Giovanni to do it, either.

### Lore

• **Money Obfuscates:** It's hard to make money and not be noticed, but the Dunsirn have worked in the shadows for centuries. You've spread some of your family's money around to make an alternate identity for yourself. You get two dots of the Mask Background for free, though you must maintain this Mask at least once per story.

•• **Money Talks:** The Dunsirn find information in the most *interesting* places. All you have to do is spread a little money around, and people jump out of the woodwork to tell you things. Once per story, you can find information as if you had the Contacts Background with a number of dots equal to your Resources. This ability lasts for a single scene.

••• **Money Enhances:** You always have access to the best that money can buy. Having access to quality products not only acts as a status symbol, it also makes everything a little easier. When making a roll in which you can use your own equipment, you get a bonus die to the roll.

•••• **Money Multiplies:** All the Hecata know the Dunsirn are bankers. But most of them think of it in the abstract, as if "banker" is just a different way of saying "someone with a lot of money." But you are (or are directly related to) a legitimate investment banker. Gain three dots (up to five) in Resources. In addition, anyone in your coterie loses the Destitute flaw (**Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 193), and can purchase dots in Resources at 2 experience points per dot, instead of the usual 3.

••••• **Money Dictates:** You are the head of the Dunsirn family accounts. You have your undead finger on the pulse of the Hecata's financial accounts. And you make sure that everyone else knows it. You gain three free dots of Status in the Hecata. In addition, once per chronicle, you can *either* give every Hecata in the chronicle two additional dots of Resources *or* remove all Resource dots from every Hecata in the chronicle. These Resources additions or removals last for a single story, and if removed, generate a chronicle-length Adversary Flaw in the form of one of the robbed vampires.

## Children of Tenochtitlan

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

In the early sixteenth century, Spanish Giovanni met representatives of the Aztec civilization as part of the Cortes expeditions. In the city of Tenochtitlan (now part of Mexico City), these Giovanni were introduced to a massive, formalized necromantic tradition. So naturally they killed, enslaved, and converted the "heathens," bringing them into the fold. The Giovanni called these converts *pisanob*, a Mayan term that roughly translates to "ghosts of the dead that walk the Earth" (the fact that the Aztecs weren't Mayan didn't concern the Europeans). That these vampires already had a name, a legacy, and their own beliefs mattered little to the Giovanni.

Their leader, Pochtli, was still in charge of the Pisanob up through the Family Reunion. However, the family had been whittled down to a bare few remaining Kindred after the ongoing attacks by the Harbingers of Skulls, although the reasons for the attacks were unknown. Pochtli offered his unlife to the Harbingers in exchange for an end to hostilities, which the Harbingers accepted.

Now, the remaining children of Tenochtitlan are deciding on a new leader, while planning their revenge.

## Lore

• **Hiding from the Wolf:** The remaining Pisanob survived because they are really, *really* good at hiding. You've learned all manner of techniques to remain out of sight of those that would hunt you… and those you would hunt. You get one extra die on any roll to hide, including via the use of Disciplines or Ceremonies.

•• **Ghostly Instincts:** The original Kindred embraced in Tenochtitlan were extremely talented necromancers, and they have carried on a wide variety of tips, tricks, and secrets among their brethren. You've learned some of those secrets, which give you two additional dice on any Oblivion Ceremony roll involving the summoning, control, or destruction of ghosts.

••• **Forward Thinking:** After years of being hunted down by the Harbingers of Skulls, you've learned to always plan ahead, turning potential tragedy into a triumph. Once per story, you can reroll any Skill roll. In addition, you always get one free Skill reroll in any scene in which you work against another Hecata. If the Hecata in question is a member of the Harbingers of Skulls, you get an additional success on that reroll.

•••• **Necromantic Prodigy:** The secrets of Oblivion are yours to command, whether through study, your ancient bloodline, or secrets you have acquired from your cousins over the years. Your mastery of necromantic ceremonies is unparalleled. You get two automatic successes on any roll necessary for activating a necromantic Oblivion Ceremony.

••••• **Next in Line:** Now that Pochtli has sacrificed himself to the Hecata's grand plan of unity, it is time for another to step up and lead the Pisanob to future glory. You are one

such individual, wielding a balance of necromantic skill and political savvy. You have an additional two dots of Status within the Hecata. Further, you have an ally among the anziani, who acts as a five-dot Mawla once every other story. (You can purchase the Mawla Background as normal to make the character a more regular mentor or patron.)

## Descendants of the Baron

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

The descendants of Baron Samedi are a mysterious lot, and that's just the way they like it. Prior to the Family Reunion, they universally had horrifying, rotting countenances, often making them easily confused for Nosferatu. Prior to the Family Reunion, their control of necromancy made them seem like a bastard offspring of the Cappadocians. Prior to the Family Reunion, if the Samedi talked about The Baron at all, they were just as likely to claim he was a loa as a vampire.

Now, the Hecata are one, big, happy family, right? The Samedi even got their looks back, although the rot and decay peek out whenever they feed. But these Kindred are steeped in vodou and hoodoo, and they know that everything comes with a price. Nothing comes for free. So they don silk hats, smoke fine cigars, and plan to enjoy the ride until the bill comes due. *Laissez les bon temps rouler.*

### Lore

• **CSI Shit:** As one of the Baron's children, you've learned a few tricks about death. One of them is knowing a lot about rot, decay, and how bodies die. By carefully examining a mortal corpse and making a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 3), you can immediately know the cause of death.

•• **Exquisite Corpse:** At one time, the Samedi all looked like walking corpses, but thanks to the Family Reunion, they have brand-new respectable faces. But you can go back to looking like a corpse whenever you want. What's more, you can look like a *specific* corpse you've touched, if you try hard enough. With the cost of one Rouse Check, you can make a Resolve + Subterfuge roll against an observer's Wits + Awareness, to look like that corpse.

••• **Hollow Inside:** Sure, you and the Baron's children don't *look* like corpses anymore, but some of you still have the advantages of being one. Like the fact that corpses can't feel much of anything anymore. You don't lose two dice from relevant dice pools for being physically impaired, although you still retain the penalty for impaired Willpower.

•••• **My Setite Friend:** The Samedi have a strange relationship with the Ministry. There's a lot of overlap in interest, and more than a few have decided to join the Ministry rather than stay with the Hecata. You have a connection with the Ministry, whether it's one of those wayward Samedi or another Follower of Set. You can ask your friend for a

favor once per story, which translates to the equivalent of three dots in appropriate Backgrounds such as Allies, Influence, and Resources.

••••• **The Silk Hat:** No one is entirely sure who The Baron is, but they *do* know you have his favor, and are the next in line to his barony. Whatever that is. You're not entirely sure what will happen if you step up and claim the silk hat of The Baron. It may be a purely political position within the Hecata, or it may invest you with fantastic spiritual powers. It'll certainly invest you with The Baron's enemies. Before you accept the role, however, you have the effect of Mawla at five dots, although the help comes in cryptic ways and via mysterious actions.

## Flesh-Eaters

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

The Nagaraja are the most wayward of vampires in a clan now full of wayward vampires. They believe themselves to be the first ever necromancers. They revel in the fact that their lineage is not easy to trace back to one of the known Antediluvians. They believe they once mastered the lands of the dead, having converted their Blood to live in such a place. And, perhaps as a result of said Ceremony, they ate human flesh in lieu of drinking blood. They believe one night they can become masters of the Underworld again.

A handful of Nagaraja showed up to the Family Reunion, claiming some kind of catastrophe drove them out of their home. Initially they were believed to be some kind of radical form of Dunsirn, but while the bankers are hobbyists in the realm of cannibalism, the Nagaraja are experts. Years of avoiding attention from both mortals and Kindred society have honed them into efficient serial killers — quite useful to their new clanmates. They may no longer need flesh the way they did, but their skills are still useful in this new age. And some never lost the taste.

### Lore

• **Viscus:** You can still eat flesh in lieu of drinking blood — biting a mortal and causing an Aggravated wound acts in all other ways like drinking blood for you. You can also eat fresh corpses, although the taste is not as good.

•• **Unseen Spirit:** Some of the Nagaraja can make themselves unseen to ghosts and spirits. If you do not already have access to the Obfuscate Discipline, take Cloak of Shadows (**Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 261) at no cost — you do not necessarily have the Obfuscate Discipline, but rather a special power of your own. This power works like Cloak of Shadows, except that it only works against spirits and ghosts. If you do have (or later acquire) Obfuscate, instead all your Obfuscate powers work against ghosts and spirits *in addition* to their usual effects.

••• **The Perfect Murder:** You have a lot of experience in planning murders. As long as you have at least a night to plan a cold-blooded, intentional murder, you get one extra

success on all rolls for that murder scene. These successes are negated by someone who possesses the Send a Murderer Bloodline ability (below).

•••• **Send a Murderer:** You're a serial killer, or maybe you've spent a lot of time studying them. You get two extra dice on rolls to study murder scenes or track down killers. In addition, you've worked with law officials (mortal, Kindred, or both) on some cases, whether it's through sending them anonymous emails or as a direct consultant. You have three dots to spend between Contacts with the police force, Contacts with investigators in Kindred society, and Status.

••••• **Death to Serpents:** You are one of the few who remember the true purpose of the Nagaraja — to rid the world of the Setites. They may have changed their name to "the Ministry," but their blight on this world has not changed one jot, and you will make sure to annihilate every single one of them. You incur no Stains for killing a Ministry Kindred, or any character who serves the Ministry.

## Harbingers of Ashur

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

Holding the Jyhad's longest grudge, the Cappadocians were the Clan of Death before they were usurped by the upstart Giovanni. Believed for centuries to be destroyed, the Cappadocians either took to wearing masks and calling themselves the "Harbingers of Skulls" or a subfaction of the clan named themselves "Harbingers" generations before. Whatever the truth, the majority joined the Sabbat and worked aggressively against Giovanni interests. For many years it was thought that both sides would never stop until one obliterated the other, but that appears to have changed with the Family Reunion.

Despite the reconciliation and the acknowledgment of the remnants of the Cappadocian Kindred, the Harbingers of Skulls as they were could no longer exist. But neither could the Cappadocians return to their former state after so many centuries of anger. As such, these vampires respond to either name, but they have become some synthesis of the two. Like all things, the past form has died, and enriched the earth so that something new can grow.

### Lore

• **The Ashen Mask:** You don a plain mask made of ash wood, for while you respect the traditions of the Harbingers, you care more about studying death than status, glory, or revenge. One of your Touchstones is dead, and you are studying their corpse. That Touchstone is damaged only when either someone besides yourself interferes with the corpse or it putrefies beyond recognition.

•• **The Gold Mask:** You don a rose gold mask, because you strive to balance your existence between the living and the dead. Gold has connections to both wealth and alchemy, with golden grave goods sitting in the perfect intersection between the two. As

such, you have the capacity to hide your actions, and the actions of your coterie, as you explore death. You have the equivalent of four dots of Influence when attempting to cover up a death.

••• **The White Mask:** You don a bone-white mask, with not a speck of dirt on it, because it is the mask of a respected Harbinger who was lost in one of the historic purges. You speak for the elders of your bloodline, and most Harbingers (and even other Hecata) listen to you. You get three dice to any social roll against another Harbinger, and two dice to any social roll against another Hecata.

•••• **The Obsidian Mask:** You don a polished black mask, because you are more than just a vampire — you are truly half-dead. You are a wraith that has inhabited a vampire's body. It costs you half the usual experience to learn Oblivion Ceremonies, and you gain two dice to resist effects to control your physical shell (such as through Dominate). You do however lose two dice when attempting to resist control over your ghostly components (such as through Oblivion Ceremonies).

••••• **The Lazarene Mask:** You don the mask engraved in the image of one of the clan founders, for you know the true secret of the Harbingers. Their crusade was never solely about destroying the Giovanni, but annihilating all those who serve the Clan of Death. The final stage of necromancy is for all who practice it to die, and become the masters of death. You incur no Stains for killing another Hecata Kindred, or any character who serves the Hecata.

## La Famiglia Giovanni

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

Until recently, whenever an outsider Kindred thought about the Clan of Death, they pictured the Giovanni family. Their origins stretch back before the Roman Empire (when they were known as the Ioveanus or Jovians), and the entire time they've had their hands in Kindred affairs. The original Giovanni family knows how to play the game better than anyone, crafting an identity as "Devil Kindred" to strike the right balance of fear and respect in their rivals — and their relatives.

The Giovanni family and the clan of vampires known as the Giovanni are not identical, but it was a useful fiction for centuries. However, now that the Family Reunion has caused a restructuring of the Clan of Death, the original family refuses to be left out in the cold. As much as some cousins would like to see the backside of *la famiglia*, the "true" Giovanni aren't just going to stand by and let thousands of years of family history get tossed out due to some political convenience. They are the top dogs, and they'll murder to retain that position.

After all, no one fights like a family.

### Lore

• **A Cousin's Ear:** Even if family members hate each other, the whole family lives by a certain code to share information — that's how they've survived everything from the fall of the Roman Empire to the Second Inquisition. Once per session, you can ask a direct question of another member of the Giovanni family, and get a straight answer. However, you have to answer a question in return. You can also ask a favor of mortal members of the family once per story, as if you had the Allies Background at three dots.

•• **Faded Glamour:** Being a Giovanni still means something, even if it's not your name on the clan anymore. Old habits die hard, and the instinct to obey is still ingrained in much of the Clan of Death. Once per session, you can add one automatic success to any social roll against another Hecata Kindred, ghoul, or retainer.

••• **Petty Cash:** The Giovanni started as merchants, and they still know the power of cold, hard cash. As one of the favored childer of the family, you have access to a substantial bank account. You get four dots to spread among the Resources and Retainers Backgrounds for free, but these dots can be pulled back by elder members of the family at any time, especially if you cross them.

•••• **Spectre Servant:** There's a lot the family are good at, but in particular they're excellent at enslaving the spirits of the dead to their will. You have inherited or personally captured a spectre to act as your servant. This acts as a five-dot Ally (four dots in Effectiveness, one dot in Reliability), using the stats for a spectre in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 377. The spectre wants nothing more than to break the leash and devour your spirit.

••••• **Aspiring Anziani:** You have managed to work your way through the hidden politics of the Family Reunion and come out on top. You've done so partially from political skill and ruthless zeal, but mostly because you know where the bodies are buried (in every sense). You get five dots of Status among the Hecata, and you can get a private audience with the Capuchin every few stories. Just don't push your luck, or you'll join the corpses.

## The Criminal Puttanesca

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

For a few decades, the Giovanni had a reputation as being nothing more than vampire mobsters. Savvy Hecata ancillae confronted by such ethnic stereotypes in Camarilla Elysia laugh and suggest the rumor started from too many late-night showings of *The Godfather*. And once the Hecata gets a chance to slip away, they call their cousins and ask what the fucking Puttanesca have done this time.

The fucking Puttanesca family, as they're often called by other Hecata, were acquired from Sicily in the 1660s as talented street hustlers — perfect for dirty, low-level jobs that the more moneyed Giovanni couldn't be bothered to handle. Over the years, these

Puttanescas leaned into the mafioso stereotypes, because you might as well be a legbreaker if you break legs for a living. After the Family Reunion, any remaining connections to organized crime have been quickly shuffled over to the Puttanescas. The anziani say it's a reward for loyal service. But the Puttanesca know it's a way to put all the Hecata's embarrassing assets in one place.

So if they're going to be "the fucking Puttanesca," that's fine. This family knows all about beating on the little guy before you get beat on by a bigger guy. But soon they'll be the big guy, and it'll be everyone else that gets fucked.

### Lore

• **Friends in Low Places:** Puttanesca Kindred have close ties to the street, and usually have a few side hustles happening at any one time. It's easy to get your hands on a little bit of cash and a little bit of muscle whenever you need it. You get two dots to spread between Allies and Resources, and you can reallocate those two dots at the start of each story. These Advantages are immediately subject to police scrutiny.

•• **Show Your Belly:** Some members of your family survive by looking as harmless as possible to people more powerful than them. Sure, it's not dignified, but if you can survive the night, that gives you time to get your revenge later. You get three bonus dice to rolls to convince people not to hurt, endanger, or act against you.

••• **Show Your Fists:** On the other hand, it's not all being pushed around. Some Puttanesca prefer to kick around those smaller than them. You need to show them who's boss. Prick probably would've done something to piss you off anyway, so better to get your licks in first. You get two bonus dice to rolls for intimidation, as well as melee attacks against mortals.

•••• **Get the Squad Together:** Occasionally you just need to get some people together for a good old ass-beating. Once per story, you can get a gang together for a brawl. This gang comprises any local Puttanesca Kindred, as well as mortals equivalent to five dots of Allies. You also get an automatic success in rolls to convince other characters that this beatdown is necessary.

••••• **The Don:** Against all odds, you've kissed and kicked ass in equal measure to make your way to some amount of respect, wealth, and influence. Other Hecata might even stop insulting you to your face. You have three additional dots in Influence, Status, and Resources, but they must be assigned to criminal enterprise and require careful maintenance to not draw the attention of groups such as the FBI, agents of which can become potent versions of the Enemy Flaw.

## The Gorgons

*(Bloodline; Hecata characters only)*

The Lamiae were a bloodline of Kindred believed to be descended from Lilith as well as Caine — their founder and high priestess (named Lamia) claimed to be the daughter of the Dark Mother herself. In ancient times, a Cappadocian elder found Lamia performing sacred Bahari rites, and was so taken by her skin and resistance to pain that he Embraced her. From then on, the Lamiae were dedicated warriors protecting the Cappadocian clan, until the clan's alleged destruction by the Giovanni. The last Lamia was believed destroyed in 1718.

However, the Gorgons lived on, much like their Cappadocian charges. While the latter claimed the title "Harbingers of Skulls," the Lamiae took the title of "Lilins," spreading the word of Lilith and the Bahari faith while secretly uncovering the fate of the Cappadocians and undermining the Giovanni. Now, in the wake of the Family Reunion, these women stand proudly once again at the side of the Kindred that Embraced them — although they are less inclined to tolerate so-called "Cainites" that chastise their faith or insult their martial skill.

## Lore

• **The Serpent's Kiss:** For centuries, it was believed the bite of the Lamiae spread disease, a virulent pox like the Black Death (indeed, it might have been the Black Death) that was fatal after a few days. Whether that was true or not, these nights the bite of the Lamiae is no longer fatal, although a few like yourself have some remnants of the disease left in their system. Once per story, you can choose to infect your mortal prey with disease, causing them one Aggravated Health damage every night for three nights. This ability has no effect on vampires.

•• **Protection:** You embody the original purpose of the Lamiae — the protection of your charges, by any means necessary. You gain two dice on any Close Combat rolls which involve the protection of an ally or another member of your coterie.

••• **Four Humours:** Many ancient Lamiae practice manipulation of the four humors, allowing control over their victim's body or mind. After biting a victim, and at the cost of one Rouse check, you can inflict a two-die penalty on your target by one of four means: phlegmatic (lethargy), melancholy (obsession with death), sanguine (excessive bleeding), or bilious (poisoned).

•••• **Controlling the Beast:** Chaos and pain are key aspects of the Bahari faith (and, thus, the faith of many Lamiae). However, *mindless* chaos and pain do not lead to education, so controlling accidental infliction of both is important. Once per session, you can convert a messy critical in combat into a critical.

••••• **Medusa's Gaze:** It was long believed that the nickname of "Gorgons" was given to the Lamiae for their terrifying prowess and allegedly disease-ridden blood. But those members most steeped in the bloodline's mysteries hold a private power that betrays a more literal meaning behind their epithet than many realize. At the cost of two Rouse

checks, you can make an Intimidation + Occult roll vs. an opponent's Stamina + Occult + Blood Potency. If the roll succeeds, your opponent is unable to move for one scene.

# Loresheets

## Calling the Family Reunion

*(Hecata characters only)*

The Clan of Death, in all its forms, has always had a gift for understatement. The latest, the so-called "Family Reunion," was a combination of the strategic removal of some high-profile elders, the burying of some ancient axes — sometimes in another vampire's head — and the subsequent unleashing of millions of outraged and ungrateful ghosts taking out centuries of pent-up ire on any necromancer they could find.

You are party to the hasty (by Kindred standards) discussion between ancient enemies of the necessity and utility of working together. You may have been involved in some of the acts that led to it, or you were present at the Reunion itself. In your own way, you've contributed to this new step in the Clan of Death. And even though you've become one big happy clan again, that doesn't mean you just forgive and forget.

