

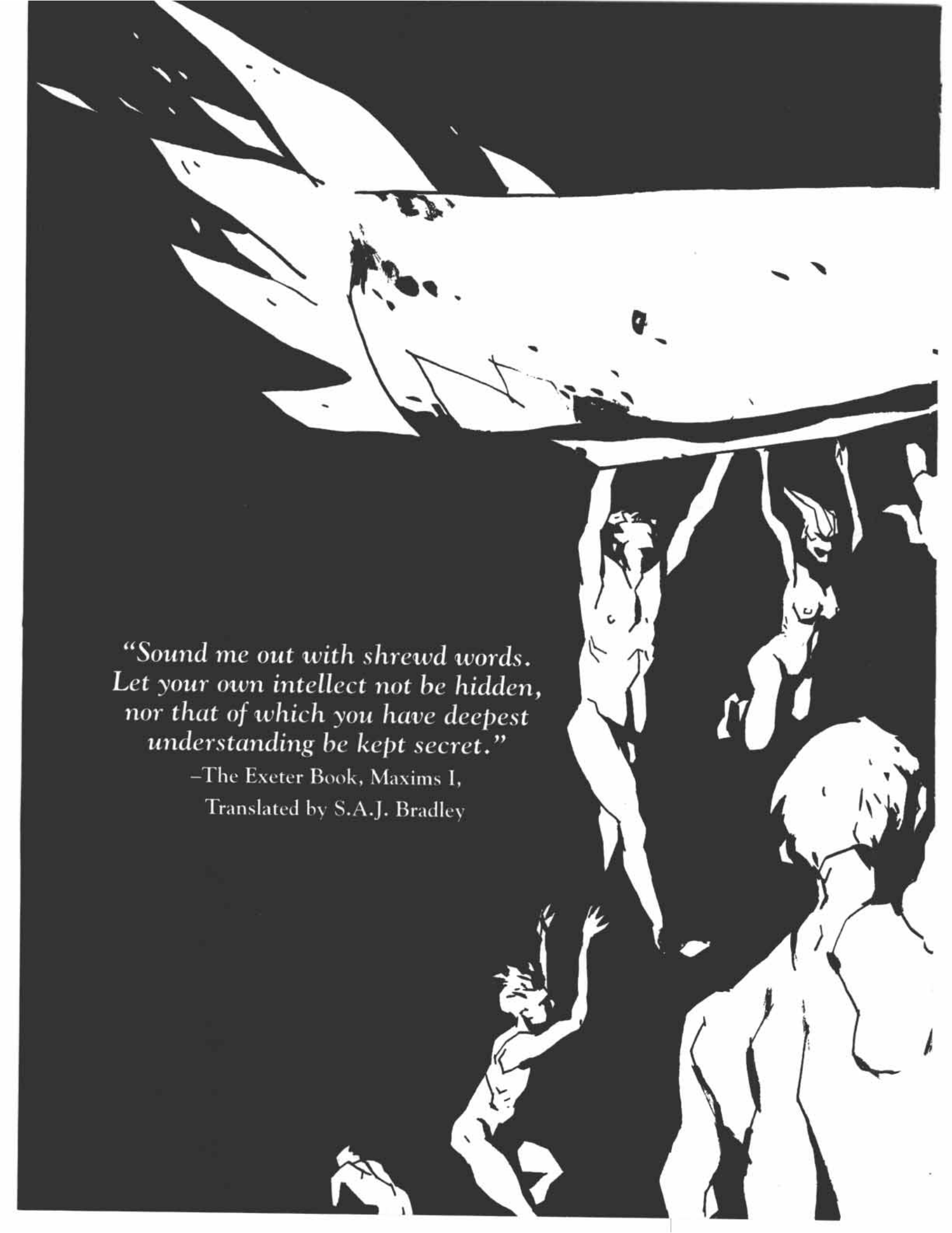
LIBELLUS SANGUINIS



KEEPERS OF THE WORD
A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES[®]



BY JACKIE CASSADA, RICHARD STRATTON AND
CYNTHIA SUMMERS



*"Sound me out with shrewd words.
Let your own intellect not be hidden,
nor that of which you have deepest
understanding be kept secret."*

—The Exeter Book, Maxims I,
Translated by S.A.J. Bradley



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(But if you ever try to back the forklift over me again, we're gonna have words....)



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Introduction:

How to Use This Book

You have in your possession the second in the series of Dark Ages Clanbooks — **Libellus Sanguinis II: Keepers of the Word**. Here we have gathered under one cover the three clans of the Dark Medieval world to whom scholarship and the arts of wordplay are the most vital, though perhaps there is little agreement among the three as to how the gifts of language should best be used.

The Toreador, called Artisans, concern themselves with the arts of love and beauty. Do not dismiss them as mere dilettantes, however — their graceful fingers lightly pluck the strands of power, and the Courts of Love carry more weight than many ducal decrees. As the fine arts have less concrete expression in the dark nights of the 12th century than they will in the modern world, these Toreador are as much concerned with the ideals of beauty and expression as they are with the actual creation of art.

The Tremere Usurpers are not nearly so cocky in the Dark Medieval world as are their modern counterparts. Their place in Cainite society not yet ensured, their very existence under siege from Lupines and vengeful Tzimisce, the Tremere are in a fight for survival. It is in these bloody times that the clan's legendary paranoia and tight-knit structure come into being, for there is no other way the Tremere can continue.

Finally, the Brujah are caught here mid-fall, trapped between the noble Cainites of Carthage and the Rabble they will become. Balanced between the philosophy of Hellas and the rage of the modern day, the Zealots are at once monsters and scholars, destroyers and would-be saints.

So what webs do the Toreador weave with song and favor? What will enable the Usurpers to outlast the rage of the other clans? What will the Brujah's rage destroy, even as they seek to rebuild lost Carthage? The answers, gentle reader, are within — if you're willing to learn them.

Format

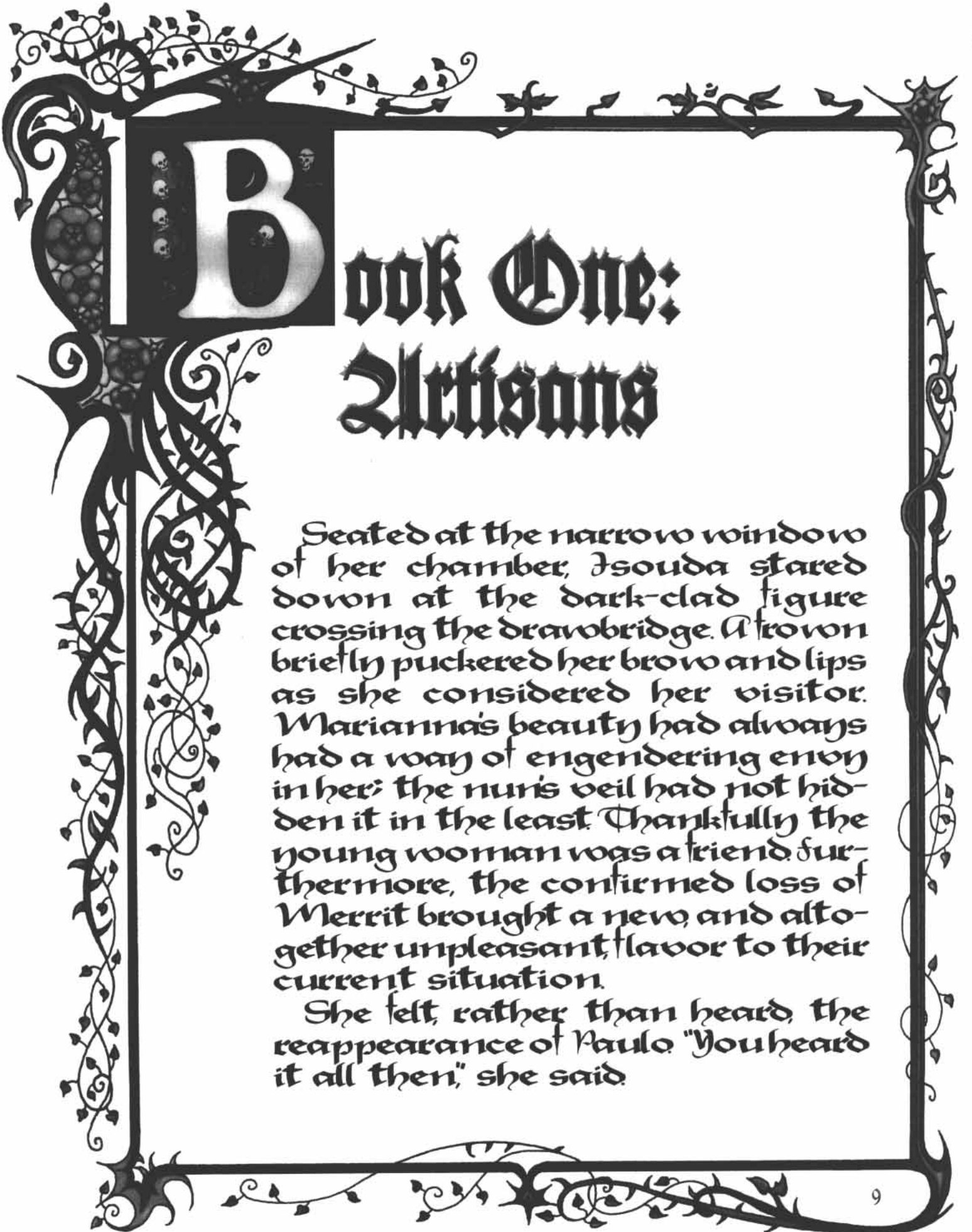
The material in this book follows a rough format designed for ease of use. Each section begins with a short introduction predicated on giving the reader a sense of how the clan thinks. Next comes information on the clan's organization and dealings with the rest of the Dark Medieval world. Don't expect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

Third is the so-called "crunchy" material — Merits, Flaws, Backgrounds, new Discipline powers and so on. All of the gamespeak is contained in these portions of the book. Finally, there is a brace of templates for each clan, and a particularly revealing slice of that clan's history. Where do the Daughters of Cacophony come from, or what really happened to foment the fall of the Third City? You might discover those secrets here, assuming that you trust the teller of the tale. And that's not always wise when Cainites are concerned....