### Lore

• **The Kids' Table:** You were present at the dinner where the final details of the Reunion were discussed. You didn't have any significant impact in the discussion, but you know what was debated, so you're familiar with all the old animosities and arguments. You get two dice on any Persuasion checks against another Hecata who tries to resurrect old disagreements.

•• **Updating the Rolodex:** Not everyone gets along in the new-and-improved Hecata, but since you were present during the initial dealmaking, you now have access to a lot of new contacts. When asking for information or small favors, you have the equivalent of three dots of Status within the Hecata clan.

••• **Hiding the Bodies:** Even the Clan of Death doesn't have the luxury of flaunting all the corpses they've left along the way. You were involved in the cleanup of a key murder, and a Hecata elder is in your debt as a result. Once per chronicle, you can blackmail that elder in exchange for a significant act. However, once the act is resolved, that elder is now a three-dot Adversary (**Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 193).

•••• **Dealmaker:** For all the visible debates during the Family Reunion, there were just as many backroom deals made in order to make the reunification of the Hecata a success. You were a part of one of those deals, and an influential elder in the Hecata owes you as a result. That elder counts as a five-dot Mawla Background but will become a potent Adversary if the secrets are ever revealed.

••••• **Spiritual Assault:** You were involved in the murder of Augustus Giovanni, the methuselah responsible for the alleged destruction of the Cappadocians. As such, you know it was Augustus' death that unleashed the maelstrom of wraiths coming after the Hecata. Anytime you or someone who consults you uses an Oblivion Ceremony to deal with a spectre or other antagonistic ghost, you gain two automatic successes.

## Child of the Angel Michael

*(Unavailable to Nosferatu characters)*

That which is perfect is beautiful. That which is beautiful is good. That which is good leads to utopia. This is what the Nephilim believe — that if they can embody all that is beautiful and perfect, they can recreate the utopic dream of the perfect Kindred city: Constantinople. A recent cult chided in equal parts as a Toreador fever dream and an excuse for lavish parties, the Nephilim nevertheless draws in a large share of proponents, eager to ogle the great and the good, or to find ways to improve themselves toward their personal ideal.

Of course, the pursuit of ideal perfection shouldn't be sullied by base concerns like money or power. Those that give up all that they hold dear to the Nephilim will be rewarded, becoming more perfect and more beautiful with each passing night. Besides, once the Dream of Constantinople comes to pass and all vampires are living in harmony, none of that will matter anyway. Right? You might be a seeker of beauty, or one of the beautiful yourself, but you're definitely invested in the Dream, one way or another.

### Lore

• **The Great and the Good:** Even just being around perfect and beautiful people has its advantages, and you've been able to leverage your connection to fellow cultists into a few small gains yourself. You have two free dots to distribute between the Contacts, Fame, Herd, and Influence Backgrounds, though the kinds of followers you attract verge on the fanatical and dangerous to you and your loved ones.

•• **Outer Beauty:** You make trips to the local Nephilim temple, and the accentuation of your "inner beauty" leads to outer effects. Your skin becomes clear, your hair gains luster, and your limbs become long and firm. You get the Looks Merit at four dots, even after character creation. The negative side is you have to really disguise your appearance if you want to avoid attention. Inevitably, your face will be the one witnesses remember.

••• **Hedonistic Pleasure:** Of course, there's no point being beautiful if you can't enjoy it, right? Lots of long nights of excess have taught you a thing or two about having a good time, even when you're not in a Nephilim temple. You gain two dice on any rolls to score drugs, get a date or sexual partner, or get yourself invited to a party. In addition, your exploits are legendary — take either two dots in Fame or two dots in Status.

•••• **Michael's Calling:** You've been in past cults in which the childer of Michael were worshiped to bring about the Dream. While it's novel and convenient that all of these fringe cults have come together under one roof, as it were, you see it all as the sham it is. That won't stop you from leveraging it for your own gain, however. Once per story, you can use all of a cult member's appropriate Backgrounds as if they were your own.

••••• **Wiping Away the Stains:** The most horrific and flawed parts of the Kindred are, of course, on the inside. Most of the cult claims they want inner beauty as well as outer perfection, but the sex and drugs tend to get in the way of true enlightenment. Luckily, you haven't lost the true path. Once per story, you can spend a Willpower to remove a Stain from another vampire. The vampire must have sex with you, do drugs with you, or engage in some other hedonistic activity for at least an hour.

## Servitor of Irad

According to the *Book of Nod*, Irad the Strong was the third childe of Caine, and he served as his sire's enforcer and military leader in the First City. The Kindred of the Servitors of Irad seek to emulate that mythological vampire, who is said to have pledged to serve the Antediluvians in all things before his kin or his childer destroyed him. They hope that, if they spend their existence showing they serve the Antediluvians, they will be spared when the ancients rise. Irad believed it, but received the revelation too late to preserve himself.

The cult doesn't actually have any contact with the Third Generation, but they assume that the Antediluvians would want the elders of Kindred society to be weak and divided. As such, they infiltrate any vampiric organization they can find — Camarilla cities, Anarch gatherings, and even other cults — to sow dissension and shatter fragile alliances. And now you're one such deep cover member. You're cut off from the other members of your cult, trying to enact a hazily-understood plan set down by mythological figures with whom you have no direct contact, with the knowledge that if any other vampire ever found out, you'd be immediately and painfully killed. But you have faith, and that's enough.

### Lore

• **Shield of Irad:** You can't do the work of the Antediluvians if you get discovered by others. Luckily, you have a lot of experience shielding your true intentions from the gaze of outsiders. You gain an additional die on rolls involving lying to other Kindred.

•• **Sword of Irad:** Sometimes you must act decisively in the name of the Third Generation, and that conviction adds additional strength to your act. Once per story, you can add three dice to a roll that is integral to your cult's plans.

••• **Know the Will of the Ancients:** You are firmly convinced you know the will of the Antediluvians. Perhaps you even hear their voices in your head, or gain prophetic

dreams from them. As long as you are a member of the cult, you can take an additional Conviction that is directly related to the goals of your infiltration (your membership in the cult acts as your "touchstone" for the purposes of this Conviction). If you infiltrate a new group, you can change your Conviction to reflect the new assignment.

•••• **Do the Will of the Ancients:** All actions are in service to the Third Generation, the thirteen vampires that will some day rise and destroy the world. There is nothing you won't do to fulfill that goal, and you have devoted your entire existence to it. The blood you have inherited from your clan founder is secondary to this higher purpose. Your clan Bane can be ignored once per story while you are a Servitor of Irad.

••••• **Kill Thy Brother:** When the Third Generation eventually rise, you know that most of Caine's errant childer will be destroyed. So, killing another vampire in the name of the Antediluvians just makes their job a little easier. If you kill another vampire or their servants, you gain one fewer Stain. If you planned to kill that individual at the behest of your cult, you gain no Stains at all.

## The Promise of 1528

After the Giovanni engineered the fall of the Cappadocians (or so they thought), the up-and-coming Camarilla expressed concerns about the so-called "Devil Clan." The purge of the Cappadocians entered full force soon after the Anarch Revolt, and the Kindred of the Camarilla were worried that this was more of the same. With the upstart Anarchs forming into what would become the Sabbat, the Camarilla couldn't afford a war on yet another front. So, Augustus Giovanni and the Inner Circle of the Camarilla met in Venice in 1528, and signed an agreement.

The problem is, no one really knows what's *in* the agreement. For years, all that was known was that the Giovanni had some degree of autonomy in Camarilla domains, and that the clan was given ownership of the city of Venice (in exchange for the Inner Circle being allowed to hold their meetings there). After the Family Reunion, however, an additional detail has been revealed: The Promise has a limit of 500 years, meaning it will expire in 2028. Both the Camarilla and the Hecata are scrambling to find out the details of the agreement, as well as the consequences once it expires.

### Lore

• **Legal Scholar:** You are an active student of the Promise. You don't know much, but that's more than most Kindred know. Even the fact that you know such a document exists gives you leverage. In legal disputes with Camarilla Kindred or members of the Hecata, you gain two dice on Persuasion checks.

•• **Scrap of Information:** You saw a scrap of a transcript of the Promise once. A lot of forgeries have circulated among the Kindred over the centuries, but you're reasonably sure this one is genuine. This makes you a hot commodity among other Kindred who

hunger to know what's in the Promise. Once per story, if you allow Kindred access to your notes on the Promise fragment for research, you gain a temporary dot in Contacts, Herd, Influence, or Resources that lasts for the remainder of the story as payment.

••• **Tick Tock:** You know, or believe you know, the consequences of allowing the Promise to expire, and they aren't good. Once per story, you can give advice to members of your local faction (the Camarilla court if you are a Camarilla Kindred, or the local family if you are Hecata). There's no guarantee that your advice will be followed, but you will at least get an audience.

•••• **Faulty Memory:** You read the Promise once, but for some reason you can never recall the text in full, even if you have advantages or powers that would normally allow you to remember things or uncover buried memories. But once in a while, snippets surface to help you at just the right time. Once per story, you can add three dice to an appropriate roll where memory of the Promise would help you.

••••• **Signatory:** You are directly related to one of the signatories of the Promise (or you are a signatory yourself). Once per chronicle, you can leverage your knowledge of the Promise to force a Camarilla Prince or a Hecata anziani to permanently change a ruling or local law in your favor, using your knowledge of the Promise to give you political clout. However, you must decide why you are unable to ever speak of the details of the Promise — perhaps it's a thaumaturgical compulsion, the spirit of a loved one threatened with eternal torment, or a *lot* of Ventrue Dominate.

# Styx and Bones

*"If you're not comfortable around dead things, this family isn't for you."*

— Anja Giovanni, Matron of Munich, to a group of aspiring neonates

The Hecata struggle to survive. When it comes to the newly formed Clan of Death, the Camarilla and Anarch Movement would like to finish eradicating the troublesome independent clan, which from all appearances seems to be on the ropes. However, in the German city of Munich, they've carved out toleration under the reign of the progressive Prince Ursula Eisenstadt. Through the leadership of Anja Giovanni, Mother of the local Hecata, they've acquired territory on which to build an estate. And, as long as they conduct themselves peacefully, the extended family and their associates are able to meet there in relative safety.

As they welcome a new minor family into the Clan of Death, the Munich Hecata mend old grievances, pursue unrealized goals, and pledge their eternal fidelity to family. But, when bodies begin to pile, the Hecata must contend with a new foe while the Camarilla keeps the boot to their necks.

## Introduction

**Styx and Bones** is an exploration of the Hecata within the World of Darkness, and the logical continuation of the **Cults of the Blood Gods** setting. This story centers on the Hecata as they exist in Munich, a Camarilla city that barely survived the Second Inquisition. As members of the Hecata or as their trusted allies, the players will explore two cults in the **World of Darkness**. They will unearth old ghosts, investigate new dangers, and struggle with the personal cost of Kindred warfare.

On p. XX, six ready-made characters are available for this story. PCs have at least a slight knowledge of one another before they start the prologue. This is necessary for the needs and length of the story and will assist the players in creating a deeper connection with each other.

Starting on p. XX, you can find further, shorter story hooks for running other stories relating to the cults in this book.

**Players required:** 4-6

**Duration:** 10-15 hours

Characters

PCs in this story likely hail from the Hecata, but there is no restriction on clans one might play. Likewise, while the story does not involve itself in the politics of the Camarilla or Anarch Movements, characters may still hold affiliation with either sect, or indeed a cult beyond the Hecata. While it may seem strange for the Hecata to involve non-clan members in their internal affairs, it does in fact serve multiple purposes: this plot highlights the apolitical veneer of the Hecata, allows the clan to find reliable mercenaries from outside the family, and enables them to forge close contacts with members of the other sects and cults without the need to pin their banner to any particular view or philosophy.

Characters in this story can be local to Munich and invited to the family dinner in the prologue due to prior history with the Hecata, or may be from outside the domain, summoned in to perform the task at hand. The Hecata are always happy to reward out-of-clan vampires with money and property, of which they hold plenty, with a harder bargain eking Oblivion knowledge out of a potential Mawla awarded for good service. If the vampires are from within the Hecata, it is their duty to serve the family and further the clan's goals, knowing rewards should (in theory) trickle down from their elders for good, loyal service.

# München mag Dich (Munich Loves You)

**[BEGIN TRANSCRIPT]**

Henry the Lion was a powerful prince in a time of competing families within the vast Holy Roman Empire when he founded Munich in 1158. But Emperor Frederick I, who in turn granted the duchy to one of Henry's rivals, Otto I, deposed him. As part of the House of Wittelsbach, Otto's dynasty continued for the next seven hundred years.

In many ways, Munich isn't all that different from other Camarilla cities within Europe. Many who claimed allegiance to the Fiefdoms of the Black Cross under the Ventrue Elder, Hardestadt, gathered here during the thirteenth century. This resulted in a series of false prophets, endless wars, and struggles for power. Mostly fought against the Brujah and Lasombra of Italy and the Courts of Love in France, not to mention the pervasive Lupines, the conflicts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were particularly violent for Munich. I could provide you with a comprehensive list of Princes — a succession of rulers over the centuries, complete with an exhaustive list of deeds accomplished and contests won. I could do that. But such would do you little good. These names are obsolete. They are the bones and ash on which this praxis now stands.

Regardless of my thoughts though, you should probably know about the first Camarilla Prince of Munich, Jann Berger. The Brujah zealot claimed the title in the early sixteenth century and ruled for the next couple hundred years. Like so many other contemporaries of his day… or night, if you prefer… Berger was a dictator with some fucked up religious beliefs and fanaticism matched only by the Inquisition. Those who didn't conform, he executed — a.k.a., he branded anybody who questioned his leadership a tool of the devil and staked them for the sun.

During the Thirty Years War, King Gustavus II of Sweden invaded the city. While Gustavus was probably part of some larger Jyhad between the Kindred elders of the Empire and those aligned with the Anti-Habsburg states, I doubt either one of them would claim responsibility for the plague that followed. The younger Kindred residents of Munich tried to take advantage of the chaos and assassinate Jann Berger, but they couldn't get it done. And so another series of ashy executions followed. It was only after Berger's own childe smote him that his reign of terror finally ended. That childe was Jaroslav Pascek. You might have heard of him. The former Brujah Justicar?

Anyway, he was a fanatic, too, though I don't know what his daddy issues were so I can't say if it was personal or pontifical. And, as is so often the case, Berger's departure from this immortal coil resulted in a series of violent gambits and failed coups. Few have the fortitude to claim a

praxis from a sitting sovereign, but everyone lines up when that Prince trips on a stake. For the next century, Munich entered what you might describe as a transitional period.

But by the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the birth of the Kingdom of Bavaria under Maximilian I, the city of Munich finally had a stable Prince. Felix Ritter was an Austrian Tremere of some renown. He had served in a series of campaigns against the Sabbat in Eastern Europe and had a reputation for callousness. He was devoid of sentiment, a fact which allowed him to bargain when possible and butcher when needed. The various elders who surrounded Ritter aided his rule in no small part. Munich proved an excellent launching pad for their own agendas and careers within the Camarilla. They included Lethe, Ritter's Malkavian Seneschal and soothsayer. They included Maris Streck, who served the Prince of Munich as an investigator-for-hire and who later served as the Malkavian Justicar. And they included Josef von Bauren, the Nosferatu of legend who, according to hearsay, spent his days underneath a decrepit and abandoned opera house here in Munich.

It was the golden age of the Camarilla. The Ivory Tower gleamed bright and the city of Munich stood as the paragon of Camarilla dominance within the region. The Court of Munich forged alliances with neighboring cities, the Anarch Movement, and with a German branch of the Giovanni known as the Königs. This period culminated in the Conclave of 1933, held here, which declared worldwide lextalionis against the villainous Kemintiri. And then, a few years later, the mortals reminded the immortals how powerless they really were.

You can't discuss the history of Munich without mentioning the Nazis. To do otherwise would be to ignore the havoc those assholes wrought and insult the weighty number of lives lost during the Holocaust. National Socialism was born in Munich. They called this city the Hauptstadt der Bewegung, the "Capital of the Movement." We remember the treaty Neville Chamberlain signed here, and we remember the bombs that decimated us. When the U.S. Army assaulted the city, they took it with relative ease before liberating the concentration camp at Dachau in the process. Most Kindred I know kept their heads down during the whole affair. Ritter survived, and his newly established court assisted with the Wirtschaftswunder – the rapid reconstruction of West Germany. The Tremere continued to rule a rebuilt and prosperous Munich for another sixty years. We said goodbye to the twentieth century and ushered in a new millennium.

And then, for a second time, we were powerless in the face of organized mortals.

Grenzschutzgruppe 10, Germany's new secret police and part of the global war-on-the-damned, took out half of Munich's Kindred population in one day. Within the span of a single sunrise to sunset, we experienced what I might call a tactical cleansing. They say Ritter and his childer were the first to die. They exterminated the entire Giovanni presence within Munich, and most of the Anarchs fled. By the next day's dawn, the bulk of us were dead, deep underground, or long gone.

Possibly a rumor, but they say there were some discussions within the Inner Circle of abandoning Munich altogether. I can't speak to its truth. Thankfully, one young Ventrue managed to pull our stomped-on asses from the fire. Ursula Eisenstadt was a fresh-faced twenty years dead when she planted her flag in Munich and called it hers. Who was here to stop her? She instituted security protocols, confiscated electronics, and kept us hidden from the Second Inquisition.

What I think is the most interesting aspect of her ascension to the throne is she didn't abandon the old ways of thinking. Not entirely. It was more like an old-meets-new adaptation. She treated these modern threats as both real and immediate. As Prince, unlike so many of the elders, she recognized these dangers weren't momentary storms, but life-long realities.

Tonight, the city of Munich is prosperous once more, leading Germany into the twenty-first century. We're undoubtedly cautious and never too paranoid, but we're also proud of what we have. This city is the heart of Germany and a center for art, culture, technology, and finance that elevates all of Europe. We are Kindred, after all. It's not enough to simply survive.

— Gerhard Röhrich, Sheriff of Munich

**[END TRANSCRIPT]**

# Where the Bodies Are Buried

In 2007, the Second Inquisition tore through the city like some ghastly juggernaut. Most of the old guard either fled the city or died in the night. Tonight, because of Prince Eisenstadt, Munich is once more a thriving city for the Camarilla. The Ivory Tower forged alliances with the local Anarch Movement and Independent clans to secure the peace. And while old grudges remain, the peace holds.

**The Camarilla**

Ursula Eisenstadt is part of a new breed of Camarilla Princes. She rules not through fear, but rather through raw intelligence. She embraces new ways of viewing the world, preferring practicality over individual pride. She punishes when she must, but much prefers to negotiate for the mutual benefit of all parties involved. At least, she does when it comes to Kindred within her domain. Any vampires outside Munich lack the rights of diplomacy afforded to those within.

A group of competent Kindred surround the Ventrue Prince and assist in her success. While they may personally despise each other, they respect Ursula Eisenstadt too much to see her overthrown. She hasn't always made the right decision, but they see her as proof the Camarilla can succeed in the 21st century. This group includes Seneschal Mehmet Sumal, a Turkish Tremere of some age and flexible ethics.

Sumal represents the last remnants of the old guard. He supports the Prince from the shadows and executes her bloody will when required. These duties often involve the presence of Gerhard Röhrich, a native of Munich and the Nosferatu Sheriff. Like most in his profession, Röhrich has survived a number of violent skirmishes over the years, but much prefers to maintain the peace. He is loyal to Eisenstadt almost to a fault and acts not only as her primary investigator but also as her bodyguard. Rounding out the inner circle of Munich is Pearl. The American expatriate is a Toreador of exquisite taste who serves the court as its Herald. The city includes roughly twenty other Camarilla citizens of mention, which can be created per the needs of the individual Storyteller.

**The Hecata**

Between the Second Inquisition, internal struggles, and clandestine conflicts with the Camarilla, the Clan of Death has suffered in recent years, at least ostensibly. Like the rest of the newly formed clan, the Hecata of Munich are adjusting to their contemporary hierarchy. Anja Giovanni, Mother of the city's Cult of Death and Undeath, maintains the delicate alliance with the

Camarilla. Two additional, powerful figures form a strange triumvirate within Munich. The first is Hiromitsu Asano, a newly arrived Japanese member of the Hecata who brings with him strong industrial ties. The second is Mora the Death Seer. Mora is a mysterious and androgynous Cappadocian who appears to operate with impunity. Asano and Mora were once rivals, but reconciled under the careful eye of the Giovanni who made room for the introduction of this new minor family.

**The Anarch Movement**

With strong ties to Red Liberation out of Berlin, the Anarchs of Munich are both large and largely disorganized. Consisting of three or four individual gangs, the Movement controls Eastern Munich. Despite their chaotic assembly, they have managed to center upon Dieter Straub, a charismatic figure who commands the Movement as Baron, though he has never officially claimed the title. Unlike their compatriots in Berlin, the Munich Anarchs keep to an uneasy peace with Prince Eisenstadt, preferring security over the unpredictable impact of conflict.

**The Second Inquisition**

After the Munich massacre of 1972 that claimed the lives of eleven Israeli Olympians, the German government reevaluated their practice and policies regarding terrorism. As a result, the German Federal Police created a tactical unit known as Grenzschutzgruppe 9. Focused on kidnappings, hostage situations, and terrorist incidents, GSG 9 serves as the elite wing of the German Police.

With the rise of the Second Inquisition, a new Border Guard Group has emerged in Germany. Readied with a new mandate and secret orders, GSG 10 hunts and destroys all Kindred found within the Federal Republic of Germany. They are well armed, well funded, and most of all, patient.

> Munich or Elsewhere
>
> While this story is set in the city of Munich, it can easily be transposed into another domain with minimal adjustment. We recommend that if you decide to move this story to another domain, you pick out a dozen locations of note from within the city, small and large. If for instance you wanted to set this in the domain of Dallas, the Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza is a site forever associated with the murder of JFK, making for an ominous Hecata meeting spot. The Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Gardens make for excellent neutral ground for meetings between the sects. Meanwhile, on a smaller scale the Nasher Sculpture Center makes for a bizarre setting to host a showdown, while one could easily state the Bishop Arts District is a territory firmly in Clan Toreador's hands. Set dressing is key to making a city feel true to life.
>
> The primary players have been created for this story, therefore names and clans can change, allowing the Prince to become a Malkavian, or even for the Hecata surroundings to become those of the Ministry or Tremere, given both clans share a sense of internal order. The necromantic element of this story could be replaced with Blood Sorcery or some arcane rituals another clan practices in secret.

We recommend you use Munich if you do not have a present domain for your stories, but if you have already fleshed out your setting, use it and migrate your personalities, sites, and events into this tale.

# Die Heimliche Hauptstadt (The Secret Capital)

*"I tell you there's nothing like Munich. Everything else is a waste of time in Germany."*

— Ernest Hemingway

A city of 1.5 million, Munich is the capital of the German federal state of Bavaria. It rests along the Isar River, just north of the Alps with an elevation of 520 meters. Munich hosts seventeen universities, forty-six museums, forty-seven theaters, and various centers of industry. The European headquarters of Siemens AG, BMW, and Endron all call Munich home. Finally, Munich entertains the Franz Josef Strauss International Airport, extensive eco-friendly bike paths, and an interconnected network of Autobahn, U-Bahn, S-Bahn, and tram lines.

In the past two decades, Munich has become one of the safest cities in Germany. Extremely violent crimes are rare, and the full force of the Munich police usually descends on them quickly. As a result, the local Kindred population tends to tread carefully.

**Altstadt-Lehel**

The City Center of Munich is the old city fortifications, surrounded by the innermost ring road known as the Altstadtring. It includes the Marienplatz Central Square, the New City Hall, and the world-famous Rathaus-Glockenspiel — a mechanical reenactment which, twice a day, tells two stories from the sixteenth century for passing crowds. Adjacent to the New City Hall is the Old City Hall, the former residence of the Bavarian kings, the Munich National Theater, the Bavarian National Museum, and the Frauenkirche Cathedral, home to the Catholic Archdiocese of Munich and Freising.

**Maxvorstadt**

Maxvorstadt is the artistic and academic heart of the city, located north of the City Center. In addition to various creative and scholastic institutions, the district houses the University of Munich, the Technische Universität München (TUM), the Pinakotheken museums, and Königsplatz Square. On the eastern border of the district sits the Odeonsplatz, a large central square which also houses the Feldherrnhalle. Not surprisingly, Prince Eisenstadt gifted Maxvorstadt to both Clan Toreador and Clan Tremere of Munich as part of a joint territory. While there have been squabbles between the two clans in the past, since the 2007 purge the two have cooperated amicably. They are the only vampires who can hunt in the district, and have been known to punish outsider members of their own clans who hunt there without seeking approval from their resident opposite number.

**Ludwigsvorstadt and Isarvorstadt**

These two districts lie south of Maxvorstadt. With a large immigrant population, the area is home to numerous cafés, bars, restaurants, and nightclubs. It also includes the Gärtnerplatz, an urban square arranged as a roundabout. While court gatherings are rare in Munich, when Prince Eisenstadt needs to speak with Kindred face-to-face, she uses Hänsel und Gretel. The restaurant in Isarvorstadt offers traditional German food and allows for private and secure meetings.

**Schwabing & English Garden**

North of Maxvorstadt, Schwabing is an affluent neighborhood, home to fashion outlets, specialty bookstores, and high-end art galleries. Famous residents include Vladimir Lenin, Werner Heisenberg, Wassily Kandinsky, and writers Thomas and Heinrich Mann. The English Garden, an urban park with several creeks and lakes, flanks it. On the northern edge of Schwabing sits the Allianz Arena, a football stadium with a capacity of 75,000.

**Olympiagelände**

Built on Munich's former airport, Oberwiesenfeld, this was the site of the 1972 Olympic Games. In modern nights, it's used for outdoor concerts, and includes both the BMW headquarters and the BMW museum. Grenzschutzgruppe 10 holds several warehouses in the area not far from a memorial honoring the 1972 Munich massacre. The GSG 10 use the warehouses as their primary base of operations. This base includes a training area, forensics lab, barracks, and command center.

**Neuhausen-Nymphenburg**

A quiet residential area, the district includes the Nymphenburg Palace, the primary summer residence for the royal House of Wittelsbach. In addition to entertaining the Camarilla Conclave of 1933, Prince Ritter used Nymphenburg Palace for his public court gatherings.

**Au-Haidhausen**

The district around the Munich East station (Ostbahnhof) is well known for its bars and nightclubs. It's also home to one of Munich's largest breweries, the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, Munich's municipal library, and the Maximilianeum. After years of negotiation with Prince Eisenstadt, the Hecata have acquired an abandoned Protestant church in the area. After repurposing, it currently functions as both a temple and mausoleum.

**Eastern Munich**

Bogenhausen, Berg am Laim, Trudering-Riem, and Ramersdorf-Perlach are the residential areas of Eastern Munich. Parks run along the Isar River and the Hellabrunn Zoo which help add a cozy, small-town feel to this metropolis on the rise. The Anarchs claimed this territory in their arrangement with Prince Eisenstadt and, as long as they maintain the Masquerade and commit zero public violence, she allows them to exist as they see fit. While there have been a handful of minor violations, to date, Dieter Straub has managed to maintain the peace.

# Prologue: A Family Dinner

*The Storyteller should read this section aloud or pass it around the table so each player has a chance to introduce a section of the Prologue*

Moonlight pours through the stained-glass windows of a remodeled Gothic church, and in its basement, the dead dine with family. Mother Anja Giovanni, a tall and rail-thin woman, stands at the head of the table. Her steel gray hair and the slight crow's feet at the edges of her pale eyes add sophistication to her elegant features. She holds her raised wine glass by the stem. "Family, I wish to thank you all for joining us. Across this continent, the Clan of Death gathers. We meet to bury old grudges and embark on new beginnings. For we are all Hecata, now. We are all family."

She inclines her head to the man sitting on the other end of the long banquet table reserved for local cult leadership and their honored guests. Hiromitsu Asano wears a sprig of honeysuckle

pinned to the lapel of his tailored Italian suit. The sweet smell of the trumpet-shaped white flowers permeates the room, layering a candy-like aroma over the coppery scent of blood. “Thank you for this welcome.” He raises his glass to Mother Anja in return.

At smaller tables scattered around the basement, family clink glasses and drink to the Asano, who have joined the Hecata as the newest minor family. Those at the head table lift their glasses to the Asano patriarch as they offer quiet comments of welcome along with their congratulations. Once the murmurs in the room taper off naturally, Mother Anja sits and flicks a sharp glance to the individual on her right.

“Asano-san.” Mora the Death Seer rises to their feet. Striking cheekbones emphasize their delicate lips and a receding chin as they speak. “Five centuries ago, Augustus and his brood systematically murdered the Cappadocians. Few of us survived, but all swore vengeance on the Giovanni usurpers. Your sire, Heinrich König fell at my hands. As did many Giovanni.” Their low voice braces at the spoken truth, but their broad-shouldered stature does not slink away from the responsibility. “The time for vendettas and bloodletting is over. Let us heal. Let us understand and be understood in turn. Please accept our condolences for your loss, and please accept our most sincere pledge to your continued well-being.”

Asano stands and bows slightly at the neck in response. “I accept your apology. I, too, pledge myself to the well-being of our family.” Then, he moves from his chair to approach. Mora retrieves a gift from the folds of their black waterfall cardigan, and with both hands, presents a cylinder wrapped in pastel-blue silk to Asano. He refuses it a customary three times. Each time in response, the Death Seer insists. Finally, he accepts, and in turn, pulls from his pocket a small wooden box.

He holds it out with both hands, offering it to Mora. “This is but a trivial gift….” It’s Mora’s turn to refuse. And they do three times, knowing they would eventually accept it. At the conclusion of the exchange, Mother Anja rings a small, high pitched bell. The two return to their seats to await dinner.

From the wings come a series of mortals dressed in white, ranging in size, shape, and age. Each carries a carafe of treated blood for the Kindred and a portion of the first course — small bones speared into slices of rare steak and lamb — for the kine. After each serves a table, Mora prays aloud. “I am the end and the beginning. Dead flesh may cover my bones, and my bones may encase an unbeating heart, yet I remain. Ghosts may follow in my wake, and in my wake, may other ghosts soon join them. For I have chosen my path in famine, plague, and war and stand between the living and the dead. I am prepared. For I am Hecata. I am the beginning and the end. I remain. I remain. I remain.”

A chorus of voices answer in response. “We remain.”

The still room comes to life as guests commence dining. Every course that follows is more decorative than the one before it. On serving platters, each course makes for an elaborately morbid presentation — flayed hands gripping rib-bone prison bars, the hands actually made from vegetables; blood coral tuile garnishing prettily plated organs made from puffed rice and dumplings; and giant roasts complementing soups served in skulls. Each dish is as much an unspoken threat as it is a statement of culinary artistry. Cross the Hecata and be devoured.

All indulge as they talk and reminisce well into the night. Once the dinner progresses into the more orgiastic than refined, Mother Anja Giovanni approaches the table occupied by the coterie.

After making a bit of idle conversation, she provides a rough overview of the city and offers housing to those who require it. Eventually, she beckons Mora before posing a business opportunity to those seated.

“There is an article which would prove beneficial to the Hecata,” says Mother Anja. “And may prove an opportunity for you to provide for the clan. An Autarkis has recently traveled to Munich to host a private auction. Apparently, he has in his possession a burial jar said to have the power to recall a soul from the Tempest, a place of storms in the Underworld. Mora may then be able to place that soul into an empty shell. We suspect this jar to be of Cappadocian origin, though others will certainly be competing for its possession.”

“If successful,” interjects Mora as they approach the table. “We will be able to use this artifact to resurrect one of the great elders, Constancia, Priestess of Bones. All we lack, besides the burial jar, is a worthy vessel. We happen to know of such a specimen, being young, virile, and deserving of death.”

“‘All that is dead carries the echoes of life’,” quotes Mother Anja. “‘All that lives hears the cry of its death’. Do this thing for the Hecata. Do this thing for me. Rest tonight and receive further instructions at tomorrow’s dusk.”

> Awkward Family Reunions
>
> It’s not every night vampires from across the world sit in a dining hall together. This is an excellent opportunity for a Storyteller to disseminate information about Munich and the world beyond its borders.
>
> During the break between the ceremony and dinner, Storytellers can incorporate a cocktail hour where characters have the chance to engage Mother Anja, Mora, or Asano as well as other visitors. If the coterie is new to the city, they can ask about territories, the Prince, or how Munich has fared against the Second Inquisition as some examples.

# Chapter One: Body of Lies

Regardless of whether the characters take Anja Giovanni up on her offer and sleep inside the Hecata temple, she, Mora, and the coterie reconvene there the next evening after sunset. Anja provides the characters with a file on the body they require and an invitation to the auction. She reminds the coterie Munich is a Camarilla city and the Masquerade is strictly enforced. She warns them to tread carefully, and not to do anything to hinder relations between the Camarilla and the Hecata. Or, if they do, to not get caught. Furthermore, in addition to whatever the coterie may offer at the auction, Anja grants them access to one major boon to help secure the burial jar, despite her vocal distaste for the Camarilla’s system of boons.

With the two handouts below, the characters may plan their course of action. They may choose to handle the auction first and Hildebrant after, or they can choose to split the party and address both items simultaneously.

## Handout #1: The Auction Invitation

**[PLAYER HANDOUT — IN THE STYLE OF AN INVITATION**

**PASSIVE VOICE IS INTENTIONAL FOR CHARACTER’S VOICE]**

You are cordially invited to a private auction held in the Industrial Park South in Feldkirchen at 10:00PM. My agents will be waiting to escort you to and from the warehouse.

Up for auction is a burial jar of ancient origin, recently found during an archaeological dig in Venice. Its provenance has been accurately dated to the third century, and it was once possessed by Augustus Giovanni. According to documents found on site, he used the jar to call upon those dearly departed.

No violence will be permitted during the auction. Any found to be using their particular gifts in order to secure said item will be dealt with harshly. Please bring with your patience an open wallet and a worthy temperament.

Sincerely,

Mathieu Cassel

**[END INVITATION]**

## Handout #2: Günter Hildebrant Dossier

**[PLAYER HANDOUT — IN THE STYLE OF A DOSSIER]**

Name: Günter Hildebrant

Date of Birth: October 28th, 1983

Height: 1.88 m Eyes: Brown

Weight: 94 kg Hair: Brown

Education:

Wilhelm's Gymnasium — Graduated with honors, 2001

Bundeswehr Deployment: Afghanistan, 2002-2007

Bundeswehr[1] Discharge: Honorable Discharge with the rank of Sergeant, 2007

University of Bayreuth: Graduated with a degree in Political Science, 2012

The Leon Group: 2014 - Present

Places of Interest:

Address: Apartment 14C, Grün Street, Glockenbach

Place of Business: The Leon Group, Denkmal Avenue, Maxvorstadt

Area of Interest: Zum Wolf cocktail bar, Glockenbach

Evaluation:

Hildebrant is an intelligent man who after serving several tours in Afghanistan attended the University of Bayreuth to earn a degree in Political Science. Afterward, he returned to Munich and joined the Leon Group, a left-wing think tank. He is a gifted hunter with six confirmed kills. The majority of those kills have been reserved for Anarchs and members of the Hecata. As such, the Camarilla have privately allowed the hunter to operate in the area.

Hildebrant works late, leaving the Leon Group main office on Denkmal Avenue between 9:00PM and 10:00PM. On weekends, he travels to the Zum Wolf cocktail bar in Glockenbach

and spends several hours there before walking to his apartment located eight blocks away. He usually leaves the bar between midnight and 1:00AM. Hildebrant lives alone, but does on occasion invite people he finds at Zum Wolf.

Special note: We require the body of Hildebrant intact. Remove no limbs and leave his face unmarred.

**[END DOSSIER]**

## The Auction

Northeast of Trudering-Riem is the municipality of Feldkirchen. Only 6,000 residents live in this small area with industrial parks located in its southern tip and eastern side. Mathieu Cassel has secured a warehouse in the south for the auction. Once the coterie reaches the location, a sedan guides them to the warehouse either as passengers if they arrived on foot, or acting as a lead vehicle if they arrived by car.

They enter a loading door used for semi-trucks and pull up beside an array of other automobiles ranging from dirty hatchbacks to luxury crossovers. A few meters away, about a dozen folding chairs make a crescent moon shape around a single table. Harsh fluorescent lights reflect off a table's shiny oak varnish. A red runner draped across it awaits display of the priceless artifact.

In addition to several ghouls, four other invited Kindred are present. The first is Pearl, Herald of the Camarilla. The American Toreador is a study in monochrome with rich pink-colored hair that matches her hourglass-hugging wiggle dress in the same shade. As she speaks with Dieter Straub, the de facto Baron of Munich, she poses as if entirely sure whoever is in the room is looking at her. She tosses a flirty wink at those daring enough to not glance away when she catches them.

Straub looms over her like a giant with short red hair and a trimmed beard. In contrast to Pearl's luxurious silk dress, the Anarch is in torn jeans, scuffed boots, and a heavy wool coat. He eyes the newcomers with suspicion as he listens to the ever-chattering Herald with resigned patience.

An unknown man snakes through a few chairs toward the coterie to introduce himself as Terrence Rusk. Rusk has neat salt-and-pepper hair and dresses in an ash gray suit, stark white shirt, and sapphire blue tie. He addresses the characters with respect as the Perses of the local Cult of Mithras. If asked what a Perses is, he will smile and note the title is synonymous with that of a knight.

Finally, the host, Mathieu Cassel, stands near the table with two rather broody looking security specialists flanking him on either side. The French Autark is short and slight in stature. He's a small man who has made his reputation less on his charm and more on his goods. Distinguides by heterochromia which gives him one black eye and one yellowish cat's eye, his fingernails are black to match his dark suit and ebony skin, though a teal  tie adds a pop of color.

"Assembled agents, merchants, and collectors," announces Cassel in a thick French accent. His voice is rough and dry from smoking too many Gauloises. "Thank you for joining me this evening. Detached professionalism is the hallmark of my trade, so I will avoid any prolonged preamble or intimate introductions. We are all personages and privileged guests, here to purchase that which transcends the imagination. Therefore, we will move directly to the main attraction."

With a snap of his fingers, his security specialists set a huge cube-shaped case on the table. By unlatching the top, the sides fold out revealing a large black jar. The pottery resembles an amphora container, two feet tall with barbotine decoration depicting a funeral scene.

"The imprecisely named 'Venetian Jar' has been carbon dated to the third century and is of Roman design. It was discovered at an archaeological site in Venice, found underneath the former haven of Augustus Giovanni. According to his private notes, the jar was used to communicate with the deceased. This is the only item up for bidding this evening, which will start at one major boon. Do I hear a second?"

## Coterie Options

**Bargaining:** The simplest means of securing the Venetian Jar is to purchase it outright at the auction through a combination of boons, favors, and resources. The characters hold one major boon from Mother Anja Giovanni via proxy, but may offer their own in addition with pooled resources between the characters.

The bidding increases in increments through a combination of minor boons, nebulous favors, major boons, and monetary resources. Everyone in the room increases the bid to two major boons. Then, the bidding becomes more heated. However, the Kindred in the room drop out in the following order while the ghouls representing other interests stop their bidding at totals in between.

- Baron Dieter Straub ends his bids with two major boons and monies equal to two dots of Resources.
- Herald Pearl bids three major boons, two minor boons, and cash equivalent to three dots of Resources.
- Finally, Terrence Rusk bids four major boons, one minor boon, and three dots worth of Resources.

If the characters can bid more than Rusk, they will rightfully win the auction. Any Resources spent as a part of the auction are lost for the remainder of the story. Of the participants, only Straub and Rusk appear aggravated by the loss. Herald Pearl lets out an effervescent laugh. The ghouls representing other interests remain solemn.

**Combat:** Given the number of Kindred and ghouls in the building, robbing the auction directly will not go well for the characters. However, if the characters want to ambush Rusk after he's won the item, that is within the realm of possibility. Rusk leaves with the Venetian Jar and gets in the back of an expensive Audi. His driver takes them toward Maxvorstadt where Rusk havens. If the characters have a vehicle or a means of keeping watch on Rusk's vehicle, they can tail him with a Wits + Drive roll (Difficulty 4) or a substitution of an applicable Attribute + Skill (Difficult 4).

Otherwise, they can ambush him before he leaves the warehouse and the industrial park. The characters can then deal with Rusk as they see fit, stealing the Venetian Jar in the process. This will put a strain on any future relations with the Cult of Mithras, and if executed too vociferously, will draw police attention.