New Traits

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





B

ook One: Artisans

Seated at the narrow window of her chamber, Isouda stared down at the dark-clad figure crossing the drawbridge. A frown briefly puckered her brow and lips as she considered her visitor. Marianna's beauty had always had a way of engendering envy in her; the nun's veil had not hidden it in the least. Thankfully the young woman was a friend. Furthermore, the confirmed loss of Merrit brought a new and altogether unpleasant flavor to their current situation.

She felt, rather than heard, the reappearance of Paulo. "You heard it all then," she said.



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"Indeed. Poor little Marianna, searching for her husband, all alone in the great wide world," Paulo replied, his mock-sympathetic tone embittered with scorn.

Isouda turned to the Magister, who stood casually in his usual spot beside the chessboard. His patrician features had never failed to capture her attention, even when she was annoyed with him. Now, however, was not the time for her to enjoy his visage. "When you have lost a loved one and understood such grief, then you may feel free to wallow in the misery of others. You will forgive me if I do not join you in your joke — Marianna is a sister through both God and clan, no matter how ridiculous she seems to you."

"Of course, lady. Many apologies." Paulo advanced the white king's pawn a single space and looked at her expectantly.

She frowned again (the insincerity of his apology would need addressing, but later) and sat down across the board from where the Magister stood. Carefully, she advanced a pawn in response, knowing that he was staring at her face, her hands, her every move. For all that he had been dead for five years, Paulo was still human enough to remember certain things. It worked to her advantage when Don Roland was foolish enough to send his smitten childe to continue their dealings. "How fares your master?" she asked, pitching her voice to hold the proper amount of solicitous concern.

Paulo sighed, took two steps and waved a hand in annoyance, giving Isouda a prime view of a piece of velvet on his belt. She had managed to catch sight of gold thread woven into that particular scrap of fabric before he chose and advanced a pawn. "He has not visited the courts in five months now. He trusts only me to serve as his proxy. Of late, though, my business has brought me here instead. Don Roland wishes to learn—"

"Whether or not I can repair the damage done after the incident with that fool Fulk." Isouda smiled and moved her queen's knight.

"As always, you cut to the quick, gracious lady." The Lasombra moved a knight of his own, placing it where it had only a pawn for protection. Again, the brief glimpse of the velvet on his belt. This time, Isouda noticed a single initial: R.

"I can promise nothing, of course. I am fortunate enough to have some sway with Severus, as a fellow Artisan, but if he chooses not to continue his relations with your master, that is his business."

"Don Roland is most concerned that the matter be brought to some conclusion. After all, such an incident only serves to fray relations between our clans."

Isouda smiled lightly; her lips, still as red as when she had first come across the border between life and death, were holding his attention more firmly than was the board. "True, but your presence at our Court of Love has assisted matters greatly. I do hope you are finding entertainment enough to suit you?"

Paulo permitted himself a chuckle. "If you mean watching that fool Geoffrey abase himself before Aline, then yes, I have enjoyed myself immensely. Whyever do you allow him to hang about the place?"

"He has the makings of one of Love's knights, as soon as he learns proper humility. I think a few weeks of fetch-and-carry will have a most satisfactory effect on our proud little fop. He must learn that this is not some emperor's garden of earthly delights." She advanced her knight again and moved her hand back, brushing his as if by accident. Though her fingers had been chilled for years, her touch was still thrilling, at least if Paulo's reaction was any indicator. She smiled as his hand jerked back, overturning a rook which in turn knocked over two pawns. "Why, Don Paulo — such clumsiness is not like you."

The Spaniard hastily replaced the pieces, leaning forward as he did so. The velvet was now in his lap, and she could see a golden sun in addition to the letter. "Apologies, my lady."

"Accepted, of course," and she favored him with a gracious smile, although she was already tired of the charade.

After another half-hour of idle chit-chat and pointless moves, Isouda dismissed Paulo, claiming that she had letters to write before the sun rose. Paulo did not argue (a good sign — he was learning that a well-bred knight of Love did not press the issue when a lady made a request), and excused himself with a deep bow. Isouda studied the board for the next few minutes, considering what had been left behind: a number of pawns had been advanced (none very far), the white queen had been left undefended, a black knight had been placed too far forward, a white rook stood threatened, and a black bishop had been advanced a few ranks — interesting signs indeed.

When suitable time for contemplation had passed, she stretched out her thoughts, seeking for the young mind she knew almost as well as her own. A few minutes later, Rosamund knocked quietly at the door, entered without waiting for an answer and closed it behind her without a whisper. For a moment, Isouda was lost in admiration of her handiwork. It was so remarkable how the fiery thatch of hair and gray-green eyes had, with a little care, grown into one of the court's prettiest roses. But there was work at hand, and she considered her protégé gravely as the girl stood before her.

"We shall speak French, for you need to practice it more," said Isouda, knowing that she had spoken, *Speak as we always do, for privacy.*

Rosamund replied meekly, although her true intent was not quite so demure. "Of course, my lady." *I understand you perfectly.*

"How go your lessons?" *I saw he wore your favor.*

"Very well, thank you, my lady." *Just as you requested.*

"I have heard many good things from your tutor. I am most pleased, childe." *Does he suspect anything? Does all proceed?*

"I hope I am always so worthy of your praise." *He suspects nothing.*

"Have you been to Mass recently? I would not have you neglect your catechism." *Continue for the next two weeks. We are not yet done with him.*

"Yes, my lady, and no, my lady." *What now?*

"Good. Just the same, speak a little with Sister Avis — it will do you no harm to spend more time in her company. The court will not suffer overmuch for your absence in pursuit of virtue. A good lady does not neglect herself spiritually while she pursues the material." *See what his feelings are regarding both Marianna and his ridiculous sire. I believe there is work yet to be done. Continue to instruct him — he shall be of more to us than them when we are finished.*

"Of course, my lady." *And what of Severus?*

"You do me great credit, Rosamund. It pleases me to see how far you've come." *Leave him to me.*

"I am pleased to please you, lady." *As you wish.*

Isouda smiled, genuinely this time. Rosamund had the makings of the next Queen of Love; with a little more time to temper the last gawkiness into womanly grace, Isouda would have to consider her a serious rival. "Good. You may go, and I shall see you tomorrow at the court. Do not forget what I've said." Rosamund curtsied. "Of course not. Good night, madam." And she departed as quietly as she had entered.

The Artisan considered the board before her again. Severus, of course, was a moot point. After the loss of his childe, he held no interest in continuing relations with the Magisters, and indeed would give a great deal to ensure that the Toreador as a whole did not continue such. Precisely how much he would be willing to give was still open to debate, but Isouda suspected that it would be more than enough to satisfy her. Fulk's loss had not been mourned overmuch here; Isouda thought the brat to be one of Severus' grossest lapses in judgment.

Marianna's appearance presented her with an interesting opportunity, though. If her visitor were correct in assuming that it had been a Lasombra who had led the siege that resulted in Merrit's disappearance, then Don Roland might be persuaded to lend his assistance in learning the whats and wherefores of the matter in exchange for the promise of the return of Severus' good favor. As it had taken the Magister several decades to cultivate the relations with the artist, he would not be likely to throw away such an investment so quickly. Whether he could be persuaded to betray one of his own to preserve that relationship would remain to be seen, but Isouda believed that the loss of Artisan favor (and courts, and games) would eventually take their toll on Roland's temper and would be enough to persuade him to better behavior.

"Black queen takes white king — check and mate," she murmured in satisfaction.



The Wide World and its Wonders

ARTISANS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The Toreador are, by and large, a secular lot, more temporal than their fellow Cainites. They dwell in the moment, neither looking too far ahead nor too far behind. History is a story about things come and gone, perhaps relevant to the day, but not required reading. The future is murky and unknowable, and only extreme arrogance would permit one to dare to claim knowledge of what is to come.

When one considers the transience of beauty — the flower that smiles today dies tomorrow — the Artisans' attitude is not entirely surprising. However, for a group of individuals who have the potential to enjoy life everlasting, that's a lot of transient moments. For the Toreador, the trick to eternal life is drinking in existence's moments when they arrive, each framed by the search for beauty and truth.

Toreador firmly believe in the importance of beauty and love in the world, even their particularly dark one and even despite their particular tastes. A world without beauty gives one nothing to aspire to, and with no inspiration, what reason is there, then, to drag out one's existence? Matters are likewise with love, but to the Toreador, love is a much more serious business. A world without love is a world without life (which, admittedly sounds odd coming from a Cainite, but the Toreador definition of "life" is more akin to "existence" than "the ebb and flow of blood in one's veins").