**Theft:** A final option for the characters is to steal the Jar from Rusk unbeknownst to him from the trunk of the Audi, either through lock-picking the trunk or through some other, supernatural means. This can be achieved with a Wits + Larceny roll (Difficulty 4).

## Approaching Günter Hildebrant

Whether during or after the auction, the characters need to murder Hildebrant. He is at work at the Leon Group until 10:00 PM. Afterward, a short cab ride delivers him to Zum Wolf which, per his dossier, is only eight blocks from his apartment. He drinks until 12:30 AM, after which he walks home.

Tall and lithe, Hildebrant is in excellent shape with muscles plugging the sleeves of his too-small gray business suit. Personable and aware of current events, Hildebrant is an excellent conversationalist and quite easy to like. He uses the "Police and Wayward Muscle" stats listed on p. XX, though he is not armed.

### Coterie Options

**Manipulation:** The simplest solution for the characters is to seduce him at the bar with a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 2) or a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 3). Note if Hildebrant has been drinking for more than an hour, Difficulty rolls against him decrease by 1. Regardless, successful rolls convince Hildebrant to take the player character home with him, after which the characters may ambush Hildebrant at his apartment or en route.

**Combat:** If the characters choose to ambush Hildebrant en route to his apartment, they may choose to act from a position of stealth. Glockenbach is an urban neighborhood, but there are enough corners to provide suitable cover, and it's late enough in the evening to lessen general foot traffic. A successful Dexterity + Stealth roll (Difficulty 3) allows for one free surprise attack, which grants a combat challenge against a static Difficulty 1.

As an alternative, the characters may wish to break into Hildebrant's apartment and lie in wait for him. An Intelligence + Larceny roll (Difficulty 4) secures entry into the domicile. Afterward, they may use the stealth roll listed above.

## The Ritual

The characters need to transport both the body and the Venetian Jar to the Hecata temple in Au-Haidhausen. Once near the property, Mother Anja dispatches ghouls to bring the body and jar inside. Within the Gothic church, they're given time to rest, freshen up, and chat until 1:00AM, at which point the characters descend once again into the basement. Staff have removed the extra tables from the dinner, but the empty head table remains. Massive, carved wooden valves folded like French doors reveal an inner sanctuary beyond the space used as a dining hall.

The Hecata sanctuary is a large marble room with a circular pool. Dimly lit by candle, the water appears black. The floors, walls, and ceiling glow bronze. The pungent smell of myrrh, mugwort, and wormwood wafts from braziers. Mother Anja and Mora stand next to the pool, waiting for the characters.

Mora, skin covered in a thin film of dirt and holding the Venetian Jar in their hands, instructs the characters to stand in a circle. The Death Seer removes the lid before biting into their wrist, allowing the blood to flow freely into the jar. They instruct the coterie to do the same. After all of the characters have bled, the Death Seer begins the ceremony. Mother Anja, Mora, and the coterie divest themselves of the bulk of their clothing before picking up the corpse of Günter Hildebrant and stepping into the pool. The body floats on the fingertips of the coterie as they encircle it.

“I am the end and the beginning.” Mora raises the Venetian Jar toward the sigil inscribed on a ceiling dome above. “We reach beyond the Veil. We cast our net into the seas of the Underworld. We plead with the Tempest to deliver unto us one who is lost. We ask for Constancia, Priestess of Bones and childe of Japheth. We demand her freedom. We demand her memory. For we are Hecata. We are the beginning and the end. We remain. We remain. We remain.”

Mother Anja, standing opposite Mora, looks to the coterie to provide the chorus response with her. “We remain.”

Mora moves with alacrity, reaching high into the air and snatching something invisible before slamming the flat of their hand onto Hildebrant’s chest above his heart. Then, they take the Venetian Jar and pour the collection of blood down the cadaver’s throat.

A disembodied shriek starts soft, but grows louder and louder until the cry is deafening. The candles burn more brightly and the body reels, erupting in spasms and a deep, garbled gasp. Latching onto the characters, the body of Hildebrant awakens. And while his face might be that of a man, the strength of his grip is an elder’s. The sanctuary goes silent. Mother Anja rings a hand bell, and on command, three nude mortals enter the pool. Like a freshly Embraced neonate, Constancia descends on the trio with violent abandon. Once satiated, the Priestess of Bones collapses into slumber.

While Mora tends to Constancia, Mother Anja Giovanni pulls the coterie aside to thank them for their efforts. She grants each of them a minor boon and free access to the Hecata temple for as long as they remain in Munich. The characters can then rest for the evening, having accomplished something rare and wonderful for the Clan of Death.

# Chapter Two: Grave Digging

After the ceremony, the characters have a few nights to acclimate themselves to Munich if they’ve come from out of town, or meet with existing associates if they are residents of the domain. The following are locations Storytellers can use for additional side and sub plots.

### Nightly Grind

In addition to their personal agendas, most Kindred spend their nights feeding, patrolling territory, and acquiring information on their friends and enemies. Storytellers can combine the locations in Exploring the City with these nightly activities so PCs can experience vampire existence in Munich. Note that events like patrolling are primarily for Kindred from Munich, though a coterie looking to impress the Camarilla might offer their services.

**Feeding:** With 1.5 million people, Munich has no shortage of feeding opportunities. Whether pursuing animals or humans, most urban hunting utilizes a basic Wits + Investigation roll (Difficulty 2) or a Wits + Animal Ken roll (Difficulty 2).

**Patrolling:** Anarch territories to the east and Camarilla territories on the western side of the Isar flank the Hecata temple in Au-Haidhausen. The Hecata patrol this area nightly to identify potential threats. Most patrolling requires a Wits + Streetwise roll (Difficulty 3) or an Intelligence + Investigation roll (Difficulty 3).

SPCs may discover characters venturing into sect territories using these same rolls.

**Gathering Intelligence:** With agents of the Camarilla, Anarch Movement, and independent parties conducting business throughout Munich, the characters can involve themselves in ongoing events. Some of these may require diplomacy while others may demand maneuvers that are more clandestine. Social introductions use a Manipulation + Etiquette roll (Difficulty 2), while spying and surveillance requires a successful Wits + Stealth roll (Difficulty 3).

## Exploring the City

### The Angel of Peace

Situated in Maximilian Park on the eastern side of the Isar, the Friedensengel is a public fountain and overlook. It includes a thirty-eight-meter high Corinthian style column, atop which stands a six meter angelic statue. The sects use this area as a neutral meeting place, especially between the Camarilla who control the western side of the Isar and the Anarchs who claim the east.

### The Field Marshal's Hall

The Feldherrnhalle is a monument in Munich situated on a central square known as the Odeonsplatz. Commissioned in 1841 by King Ludwig I, it includes a pair of lion statues designed by Wilhelm von Rümann. The lions mimic the Medici lions of the Loggia dei Lanzi, and according to rumor, Clan Tremere has somehow devised a method of spying through a statue's eyes.

### The Glyptothek

Envisioned as a "German Athens," the Glyptothek is the oldest public museum in Munich with exhibits from the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. Among the most famous pieces are busts of Dictator Sulla, and Emperors Augustus, Caligula, and Nero. Not surprisingly, the Glyptothek is within Toreador territory. The clan uses the museum for entertaining foreign dignitaries.

### The Royal Brewery

Also known as the Staatliches Hofbräuhaus in München, the Bavarian government owns the brewery. It is one of the oldest beer halls in Munich made famous by the Bavarian Beer Purity Law of 1516, which decreed the brewing process could only use natural ingredients. Hofbräuhaus gained world-wide renown in the aftermath of World War II. Today Hofbräuhaus exports their product all over the world, and its franchises include individual breweries on five of the seven continents. The Anarch Movement lays claim to the Hofbräuhaus and use it for their own purposes.

### The MMA Club

The Mixed Munich Arts nightclub is located in a former power plant built during the 1930s. Located in Maxvorstadt, the main boiler hall has transformed into a dance floor with twenty-one-meter high walls and a space of 460 square meters. Since most of the facility is underground, the site provides a rough, dark atmosphere and features DJs from around the world. Young Kindred flock to the club as a prime feeding ground.

**The Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich**

Also referred to as LMU, the university has fifty thousand students, twenty individual facilities, and an operating budget of 1.7 billion Euros. Considered one of the most prestigious universities in Germany, as of 2018 it has produced 42 Nobel laureates. Seneschal Mehmet Sumal has placed the Tremere chantry somewhere within the university. All those seeking to use the university must first speak with (and compensate) the Turkish Tremere.

## Permanent Lodgings

**Hotel / Motel:** Munich has plenty of hotels of various shapes, sizes, and price ranges. With a simple Intelligence + Security roll (Difficulty 2) or an Intelligence + Streetwise roll (Difficulty 2), the characters should be able to locate a suitable place to rest for the day, and acquire the necessary materials to safeguard it during daylight hours.

**The Hecata Temple:** If the characters so desire, they can take Mother Anja up on her offer and stay inside the Hecata Temple. The building is large enough to grant each character a small dormitory, but is somewhat lacking in terms of privacy.

**Coterie Havens:** If any of the PCs are native to Munich or have the means of purchasing a haven, the characters can stay there during the day.

**Public Space:** Munich has numerous parks and cemeteries, not to mention public spaces for vans, shelters, and churches. This is risky, as pedestrians and vagrants may notice characters making use of the environs, but it remains an option.

## The First Nightmare

Days pass as the characters solidify their holdings and get to know the city. On the third day after the resurrection of Constancia, the coterie has a vision while they sleep. The nightmare is communal with each experiencing the same event.

*Pervasive cold numbs your limbs. In the darkness, you pass through a snowy park and approach a gazebo-like structure that appears Chinese in inspiration. Footfalls on snow make chomping sounds as you reach the first of five stories. You climb a spiral staircase to the upper levels and pass open air balconies, one built on top of the other to form a tower. Each step brings you closer to your intended prey. The smell of flesh and blood assaults your nostrils as he finally comes into view — a wealthy man with sandy blonde hair wearing a long wool coat leans against the balcony. He takes a long drag from a cigarette while he scrolls through a news feed on his phone.*

*From surprise you strike, snatching one hand and twisting it hard. Bones and sinew snap as he yells in pain, drops his phone, and reels in horror. Before he realizes the true danger, his own shadow snakes around his throat, waistline, and free hand. He struggles against your attack, but lacks the immortal strength of a being such as you. Your fangs extend, and you bite hard into his throat. You gorge yourself on hot blood.*

*As the man's heart slows, he goes limp. He's powerless to stop you as you use the shadows to pull stretching flesh and bone. You tear a single arm from its socket, thrilling at the sound of ripping flesh and wrenching muscles. With his one arm in your hand, you toss the corpse from the tower and smile when it lands in the snow with a crunchy thud.*

## Under Arrest

Suddenly, the coterie awakens from their nightmare to an uninvited guest. Whether havening on their own or housed at the Hecata temple, a dozen armed men are there. They're dressed in business attire and are lead by Gerhard Röhrich, the Nosferatu Sheriff of Munich. With a shaved head and square features, he's dressed in black tactical gear and armed with a holstered pistol. Röhrich invites the coterie to meet the Prince, though his tone warns of forceful arrest if they don't accept.

If the characters attempt to flee, they'll quickly find themselves outnumbered and outgunned. The posse has orders to bring the characters in alive but are accustomed to violence and will use it if necessary. If the characters are at the Hecata temple, Mother Anja objects to this harassment before ultimately permitting their arrest. She advises the coterie to report to her immediately after their conversation with the Prince.

Agents of the Sheriff thoroughly search them with a security wand and pat-down. They confiscate any weapons, metallic items, or electrical devices, putting them in a duffle bag before shoving each character into an unobtrusive white van. For any character who may be keeping an eye on where security takes their possessions, the duffle bag leaves with an agent taking a separate vehicle.

The Storyteller can use their discretion to determine if a character has the means of keeping track of their things. If so, the second vehicle drives in a different direction and parks in a random lot nowhere near the characters' destination — Hänsel und Gretel, a restaurant in Isarvorstadt.

Once inside the restaurant, Röhrich delivers them to a large back room. With polished stone floors, marble tables, and black and white drawings lining the wall depicting scenes from various tales of the Brothers Grimm, the room is cold and uninviting. In addition to several armed ghouls, Ursula Eisenstadt, Prince of Munich, sits at one of the tables. She's of average height and build, dressed in navy slacks, a sleeveless silver blouse, and matching flats. Her auburn hair is styled short with a blunt cut, which enhances her sharp features and hazel eyes. On her left arm is a sleeve tattoo stretching from her wrist to her shoulder. Vivid and imaginative, its lacy web traps different flying creatures, some mythological and others real.

Seated behind her in a back booth are Seneschal Mehmet Sumal and Herald Pearl. While the Herald takes handwritten notes, the olive-skinned Tremere eyes the coterie and worries a large gold coin in his hand.

Prince Eisenstadt lifts her head from some paperwork. After taking her time memorizing each of the characters' faces, she nods. "Introduce yourselves." She listens to their introductions without reaction or interruption. "Once upon a time, Kindred ruled the land seizing whatever they desired, fashioning their personal reality, and killing any who stood in their way. We were all blood gods. That was until ten years ago.

"The Second Inquisition gutted this city. The few of us who survived did so because of two things. Do you know what they are?" Not a rhetorical question, she waits to see if any of the characters give it a guess. Regardless of silence or an answer, she says, "Caution and restraint."

Eisenstadt opens a folder. Inside are photographs she spins around and slides to the far side of the table so the coterie can see. "Therefore, I will not abide acts like these."

The series of photographs depict a dead man dressed in a long wool coat lying like a rag doll in red snow. He has a deep gash running through his neck as if someone tried to tear his head off. His left arm is broken at the wrist. He's missing his right. The crime photos are graphic — taken

during the day — and reflect the shared dream experienced by the characters. “His name is Stefan Schaumann, a public prosecutor. Someone killed him early this morning outside the Chinese Tower in English Garden. His arm was used to write this....”

Eisenstadt shows another photo with the Hecata symbol drawn with blood in the snow. Schaumann’s severed arm is also in the photograph in its own small pool of melty red as if tossed haphazardly after use. The Prince of Munich gives the coterie a hard look. “If I believed you did this, you’d already be stacked like cordwood and set on fire. But clearly, this is one of yours at work or someone who wants me to think it is. So, I’m officially making this your problem. You’re going to find out who did this and bring the person or persons responsible to me. You will do this, and I will continue to believe the Hecata are worthy guests within my city. Otherwise, I will take no chances to rid myself of the issue. In this, Röhrich speaks with my voice. Now, get out.”

After the characters leave Hänsel und Gretel, they get into the van again and are driven to the parking lot with the second vehicle so the Sheriff’s agents can reunite them with their possessions. The vehicles depart leaving the coterie to find their own way home.

## Threats and Rumors

Over the course of Chapter Two, at any point after their meeting with the Prince until Chapter Three, a couple characters’ Touchstones reach out to them. Unknown parties are harassing and threatening them. While these attacks escalate in subsequent chapters, examples include:

- Four bullets found outside the home of the Touchstone.
- Someone calling the Touchstone at odd hours and hanging up.
- Dead flowers delivered to the Touchstone’s place of work without a card attached.
- The Touchstone worried someone has been following them during the day.

## Clan Advice

The characters are likely to reach out to their Hecata superiors for guidance. They may choose to keep their shared vision a secret as well as the threats against their Touchstones, but news of the English Garden murder spreads quickly throughout the Kindred community of Munich. Most of the Hecata respond to inquiries with concern. Typical responses are as follows:

**Mother Anja:** “I find it difficult to believe our family is responsible for this, but I agree with the Prince. We need to look into this for our own security. Best to do that without the prying eyes of the Camarilla. You have whatever support I can muster to see it through. In the meantime, I will develop an exit strategy in case the Prince makes good on her threats.” Mother Anja exhales a thoughtful sigh. “I would advise you to investigate the victim. Perhaps a Kindred held some grudge against him, or perhaps someone holds a grudge against us. There must be a reason for this particular act. Why this Schaumann and not someone else? Munich is not accustomed to grisly murder. So time, as always, is not on our side.”

**Mora:** The enigmatic Death Seer is in the Hecata temple. “I had the same vision you did. We are connected. Them, thee, and me. We used our blood to reach into the Underworld. It is not impossible when we rescued Constancia… that something else used the gateway as well. Something that moves and acts as a Kindred with full access to our particular gifts. Perhaps a spectre, possessed of a burning rage seeking to unleash its wrath on some soul or souls. A

vendetta, born of some grudge. So you must find this victim, this Stefan Schaumann, and learn everything you can about him. You find his crime and you may yet find his adversary."

**Asano:** Asano is not present in the Hecata temple, and is not available for conversation or advice.

**Constancia:** Books surround the shell of Günter Hildebrant. The ancient vampire occupying his body smiles at the coterie, beckoning them inside. The Priestess of Bones is slow to move and speak as she remembers how. While Constancia has no knowledge of the Schaumann murders, she can answer certain broad questions. "Everything is so strange. Familiar and yet…not? I remember fragments from my life so long ago. My sire, Japheth. My childer, Ambrogino and the one calling himself 'de Camden.' Augustus and his betrayal. I remember almost nothing of how I died or the Tempest, save shards of… it is difficult to describe. Like a song when you only know the melody and chorus. To know each and every one of them, sharing in their pain and they so very aware of mine. Connected and terrible. But this world! This new world. This new age so full of magic and wonder and awe. Mora has begun to illuminate me but it is all so overwhelming. So much history. So much death and destruction. To have once been so powerful and now so small. So fragile. Lost in the voices." The elder becomes distracted, returning to her books.

## Investigating the First Attack

The characters can investigate the murder at the Chinese Tower in English Garden through different means. Either through police contacts, through allies at the city morgue, or by traveling to the site itself, the characters can learn about Stefan Schaumann.

The Chinesischer Turm, or "Chinese Tower," is a twenty-five-meter high wooden structure constructed during the late eighteenth century. The tower has five open-air stories, ranging in roof diameter from nineteen meters at the bottom to six meters at the top. The Chinese Tower stands on the southern portion of the English Garden currently closed off by police tape. Blood stains still coat the snow, situated in front of the tower, and on the second story balcony from which the murderer hurled Schaumann.

While there are no security cameras or witnesses, if the characters have access to Auspex or are able to communicate with animals via Animalism, they may discover the assailant appeared as a moving, humanoid shadow. Roughly six feet tall with four splayed shadowy arms, the figure clearly had access to Oblivion, the Discipline most often associated with the Lasombra and the Hecata. Calculating anger fueled the attacker. Driven by a need to cleanse and purify, it attacked Schaumann on the balcony, broke his left wrist, fed from his neck, and then tore off his arm. It then tossed the body onto the snow below before using the arm to draw the Hecata symbol in blood. Investigating Schaumann's body at the morgue confirms this, but also reveals an estimated time of death between 3:00 AM and 4:00 AM. Characters who possess any level of the Occult skill know this as the classic "Witching Hour."

Through their own contacts or by way of allies inside the Munich police, the characters can gain access to Stefan Schaumann's body and home address. He is thirty-nine years old, single, and living alone in an apartment in Schwabing. He was born in Frankfurt and studied legal theory at Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg. He completed his state examinations with the highest possible marks, for which he was awarded a Doctor of Law from the University of Würzburg in 2013. As a prosecutor for the city of Munich, he mostly handled non-violent financial crimes and

earned a decent conviction record in the process. His most notable convictions include a pollution case against Endron, price-fixing against a pharmaceutical company, and financial crimes against day traders on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange. He was not religious, nor was he ever married. Puzzlingly, he comes off as rather unremarkable.

Storytellers can button the end of Chapter Two with an initial round of threats against the Touchstones of the characters or with additional acts of intimidation against them.

# Chapter Three: The Price We Pay

The next day, while the characters sleep, they have a second vision. The nightmare is again in concert with each experiencing the same event.

## The Second Nightmare

*A branch snaps under your foot. Out of a dense forest, tombstones and sepulchers emerge. They line a path dotted with stone crosses and angelic statues. You come to a building with a gated arch. Above the entrance, the phrase "Die Liebe hoeret nimmer auf" reminds visitors to the columbarium that love never stops loving. On the front steps of the memorial building, a pair of young lovers sit intertwined, bundled against the cold.*

*You crouch low to feel their heat and smell their blood. Hunger growls from within as you prepare to pounce. Patiently, you stalk your prey, allowing the two to continue their embrace while you blanket the area in darkness so thick it blocks the light from the moon and stars above. As they kiss and paw at each other, you slip your shadows around them like you've gifted each of them with an extra set of hands.*

*Slowly, you squeeze. Their heaving breathes become gasps under the strain. Then, violently you pull them apart from each other. They scream as you lift both high. Their feet scramble against air. Your first cut lacerates the man's throat. The girl cries out in choked wails. With blood spraying across the columbarium gate, you bring the boy down hard, snapping bones in the process. Your second cut serrates the girl's leg and side. More blood leaks from her onto the snow like a broken faucet, and as your shadows tighten around her throat, she too goes limp. You toss her next to her lover before your shadow arm — coated in blood — draws something on the concrete.*

When the characters awaken, they realize a second attack has taken place. If they're familiar with Munich, they may recognize the columbarium as belonging to Nordfriedhof (the Northern Cemetery). Otherwise, or in addition, they can speak with their fellow Hecata.

**Mother Anja:** If given a description of these violent events, Mother Anja responds immediately. "You're describing Nordfriedhof. A cemetery in Schwabing-Freimann. Go! Now! Before it's too late."

**Mora:** If the characters are at the Hecata temple, the Death Seer seeks them out. "I know. There has been another. I recognize the site as the Northern Cemetery. But the timing of it is suspicious. The attacks happen early in the morning, but we are only experiencing them while we sleep during the day. It is a kind of aftershock or phantom memory, I think. But that also means we are twelve hours behind these attacks. I must take time to think on this."

**Asano:** Asano is still not present in the Hecata temple and is not available for conversation or advice.

**Constancia:** The newly resurrected elder is in her room. As she grows accustomed to utilizing a man's body, Constancia chooses different men's garments from a rolling rack. She tries on a sport coat and smooths the lapels as she admires herself in a mirror. Attempts to ask her about the murders result in easy laughter. She teases the coterie about their soft hearts and queasy stomachs. "What have we become? When have we ever done the bidding of a Camarilla Prince? Foolish babies, you do not see what we can make of this."

She remains unaffected by recent events, but if the coterie continues to question her, she'll ask insistent questions of them about modern living and technology. If there are men in the group, she'll press them about how to be a man in the 21st century. Constancia is more interested in her own new existence than any issue facing the Hecata.

## Investigating the Second Attack

Situated in the suburb of Schwabing-Freimann, Nordfriedhof, "the Northern Cemetery," has 34,000 burial plots and is marked as the largest cemetery in Munich. In addition to the graves, the site houses a chapel, a mortuary, and a sixty-year-old columbarium.

Arriving on the scene, the characters find several ghouls, dressed in casual jeans and winter coats, stationed around the building. While they are unfamiliar, they make no effort to bar the characters from entry into the area. Beyond them is the murder scene, complete with two fresh corpses and the symbol of the Hecata drawn in blood on the concrete in front of the entrance. Standing over the two bodies is Terrence Rusk with his hands shoved into the pockets of his long wool coat.

It's possible the characters killed Terrence during their robbery in Chapter One. If this is the case, another member of the Cult of Mithras, Anna Fleischer, can replace Rusk. But assuming Rusk survived, the Cult of Mithras will be surprisingly forgiving.

"Our time is limited," notes the Ventrue. "We've delayed the authorities, but we must proceed quickly. I've already done my preliminary investigation. I suggest you do the same. Afterward, we can compare notes. The cemetery doesn't get many visitors in the winter but my men won't be able to hold pedestrians off for long."

If the characters investigate, they recognize the two corpses killed outside the columbarium. The first is a young male in his twenties with shoulder-length brown hair. In his wallet, his identification marks him as Finn Laubenstein, a guitar instructor at MGI München. In addition to several broken limbs, he died from a single claw strike to his throat which lacerated his carotid artery and trachea. Information on the girl is more difficult to come by. PCs will need to find her purse, which she lost while she was kicking and screaming in the air.

If they find it, they'll identify her as Hannah Hagen, a nineteen-year-old student at MGI München. She has a deep gouge, made by a claw, running along her side and into her leg. The attack shattered sections of her ribcage and cut her femoral artery on the inside of her thigh.

Once again, Auspex, Animalism, or other Disciplines may help piece together what occurred. As the area darkened under some supernatural power, shadows grappled the pair. The figure then attacked the two lovers and sliced into them with clawed fingers resembling Protean claws. Spirit's Touch highlights rage similar to that at the previous murder scene as well as the need to purify.

Through various social media applications, police allies, or general contacts, a successful Wits + Investigation roll (Difficulty 2) or an Intelligence + Technology roll (Difficulty 3) reveals few clues. Finn Laubenstein was born and raised in Munich and has an apartment in Schwabing-West. He studied music at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts where he graduated with honors. Shortly thereafter, he began teaching at MGI München. Hannah Hagen is one of his students and according to social media, the two have been dating for three months. Hannah's family is originally from Berlin but moved to Munich when she was twelve. She maintains an apartment near MGI München while her family lives in Trudering-Riem. Neither appears to have any overt connection to Stefan Schaumann, and for reference, the Nordfriedhof columbarium is four kilometers north of the Chinese Tower.

The Ventrue's phone chirps, prompting a frown. "The police have been called on my employees. We need to go. Come with me."

## Getting to Know the Cult of Mithras

The section following assumes Rusk lived through his encounter with the coterie. If he did not, please reference the sidebar entitled: Rusk's Murder

> Rusk's Murder
>
> Anna Fleischer is the Cult of Mithras' investigator into the murder of Rusk, and she has the coterie on her primary suspects list. Her demeanor and conversation should attempt to lure the characters into a false sense of security so they join her at the Cult of Mithras estate. She speaks as if Rusk is still alive making it seem as if no one is aware of his demise.
>
> Like Rusk, she is interested in the acquisition of the Venetian Jar. Therefore, she understands she can't spook the coterie. She also wants to use the characters to find out who is committing the murders. So, her answers are similar to Rusk's if they choose to join her.
>
> The Storyteller is encouraged to use Anna's motivation as a subplot consequence of the player characters' handling of Rusk. After she has obtained her primary objectives of acquiring the Venetian Jar and stopping whoever is threatening the masquerade in Munich, she uses any evidence she's collected about his murder to push for the Prince to punish the Hecata with prejudice.

It's likely the characters will not leave with Rusk because it seems like a trap. In a way, it is. Kindred have long memories, and eventually, Rusk will get his revenge. However, his priority is getting the Venetian Jar for the Cult of Mithras. He's not prideful enough to have the treatment he received from the coterie stand in his way. He does his best to reassure them they are on the same team despite their first encounter, insisting Kindred existence doesn't come without some risks, and he is no stranger to "awkward first impressions." Mutual threats make strange bedfellows.

If the characters still refuse to leave with him, he departs the cemetery leaving the coterie at the columbarium. At the Storyteller's discretion, the coterie may have other means of discovering the information provided in this scene, but it won't come from Rusk.

Otherwise, Terrence Rusk escorts the party out of the cemetery and into several models of Audi vehicles. The caravan travels northwest into the district of Milbertshofen-Am Hart where they

arrive at a small estate. What Rusk refers to as a modest meeting place is, in actuality, a four hundred square meter piece of real estate worth several million Euros. Iron fences surround the two-story Neoclassical structure.

"Forgive the drive." Rusk leads them inside. "We needed someplace we could talk privately, and this estate belongs to my family. We use it to entertain guests. And please, do not fear me. I have great respect for the Hecata, as my Pater, Lord Roger de Camden, is one of the most honorable Kindred I know."

The interior is as stately as the exterior with clean white walls and vaulted ceilings. Rusk leads the way, taking them through the main portion of the home to a set of glass doors leading outside. They step onto an impressive veranda overlooking a meticulously planned garden blanketed in snow.

A statue stands in the center of each winter flower bed, and any Ventrue in the party will immediately recognize the figures sculpted from the marble. They include the elegant Anne Bowesley, the Duke and Duchess of Amber, Jan Pieterzoon, Julia Antasia, and both Hardestadt the Elder and Younger. The hands of masters most likely found among the Toreador exquisitely carved these exalted Kindred. They all face a dominating central figure, classically handsome with shoulder-length hair. Even the non-Ventrue among the characters may recognize him as Mithras, the former Prince of London.

Following are potential questions for Rusk and his answers:

**Who are you?**

**Rusk:** *"I am Terrence Rusk. I represent the Cult of Mithras in Munich. As their Perses, I am their defender, empowered to act on their behalf."*

**What is the Cult of Mithras?**

**Rusk:** *"Mithras was the Prince of London, God-Emperor and Unconquered Sun. One of the most longstanding sovereigns in our history. He believed in unity, and we follow his laws to preserve unity."*

**What about what we did to you earlier (assuming the characters robbed or hurt Rusk in Chapter One)?**

**Rusk:** *"Make no mistake. You owe a debt to the Cult of Mithras for your transgression. But I am willing to put that aside for the moment. Neither of us can afford a killer running loose in the city. We deal with this. And then we will come to terms."*

**How did you learn about the attack in the cemetery?**

**Rusk:** *"The Venetian Jar is used to resurrect the dead. When it ended up in the hands of the Hecata, I assumed you would use it in a cemetery somewhere. I've had my people monitor every one of them in Munich. They found the two bodies and kept the crime scene hidden long enough for me to investigate. You arrived shortly thereafter."*

**What do you know about the Venetian Jar?**

**Rusk:** *"It was a tool used by Augustus Giovanni to raise the departed. According to legend, he used it to communicate with those Kindred who passed beyond the veil. In truth I've never seen it used before."*

**Why do you want the Venetian Jar?**

**Rusk:** *"To search for Mithras, of course. Or one of his early disciples. Imagine what we could learn from history. What wisdom we might glean. The Venetian Jar you… acquired… is of great value to me and mine."*

**Who do you think is responsible for these killings?**

**Rusk:** *"At first, I assumed it was you. The killings began shortly after you obtained the jar. And given the Hecata symbol painted at each of the sites… I'm still not entirely convinced one of you isn't responsible. But the fact that you are here, you came to the site and Prince Eisenstadt doesn't yet hold you personally responsible, I suspect someone else is at work here. Personally, I think you used the jar, and in doing whatever it is you did, unleashed something on the world. A ghost, or a Risen, or something tied to the Hecata."*

**What's a Risen?**

**Rusk:** *"A ghost trapped in the body of a man. Something gone mad from years in the Underworld. Like us, they are cold to the touch and cannot eat or drink. But their motivations would be alien to us. Like trying to describe the makeup of the cosmos to a toddler."*

**Why do you think the murderer has targeted these people?**

**Rusk:** *"A ceremony is at work here. These mortals must have significance. Perhaps some ghost or spirit is exacting their revenge. Or using their blood to fuel some strategy. What links these two attacks? Is there a familial relation? Are they pawns of some Kindred? You find out why, and we may yet find out whom."*

**So what now?**

**Rusk:** *"You have a choice. I want the Venetian Jar. You give it to me, and I'll mobilize my substantial resources to help you solve this problem. Members of the Cult of Mithras stand among the ranks of the Camarilla and the Anarchs. We can be a valuable friend to you and yours. We can help you catch this killer. Refuse my offer, and you make an enemy of us. You decide."*

The characters' first option is to accept Rusk's deal. If they do, the Perses gives the coterie twenty-four hours to provide the artifact, at which point he will deploy his network of spies and assets. The Hecata temple currently houses the Venetian Jar. Mora refuses to hand it over, but theft of the item is possible, though it no doubt results in disciplinary consequences.

The second option is to refuse. If so, Rusk grows angry, calling them foolish. If the characters are itching for a fight, Rusk and his ghouls can attack the characters. Otherwise, Rusk simply ejects them from the estate.

## Threats and Attacks

The Touchstones of the characters experience a new round of attacks. These attacks may vary in terms of lethality, but should absolutely escalate from those perpetrated in Chapter Two. Examples include:

- Someone sets a Touchstone's home or place of business on fire.
- Two unknown assailants beat a Touchstone badly enough to put them in the hospital.

- Munich police arrest a Touchstone for possession of drugs in their home or workplace.
- An unseen sniper shoots a Touchstone.

Note, if a Touchstone is hurt or killed, the Storyteller should apply a frenzy test when the PC finds out. If the Touchstone is hurt, apply Difficulty 3. If the Touchstone is murdered, apply Difficulty 4. The Storyteller should also apply Stains (see the chart in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 240).

Depending on the severity of the attacks, the characters may want to check in on their Touchstones or look into what's happening to them. These attacks offer a wealth of side plot opportunities, which Storytellers can tailor to individual characters. From these investigations and encounters, the characters need to learn the descriptions of a German man and woman who are professional operatives. The Storyteller can use any consistent description for them, but they are a well-trained team. One acts as support while the other is the trigger puller.

While Storytellers can tease leads, they should divert players from a confrontation that would eliminate this team. They need to appear again in Chapter Four.

# Chapter Four: A Family Affair

## The Third and Fourth Nightmare

*Hunger moves you along the crushed stone path. In the dead of night, the smell of blood compels you forward. You trudge through deep snow as you move through a tree-filled area. Spikey branches scrape you. Ahead of you, on a cleared pathway, an older man walks his tiny dog. Balding, with a pair of thick glasses on his nose, the man allows the dog to guide him, unaware of the danger stalking him.*

*In a blink, you close the distance between your hiding spot and the man. Your feet don't touch the ground in a sprint, but rather, you simply materialize before him. Your first strike severs his right arm. The dog runs in terror. His leash bounces behind him as he disappears in the nighttime distance.*

*The old man howls half in shock and half in pain as you tower over him. With blood spurting out of his arm socket in rhythmic bursts, a second sweeping blow cuts out the man's legs, sending him sprawling onto the path and screaming for help. A third and final blow crushes his throat and ends his life.*

Darkness fills your dream and a fourth nightmare emerges.

*A homeless woman sits on an island in the middle of the Isar River. Near the edge of the island, with the Deutsches Museum behind her and protected by several trees, the vagrant sets up a tent. She is haggard with oily long hair, a worn jacket, and tattered boots. From the edge of the water, you emerge. The same hunger burns as before. The same yearning and desire to purify.*

*Suddenly, you stand over the tent, plunge the scene into darkness, and use your shadows to reach inside for her ankles. As you drag her into the snow, her eyes are wide with terror and her mouth opens to scream. You shove your clawed hand into her gaping mouth. Her flimsy arms flail at you, fighting to survive even as she coughs and chokes on the blood filling her lungs. Flexing your fingers, you tug, removing the woman's jaw from her face.*

## Investigating the Third Attack

Munich is not accustomed to serial murders and has already mobilized in force. By the time the characters awaken, GSG 10 have already taped off the crime scenes. A growing sense of panic in the city results in news outlets printing wild and outlandish stories. The morbidly curious flock to the locations of the murders. The GSG 10 collect all five bodies and deliver them to their base of operations in Olympiagelände. Meanwhile, officers continue to investigate the crime scenes. The characters need to collect their clues either through allies, influences, or creative solutions.

The site of the third attack is in Dinniger Anger, a large green area east of the Isar, located in Bogenhausen. While not as popular as English Garden or Olympic Park, Dinniger Anger is a park for walking and jogging. Tonight, the police have closed off the eastern half of the grounds. The victim, Leon Hummel, was sixty years old. His corpse lies on a mortuary slab in Olympiagelände. Another bloody Hecata symbol remains at the scene. Interactions via Auspex, Animalism, or other Disciplines yield similar results to the previous attacks.

Eastern Munich is under the control of the Anarch Movement. If the characters want to investigate the murder directly, they need to gain permission from Baron Straub. Otherwise, they may encounter elements of the Movement, none of whom take kindly to trespassers. The Anarchs aware of the attack in their territory and are patrolling their streets with care. If the characters enter Bogenhausen without permission, one possible scenario is for the Anarchs to move on the characters before they reach Dinniger Anger. Lead by Baron Straub, a half dozen Anarchs on motorcycles surround the characters and usher them into a deserted alley.

### Coterie Options

**Combat:** If the coterie uses violence or physical threats to get past the Anarch blockade, they have to fight Straub and five others. The Anarchs are fully fed and quite capable of defending their territory. Refer to Straub on p. XX, and use the "Peter Bohn, Anarch" statistics for his entourage.

**Bribing:** The Anarchs always need cash. Straub accepts bribery in the form of weapons, boons, or cash, though the amount needs to exceed two dots of Resources. The character loses the dots for the remainder of the story.

**Manipulation:** The characters need to win the Anarch over. They can accomplish this with a successful Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4) or a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 5). Straub doesn't like trespassers but he also doesn't like threats against the Masquerade, especially given the tenuous agreement he has with Prince Eisenstadt. The Gangrel Baron isn't a reasonable person, but if the characters can convince him their only purpose is to investigate the murder site and they pay him, the Baron may be inclined to let them off with a warning.

## Investigating the Fourth Attack

The German Museum of Masterpieces of Science and Technology is the world's largest science museum with 28,000 individual exhibits. Located on a small island in the Isar River, the museum sits on the border between Isarvorstadt and Au-Haidhausen. Tonight, the southern portion of the island is swarming with police. The police have not been able to identify the victim. The GSG 10 have moved her to Olympiagelände. Communicating with animals or other supernatural means may yield some answers but in order to get hands on the bodies the characters need to infiltrate the GSG 10 facility.

# Investigating GSG 10

Munich hosted the 1972 Olympic Games in its eleventh district of Milbertshofen-Am Hart. Olympic Park is primarily for public recreation, music concerts, and cultural and religious events. While a vast complex, GSG 10 has requisitioned some of this land for their use. The GSG 10 facility is not a single fortress. Instead, it's several individual buildings and warehouses interspersed among others. This allows the GSG 10 to blend in with their surroundings in a busy area. There are four buildings in total: a command center, barracks, training center, and forensics lab.

## Coterie Options

**Stealth:** A pair of technicians are in the forensics lab which has a state-of-the-art security system. Breaking inside requires a Dexterity + Stealth roll (Difficulty 6) or a Wits + Technology roll (Difficulty 5). From there the characters may gain access to the bodies of Leon Hummel and the unnamed woman.

According to police reports, Leon Hummel is a sixty-year-old school teacher at Wilhelm-Hausenstein gymnasium. Leon had his right arm severed by some manner of sharp weapon with an elliptical edge. His legs suffered superficial wounds from a similar weapon, and he had a crushed throat. Like the first murder, photographs reveal his detached arm was the implement used to carve the Hecata symbol into the snow, though the police mark this down as some manner of occult symbol. Leon Hummel is a widower who lived in the area for nearly twenty years. He has one adult daughter, Helena Hummel, who is currently attending the Freie Universität Berlin.

The GSG 10 identified the woman as Martina Rittberger, a forty-year-old who died shortly after having her jaw torn out, causing her to asphyxiate on her own blood. Her body accompanied a Hecata symbol drawn in blood on the ground. Her history shows a long history of mental illness. Untreated, she slid into indigence and ended up on the street by 2016.

According to the coroner, both died sometime between 3:00 AM and 4:00 AM. Using Spirit's Touch on either body confirms the authenticity of the nightmares and reveals the same shadowy figure. The four victims to date, Stefan Schaumann, Finn Laubenstein, Hannah Hagen, Leon Hummel, and Martina Rittberger do not appear to be related or connected in any obvious fashion. However, the murder site in Dinniger Anger is roughly four kilometers east of the Chinese Tower, and the Deutsches Museum is four kilometers south.

**Manipulation:** GSG 10 technicians are not likely to allow access to a restricted building, but the characters are certainly welcome to try. If executed under the pretense of official police business or if coupled with some manner of disguise, the coterie may achieve entry with an advantageous Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 7) or a successful Manipulation + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 7). From there, the characters gain access to the same information listed above.

**Combat:** While not recommended, the characters can attempt to storm the forensics lab through sheer force. Security cameras and alarms ring as a result, drawing unwanted and lethal attention. For while there are only two unarmed technicians inside the forensics lab, twenty armed and highly trained agents can be at the lab in two minutes. These officers use the "Grenzschutzgruppe 10" statistics listed on p. XX. Regardless, the characters have little time to glean the information listed above.

If the characters choose the stealth option and fail or if they aren't successful in their manipulations, GSG 10 responds with the combat scenario.