CLAN STRUCTURE

Unlike many of their brethren, the Toreador maintain a fairly tight clan structure. All Toreador are expected to know their place and keep to it. Social station *can* be as rigidly locked as mortal society near the very top, but there is a certain amount of freedom to ascend that is not often found among the kine. A Toreador neonate has the chance to move up in the world of her elders, provided she attracts the right eyes, says the right things and shows the proper initiative. Some claim that, at the higher echelons, often one's art becomes secondary to one's social graces. These claims are by and large quite correct.

Those Toreador who come from the peasant or merchant classes (and how few they are!), and who believe they are being instantly catapulted into a realm of equal opportunity by the Embrace, are in for a rude shock. The Cainite in the castle is their lord, and they had best not forget it. Few believe in the notion that death should equalize all; why should a peasant, Embraced with straw in his hair and dung on his boots, suddenly be elevated to the same position as the lord of the manor? That peasant must first show that has some social graces before he can start dreaming so grandly, and no sire worth his salt skimps on this training. After all, the upbringing of the childe can and does reflect on the sire, and no sire wishes to be disgraced by his childe. For a clan that places so much emphasis on art and the finished "project," the Toreador see the training of a childe to be no different than the creation of a stained glass window or illuminated manuscript.

Toreador select their potential childer carefully for skill at art, "noble quality" and potential political use (not necessarily in that order). The would-be childe must not only possess qualities worth preserving, but must show some ability to grow personally. It is one thing to Embrace a harper who was raised by peasants, but he will be worth little to his sire if he still eats and talks like a peasant even after a decade of instruction. Such a childe, one who never outgrows his humble origins, is usually shunted off to some distant outpost, or is driven into self-imposed exile after one too many humiliating incidents at court.

In spite of all care, there are still impulse Embraces of beautiful mortals, wherein some Toreador decides that she wants to preserve a beautiful mortal from aging past her prime but with little other thought to that childe's usefulness to the clan. This leads to one of two things — either the childe quickly learns to make herself useful in some way, or she is put where she cannot do much damage. It is rare for Toreador to destroy their childer unless the Embrace has driven the poor unfortunates mad, or they have caused heinous embarrassment to clan and sire.

Another impulsive Embrace, even worse than one done for beauty, is that done for love. Perhaps a Toreador lord wishes to bring his lovely young wife across to live with him forever, or a Cainite lady decides that she must have the young count who has stolen her heart completely. These Embraces often have the saddest ends—unexpected Changes can drive the new childe to rage, resentment or madness. Sometimes, the sight of the beloved displaying the same predatory instincts as her sire is enough to send the sire into depths of remorse or insanity. The odds of a romantic Embrace producing a happy union are slender, but occasionally Fate or some other higher power smiles on the pair. If the couple can survive the first tumultuous months of their new relationship, they have several decades of more of the same to look forward to.

THE WOMEN OF TOREADOR

Perhaps it is only natural that a clan which traces its lineage from a master sculptress should be so protective and supportive of its women. In an era that largely views women as chattel to be moved from one household to another, the Artisans take a very expansive view of their ladies. Women outnumber men in the clan, and distaff voices carry a ring of authority that is used to obedience. A number were once the keepers of the household keys, born to positions of authority. Others may not have been born to power, but they soon learn its ways.

Chivalry, unsurprisingly, finds its greatest support among the Toreador. Some have argued that under this school of thought women are no better off than before, merely treated like lapdogs instead of chattel—not much of an improvement. These loudest critics tend to be women of the more “martial” clans, such as the Brujah and Gangrel. The Artisans and their proponents disagree; when one is required to be quiet and respectful when a lady speaks, one might actually listen, and (Heaven forfend!) actually learn something. And chivalry has produced men, not beasts who happen to be able to swing swords.

Many Toreador women model themselves after the great queens and beauties of antiquity (Helen of Troy, Esther, Hippolyta of the Amazons, the goddesses of Greece and Babylon), and aspire to equal them in the realms of strength, wit and beauty. The ascension of Eleanor of Aquitaine to her current post as Queen of Love and patroness of chivalry has added her to the roster of eternal worthies as well, demonstrating that the heights to which the Toreador aspire can still be reached.

Some clans see such “largess” as foolish fripperies — “Just like a woman to be preoccupied with frills,” they say. “Leave the real work of governing to the men,” they say. The Artisans, however, came largely from the ranks of those who know what power a woman can truly hold, and how she can use it. These Cainites know who controls the household, who encourages the arts, who learns the real secrets, and who gathers the murmurs and sleepy tales of the pillow — and that is power beyond what most Cainites can comprehend.



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RANK AND PRIVILEGE

One can rise through the ranks by merit and skill alone, although it is rough and slow going. Without some form of surety regarding a neonate's politics, art and bloodline, many older Toreador are inclined to distrust those who simply appear on their stoops, and with good reason. It can be frightfully easy to impersonate a Toreador (so long as one can carry a tune, have a pleasant speaking manner and remember to stare at the appropriate moments), and the clan fears infiltrators terribly. A neonate who is new to the ranks, but without any sire or other elder to introduce her around, can expect to be tested a thousand thousand times before anyone is remotely satisfied as to her claims, and even then, she will be watched for a long time to come.

Acquiring a patron or mentor of the elder ranks is one of the best ways to get one's name recognized and accepted. A patron is not chosen, although an artist or other low-ranking clan member may petition a higher-ranking Toreador for her patronage. The criteria for selecting an artist to patronize varies from elder to elder, and none seem to quite know how or why certain choices are made. It has happened that an elder bypasses a promising neonate for an overly proud blockhead; such choices may have more to do with those who are not immediately recognizable as part of the picture. Perhaps the blockhead has a particularly powerful sire who has deemed that his childe shall have only the best, or has a boon which he has used to obtain the patron's favor. The bypassed neonate may have politics the elders do not care for or may be the childe of someone who has been cast out of court. The elder himself may have certain requirements that must be fulfilled before he will even consider a ward, such as a certain amount of wealth, the right bloodline, political beliefs, even something as simple as nationality.

Patronage is, quite simply, the process by which the patron takes the childe under his wing, teaches her what she needs to know about the manners and business of the court and introduces her to the "right" people, while the childe works for her patron by producing artworks on commission or showing off her patron's name to the best of her ability. Patronage may last for decades, even centuries, if the benefits are mutually agreeable. There are few better bargaining tools within the clan than the promise of patronage — granted or withheld.

SECULAR VERSUS SACRED

Very few other clans experience the clash of Church and crown more intensely than do the Artisans. Straddling the line between those two worlds as they do, Toreador experience far more interclan strife than do the others, with both sides squabbling like siblings when a parent's back is turned. The Church's power is considerable, but not absolute. For every Holy Roman Emperor forced to kneel in snow for three days to gain a pope's favor, there are local churches and

monasteries ransacked by knights eager for profit. The balance is an uneasy, ever-shifting one, and the demands and desires of the Toreador on both sides of the equation make equilibrium in these affairs a myth.

THE CHURCH

In an era where the Church is center of power, art and culture, small wonder that the Toreador hold so large a place in its workings. The fact that the Artisans must share that niche with others is not always a bone of contention. The Church's labors span thousands of miles and millions of lives, from stonecutters to Crusaders, oblates to the Holy Father. At the lower levels of Church power, Cainites might spend their unlives quietly working away and never come into contact (or conflict) with one another. As they climb in power, the smaller numbers of positions available in the hierarchy inevitably brings the various factions and clans into closer quarters, and rivalries are bound to erupt as a result. But in many cases, a Toreador interested in constructing a cathedral can work quite well with a Lasombra intent on making the Church's authority manifest by diverting tax funds from the local lord.

A number of Toreador enter the Church, or find new fervor for it, after their Embrace. The Church represents security — there is strength to be found in the solid stone walls and familiar rituals, in the belief that one is serving God and that He might, in His mercy, remove the stain of Caine's touch eventually. Are there not passages in the Bible where Christ forgives the stained and sinners? In passion there is ecstasy, and the ecstasies of this time are considered touched by God. This fervency occasionally translates into True Faith — and a Cainite with True Faith is a miracle indeed.

The Church also preserves a connection to mortal life that is often lost with the Embrace. Abbeys and cathedrals are hardly the place to hide oneself away from the world. They are vital, thriving communities with extensive groups of people dependent on them. The abbots and abbesses who rule these places hold extensive power over the lands surrounding the abbeys and the peasants who farm them, and can be summoned to the royal court or act as justices for the Crown. Cathedrals are often the sites of pilgrimages, and the seats of bishopric power. Toreador wishing to maintain their human natures often gravitate toward such spots, seeking themselves while assisting or bedeviling others. A few Artisans seek bishop's miters for the temporal power that can be wielded over a region, in addition to the considerable spiritual power the see grants. However, the power wielded by the clergy need not always be in the form of an iron fist bearing a bishop's signet or coming from an abbey. In smaller parishes, the lower clergy are seen as the spiritual leaders of the community, respected and even loved. The act of confession or blessing holds great weight with the simple people, and withholding those sacraments can produce remarkable results when necessary. In the days following the Third Crusade, many clergy have turned

their attention to the brutes who call themselves knights, urging them to add piety, humility and protection of the weak and powerless to their list of virtues. As the clergy exhort the less-than-chivalrous knights to improve their behavior, society likewise urges them on. The approval (or disapproval) of the clergy, high or low, has a far greater impact than many Cainites give it credit for, and the wise Toreador learns to take advantage of her fellows' negligence.