## Asano's Ambush

After midnight but before 3:00 AM Hiromitsu Asano ambushes the characters. This will likely take place outside the Hecata temple, but can be anywhere relatively secluded. Four ghouls dressed in business attire accompany Hiromitsu Asano. Two of them are the team noted in Chapter Three. These along with two others are responsible for the attacks on the Touchstones of the characters in Chapters Two and Three.

Asano is a shadow of his former self. He's gaunt, ragged, and half mad with grief. Having lost his Touchstone, Günter Hildebrant, Asano has lost his Convictions and some of his Humanity. In his anger, he dispatched his own ghouls to harass and harm the player's Touchstones. He and his entourage shoot to kill. During the attack, Asano reveals his connection to Günter Hildebrant by either screaming at one of the characters or weeping.

### Coterie Options

**Combat:** Asano and his quartet are dangerous. The four ghouls use the "Police and Wayward Muscle" statistics listed on p. XX, and are armed with heavy pistols and shotguns. They all fight to the death or until Asano gives the command to stop.

**Escape:** If the characters are on foot, they can escape via Celerity and/or Obfuscate. A successful Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 4), a Wits + Stealth roll (Difficulty 4), or a Dexterity + Streetwise roll (Difficulty 4) can aid this. If the characters are in a vehicle when the ambush occurs they should be able to escape using back alleys and side streets with a successful Dexterity + Drive roll (Difficulty 4).

**Manipulation:** At this juncture, the characters are now suddenly aware Günter held some connection to Asano, and may try to reason with him. Asano is on the warpath and hungry for vengeance, but he may earn a moment's pause if he realizes how the characters were duped. With a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 4) or a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 4), a success allows Asano to call for a cease fire and draw a close to Chapter Four.

# Chapter Five: Rise and Fall

The file given to them by Mora in Chapter One was chosen deliberately, and in spite of their pledge toward fidelity, the Death Seer used the characters to attack Asano's Touchstone. Unfortunately, both Mora and Constancia have fled the Hecata temple. Mother Anja, if made aware of what has transpired, grows concerned and grants the characters access to Mora's personal room.

The Death Seer's bedroom, normally spartan, has scattered clothes, papers, and belongings. Most are benign, but several pages lie on the floor. They include maps of Munich, marked in bold red circles. They total five, including the four most recent attacks in English Garden, Nordfriedhof, Dinniger Anger, and Coal Island. They also include a fifth location at Saint Barbara's Church in Schwabing-West. The five, together, form an X cross through the city.

Further investigation of Mora's notes reveals the attacks were not targeting the victims, but rather their locations. By creating an ever-expanding pattern of crosses, the Death Seer hoped to create what they refer to in their notes as an Oblivion circle. By painting key locations in blood,

the Death Seer might be able to use their particular Oblivion gifts on a city-wide scale. Her notes theorize the ability to shroud Munich in darkness. Another page asserts an exhaustive ceremony would allow the Hecata to not only perceive everything occurring within Munich but travel instantaneously within the city via Shadow Step.

At this juncture, the characters know where the next attack is likely to take place. If Asano is alive, and the characters have briefed him on Mora's culpability, he volunteers to assist them in hunting the Death Seer down. Furthermore, if the characters handed over the Venetian Jar to the Cult of Mithras, Terrence Rusk (or Anna Fleischer) will also be available to assist the coterie.

## Preventing the Fifth Attack

Saint Barbara's in Schwabing-West is a quaint Catholic Church originally used to service soldiers during the First World War. From then on, it served as an annex for various institutions, including a short time as a military church for the Wehrmacht. Today, the single-story hall church has a simple design, complete with a mansard roof, surrounded by trees.

The murderer appears between 3:00 AM and 4:00 AM and attacks the first living person who comes into view. The creature matches the same general shape and size of Günter Hildebrant, with constantly moving shadows shrouding him. Constancia, or something pretending to be Constancia, powers the mortal frame and has full access to the Disciplines of the Hecata.

If the characters interrupt the ceremony, the Risen turns on the characters, fighting to the death. The Risen's first action is to use their Oblivion Discipline to darken the area with Stygian Shroud. Afterward, it makes full use of Feral Weapons via Protean, Arms of Ahriman, and its basic levels of Celerity, Fortitude, and Potence. The battle is vicious and feels more like fighting an animal than fellow Kindred. But when the Risen loses their last Health level they die. A tortured scream echoes into the air as visible wisps of shadow evacuate the body of Günter Hildebrant. They float into the wind, transform into strings of ash, and disappear.

Victorious, the coterie needs to vacate the scene quickly. The noise of combat has alarmed local residents. Asano requests to bury Hildebrant and doesn't permit the characters to hand over the corpse to Prince Eisenstadt. As an alternative, the coterie can contact Sheriff Röhrich to report to him. Prince Eisenstadt may not appreciate the absence of a body but takes the characters at their word, offering a cold and polite thank you for their efforts.

# Epilogue: Death is Certain, Life is Not

The Munich Waldfriedhof is a woodland cemetery holding 60,000 graves, and now prepares to house one more. Snow falls from a dark, overcast sky as mourners gather. Candlelight flickers across Asano's face as he stands over the open grave of Günter Hildebrant. Mother Anja's expression is solemn and thoughtful as the body rests beside his parents and grandfather, Alexander Hildebrant. Mora is not in view.

"Your grandfather was my dearest friend," Asano says to the departed. "He showed me great kindness in a world that held little. He cared for me, and I cared for him. After he died, I honored his memory by protecting his children, and his children's children. By protecting you." His voice cracks with emotional, and Asano clears his throat.

"I failed, but will atone for my sins and renew my vow to your sister, Laura. For out of this tragedy some good will come. It must. I dedicate my unlife to preserving hers, and in so doing, your memory. And of my dearest friend Alexander."

Mother Anja steps forward to speak. “I am the end and the beginning. Dead flesh may cover my bones, and my bones may encase an unbeating heart, yet I remain. Ghosts may follow me in my wake, and in my wake may other ghosts soon join them. To bear witness. To honor their memory. To live beyond them. For death is certain. Life is not. For I am Hecata. I am the beginning and the end. I remain. I remain. I remain.”

The mourners respond, “We remain.”

At the conclusion of the funeral, the gathered depart, wandering their way back toward their cars. The forested cemetery is softly silent. With an end to the murders, the Prince’s stranglehold on the Hecata has loosened. With the Risen destroyed, the Kindred return to their nightly agendas. But, as the characters reach their vehicles, a private courier arrives to deliver a handwritten letter.

### Handout #3: A Letter

**[PLAYER HANDOUT — LETTER FROM MORA]**

Family,

I trust you receive this letter in the spirit it is written. For I am Hecata and bear no ill will toward my family. I did deceive Asano, and I did use his dear Hildebrant for my own ends, but my actions were in furtherance of the clan.

Constancia almost succeeded in completing her ceremony. While this proves somewhat disappointing, it does invite further study. For if we Hecata have the means of monitoring an entire city or traveling across Munich via the shadows in the merest blink of an eye, then we have the means of redefining our destiny. We may yet emerge from the ashes of our past and reclaim our place in the Jyhad. We may yet escape from underneath the boot of the Camarilla and define, for ourselves, exactly who and what we are. The destiny I strive to create. I do not apologize for seeking to better my family, though I regret this inconvenienced so many in the interim.

I depart to continue my great work. Should our paths cross again, I will embrace you as my blood, and pray you understand the full depth of my actions. Until then, I bid you a goodnight. For we are the end and the beginning. And we yet remain from now and for all time.

Sincerely,

Mora

**[END LETTER]**

## Antagonist Stats

Those SPCs dedicated exclusively to **Styx and Bones** follow. They include stats for primary characters such as Hiromitsu Asano along with more generalized SPCs.

### Hiromitsu Asano

**Epitaph**: Ruthless Entrepreneur

**Quote:** *“We do what we can for as long as we can until our fate is revealed to us. Then we quickly discover if we are men, or if we are nothing but beasts.”*

**Clan:** Hecata

**Mortal Days: The Dutiful Son**

Hiromitsu Asano was born in 1920 the son of an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy. Asano's father was a veteran of World War I and imposed strict discipline on his son. Asano's mother was loving and instilled in him an appreciation for botany. While in school, Asano studied life sciences, but followed in the footsteps of his father to serve as a requisitions officer during World War II. After the Allied victory over Japan, Asano's employer changed, but his profession did not.

As Japan rebuilt, Asano managed reconstruction logistics which proved a profitable occupation. After regaining its sovereignty in 1952, Japan's business interests expanded and Asano capitalized on Japan's growing relationship with Germany. As part of his involvement with growing trade relations, Asano partnered with a German entrepreneur named Alexander Hildebrant. Their business expanded as their friendship deepened. Asano and Hildebrant took many trips to each other's countries, and were often inseparable. Their success attracted the attention of Heinrich König. The German Giovanni thralled Asano and supported his business expansions, eventually embracing him in 1956.

**Kindred Nights: The Disciplined Executive**

Alexander Hildebrant died in a car accident in 1964, devastating his dear friend and business partner. While Asano continued to handle Giovanni business interests in Japan, he funneled money back to Hildebrant's family in Munich, to ensure the well-being of his wife and son (and eventual grandson).

The Giovanni were never numerous in Japan, but managed to position themselves favorably among the competing sectarian interests of the Camarilla, Anarch Movement, and the Sabbat. Asano worked closely with his German sire, maintaining the flow of goods between Europe and East Asia. While the bulk of these shipments were legal, they also included illegal drugs and weapons smuggling. Meanwhile, Hiromitsu Asano cultivated, thralled, and Embraced promising relations so the Asano could prosper within the ranks of the Giovanni as a yet unrecognized minor family.

But then, the Cappadocians returned, aligned with powerful interests, and struck in vengeance. All across Europe, they cut down Giovanni. One such Cappadocian, Mora, systematically murdered the Königs of Munich, including Asano's sire Heinrich. For the next half decade, Asano invested millions of dollars in avenging Heinrich by hiring Anarch mercenaries and Banu Haqim assassins. All failed.

With the formation of the Hecata, Mother Anja has helped achieve a fragile reconciliation by promising to recognize the Asano as a family of the Hecata. She has personally invited Asano to Munich to mend matters between Mora and Asano and usher in a new age of cooperation among the Hecata. Only time will tell if she is successful.

**Plots and Schemes:**

- **Import / Export:** Asano controls a sizable transportation business and seeks to expand not only his reach but also his personal wealth. He is quietly buying up smaller logistics companies, offering his services to his fellow Hecata, the Camarilla, and the local Anarchs.

**Domain and Haven:**

- **Bordeauxplatz Apartments (Haven 4, Resources 4)** Asano maintains an immaculately kept penthouse in Au-Haidhausen overlooking Bordeauxplatz park. It includes a panic room, additional rooms for his ghouls, and a small outdoor garden.

**Thralls and Tools:**

- **Transportation Service (Allies 4, Resources 4)** Asano has a diverse portfolio with heavy investments in the freight and transportation industry. His assets include a private hangar at Franz Josef Strauss International Airport and enough cargo vehicles and vessels to conduct business throughout Europe.

- **Mr. Katô and Ms. Yamashita (Retainers 2)** Asano keeps two ghouls who act as his personal driver and bodyguard. They maintain the same hours as their regnant and are never far from his side.

**Kindred Relationships**

- **Anja Giovanni (Respect)** Asano genuinely respects Mother Anja, deferring to both her leadership and her judgment. The two have known each other for several decades, and she has proven herself a political leader.

- **Mora (Rival)** Asano has never forgiven Mora for the death of his sire. While Mother Anja has brought the two to the negotiating table, relations remain uneasy. Given the opportunity to hinder his rival, Asano takes it. He pledges loyalty to the Family, not Mora specifically, and he believes the Death Seer is a danger to the goals of the Hecata.

**Whispers:**

- **Vendetta:** The Japanese Hecata does not intend to reconcile his past feud. He is secretly plotting against the Death Seer and may be hiring the Banu Haqim to kill them.

- **Hostile Takeover:** Asano is positioning himself against other transportation businesses in Munich, many of whom the Camarilla control.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Small of height and build, Asano has short black hair and slightly gaunt features. He appreciates stillness. With motions exact and delicate, his formality comes off as cold. But, beneath his stoic visage is a chasm of deep-rooted emotion. He prefers tailored Italian suits in dark or muted colors and wears flowers in his lapel to honor his mother.

- Asano's legal passport names him as Heihachiro Anzai. He pays his taxes, obeys traffic laws, and otherwise appears as completely legitimate **(Mask 2)**.

**Sire:** Heinrich König

**Embraced:** 1956 (Born 1920)

**Ambition:** To take over the export trade in Munich

**Convictions:** Never leave a debt unpaid

**Touchstones:** Günter Hildebrant — the grandson of his closest confidante

**Humanity:** 4

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Firearms 2, Melee 3; Etiquette (Boardroom) 3, Insight 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Persuasion (Negotiation) 4, Subterfuge 2; Academics 2, Awareness 3, Finance (Banking) 4, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Fortitude 4, Oblivion 3

## Kindred Citizens of Munich

With a city of 1.5 million people, Munich has a population of roughly 100 Kindred. Most fall under the Camarilla banner, but they are as varied, both in motivations and experience, as any other Kindred community. Use these examples for Kindred SPCs and adjust as needed.

### Terrence Rusk, Perses of the Cult of Mithras

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Sire:** Peter Kleist

**Embraced:** 1880 (Born 1832)

**Ambition:** To strengthen the Cult of Mithras

**Convictions:** Always uphold Mithras' laws

**Touchstones:** Werner Keitel — attendant and loyal ghoul

**Humanity:** 4

**Generation:** 7th

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Melee 3, Survival (Urban) 4; Intimidation (Interrogation) 4, Stealth (Tailing) 3, Subterfuge 2; Awareness 4, Medicine 2

**Disciplines:** Dominate 3, Fortitude 4, Presence 3

### Anna Fleischer of the Cult of Mithras

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Sire:** Charice Fontaigne

**Embraced:** 1967 (Born 1910)

**Ambition:** Further my own position in the cult

**Convictions:** Never lose self-control

**Touchstones:** Magda Rathenau — mortal grandchild

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 10th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Firearms (Pistol) 4, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1; Insight 2, Intimidation 2, Performance (Guitar) 4, Persuasion 3; Awareness 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Technology 3 (Hacking)

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Fortitude 3, Presence 2

## Dieter Straub, Baron of Munich

**Clan:** Gangrel

**Sire:** Daryl Lutz

**Embraced:** 1978 (Born 1949)

**Ambition:** Extend the Anarch reach into Munich

**Convictions:** None

**Touchstones:** None

**Humanity:** 4

**Generation:** 8th (through diablerie)

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Drive 3 (Motorcycles), Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3 (Urban); Animal Ken 1, Insight 1, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3; Awareness 2, Investigation 3, Medicine (Triage) 3, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Animalism 1, Celerity 2, Fortitude 3, Protean 4

## Peter Bohn, Anarch

**Clan:** Brujah

**Sire:** Unknown

**Embraced:** 2012 (Born 1985)

**Ambition:** Mediate a treaty between Camarilla and Anarchs in Munich

**Convictions:** Always fight in the pursuit of peace

**Touchstones:** Kurt von Weber — best friend from college

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 13th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 4

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Larceny (Lockpicking) 4, Stealth (Stalking) 4, Survival 2; Animal Ken 1, Etiquette 2, Insight 1, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3; Academics (Law) 1, Awareness 2, Investigation 4, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Potence 3

### The Risen

The Constancia Risen is a soul gone mad stuffed into a mortal body. It holds the shattered memories of its former life, and those of Oblivion, forming an amalgamation of rage, loss, and cunning. The Risen is a powerful foe with full mastery over the Oblivion Discipline and with no regard for collateral damage. It defends itself for survival. Its stats are skewed away from those Constancia might have possessed when fully capable.

**Clan:** Hecata (nominally)

**Sire:** Japheth Cappadocius

**Embraced:** Unknown

**Ambition:** Usher the Horsemen into this city

**Convictions:** None

**Touchstones:** None

**Humanity:** 1

**Generation:** 5th

**Blood Potency:** 6

**Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 4; Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 8, Willpower 8

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Brute Force) 5, Stealth 3, Survival 5; Etiquette 2, Insight (Fears) 4, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 5; Academics (Linguistics) 4, Awareness (Ambushes) 4, Medicine 4, Occult (Oblivion) 5

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Oblivion 5, Potence 2, Protean 2

## Mortals of Munich

### Grenzschutzgruppe 10

GSG 10 are some of the best trained police in the world. They handle kidnappings, hostage situations, and terrorist incidents. They are highly trained and heavily armed.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 5, Social 3, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Athletics 6, Brawl 6, Drive 6, Firearms 6; Streetwise 5; Investigation 6

**Weapons:** GSG 10 arm themselves with pistols or shotguns (medium gunshot, +3 damage) or assault and sniper rifles (heavy gunshot, +4 damage). They also carry tactical armor providing them with 6 armor.

**General Difficulties:** 5/3

### Police and Wayward Muscle

Germany adheres to the European Firearms Directive maintaining strong anti-gun legislation. Firearms are available for competitive shooting, hunting, and collecting, but the state constrains all three with heavy regulations. Nevertheless, firearms are present in Munich, either in the hands of the police or those of the criminal underworld.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 4, Social 2, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Drive 5, Firearms 5, Larceny 5; Streetwise 4; Investigation 5

**Weapons:** Standard police arm themselves with pistols or shotguns (medium gunshot, +3 damage) or stun guns (light impact, +1 damage).

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

### Lieschen Müller/Jane Q. Public

This average mortal represents SPCs not otherwise mentioned in the book who may act as a hindrance to the coterie. They have no combat training.

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 3, Social 3, Mental 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Insight 4, Streetwise 4; Academics 5, Awareness 4

**General Difficulties:** 3/1

## Ready Made Characters

**Styx and Bones** includes the following ready-made characters. Adjust as needed.

### Christof Giovanni

**Concept:** Wallet behind the Throne

**Quote:** *"Money and means create power."*

**Clan:** Hecata

**Mortal Days: Greed is Good**

The Giovanni raised Christof through various nannies and tutors, which created in him a sense of isolation. One of his math tutors, Stefanie Knapp, showed Christof kindness. But, it was too little too late. Christof grew into a cruel man with an appreciation for numbers.

After going into finance, Christof traded on the Deutscher Aktienindex in Frankfurt. He was young, single, and absent morals, living a dangerous lifestyle of easy money, fast cars, and loose women. With the help of his family connections, he took up money laundering as a pastime. Reliable work and a few windfalls earned him the Embrace.

**Kindred Nights: Greed is Godhood**

Christof traveled throughout Europe at his sire Anja Giovanni's insistence. They engaged in a brief love affair, but she grew tired of his childish need to impress others and sent him away. Recently returned, he's built a private hedge fund. His holdings keep the Munich Hecata in the black. They have instant access to money, means, and other economic opportunities. It's one of the few reasons Mother Anja endures his presence. Christof acts like her disinterest doesn't bother him, but he's always one of the first to show up when she needs help.

**Guide to Play:**

- **Independent:** As a Hecata, Christof has found an organization that appreciates his talents. He might not be the most accomplished member of the Cult of Death and Undeath, but he does recognize and support the need for strict hierarchy. It offers him protection in a world fraught with dangers.

**Background Detail:**

- **The Sendling Lofts (Haven 3, Resources 4)** Christof lives in a lavish apartment with a beautiful view of the Munich skyline in residential Sendling.
- **Demperwolf Logistics (Influence 3)** A Shell Company with a well-paid board that assists in facilitating "financial maneuverings" on behalf of his clients.
- **Munich Underworld (Contacts 3)** Christof enjoys a dangerous lifestyle and can tap into his own client base to acquire things.

**Mask and Mien:**

- The product of a Tunisian grandfather, Christof has olive skin and short dark hair. He is always dressed to impress.
- According to his passport, Christof is actually Christopher Hamila **(Mask 2)**.

**Sire:** Anja Giovanni

**Predator:** Alleycat

**Embraced:** 2011 (Born 1982)

**Ambition:** Earn the respect of the elite

**Suggested Desire:** To drive a Hennessey Venom F2 at three hundred miles an hour

**Convictions:** Do not let someone use you as a pawn

**Touchstones:** Stefanie Knapp — your last true friend

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 2, Larceny 3; Etiquette 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Bargaining) 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3; Academics (Economics) 4, Finance (Stock Market) 4, Technology 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Dominate 2, Fortitude 1, Oblivion 1, Potence 1

# Franziska (Hollander) Giovanni

**Concept:** Cult Leader

**Quote:** *"Faith isn't about strength. It's about surrender. Surrender and service."*

**Clan:** Hecata

**Mortal Days: X Marks the Spot**

Franziska was born in the Dutch city of Rotterdam where she exhibited macabre tendencies. She'd often examine dead animals or visit graveyards. Her parents were concerned about her, putting her in therapy and attempting other methods of making their daughter "normal." These efforts proved to be in vain.

At the age of eighteen, Franziska left home. With the sole exception of her younger sister, she never looked back. She committed to the study of death — a journey which lead her to Bircham International University in Spain. After obtaining a degree in thanatology, she traveled extensively throughout Europe as a specialist in a field which had few. During a guest lecture in Munich, she drew the attention of Anja Giovanni. The two cultivated a friendship which eventually culminated into a full-throated partnership. Franziska served as Mother Anja's loyal ghoul for a decade before the Embrace.

**Kindred Nights: Faith and Feeding**

In many ways, Franziska is a younger version of her sire. She is a disciple of the Cult of Death and Undeath and represents a new generation of younger, more technologically-savvy Hecata. Franziska tends to take herself way too seriously. Her rigorous attitude has led her to form her own cult, the Church of the Transcendent. There Franziska educates young women with an interest in the morbid and obscure. In the meantime, she serves as the spiritual heart of the coterie.

**Guide to Play:**

- **The Church of Death and Undeath:** Franziska is a devout follower of the cult fully committed to its doctrines and its practices. She has taken this a step further by building her own small following within Munich. While she has the utmost respect for her sire, she views herself as the natural successor to the Hecata temple, and is learning all she can for the night she claims the reins.

**Background Detail:**

- **The Church of the Transcendent (Fame 2, Cult 2, Herd 2)** In addition to being a member of the Hecata temple, Franziska leads the Church of the Transcendent. As its Mother, she has access to a half dozen like-minded individuals all of whom believe in the transcendent aspect of life and death.
- **The University of Munich (Contacts 2, Resources 2)** With permission from the local Tremere, Franziska is a guest lecturer of thanatology at the University of Munich, teaching a pair of night classes each week. She has unrestricted access to the university's archives and uses the campus to recruit members into her cult.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Franziska is exceptionally tall with short black hair and pale skin. She has an athletic build, preferring dresses when indoors and a long fur coat when she needs to venture out.

**Sire:** Anja Giovanni

**Predator:** Osiris

**Embraced:** 2012 (Born 1979)

**Ambition:** To one night take over the Cult of Death and Undeath

**Suggested Desire:** To earn her sire's respect

**Convictions:** Respect the Cult of Death and Undeath as sacred and obey its laws

**Touchstones:** Lea Dudenhoeffer — one of her followers from the Church of the Transcendent

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Brawl 1, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2; Etiquette 2, Insight 4, Intimidation 2, Leadership 3, Persuasion 2; Academics (Linguistics) 3, Awareness 2, Investigation 4, Medicine (Autopsies) 3, Occult (Thanatology) 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 3, Oblivion 3, Presence 1

## Jan Putanesca

**Concept:** Stalwart Defender

**Quote:** *"You're fast. I'll give you that. But when I pull this trigger, this incendiary round is going to move at eight hundred meters per second. And nobody, living or dead, is fast enough to dodge it."*

**Clan:** Hecata

**Mortal Days: Down Range**

Seeing an opportunity to serve both Germany and the world, Jan left school to enlist in the Bundeswehr. After five grueling years, he joined the elite Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK). He fought primarily in Kunduz, a northern region of Afghanistan, participating in several battles and earning various honors. After he left military service, he returned to Munich and did a series of odd jobs before attracting the attention of a German-Italian Hecata named Niklas Putanesca. Seeing the need for additional muscle within the newly formed Clan of Death, Niklas adopted, educated, and eventually Embraced Jan.

**Kindred Nights: The Death Knight**

Jan adapted quickly to his immortal life, using the skills he learned as a soldier to benefit the Hecata. In 2017, Mother Anja sent Niklas, Jan, and Heather Milliner to Venice on her behalf. The younger Hecata were unaware of the particulars at the time, but she had tasked Niklas with locating a crypt belonging to the Giovanni. One night while in Venice, Niklas disappeared and never returned. Jan spent several weeks trying to locate him before Mother Anja called him and Heather back to Munich. While he has no leads to follow, he remains committed to finding his sire. In the meantime, he looks after Heather and does what he must to protect the Clan of Death.

**Guide to Play:**

- **Independent:** Jan's heart isn't in the Cult of Death and Undeath, but he has a passion for protecting family. Jan is a loyal soldier who appreciates a clear chain of command and, perhaps unusual for a Kindred (particularly a Putanesca), he has a firm sense of right and wrong.

**Background Detail:**

- **Safe House (Haven 2)** Jan has access to a safe house on the outskirts of Munich. The small apartment keeps out sunlight and includes a security door, a dedicated security system, and an emergency exit.

- **Underworld Armory (Allies 2)** Jan has ties to certain private security companies operating in Munich with access to small and medium firearms. While they can't procure an RPG for Jan, they can provide pistols, shotguns, and rifles.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Jan prefers streetwear to blend in with the twenty-somethings of Munich. This often includes sneakers or boots, jeans, and a black t-shirt. He has crystal blue eyes and a semi-permanent scowl.

- Jan carries a passport for Jan Haas and has the papers to prove his service to the KSK **(Mask 2)**.

**Sire:** Niklas Putanesca

**Predator:** Alleycat

**Embraced:** 2010 (Born 1983)

**Ambition:** To transform the Hecata of Munich into a strong and powerful force

**Suggested Desire:** To teach a clanmate how to defend themself

**Convictions:** Protect the innocent from harm

**Touchstones:** Sabine Lauterbach — a fellow retired soldier and romantic entanglement in Munich

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 8, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Grappling) 3, Firearms (Pistols) 4, Stealth 2, Survival 2; Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2; Awareness (Ambushes) 3, Investigation 3, Medicine (Triage) 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Fortitude 3, Oblivion 2, Potence 1

# Heather Milliner

**Concept:** Methodical Problem-Solver

**Quote:** *"Every problem can be worked."*

**Clan:** Hecata

**Mortal Days: OB1 (Off By One) Error**

Born in Chillicothe, Ohio, Heather was a withdrawn child. With few friends, she adopted an online lifestyle. During her sophomore year of college, she transferred to Technische Universität München (TUM) for computational science and engineering. During that time, she fell in love with a local musician, and while the relationship didn't last long, Heather stayed in Munich. She joined a white-hat cyber security firm for several years until it was time for her to say goodbye to daylight. Now, she maintains the Hecata temple's digital security.

**Kindred Nights: DDoS (Distributed Denial-of-Service)**

Like many newly Embraced Kindred, Heather's adjustment was difficult. She withdrew from society and once again found herself spending most of her time on the internet. If it wasn't for Jan, she might have fallen further into her depression. Instead, the soldier managed to show her the freedom of her new unlife and slowly guide her back into the world. In thanks, she sets aside time to comb the internet in search of Jan's sire, Niklas.

**Guide to Play:**

- **Independent:** Heather believes in empirical evidence, which is why she is dedicated. She's seen what the Hecata can accomplish with her own eyes.

**Background Detail:**

- **Hacking Community (Allies 2, Contacts 2, Influence 2)** Heather is part of a mortal hacking community. While the group is unaware of her Kindred nature, she uses them to gain access to tools, information, and criminal elements.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Heather is short and somewhat stocky, with long auburn hair and brown eyes. So over the "hacker girl" stereotype, she refuses to dye her hair. She dresses in cozy oversized sweaters and leggings.
- Understanding the need for the Masquerade, Heather carries a valid passport with the name Danielle Fabrizo **(Mask 2)**.

**Sire:** Fenway Milliner

**Predator:** Bagger

**Embraced:** 2014 (Born 1985)

**Ambition:** To become the cyber security lead for the Hecata

**Suggested Desire:** To assist your companions in regaining lost humanity

**Convictions:** Always stop to help someone in distress

**Touchstones:** Klara Gade — your former classmate whose popularity you continue to envy

**Humanity:** 7

**Generation:** 12th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Firearms 2, Stealth 1, Survival 2; Etiquette 1, Insight 2, Streetwise (Black Market) 2, Subterfuge 2; Academics (Electrical Engineering) 2, Awareness 2, Investigation 4, Technology (Hacking, Security Systems) 4

**Disciplines:** Auspex 4, Fortitude 1, Obfuscate 1, Oblivion 1

## Marlene Drake

**Concept:** Broken Beauty

**Quote:** *"Everyone hides a private pain, and everyone yearns to share it. All I do is listen."*

**Clan:** Toreador

**Mortal Days: No more let life divide…**

Named after the famed actress and singer, Marlene Dietrich, Marlene grew up in and around the London theatre scene. Her theatrical parents passed down an appreciation for the classics, and Marlene took in every bit of it. She became a theatrical star, performing in London's famed West End. Her skills attracted the admiration of an English Toreador. Alice Pike, a performer and sportsman, adopted Marlene as her protégé. She Embraced her a year later, and Marlene quickly became the darling of London's Camarilla court.

**Kindred Nights: …what death can join together**

In 2013, the Second Inquisition burned through London, killing Queen Anne Bowesley and much of her court. For her part, Alice Pike managed to hide her childe in the Thames in order to

protect her. When Marlene lifted her head out of the freezing water, she saw her sire die — gunned down by a dark-haired SO13 officer. While she survived the night, the vision of her sire's murder and the person responsible has never left her thoughts. Marlene fell into despair and went on a search for answers regarding death, undeath, and the afterlife.

Her journey led her to Mother Anja Giovanni of the Cult of Death and Undeath in Munich. After a short while, Marlene found herself a loyal disciple of the order. In public, she carries herself with a warm and welcoming smile, but in private, she's more somber.

**Guide to Play:**

- **The Church of Death and Undeath:** Marlene is a young acolyte among the cult, still learning. Despite being a Toreador, she doesn't view herself as an outsider. She's learned how to grieve her losses and how death isn't really the end of things but rather the beginning.

**Background Detail:**

- **The Marlene Dietrich Society (Fame 1, Herd 2)** The Toreador is part of a small club devoted to the famed actress Marlene Dietrich. She uses the club to feed and occasionally perform.

- **The Munich National Theatre (Allies 2, Contacts 2)** Marlene is a patron of the world-famous Munich National Theatre. The historic site is home to the Bavarian State Opera, the Bavarian State Orchestra, and the Bavarian State Ballet.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Marlene is a striking black woman of average height. She generally keeps her hair pulled back into a bun to show off her refined features and bright brown eyes. She wears heeled boots, denim jeans, and a short leather coat unless she's preparing for a role. Part of her preparation involves incorporating garments her character might wear into her nightly life.

**Sire:** Alice Pike

**Predator:** Osiris

**Embraced:** 2012 (Born 1988)

**Ambition:** To avenge your sire

**Suggested Desire:** To perform on a real stage, in front of a real audience

**Convictions:** Stand up for women

**Touchstones:** Oskar Kretschmann — who reminds you of the man who killed your sire

**Humanity:** 6

**Generation:** 12th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Stealth 2; Etiquette 2, Insight 2, Performance 4 (Acting), Persuasion (Seduction) 3, Subterfuge (Sincerity) 3; Academics 1, Awareness 2, Investigation 2, Occult 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Presence 3

## Jürgen Schweiger

**Concept:** Street Survivor

**Quote:** *"Be afraid of the person with nothing. They got nothing left to lose. It makes them willing to do anything."*

**Clan:** Thin-Blood

**Mortal Days: Out of the Gutter**

Jürgen grew up bouncing between foster care and the father who beat him. These abuses hardened the young man who, at the age of sixteen, fled his situation to peddle on the streets of Munich. While he occasionally stayed with boyfriends, the relationships never lasted long, and soon enough he'd find himself living on the street. Then, he found heroin, the only thing he ever loved. To feed his habit, he dealt narcotics, pickpocketed tourists, and robbed homes. One night he stole from the wrong house, was Embraced, and then abandoned.

**Kindred Nights: And into the Night**

Jürgen has no idea who his sire is or why she Embraced him. He almost fell into frenzy and wouldn't have survived those first few nights if not for Christof Giovanni. Realizing his Kindred nature, Christof took the Thin-Blood under his wing and helped him acclimate to his new life. The two have become friends in spite of their economic differences.

Tonight, Jürgen maintains one foot out the proverbial door, ready to flee into the streets. But for the moment, he maintains a place among the Hecata, slowly learning how to trust them.

**Guide to Play:**

- **Independent:** As a Thin-Blood with close ties to the Hecata, Jürgen is something of an anomaly. He isn't bound to any particular sect or code of conduct. He sides with Hecata because they have proven to be good friends to him.

**Background Detail:**

- **The Street Sweepers (Allies 2, Resources 1)** A group of pick-pockets and burglars, the Street Sweepers are a small gang of criminals.
- **Church of the Ascension (Contacts 3, Herd 3)** Jürgen frequents a local soup kitchen and hostel, often gaining information from the vagrants who eat there. He prefers not to feed on the poor, but does there when he must.

**Mask and Mien:**

- Jürgen is rail thin, weighing less than 60 kilos. His brown hair is generally unkempt, shoulder length, and tucked behind his pierced ears. Over his second-hand shirts and jeans, he wears a puffer coat and fingerless gloves.

**Sire:** Unknown woman

**Predator:** Sandman

**Embraced:** 2017 (Born 1995)

**Ambition:** Find your sire

**Suggested Desire:** Get into trouble

**Convictions:** Take from the wealthy, give to the poor

**Touchstones:** Father Daniel Vogel — a Catholic priest who runs the Church of the Ascension soup kitchen

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 14th

**Blood Potency:** 0

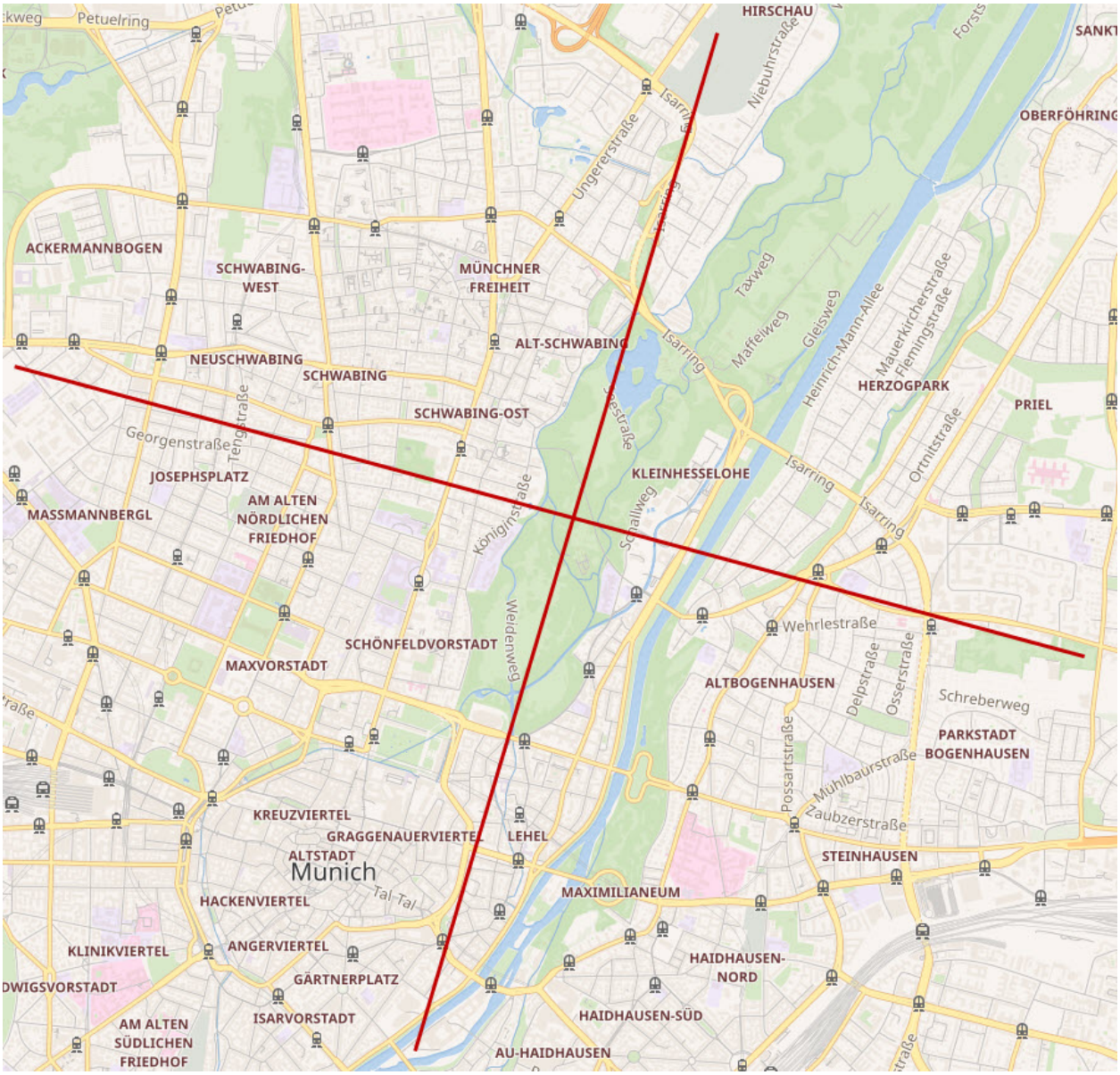
**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2; Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Larceny 4 (Lockpicking), Stealth 3 (Break-Ins), Survival 4 (Urban); Persuasion 2, Streetwise 4 (Scrounging), Subterfuge 3; Awareness 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Thin-Blood Alchemy 3

**[FOLLOWING MAP IS INCLUDED ONLY FOR VISUAL REFERENCE. CREATING SOMETHING LIKE THIS ISN'T NECESSARY BUT MAY ASSIST THE PLAYERS]**




# Matters of Faith

As in the mortal world, matters of faith divide Kindred. Those differences vary from minor philosophical disputes to open holy wars. The story hooks below illustrate this struggle and focus on a coterie of characters who all belong to, or are at least aligned with, the same cult. Should the players require a quick story with little preparation, the Storyteller can use the examples listed here and build new stories to expand Styx and Bones or stand on their own.

# The Sleeping Sword of War

In Act I Scene II of William Shakespeare's *Henry V*, King Henry speaks with the Archbishop of Canterbury. "How you awake our sleeping sword of war: we charge you, in the name of God, take heed; for never two such kingdoms did contend without much fall of blood." Ultimately, the English and French did go to war, as both held rival claims over territory. The same sense of competing interests fueled by ordained right permeates throughout history, often resulting in

bloody conflicts between both individuals and ideologies. The following scenarios depict conflicts between different and competing cults.

## The Ghosts of Carthage

**Cast:** Mago of the Cult of Carthage

**What Happened:** Hannibal, the famed Carthaginian general, invaded Italy in 219 BCE and proceeded to annihilate three hundred thousand Romans over two decades. Many Kindred believe Hannibal was a tool of Troile, used to wage war against the Ventrue of Rome. The Second Punic War ended at the Battle of Zama, with Scipio Africanus defeating the Carthaginian general. Since then, Hannibal, and his fabled city, have become a rallying cry not only among the Brujah, but also within the Anarch Movement.

The Cult of Carthage is small but growing within the Anarchs. Mago stands among them, a young Brujah with dreams of ancient times. The tenets of his faith demand retribution for ancient losses. He seeks to avenge fallen Carthage with Ventrue blood. Because of these beliefs, he challenges his fellow Anarchs. He calls on them to destroy the Ventrue of the Camarilla. His recruitment efforts have procured a number of followers, all of whom are on the verge of escalating to an all-out clan war.

**What Could Happen:**

- The coterie joins Mago and convinces the Anarchs to rid the world of the Ventrue. This plunges the two sects into war as old grudges between Rome and Carthage play out once again in the twenty-first century.
- Calling on their own beliefs, the characters challenge Mago. Through logic, reason, social acumen, or brute strength, they do what they must to prevent war.