CHURCH ART

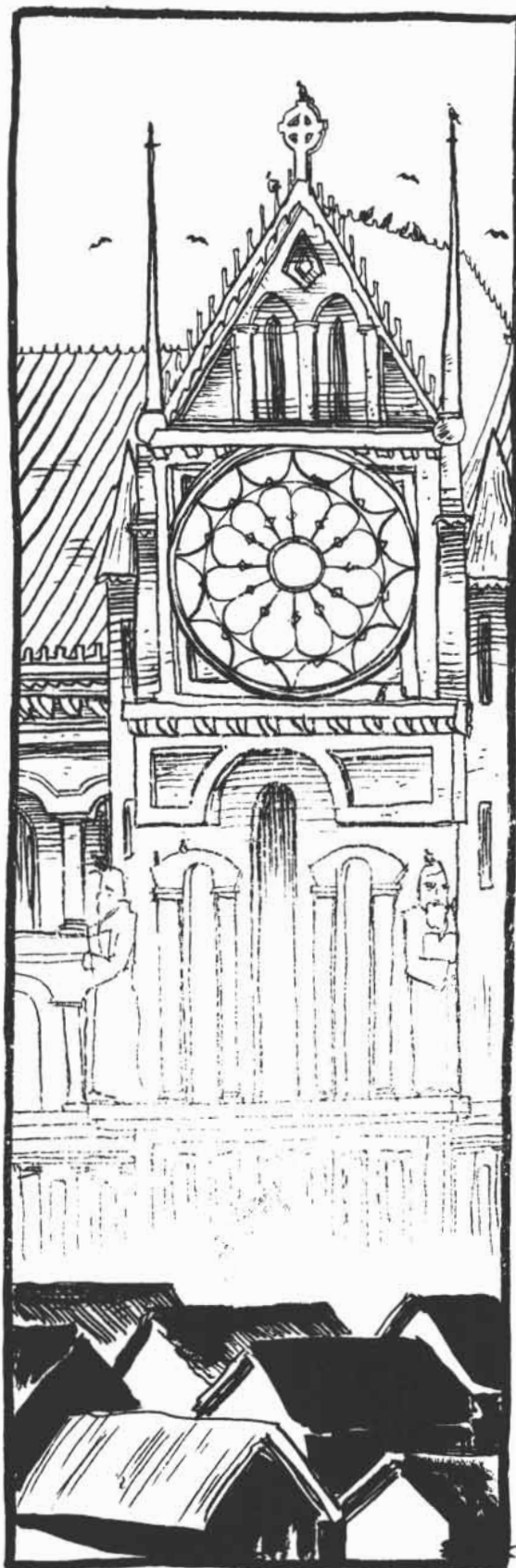
Without the Church, there would certainly still be art, but there would not be nearly the opportunities it is given to grow during the years covered by **Vampire: The Dark Ages**. The building of the cathedrals has resulted in much more work for many Toreador, who seek to scale new heights with their creative endeavors. The sponsorship of the Church grants the Artisans some measure of freedom to experiment; after all, every bishop wishes a fine cathedral for his seat (and for a magnificent stopover point for wealthy pilgrims), and it simply wouldn't do to have a church that looks no different than the one a few towns over. But is the striving of the Artisans who work on that cathedral a matter of wishing to do one's best work for God or to outperform the rival working on another cathedral? In the end, whether the height the Artisan wishes to scale is spiritual or artistic is a moot question. Music, stained glass, stonecutting, wood carving, the mystery plays — art finds a way, and in the end the art is all that matters to all concerned.

MONASTIC ORDERS

Why the orders? After all, surely a lifetime or more in a nunnery is a clear and present danger to one whose "condition" would lead her to be called a demon or worse. For many Toreador thus directed, there are few other choices — a woman wishing to serve in the Church has no choice but to enter a monastic order. A widow, even a Cainite, may be forced to seek shelter in the abbeys (if only for appearance's sake), particularly if her husband's land is usurped by an aggressive neighbor or king. For others, it is a matter of personal comfort. The routine of prayers, the safety of the surroundings, the contact with peers, all combine to make a familiar and comforting mixture that some Artisans find necessary and good when they are trying to keep their minds focused on their faith and search for God. And lastly, some Toreador, having been part of the orders in life, simply can't imagine unlife without them.

Nearly all of the monastic orders at this time have at least a single Toreador in their midst. The only exceptions are the mendicant orders, such as the Carmelites; even the self-designated Ascetics do not seek out such. Extreme poverty rarely suits the Artisans, the logistics of travel are nightmarish to contemplate, and one meets up with too many Nosferatu among mendicants.

Toreador Embraced during or after Crusades often drift into the military orders: Templars, Hospitallers, Teutonic Knights and sundry smaller orders specific to individual kingdoms. These Cainite knights fall into each other's company quickly, forming groups that do not cause much comment when all practice a particular routine. Such



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knights are discouraged from attempting to jump from these rag-tag bands to the actual Toreador knightly orders, however; each new conversion heightens the risk of the orders' being unmasked for what they are. Instead, the Toreador subtly support these anonymous bands with gold and hospitality, in the process keeping them from looking beyond their current situation to something perhaps a bit more structured.

The Cistercians also hold a place in Toreador life, by dint of sheer numbers. By 1152, there are some 54 monasteries in the British Isles alone; it is Cistercian effort that supports the wool and cloth trades, making the Isles the leader in the industry. The Cistercian sisters are another matter for the Artisans, though. The Cistercian movement among women takes root largely in Spain and Italy, somewhat to the consternation of the Toreador; after all, being cloistered in a Lasombra abbey in the middle of a Lasombra-dominated country can be a dangerous proposition. The Cainite women who have chosen the Cistercian route often find themselves trapped in the webs of Lasombra intrigue without any effort on their part. The abbey spin such like thread on a spindle.

The other order supported largely through Toreador effort is the Gilbertine nuns. Founded by St. Gilbert of Sempringham around 1131, this order of nuns, lay brothers and sisters, and canons has become a popular cause for English and Norman Toreador to support. Part and parcel with such interest is the favor of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who supported and respected Gilbert, even when he supported Thomas á Becket against her husband, Henry II. In the 1160s, lay brothers charged that the Gilbertine abbeys were immoral (a charge no doubt brought about by lay brothers frustrated by the piety of the sisters), a charge never proven and cleared by the pope. At the moment, Toreador Heloise de Couci serves as abbess at one of the Gilbertine houses in Lincolnshire, while three Toreador men work as lay brothers in another house to the north. Heloise, in return for Malkavian support against a Ventrue prince's attempts to seize the house, has begun to add caring for the insane to the Gilbertines' list of duties, an arrangement that has suited all concerned quite well so far.

The convent of Nogent-sur-seine also remains under the watchful eyes of the Toreador, as it has since its founding in 1123. Founded by Peter Abelard for his beloved Heloise, the convent has been the destination of not a few Artisans on self-imposed pilgrimages, who come to pray in the chapel and hope for a love as passionate as Heloise and Abelard's. Some Cainite lovers also pray to the pair as patrons of love that overcomes the odds.

HERESY

Heresy is a delicate subject among the Church-Toreador. Those Cainites who entered the Church in the hope of absolution for the sin of their vampirism often prefer stricter tenets and more conservative theology, believing that the ordeal will strengthen them. Those Cainites who turned to the Church as a refuge for their art or to serve as lay canons tend to favor a looser hand on the reins of devotion, and are

given to less moralizing and more attention to God instead of ritual and dogma. The result is interclan squabbling over religion that occasionally leads to one side pulling out the battle-wagon and, through mortal pawns, declaring the other guilty of heresy.

Toreador elders are demanding that such quarrels cease, or at least that they be kept reasonably private. An investigation of heresy brings outsiders and many uncomfortable questions for all involved, particularly Cainites. However, there is evidence of a particularly virulent quarrel over heresy brewing, in spite of the warnings, over the Albigensians (or Cathars) who dwell in the Languedoc region of France. The Cathars' extreme asceticism and loudly professed belief that Satan rules the material world while God rules the sacred have begun to wear on others — in particular the higher powers of the Church the Cathars no longer serve and the secular rulers unable to collect taxes from them.

A striking number of Cainites, not a few of them Toreador, have received the Cathar *consolamentum* (the rite of initiation) and number themselves among the *perfecti* (or "perfect"). The dichotomy of any Toreador deciding that the material/physical world is evil and refusing to perpetuate it is almost too incredible to believe, which has more than a few of the elders wondering if these converted Cainites are in their right minds. The number of Cainites who have chosen to attach themselves to the Cathars as believers (or *credenti*) is currently unknown, but the rumored numbers are staggering. As the requirements of *perfecti* are no great effort on the part of Cainites (abstention from all meat but fish, remaining unmarried, creating no progeny, perpetual celibacy and extinction of life to liberate the spirit from the chains of the flesh), a number of Toreador leaders fear that the vampires who swell the sect's ranks may be drawing the wrong sort of attention from outside clergy. Already, vampires may kill with little fear of retribution; some wonder if they do so with the blessing of the Cathari leadership. And now come disturbing rumors that those Cainites who walk as *perfecti* make little effort to hide their true natures, with the worst offenders said to be the influx of young Toreador. Terrifying rumors are now repeated as fact across the breadth of Europe — that exsanguination has become the method of *perfecti* suicide so that the dying may feed the undying, and that those Cainites who serve as *perfecti* practice Amerath without fear of punishment.

When Raymond VI became Count of Toulouse in 1194, Catharism entered high politics. As secular authorities become interested in the Cathars, the Toreador elders fear that too much scrutiny will bring the eyes of the superstitious mortals and the Church upon the Cainites. Already the elder Artisans seek the identities of those who begin the first campaigns against the Cathari — perhaps Lasombra seeking to expunge the influx of Toreador, perhaps a mortal who knows too much, or perhaps another vampire who hopes to set the Toreador and Lasombra at fatal odds.

THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE

In 1208, Pope Innocent III, supported by the King of France, initiates his call for a Crusade against the Cathars. Beginning with the massacre of Béziers (the city refused to hand over its handful of Cathar residents; the Crusaders slaughtered the entire population — men, women and children, most of whom were not Cathar — in response), the Crusade rages until 1229, at which point there's little left in Languedoc for the Crusaders to plunder. With the fall of the fortress of Montsegur in the Pyrénées in 1244, the last gasp of the Cathar heresy is essentially wiped out, and most of its Toreador adherents with it.

POLITICS

King-making is a dangerous game, and one at which most Toreadors will freely admit they have little skill. There are grounds where angels fear to tread, and this is certainly one of them. The Toreador's perceived lack of interest and skill in such matters often leads other clans to consider them to be beneath notice in the vineyards of politics. For those Artisans who do choose to play the game, their cousins' docility provides them with unexpected, though not unwelcome, cover.

While king-making is a game which the Toreador ignore, duke- and baron-making, on the other hand, is more to their liking, a game which the Artisans use to their advantage. In 1197, most countries are collections of duchies and baronies, ruled by a single king. A properly placed (and sufficiently fortified) duke or baron can make life difficult for his superiors, and certain large duchies (such as Burgundy and Orleans) are extremely influential when gifted with a talented duke. A king who must continually contend with the antics of a few rebellious barons cannot spend time expanding his kingdom's borders, or dealing with an abbey that's withholding tax revenues, or treating with the Cainite diplomat who comes as



BOOK ONE: TOREADOR

a representative of an enemy... and so the best-laid plans of mice, men and monsters gang aft agley. Of course, even the most fractious duchies and baronies can usually be subdued by a king of reasonable competence, but rarely before the Toreador are ready to let them capitulate.

By virtue of a number of their innate gifts, the Toreador are consummate politicians and diplomats. When one is able to placate a flustered chamberlain and in the same breath inform the king that he is served by a fool, a career as a diplomat becomes simply a matter of opportunity — and the clan excels at creating those opportunities. Consider the necessities of the diplomatic existence: an emphasis on courtly grace and manners, familiarity with the intricacies of the dances of both Church and secular courts, and the closeness one must endure to one's peers and subjects — all of these are second nature to a great many Toreador. Indeed, even when they have little interest in such, Artisans are among the first singled out by princes to perform diplomatic missions, particularly if those Artisans are not especially well-known to the community (either vampire or mortal) at large. Toreador, renowned for their decadence and lack of focus, are rarely suspected of posing any threat, sufficiently dazzling in manners and the arts to allay any suspicions that do arise and skillful enough at observation to avoid observation themselves. Some Cainites sneer that both the Toreador and the Nosferatu truck in the same gossip; the Toreador simply acquire it at the supper table instead of at the garbage heap. Wise Cainite rulers know that while the Nosferatu will know the details of a palace's every plot, the Toreador will know who set the plots in motion, why they did so and who let the Lepers in on the secret.

In Cainite politics, any connection a Toreador has will be exploited to its utmost, usually without the exploitee realizing that she is being used thus. For example, the request of a loan of a horse might not seem like so great a matter between friends, but the Toreador borrowing the horse is acquiring it for a messenger borrowed from another friend to take a message to a third friend, who is requested to pass the message on to a fourth — the interconnected webs of favors owed and granted can acquire Byzantine proportions quickly. The webs spun between resources, contacts, allies, Cainites and mortals can dizzy even the sharpest Toreador, and all are so artfully and delicately balanced that a single wrong move can easily bring down the entire structure. Needless to say, no Artisan allows strands of favor to fray so perilously; if a connection to a mortal guildmaster is weakening, threat-

ening other portions of the web, then the Toreador quickly cauterizes the strand by whatever means necessary. By necessity, then, the Toreador maintain one of the busiest correspondences imaginable, and are forever seeking new and faster ways to send their messages.

MORTAL LIFE

Toreador, by necessity, are part of mortal life, in spite of the grumbling and attempts at separation. Mortal courts, cities and churches are Toreador playgrounds, and the Toreador who attempts to separate himself entirely from mortal company will soon find the loneliness and limited companionship of his brethren maddening. Many Cainites have noted that the Toreador seem to need mortals in spite of themselves — as mirrors of themselves, as inspiration, as audience. Some claim that this is why the notion of Toreador hermits and ascetics makes for rich comedy; how could the social Toreador consider locking himself away on some mountain with only the birds to preen for?

Everywhere one looks in the life of the clan, one finds mortals — as subjects, friends, allies, coworkers, contacts, lovers, spouses, students and children. While the Toreador are certainly not the only Cainites to have associations with mortals, few others hold the living so close and so deep. For as many benefits as such connections might be, there are few worse wounds than a strike at a Toreador's mortal relations. The loss of a trusted ally or casual friend can send an Artisan into a fit of melancholy, while the death or destruction of a parent, lover, child or spouse reduces him to rubble. Should, however, the vampire find the strength of spirit to turn on his foes while in the throes of despair, the enemy can expect neither surcease nor mercy.

Of the many potential opportunities for involvement in mortal life, the rising guild structure for craftsmen provides the Toreador with a new and unexpected vehicle for inserting themselves into the cities. Most of the guilds focus on the crafts or trades that incorporate art in some way — from weaving to goldsmithing to masonry — and for the Toreador, the organization of such talent has proven to be a mecca before which they prostrate themselves. Guildmasters set the tests for entrance, occasionally to reflect certain high standards (such as those laid down by the guild's patron), resulting in a guild that is rich and strong in talent. A number of guilds are even induced to sponsor stained glass windows in churches or the mystery plays at holiday time (some after a little "encouragement"). In some cities, a subtle contest of one-upmanship has grown among the new guilds as various Cainites encourage their pets to greater heights of influence in all spheres of city life.

Art in the Middle Ages

OR, WHAT THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE ARE DOING ALL THIS TIME

A 20th-century casual scholar might look back on the era of **Vampire: The Dark Ages** and ignorantly postulate the Toreador to be wallowing in stagnation. After all, there is absolutely nothing for them to do, right? *Everyone* knows that mortals are barely scraping by with life in general and that art is a luxury unaffordable by any. Therefore, what use are the Toreador, except as interesting relics of a bygone age, pretty fossils who can still remember the rhyme schemes to some old Greek paeans?

In truth, the Toreador have a great deal to busy themselves with, even in these “dark olde days.” While the arts won’t reach their full flowering until the dawn of the Renaissance, there are always places where art is welcome. Every society inevitably needs its artists, and the Toreador are always there to fill that gap. “Creation, whether it be of a sword, a song or a soul, is never an act wasted — there will always be someone in need of it,” claims one Tuscan Toreador.

For instance, there are the cathedrals. These glorious monuments to God from His loving subjects single-handedly produce rampant blossomings of artistic expression from their very inception. From the architecture to the carved stone to the stained glass to the vestments of the clergy, all around is beauty waiting to be brought forth. For Toreador wishing to serve God in some capacity and place their works at His disposal, this is the closest they can get. A few have discovered to their dismay, however, that certain sites, relics or workers can cause a great deal of discomfort, radiating True Faith that negates their attempts at devotion. Cathedrals are not built in a day, or even a year. Some can take a decade or more, depending on the flow of money, availability of workers and general weather conditions; it is entirely possible to have the same vampiric architect, stonemason or glass painter working on the same building for up to a century (after a few strategic changes of identity, of course).

Even in the most repressive times, there is always a demand for music. There are fewer opportunities for musicians during these dark years, but “fewer” is a far cry from “none.” As the

Courts of Love grow in prominence, there is a need for the troubadours and minstrels to sing of the beauty of the ladies or of the bravery of the knights who quested for those ladies’ favors. The best troubadours enjoy a seller’s market for their talents, and a few Artisans can cut deals at remarkable prices to compose a particularly artful song for a lover or a biting satire for a rival. For musicians wishing to travel, villages and manors hungry for entertainment and news of the outside world are receptive to those who arrive on their doorsteps. Gaelic bards, French jongleurs, Russian *skomoriki*, itinerant musicians of all nationalities — all agree that one wishing to travel would do well to learn an instrument.

The Church often commissions new music for Masses. At this time, polyphonic harmony has its first outings, producing daring (for the times) new sounds in music. Monody still has its place (monastic chants are done in monody), but polyphony offers new opportunities to experiment with harmonies, blending voices and instruments in different configurations.

Theatre has all but gone underground during this time. The works of Aeschylus and Euripides which graced the amphitheatres of Greece and Rome are not gone, but largely forgotten and certainly considered too godless to produce. Most theatrical productions at this time are “passion plays,” stories dramatizing the life of Jesus, or “mystery plays” which tell other Biblical stories. Some of these plays occasionally teach moral fables and tales as well. For the illiterate peasants, this is how most learn the stories of the Bible. In the town squares and on the church steps, mystery plays are sponsored by guilds and merchants as a show of wealth. Traveling entertainers like jongleurs put on silly displays of a topsy-turvy world during Carnival time, mocking royalty and peasants alike in bawdy performances that arouse Church ire.

Brightly colored illuminated manuscripts are often works of art in and of themselves. Often gilded, with capital letters that take up large portions of the vellum or parchment page, these magnificent pieces are the crowning jewel of many a library. The *Book of Kells*, produced in the eighth century, is considered the very finest example of the art. Such beauty, however, takes time to produce when one is hand-copying a manuscript in addition

to adding such pretty pictures. For Toreador, trying to work by candlelight on a small piece can be agonizing. A number use Auspex to magnify their sight enough to see their craft while not risking more than a few small candles (as light is expensive and risks a potentially disastrous frenzy in the middle of work).

Painting has shied away from too much realism since the Roman times; such is considered to be approaching the work of God. While the artist himself might not mind, the purchaser is unlikely to willingly take on something potentially blasphemous. Perspective is not entirely unknown, but it is not always used, resulting in pictures of towers topped with ladies as large as they or cities small enough to be vaulted by the horses of the invading armies. Likewise, portraiture is affected by this lack of perspective and realism. Faces appear flat, occasionally somewhat distorted. It's enough to give someone a general idea, but few are likely to mistake the picture for the real thing.

Needlework, the creation of tapestries and lace, and fashion (although considered to be "lesser" arts by some of the elders) enjoy great popularity. Most clans admit (however grudgingly) that even when wearing the simplest of clothes, Toreador look wonderful. In the Church and royal courts, magnificent vestments utilize gold and silver and bullion, or rich fabrics like silks from Cathay or brocade from the Levant. While the Artisans abide by sumptuary laws in the mortal world, it is quite another matter at their own courts; one Ventrue chronicler reports that, "...such was the magnificence of the gowns worn, the multitude of buttons upon the ladies' sleeves, and the trims of gold crusted with gems, that I fair believed myself in a field of living flowers." Such sumptuousness also results in a subtle one-upmanship among some to be the first to use a new trim or fabric, or even create a new style. Sometime during this era, an anonymous little seamstress has the idea to cut her mistress' dress with curved armholes and sleeve caps, resulting in a better fit and silhouette. Current speculation claims that the seamstress in question was in the employ of a Cainite lady, for the design was not seen among mortals until this lady began to wear her special styles to mortal courts. Daring fashion, however, has a way of riling the Church fathers, who believe that such vanity reflects a lack of care for the soul.

What of the written word? While books are expensive to reproduce, they are still being written, often available only to the wealthy patrons who frequently commission them. Chivalry owes a great debt to Marie de France's romances and Chretien de Troyes' stories of the Knights of the Round Table. Andreas Cappallanus, the author of *The Art of Courtly Love*, is venerated by every Toreador who ever attended a court or wooed a lover (although he is privately sneered at by elder Toreador for his parodying of Ovid). Bede the Venerable also bears a great deal of quiet Toreador worship, less for his Churchly writings and more for his preservation of numerous old tales, including *Beowulf*.

Not everyone is interested in sacred art at this time. While it is considered to be the higher and "nobler" thing, there is more to creation than putting halos on everything. Secular music

certainly exists, performed and largely committed to memory by often illiterate musicians, who sing it for peasants or for royal entertainment. Not a few such songs are rife with double entendre, delivering important messages to Cainite listeners while amusing the kine. When the secular music is written down by monks in the interest of preservation, many of the very bawdiest lyrics and refrains are replaced with nonsense syllables (resulting in things like "Hey ho, hey nonino!" "Down-a-down" and the like). Those songs bearing Cainite stamps are gently (or less so) rewritten into more acceptable-sounding lyrics; a few simply go missing. Bored monks and schoolboys scribble daydreams and unchaste thoughts in the margins of the texts they are supposed to be reading. Folk tales and heroic epics from days past (such as *Beowulf*, *The Mabinogion* and *The Vainimoinen*) are filled with descriptions of gory battlefields and witches' charnel houses, flesh-eating monsters and the fatal tricks of faeries; some Artisan storytellers become so engrossed in the blood and hunger of the monsters of their tales that they need to feed immediately after.

Some Toreador speak of using their Disciplines, particularly Celerity, to allow them more speed or a finer touch, but Artisans in general look on this unfavorably. The Disciplines, they claim, do not enhance the art, but can occasionally muddy it. Speed from Celerity may allow for more work to be accomplished during the night, but the critics among them say that Celerity-driven work is frequently sloppy or lacking in fine detail. Using Auspex to give one a finer touch and a keener eye results in details that are near-blinding, such as the glitter of buttons on the figure of a brooch in a portrait; many times, most mortals' eyes simply cannot absorb such things, and so such work is done for Cainite patrons alone.

THE ART OF ART

Art at this time is considered to exist solely for the glorification of God in one way or another. Whether it be in the form of the music that rings through the cathedral, the glorious stained glass windows, a singer's achingly beautiful voice or people acting the part of angels at the birth of Christ, art comes from God, and Man is expected to return the favor. The Toreador, however, find this simple equation to be most problematic as a result of their unliving state. Art is meant to glorify the works of God. The Toreador create art with the same purpose in mind, but do so as vampires (creatures not of God and therefore damned). Will their art be considered glory to God? Not according to the thought of the day. So what is left to the Artisans, deprived (and perhaps depraved) of their art's *raison d'être*?

If their art is refused by God, then for whom should the Toreador create? What is the worth of their creations? It is one of the most explosive questions posed in Elysium, and the debates are fierce. Many Toreador insist that they should still respect God's wishes and create for Him, even if He rejects their creations (as He rejected Caine's sacrifice). These Toreador feel that their works may be the very things which redeem them in His eyes. Others feel that they should shift

their focus and make their art for those who can appreciate it, namely other Cainites and perhaps mortals of rare perception. Man and Cainite do some very fine work without God's intervention, these Toreador postulate, and therefore, why should they be left without recourse to art? If the art of the Cainites cannot be given to God, as it is a sullied thing, then why not give it to those who can and will smile upon it? The argument results in a constant tension between the artist's need for recognition and the Cainite search for redemption.

Such humanistic thoughts, though, are supposed to be kept strictly to the *Elysia* and the shadows of one's own mind. Charges of heresy are easy to fabricate in these suspicious times, and a few Toreador who take their artistic rivalries too far have found that a warning of seditious thoughts, whispered to the proper authorities, can remove a rival with a minimum of fuss or guilt. Those Artisans who do dispatch their rivals thus (and are found out) had either best have plans to travel or extremely wealthy patrons who can support them for a long while to come. Friendly rivalry and competition is one thing, but betrayal of a clan member is considered treason of the first water, and is usually met with drastic response. The clan believes as a whole that no art should be destroyed, and destruction of an artist is nothing more than a pre-emptive strike against everything she ever would have produced. After all, who knows what the victim would have created in time, if his carved altar would have crowned a royal chapel or if her song would have moved an intransigent enemy to tears?

It has been said that artists are duty-bound to sabotage the familiar, forever testing the borders in their attempts at creation. It is one thing to carve a piece of stone to look like a saint in robes, but someone looking to do more than simply imitate what has gone before seeks out new techniques and tests the border of "acceptability" in the search for something better than an imitation. That being said, artists are frequently found in the company of rogues, whether they are aware of it or not, and oft end up surrounded by scholars, philosophers, gamblers, whores, thieves and libertines — dangerous people to associate with. In an era in which the clergy can deem art to be a threat to God, and in which the putative divine order is strictly enforced by those who benefit from its current construction, artists who stand outside the order and work at what their muse commands are by definition heretical. There are a few small places here and there within the "natural order" where one might have room to stretch, but for the large part, doing so is not advisable. There is comfort and safety (not to mention power) in the familiar, the routine, the accepted order. Stepping outside that order risks chaos and invites trouble (such as suspicious clergymen looking for any excuse to light the witchfires). Most young Toreador take their risks haltingly, looking for approval from mentors, patrons and elders before they step too far beyond the bounds previously established. Older Artisans, having lived through many changes of social mores, simply continue as they always have; in their view, the times will change soon enough if one waits long enough.



ANDY'S

6-98

BOOK ONE: TOREADOR

ON ART, AND ITS CONTEMPLATION

My dear Percival.

I thank you for your acceptance of my apology regarding the incident a fortnight ago. You have asked of me an explanation of how such a thing could happen, and under the circumstances of your own calling and our friendship. I feel obligated to reply. I shall warn you now that I am no scholar, and I merely spin conjecture and repeat the theories most plausibly put forth by my own kind. Herewith, I do present the fruits of the past evenings' study.

Art of any sort has always held a deep fascination for us, more so than for any others of our kind. None can seem to recall a time when it has not, even those who claim to have held converse with our progenitor. We seek it out, revel in it, support it by whatever means necessary, drink it in and sup at it like it be food and lover. Mayhap it is even greater than vitae to us, for I have heard of those of my clan who have attempted to become ascetics and later went mad for lack of it.

I believe that art is not merely the finished piece or *fait accompli*, or why should the Toreador alone see and understand this — it is the act of creation, of bringing forth the new from the great muddy sea of ideas, thoughts, recollection, motivations and emotion. The creation that gives us a new piece of work leaves its mark upon that piece, as animal tracks in new-fallen snow or writing across a fresh page. For my own part, when listening to a piece of well-done music, gazing into a lovely face or contemplating the architecture of a church, I find myself looking for those marks of creation, seeing what was left with each sweep of the brush as it were, imagining the process itself, wondering what will yet come about as a result of this beauty in the world. And, as my thoughts suddenly spin off into themselves, when I awaken, time has passed without me.

I have heard from others that there is some sort of mystical bond in our blood that cries out for beauty and art as much as it does for vitae. I cannot say whether this is truthful, although the madness of those who have been without either for too long would seem to support this.