**Attribute Focus:** Social / Physical

### Mago

**Clan:** Brujah

**Sire:** Jayne Jonestown

**Embraced:** 2008 (Born 1979)

**Ambition:** To take down a Ventrue fat-cat

**Convictions:** Never kneel to a Ventrue

**Touchstones:** Billy Ockwell — trade union leader

**Humanity:** 7

**Generation:** 13th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Firearms (Pistol) 4, Larceny 3, Melee 1, Survival 2; Insight 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership (Cult) 4, Persuasion 3; Awareness 1, Investigation 1, Politics 2, Technology 3

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Presence 3

**General Difficulties:** 5/2

## Resignation of the Righteous

**Cast:** The Romero Twins

**What Happened:** The Romeros are a pair of siblings, Catalina and Santino, who belong to the Cult of the Fallen Kingdom. This Gehenna cult believes mankind's awareness of Kindred existence is inevitable and the only way to ensure the survival of the undead species is to expose themselves sooner rather than later. Only after the Masquerade is broken, and after the ensuing war to follow, can Kindred society rebuild.

While the Romero twins have something of a point, their methodology is flawed. They threaten the Masquerade with online postings, personal rants, and videos highlighting their vampire nature. One such video depicts the two jumping off a building and enduring lethal harm only to heal and smile for the camera.

The Prince has learned of these antics and is on the verge of declaring a Blood Hunt on the Romero twins, if the Second Inquisition doesn't get to them first. Except, their sire Frank Watchfair is slavishly devoted to his childer, and approaches the PCs with an offer of payment and sponsorship if they help convince the Prince to turn a blind eye, or at least save the Romero twins from destruction for long enough that they might flee the domain.

**What Could Happen:**

- The player characters recognize the Romero twins have blatantly violated the Masquerade and attempt to bring them into custody. By examining their videos, the characters gain clues to likely locations to hunt for the pair. Catalina and Santino are unlikely to see reason and will rely on violence to protect themselves.
- The player characters petition the Prince to allow them to take care of the problem and use their connections and resources to push the Romero twins out of the city.
- The player characters may either agree with the pair or feel sympathy for them and help them escape the city before the Prince calls the Blood Hunt. If they help them escape, Watchfair shows himself to be without funds for payment, but offers them a major boon.

**Attribute Focus:** Social / Physical

### The Romero Twins

**Clan:** Toreador

**Sire:** Frank Watchfair

**Embraced:** 2003 (Born 1981)

**Ambition:** To prepare Kindred society for the end of the world

**Convictions:** Always tell and reveal the truth

**Touchstones:** Patricia Romero — their still-living mother

**Humanity:** 3

**Generation:** 12th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2; Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Larceny (Lockpicking) 3; Insight 2, Intimidation 1, Leadership 1, Performance (Daredevil Acts) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 3; Awareness 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Technology (Social Media) 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Fortitude 1

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Idle Hands

**Cast:** The Hellhounds of Satan

**What Happened:** The Hellhounds of Satan are a cult of vampires who worship the Devil and seek to usher in a demonic hierarchy ruling on Earth. Unfortunately for them, those demons are all in their heads, but this doesn't stop them from pursuing their ambitions. They do this by attacking churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship whether mortal or Kindred. They burn down buildings, slay beloved leaders, and recruit other hellions to their cause.

As a result, the Prince or Baron of the territory has decided to crush all cult activity. In order to prove to the Prince not all cults are equal, the characters remove the Hellhounds of Satan so their own cult continues to thrive.

**What Could Happen:**

- The characters investigate the arson attacks and track down those responsible. By reviewing security cameras, speaking with witnesses, and searching for clues, the characters locate the haven used by the Hellhounds of Satan. They plan their assault, and remove the cult with extreme prejudice.

- The characters prevent further attacks and attempt to reform the cult either through persuasion or through the heavy-handed use of Disciplines. Parading the newly reformed cultists may earn the player characters the favor of the Prince or Baron.

**Attribute Focus:** Mental / Physical

### Hellhounds of Satan

**Clan:** Caitiff

**Sire:** Iqbal Blind

**Embraced:** 1996 (Born 1970)

**Ambition:** Destroy a place of religious importance

**Convictions:** None

**Touchstones:** None

**Humanity:** 2

**Generation:** 12th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Street Fighting) 4, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Ambushes) 4; Intimidation (Reputation) 4, Leadership 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2; Academics 2, Awareness 3, Investigation 3, Occult 4

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Dominate 2, Oblivion 3

**General Difficulties:** 4/2

## Family Feud

**Cast:** The Cult of Helena and the Meneleans

**What Happened:** Whether on the streets of Verona or the Upper West Side, blood feuds between two warring families can begin with conspicuous violence and end with the Second Inquisition. The enmity between the Cult of Helena and the Meneleans is no different, with the former pledged to the Toreador methuselah and the latter sworn to the Brujah. Though Helena and Menelaus were supposedly once lovers, their bitter rivalry sparked something of a holy war.

In this modern incarnation, the Meneleans and the Cult of Helena both populate the same city. The characters belong to a third separate religious institution minding their own business when the conflict spills into their territory. A quiet feud fought through attacks of influence eventually erupts into a hot war fought on the streets. If the characters don't do something, eventually the violence comes to their temple with acolytes of Helena fighting openly with Brujah Meneleans.

**What Could Happen:**

- The characters choose to intervene, placing themselves between the two warring factions. Taking on a millennia-old vendetta is no easy feat, but the coterie uses a combination of force and persuasion to gain a momentary lull in the fighting. From there they have a few precious minutes to make their case to end things diplomatically.

- The characters choose one side over the other. They help destroy, ruin, or otherwise eliminate either the Helenaists or the Meneleans. Perhaps this ends in peace with the winning side, or perhaps they turn on the characters' cult to dominate the entire city.

**Attribute Focus:** Social

# Shades of Gray

Every religion has their hierarchy of sins or specific dogmas that followers obey. While some are more forgiving than others, the world is almost never truly black and white. Most conflicts have many shades. The following hooks explore the nuances of ethics and morals as they relate to

cults and how a cult's membership might weigh or measure a situation, each according to their individual character.

## The Hunt Club

**Cast:** The Prince and her Court

**What Happened:** The Prince, a high priest of the cult of Enkidu, summons the entire court to their private estate. The territory includes a hundred acres of dense forests and open grasslands. After the court assembles, the Prince woos those present with a decadent party, then introduces a dozen mortals. The monarch releases them onto the property grounds while commanding their court to hunt them down for sport, offering a major boon to the Kindred who kills the most prey.

**What Could Happen:**

- The characters don't have the manpower to stop the Prince by force. Instead, the coterie persuades them on ethical grounds. Characters plead on behalf of the mortals in public or private and face whatever hoops the Prince requires they jump through to succeed in attaining their goal.
- The coterie endears themselves to the Prince by participating in the hunt, most likely acquiring Stains in the process.
- The coterie feigns participation in the hunt, but instead of killing their prey, they rescue the mortals and ferret them away or safeguard their lives. They do this discreetly and with great care, lest the Prince discover their duplicity.

**Attribute Focus:** Mental / Social

### Prince Vaughn

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Sire:** Skinner

**Embraced:** 1962 (Born 1923)

**Ambition:** Win the loyalty of the court

**Convictions:** None

**Touchstones:** None

**Humanity:** 2

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 7

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Firearms (Shotgun) 3, Melee 1, Stealth 2, Survival (Tracking) 4; Animal Ken (Hunting) 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 4, Persuasion 3; Awareness 3, Investigation 1, Occult 2, Politics (Camarilla) 3

**Disciplines:** Celerity 3, Dominate 1, Fortitude 1, Presence 4

**General Difficulties:** 5/3

## Blood Trade

**Cast:** Agents of the Circulatory System

**What Happened:** The Circulatory System is a collection of Kindred smugglers, traveling between domains to sell blood. Only, they are selling blood still in living vessels, through underground markets.

Devotees of the Cult of Ishtar have assisted in the quiet arrival of a pair of traffickers advertising the sale of six unique specimens of superb quality sure to delight the taste buds of any discerning connoisseur. They rent and refurbish a slaughterhouse on the outskirts of the city and set a date for the auction.

**What Could Happen:**

- Morally opposed to slavery, the characters try to purchase the six vessels outright. After their acquisition, the coterie takes steps to rewrite their memories and allow them to return to society.
- Morally opposed to slavery but armed with a talent for mayhem, the characters force the issue. Through the threat of violence, they rescue the six mortals and execute the two Circulatory System agents.
- The characters may decide to get involved in the Circulatory System in an attempt (wise or not) to dismantle the market from the inside.

**Attribute Focus:** Mental / Physical

## Absolution

**Cast:** Ethan Clare

**What Happened:** The local Anarch Movement does not take kindly to outsiders. A hundred years ago, Ethan Clare was an Archon of the Camarilla, responsible for the murder and execution of dozens of Anarchs. In recent years, however, Clare has joined the Church of the Third Eye, a cult preaching forgiveness and absolution. As Clare enters the domain, the Anarch Movement discovers his presence and mobilizes to punish him for his past transgressions. But Clare moves to greet them, offering himself in penance. As a result, the Anarchs destroy Clare's home, murder his Touchstones, and torture the former Archon in front of the entire Free State.

**What Could Happen:**

- Recognizing someone has to atone for a dozen dead Anarchs, the characters side with the Movement. They support the punishment and assist in the torture, losing their Humanity in the process.
- The coterie views the Anarch punishment as egregious and the characters place themselves between Clare and the Movement. They argue on his behalf to convince the Movement there are other ways for Clare to atone for his sins.

**Attribute Focus:** Social

### Ethan Clare

**Clan:** Nosferatu

**Sire:** Shrug

**Embraced:** 1910 (Born 1878)

**Ambition:** Earn a degree of forgiveness

**Convictions:** Always turn the other cheek

**Touchstones:** Charley Lang — a child in Ethan's care

**Humanity:** 8

**Generation:** 9th

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 4; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 8

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Melee (Staking) 4, Stealth 3, Survival (Hostile Domains) 5; Insight (Sin) 3, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Persuasion 2; Awareness 3, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Politics 2, Technology 1

**Disciplines:** Obfuscate 4, Potence 4

**General Difficulties:** 6/3

## First Change Fiasco

**Cast:** Karen Shaw, First Change Werewolf

**What Happened:** Karen Shaw is a fifteen-year-old high school student who has endured the worst day of her young life. In addition to having to deal with peer pressure, puberty, and the stresses of being a teenager, Karen Shaw is also a werewolf. After a heated argument with her cheating "bae," Shaw transforms into a werewolf for the first time. While in her frenzied state, she murders her former love. What she didn't know at the time, but will surely find out soon, is that her dead ex was the Touchstone of the cult's priest. Now the priest demands vengeance.

**What Could Happen:**

- The characters put down Karen Shaw for good as their priest demands. With a reckless werewolf, one could argue killing her is an act of self-defense, if the characters are willing to potentially take a hit to their Humanity.

- The coterie subdues Karen Shaw to return her to her family. By rewriting her memories, they're able to suppress her bloody killing-spree, but they still need to prove they got their pound of flesh for their priest. The coterie will need to figure out where the lupine line resides and hand over the very young and very confused Karen Shaw to her own kind, while finding some way to prove to their priest she got what was coming to her.

- The coterie subdues Karen Shaw and uses her to find out more about the werewolf community in and around their city. They can then use the information to rid themselves of the werewolves, or pass it along for someone else to use, whether the local Kindred or hunters.

**Attribute Focus:** Mental / Physical

### Karen Shaw

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics (Escape) 2, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Survival 1; Insight 2, Intimidation (Feral) 1, Leadership 1, Streetwise 2; Academics (Biology) 2, Awareness 2, Politics 1, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Potence 2

**Special:** Werewolves suffer aggravated damage from silver weapons and fire. They recover 1 Superficial Health level per turn. Werewolves gain claws and teeth that deal Superficial Health damage (+3 modifier), as well as +3 to all Physical Attributes when they shift into their half-wolf war form.

**General Difficulties:** 6/2

## Tolerance and Persecution

The rise of cults and churches has opened a new front in the Jyhad. Where Kindred once fought martial or political battles, now they must also contend with spiritual conflicts. As a result, Princes, Barons, and others in positions of authority have begun to persecute those belonging to specific, key churches. The persecution story hooks present cults cities tolerate, and those which must endure persecution.

### The Trinity

**Cast:** The Toreador Prince of the city, his Tremere Seneschal, and his Ventrue Sheriff

**What Happened:** During the Golden Age of Constantinople, three Kindred ruled the city. They included Michael, the Dracon, and Antonius. The triumvirate mirrored the Christian Trinity and controlled the Byzantine Empire for several hundred years. Tonight, the Prince of a modern city seeks to reclaim the Constantinople Dream, ushering in a new age of prosperity and cooperation. By Princely decree, he commands all residents of the city to renounce their particular faiths and pledge themselves to the good of the praxis.

**What Could Happen:**

- The PCs persuade the Prince to allow individuals to continue their religious practices, so long as they meet the needs of the city. This show of tolerance may require boons or other means of bribery.
- The characters attempt to galvanize some of the other religious factions within the city to create a unified force to use as leverage against the Prince, or to take over the city in a violent coup d'etat. This could result in the Prince's assassination and overthrow, or the coterie could face the direst of consequences for their involvement.

**Attribute Focus:** Mental / Social

#### Prince Bruno, Descendant of Michael

**Clan:** Toreador

**Sire:** Jezebel Locke

**Embraced:** 1982 (Born 1961)

**Ambition:** Prove my blessed lineage

**Convictions:** Never allow a heresy to pass unchallenged

**Touchstones:** Angelica Waterhouse — my innocent angel (an imprisoned chorister)

**Humanity:** 4

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 4; Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Craft (Icons) 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1; Animal Ken (Birds) 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Persuasion 4; Awareness 1, Occult (Nephilim) 4, Politics (Camarilla) 3, Science (Chemistry) 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Presence 3

**General Difficulties:** 6/2

## Praise (the Church of) Caine!

**Cast:** A small cluster of Gnostic scholars

**What Happened:** The Church of Caine, also known as the Cainite Heresy, circulates within Camarilla cities. Those Gnostic scholars who adhere to it believe Kindred are divine angels, chosen by God to safeguard humankind.

However, in this particular city, the vampire population has begun forcing Gnostics to repent on pain of death. The mob has already executed three of them and have at least two more in their sights. The city's laissez-faire leadership doesn't care what happens to the Gnostics as long as the mob doesn't break the Masquerade.

**What Could Happen:**

- While the characters are not Gnostics themselves, they view the persecution of the Church of Caine as a transgression against religious freedom. After all, if Kindred can persecute one faith so easily, what stops them from mistreating another? The player characters can take steps to safeguard the Gnostics. They might house them within their havens or get them out of the city either secretly or by pushing them out with force.

- The characters could confront the mob directly. They could persuade, bargain with, or bribe the Kindred to leave the cultists alone, or they could answer violence with violence.

- The characters might decide they don't want to live in a domain without toleration of faith. Either through social or physical means, they orchestrate a praxis seizure. This could end with a more progressive Prince on the throne or one of the characters as ruler of the city curtailing the actions of the populace.

**Attribute Focus:** Mental / Social

## Gladius Domini

**Cast:** Reverend Alfred Murray of the Society of St. Leopold

**What Happened:** Alfred Murray and his small cohort are members of the Society of St. Leopold — vampire killers who work directly for the Vatican. Equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, weaponry, and the power of True Faith, they are a terrifying force. Fed information by a local Kindred, Murray and his fellows hunt down the various cults within the city. They have succeeded in wiping out a church dedicated to Mithras and now focus their attentions on the characters themselves.

**What Could Happen:**

- The simplest solution is for the characters to go to ground and wait out the attack or try to get out of the city to let the worst pass, but they'll still need to see to their nightly needs like feeding.
- The characters could defend themselves. With a combination of guile, combat skill, and a modicum of luck, the characters manage to turn the tables on the Society, removing them as a threat and then exposing the actions of the traitorous vampire.

**Attribute Focus:** Physical

### Reverend Alfred Murray

**Standard Dice Pools:** Physical 4, Social 4, Mental 5

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 6

**Exceptional Dice Pools:** Firearms 5, Melee 5; Awareness 6, Investigation 7, Occult 7

**Special:** True Faith 3

**General Difficulties:** 6/3

## High and Low

**Cast:** A Low Clan Prince and a lot of unhappy High Clan citizens

**What Happened:** In some cities, Kindred still insist on the existence of High Clans and Low Clans. High Clans, which include the Lasombra, Toreador, Ventrue, and Hecata, carry a certain nobility which historically has allowed them to chastise and demean the Low Clans. The Gangrel, Malkavians, and Nosferatu have carried the brunt of this scorn, though the Brujah and Tremere have sometimes shared in their treatment.

In a reversal of fortune, the Prince of the city, a stalwart Nosferatu with ties to Gorgo's Nest, has come to power and demands additional taxes on the High Clans of his city. Claiming the persecution of his blood for centuries as pretense, the Prince employs Malkavian diplomats to bleed boons from the Ventrue and Toreador. They use Gangrel enforcers to threaten the lives of the local Hecata. Many of the player characters suddenly find themselves extorted for no other reason than their pedigree.

**What Could Happen:**

- The characters don't have the muscle to overthrow the Prince, so instead they try a nuanced approach. They pay off the right people in order to gain access to the Prince, taking the night to make their case and plead on behalf of the High Clans.
- The characters formulate a campaign meant to undermine and subvert the praxis. They lead a conspiracy to coordinate a rebellion among the city's other High Clan members.

**Attribute Focus:** Mental / Social

# Sample Cultists

Individual cultists come in various shapes and sizes. From the naive laity to the hardened zealot, all have a shared sense of faith. The Storyteller can use the following SPCs to populate a local storyline.

## The Naive Lay Member

**Clan:** Brujah

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 12th

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Street Fighting) 3, Larceny (Lockpicking) 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2; Etiquette 1, Insight 2, Intimidation (Interrogations) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1; Awareness 2, Investigation 4, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Potence 2

**General Difficulties:** 5/2

## The Inducted Initiate

**Clan:** Toreador

**Humanity:** 5

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3; Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Craft (Sculpture) 3, Melee 2; Etiquette 3, Insight 3, Leadership 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Misdirection) 2; Academics (Art) 3, Awareness 2, Finance 2, Occult 1, Politics 1

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Celerity 3, Presence 1

**General Difficulties:** 5/3

## The Loyal Acolyte

**Clan:** Gangrel

**Humanity:** 4

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 5

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3; Animal Ken (Farm Animals) 2, Insight 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2; Investigation 3, Medicine (Field Medic) 2, Science 2, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Fortitude 2, Protean 4

**General Difficulties:** 5/3

## The Trusted Templar

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Humanity:** 4

**Generation:** 11th

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 7, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics (Foot Chases) 3, Brawl 1, Drive (Evasions) 3, Melee (Swords) 4, Survival 2; Etiquette 2, Insight 2, Intimidation 2, Leadership 2, Persuasion 2; Awareness 2, Investigation 3, Technology 2

**Disciplines:** Dominate 2, Fortitude 4, Presence 2

**General Difficulties:** 6/3

## The Grand Inquisitor

**Clan:** Toreador

**Humanity:** 3

**Generation:** 10th

**Blood Potency:** 3

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 7

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2; Etiquette 1, Insight 3, Intimidation (Interrogations) 4, Leadership 3; Academics 2, Awareness 3, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Science (Psychology) 4

**Disciplines:** Auspex 4, Celerity 2, Presence 4

**General Difficulties:** 6/3

## The Devout Clergy

**Clan:** Malkavian

**Humanity:** 4

**Generation:** 10th

**Blood Potency:** 4

**Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3; Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 5, Willpower 6

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Craft (Embalming) 3, Drive 1, Firearms (Rifles) 4, Survival 2; Insight 4, Intimidation 4, Leadership 3; Academics 2, Awareness 2, Investigation 3, Medicine (Pathology) 4, Occult 3

**Disciplines:** Auspex 4, Dominate 2, Obfuscate 4

**General Difficulties:** 6/4

## The Charismatic Prophet

**Clan:** Lasombra

**Humanity:** 3

**Generation:** 9th

**Blood Potency:** 4

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4; Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Secondary Attributes:** Health 6, Willpower 8

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Drive 2, Melee (Broadsword) 4, Stealth 2; Etiquette 2, Insight 2, Intimidation 4, Leadership (Oratory) 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 3; Academics (History) 4, Medicine 3, Occult 4

**Disciplines:** Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Oblivion 4, Potence 4

**General Difficulties:** 6/4