Another suggestion I recently heard was that the clan is cursed because of the vanity of its founder, Arikel. She was utterly enamored of her own beauty, and refused to surround herself with anything but beauty. One day, Father Caine did call her to attend him, and she refused, so lost was she in the beauty of a young slave brought to her. Caine did call her again and she refused him again. On the third refusal, Caine himself did curse her to be a slave to that which she worshipped, even above him. I cannot vouch for the theory's validity, but it is amusing, no?

The night grows short, good friend, and I am called by my chamberlain that I have guests.

By this hand and in Love's name,

Isouda

A BARON'S THOUGHTS ON LOVE

Who is she, you ask, the lady drawn there on the ivory? Ah, you have found Annelies — the work is my own vain effort to capture what God hath wrought. Yes, I did love her, and still do. Do you think that when we accept the Embrace that we lose all that ever made us? We are the products of our artist — why should we not retain something of the grand artificer Himself, even if His hand no longer works upon us?

While it is not to say that the other clans do not feel love, few would argue that we are the most passionate of Caine's children. Immersing ourselves in art and mortal society as we do, how could we avoid loving those we are surrounded by? Some have said that the "love" in question is merely more of the same courtliness and chivalric behavior that we have been working all this while, but those who are fortunate enough to find it would never mistake it for anything else.

The dichotomy of the seeking and the having, however, is nothing less than sheer anguish. *The Book of Nod* — indeed, Caine's own words — says that Cainites should not seek love among mortals. According to both the strictures of the Church and our own words, Cainites are considered damned and unclean, thought to exist beyond the grace of love. And yet, the lure is there, the chance for redemption in the eyes of at least one, and that lure is perhaps the most powerful temptation every devised. The notion of loving, and being loved in return, is one that often drives many of us to amazing feats of creation and bravery. The Court of Love would not flourish so if we refused to believe in love.

And what of courtly love? It would seem to be the ideal solution to this quandary. At its most basic, courtly love proposes that a knight hold a lady (particularly an unattainable one) as the pinnacle of virtue and beauty, and do great deeds in her name, all for the chance of a smile, a word of praise or a gentle glance. The lady, in return, is expected to support her "suitor," but is not required to return physical proof of love (a kiss or an embrace). As physicality supposedly should not enter into the equation, chivalric love ought to support both the vampiric knight pining for a lovely mortal woman and the Cainite lady who has caught the eye of a mortal knight. Speaking as one who has sought such refuge in the chivalric courts, however, I find that it satisfies only part of the need — much like sitting at a sumptuous banquet, surrounded the smells of every dish I have ever enjoyed, and being unable to eat a morsel of it.

Our nobility often have particular considerations with regard to love and marriage. Unmarried nobility are regarded with suspicion, and a noble who is without an heir of his flesh risks his lands being seized by another with a dynasty. Some places do allow for adopted heirs, but alas, only the uncivilized continue this custom. Many of us may take spouses to allay suspicions, particularly if we are maintaining our mortal lives. Sometimes the spouse is told the truth, and sometimes she is not.

Some of us have gone so far as to have surrogates assist in "bearing" offspring (such as the mortal wife of a Toreador lord laying with her husband's mortal brother to bear her husband a child). This is a dangerous gamble, though, as the information in the wrong hands could result in charges of incest or illegitimacy at ascension time.

And what of the ascetics you've heard so much about? What of our clergy and those dedicated Cainites who seek the Lord's forgiveness by serving Him? Surely they must give up the notion of love as well, you are thinking. My childe, if that were true, then what a dull life this would be indeed. Surely your sire told the story of Peter Abelard and Heloise, who, like ourselves, were forced to reconsider the notion of any sort of physical consummation. While both may have given themselves up to the Church upon the frustration of their designs, do not think for a moment that their passions simply died like a frostbitten flower. Their ardor remained quite alive, but necessarily tempered into something more spiritual in nature — the love of two souls bound in mutual pain and finding passion in their heavenly delirium. I have been told there is something quite similar among the ascetics. Some of those who must maintain "chastity" take up Marianism with a zealotry that has grown to frighten some Churchmen, worshipping the Blessed Mother with a zeal that quite outstrips the thought of God and Christ. I dare say some might see the Heavenly Father as a potential rival! Others turn to mysticism in their lonely travels and travails, seeking to embrace the ideals of loving God by many means, and in that mysticism, they speak of the relations between God and Man in a variety of terms. One ideal that is so often used comes from the lips of Christ Himself, that Man is like a bride and God's spirit the bridegroom at a chaste and spiritual wedding. I have read poetry from some of these chaste mystics, and they could just as easily be a song from a passionate knight to his lovely lady. "The Song of Solomon" would be the most familiar to you, but I would also suggest any writings of Leonidas of Athos, if you ever happen to come across them. A word of caution, tho' — some of these mystics are considered in the minds of some to be nigh unto heretics, and you never know who will fall under the shadow. If you keep writings of these scribblers, be certain that you have a good hiding place in which to store their creations.

The other supernatural races may well entice us to lose our hearts. In Ireland, not a few of us have fallen in love with the faeries who came to dance on Midsummer's Night, and some of the Fair Folk return the favor. Ghostly lovers or passionate witches may also bring one to his knees — I recall one such witch, with hair the color of the forgotten sun and eyes as blue as a summer sky. She had met young Gervase during the dancing of a feast day, and they were sun and fire from the start. Unfortunately, when it was learned that Gervase was spending his time with a pretty (and mortal) witch, Rosalba, one of the women of the clan, went nearly mad with jealousy and hunted down the unfortunate mortal (and Gervase, I recall) with the fury of a beast. Such matches, when they occur (and occur they do) are considered star-crossed from the beginning, and all the lovers may look forward to is flight and deception as they wait for those few moments when they can be together. As for Gervase and his witch, the two eventually fled and I heard no more of them. At best they were driven out — at worst, they were pursued and killed. Cruel? Unfortunately, while we may sigh over tales of lovers parted and the like,



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we are not very good at tolerating them among our own. Witness the practice of disparaging, used to diminish the status of one's rivals. When, for example Countess B_____ is disparaged for marrying a penniless knight, he is not raised to her station. Instead, she is lowered to his.

Annelies, you ask? I knew her when we were both mere mortals, time and ago. As I said, the portrait is not a particularly good one. It is difficult to make a life study when the subject is a hundred years dead.

AFTER COURT WITH LADY CATRIONA LINDSAY

Come in, darling, and close the door behind you. You looked splendid tonight, and carried yourself with such grace! I was very proud to acknowledge you as one of my own. Come, sit with me, for I have much to tell you. Now that you have passed your first test as my childe and a Cainite, I believe that you are ready to undertake your next step, one that is your birthright as a Toreador. When you were mortal, were you familiar with the Court of Love? "Not as such," you say, which I will take for a no. Very well, then — consider this your first lesson.

The Courts of Love, founded by our own Eleanor of Aquitaine, are one of the brightest flowerings of our work. Within the shelter of the court, noble ladies and knights play out their games of courtship and love, giving rise to the romantic

images of questing knights and beautiful ladies that our troubadours make their living singing of. However, not a few of those knights and ladies play at politics while they dally with their "lovers," and the innocents so dallied with further our agendas without realizing it.

The court arranges itself thus: There is a single Queen of Love, often selected by popular accord, who leads the court and creates the rules by which the games are played. It is she who doles out punishments to the erring suitors or encourages the ladies, and occasionally teaches the new and inexperienced. She is looked to as the example of beauty and wit, and the court follows her. Those who cluster in our courts are usually acknowledged to be the best and brightest of their "mortal" courts.

Now, how does the court itself function? Each is different in its specifics, of course, but all have a general pattern so that one may travel between them and rarely lose one's footing as a guest. A knight sets his eyes and heart upon a lady, and seeks to win her favor however he can. He rarely announces his intentions before the entire court; after all, Cappallanus reminds us that love made public rarely endures, not to mention the embarrassment to the lady if she dislikes him. The knight is expected to perform deeds that will honor his lady, to undertake tasks at the behest of the queen or his lady, to endure without complaint the teasing and long waits for her attention, to treat his "beloved" as nothing less than the summit of womanly perfection always, and to brave infinite dangers for a gentle glance or smile. At every step of the



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way, troubadours sing of the knight's accomplishments to persuade the lady's thoughts and heart to look favorably upon her suitor or to change the attitude of the court. In the end, the lady may refuse or accept the suit as she chooses with little loss of face, although a lady who is too capricious may lose more allies than gain them through this dance. An acceptance of love does not usually result in physical consummation, although it has been known to happen. A knight may court a married lady, with the understanding that he must accept her wishes regarding her husband. No doubt many an unhappily married young lady seeks escape from a loutish or elderly husband by selecting from among the young stallions, but I shall give further discourse on that particular series of steps later.

It is here that chivalry blooms, our attempt to bring a measure of grace and honor to a largely honorless and brutal world. The chivalric ideal demands that knights never strike an unarmed opponent, that they maintain themselves as examples to the peasants and that women should be cherished and protected for the beauty and grace they bring to the world. The values of humility and piety are encouraged as well, often with most surprising results. Why, recently I saw how Sir Julien, one of our own, began to display a remarkable quality of... dare I say, Faith? In the pursuit of his darling — who is gentle and pious without being silly — he had begun to examine his own beliefs and to attend midnight Mass more frequently. We shall see what that brings about; no doubt there will be some who will be *quite* interested to see how this came to be.

But now what was I saying... ah, yes, chivalry. It has become quite entwined with courtly love, and certain concessions demanded of a knight in battle are likewise expected in the court. Love that is demanded or clumsily presented is seen as not worth having. A target too easily won is likewise valueless, as is one taken by force. A lover should wish for no other embraces than that granted by his own beloved, and his every thought should end with her. The object of the court is less about obtaining a goal than the road to achieve that goal, a philosophy not too much different than the *Via*. It is my understanding that chivalry has become a *Via* unto itself for a number of our knights, and that they hold to it as fast as any other *Via*. I scoff at those who claim the courts are useless or frivolous. By these gardens and offices we give them *men*, not beasts who claim to be so, and by our men's works shall you know them. Would these sneering lords, sated with their evening meals at the donjon, be so quick to sneer knowing that a number of their fledges give a great deal to join our festivities? There will come a day when they will regret being so unlettered, when all they know is how to swing a sword but not how to sheath it.

For us, the courts provide unparalleled opportunities. Arranging matches, encouraging or discouraging chosen suitors, putting the best troubadours to work against a rival, even rising to the position of queen and dictating how the court will run — all are works worthy of the attentions of both artist and Artisan. Here, where the stakes are relatively small, the young ones come to learn, and to garner the lessons that serve them well in the outer world. One of our own, Lady Isouda de Blaise, presides over

a Court of Love, a smaller one than those of Aquitaine and Flanders, and by its workings and participants has come to have far more influence than many would suspect. When one has would-be participants begging to enter, one can command certain entrance fees, if you follow my meaning. I understand that a young Ventrue lordling paid not only in gold but in his master's goodwill for his place at Isouda's court; rest assured that this gift will not be idly squandered.

A great many of us take advantage of the chance to create matches between knights and ladies, with the expectation that these unions may later be used in the "outer" world. Case in point: A lady unhappy with her husband (who is an enemy of the Toreador, perhaps the pawn of a Cainite enemy) is invited to join the court, and is promptly set upon by a small bevy of knights. The Toreador queen of the court encourages her to favor one knight in particular, or the knight is given a few hints and help while his rivals receive none. A ghoul serves as the go-between for the lovers, perhaps even as the troubadour for the knight, funneling as much information to his masters as he does between the lovers. Things proceed so swimmingly that the lady accepts her suitor's favor, and the couple eventually engages in physical consummation. Now the true game begins — the affair may be revealed to the world at large to disgrace the husband as a cuckold, kept secret through blackmail, or the lady's out-of-wedlock child may propagate another line and not her husband's. A lady caught in *flagrante* too many times may find herself at the receiving end of Toreador blackmail, forced to funnel money or shelter to her tormentor in order to keep the affair secret. The knight may also find himself in trouble — he may be forced to lend his sword arm to a Toreador cause, sent into service as a spy, or even betrayed to local justice, which may do anything from executing him to sending him on Crusade. Depending on how desperately the lady or knight must keep the affair quiet, he or she can give up rather a lot to courtly blackmail. One such occurred about a year ago — the poor fool in question was a lady who was "found out" with her favorite knight, an act which led to her being with child. As the lady in question was married, and her husband away on business, it did make for a rather delicate situation. In return for shelter at her keep for several months, one of our clan caused the servants to believe that their lord, and her husband, had returned briefly to lay with his wife at the proper time. The child has since been born, a fine boy who will inherit the lands and title due him; the fullness of time will see how well our work has paid off.

Toreador troubadours pitted against mortal counterparts may humiliate their rivals without a second thought or groom successors for greatness. Likewise, they may casually "edit" lyrics of ballads on the grounds that the words of the tune "didn't scan properly" or some such, or embroider the truth as wildly as a noblewoman embroiders a tapestry. A suitor dismissed (whether mortal or Cainite) may be suitably inflamed to cause trouble for his rival or the lady who spurned him. And as gossip be the meat and milk of the court, how can one tell from whence the plots originated?



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ON FAVORS

To my 'Rosamund, fairest rose of Islington,

I recall, dearest, that I promised to instruct you in favors and their use, upon your introduction to the court. As you have indeed reached that point, I must hew to my word and instruct you.

A favor is a token of a lady's affection to the one who fights for her honor or who holds her heart. Tokens are made to be given away, but with caution, as spreading one's favor among too many may well result in too many demands for attention, and the possibility of jealousy among one's swains. For my own part, I have made them for my husband, my lover, my knight and my favorite child, and so far, all has proceeded well. I must admit, though, that my lover became quite irked to discover that his favor bore the same embroidered tree upon it as my child's.

Favors often require a bit of labor on one's part. If nothing else, their creation encourages you not to be too liberal with yourself. Examples include a piece of embroidery, scraps of the cloth used in your last gown, or the ribband that was last woven through your hair. For my own part, when my gowns are being made, I request that at least one extra sleeve be cut, for it be a thing of beauty when your knight rides out wearing your colors on his arm.

Like all other things, favors may be read like books, provided one has been taught to read them. Consider the following example: a lady gifts her knight with a favor created on purple cloth and decorated with a she-tiger, a dragon couchant, and an oak blasted. While this might seem innocuous enough, consider the symbols themselves — the she-tiger for vanity, the dragon couchant suggesting passivity and the oak blasted for sterility. What to him looks like a token of valor is in fact an insult on her part. Whether this insult were intended or not is another matter for you to learn....

— Isolda de Blaise, from her letter

On the whole, the Courts of Love have not been widely accepted among many of the clans. The Brujah, though they are intrigued by the ideals put forth, remain somewhat suspicious — something about the "games" played they find off-putting. Such naysayers are the youth of the clan; the elders are some of our favorite visitors. The Ventrue and Lasombra, by their very natures, find the courts to be ideal playgrounds and enjoy them. True, they have attempted to usurp the courts for their own many times, but they have consistently met with failure. To the credit of these would-be paragons of amour, they do know when to admit defeat when it comes to them.

I see the sky lightening to the east. Off to bed with you, and quickly! Those eyes will look a sight if they are red with wakefulness. Until the morrow, sweet one.

THE CAINITE CODE OF CHIVALRY

The Cainites who espouse chivalry often follow the *Via Equitum*, using it as the basis for their personal codes. The members of the newer orders have taken to modifying the *Via* according to their personal beliefs, popular writings and agreements of the members. By the time some Cainites are finished, the code's original intent is hardly recognizable. What follows is an approximation of the original.

- 1 — Thou shalt be honorable and fair-minded in thy dealings with others.
- 2 — Thou shalt stand firm and recoil not before thine enemy.
- 3 — Thou shalt respect those above thee.
- 4 — Thou shalt succor and aid the weak if they call upon thee.
- 5 — Thou shalt hold the honor of thy lady, thy lord and thy charges fast to thee. If this honor be lost, thou must avenge it.
- 6 — Thou shalt regard all men with equal merit.
- 7 — Thou shalt shelter the women of this world with thy sword arm, thy strength and thy honor.
- 8 — Thou shalt not break thy word.
- 9 — Thou shalt not abuse the trust and charge placed in thee.
- 10 — Thou shalt treat thy opponent with respect due a peer.

Of course, the code has been reinterpreted many times to foster a particular group's views and wishes. For instance, Item Eight has been interpreted with the corollary "...to thy fellow Cainites," or only to nobility; what one does with regard to mortals, peasants or animals is another matter. Likewise, Item Six has been rewritten with "men" indicating only Christian Cainite males of noble birth, all Christian noblemen (Cainite or mortal), every born male, or every "person" (which could exclude Moslems, Gangrel, Malkavians, peasants and whoever else doesn't fit the knight's conception of affairs). The current claim is that the code is but a borrowing from something much older. The attributed author, one Aloyius D'Etienne, has hedged about his inspiration, but in one of his less guarded moments mentioned a set of fragile scrolls that held a code written in a curious hand, the gist of which he found to his liking.

For those who uphold the code in its highest form, their clanmates' casual rearrangement of the "truth" of the code is seen as a violation of everything that chivalry is meant to represent, namely a system of dealing with one's peers, superiors, foes and underlings with honor and efficiency. Those who interpret the code too liberally may find themselves being hunted by their fellow Cainites for their crimes and forced to "quest" to cleanse their stained honor. These code-breakers often do not return, as they are sent on tasks that are often designed to kill the quester — searches for holy relics or pilgrimages are common. Those who survive their tests and return to Cainite life are rarely wholly accepted back; often their experiences change and harden them, sometimes driving them down another *Via*, sometimes sending them into the arms of Golconda.

IN THE HALL OF DON HECTOR GONZAGA

Enter, childe, and do not hang about the door like a starving dog. You are a Toreador, after all; your sire would not be pleased to see such mopey from you.

So, you came to learn of the orders, then. Do you seek entrance to their ranks? Hmmp, they do not take those as new to the blood as yourself — they wait to see if you will trip over your sword-belt first before they consider you. Better to let you skewer yourself playing at knight in the courtyard than on the battlefield. Still, I know something of your sire, and know that it was he who sent you. Sit there, and listen, then, for I dislike repeating myself.

The knightly orders of Cainites are among the first to wholeheartedly embrace chivalry as an ideal and a belief system. Some of our scholars speculate that the Toreador of these orders were also the creators of the *Via Equitum*, and there's little to contradict the speculation. Where the orders themselves came from is another matter. I've heard every bird-brained theory imaginable, so I am uninterested in further speculation on the matter. The orders themselves typically claim divine ordinance or inspiration from the Hospitallers and Templars, among whose numbers you will find a few of our own.

Some Cainites find the very idea of Cainite knightly orders to be foolish or misguided. Others are intrigued at the notion of a familiar kine organization modified to meet our particular needs. For now, I will speak only of those which

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have been founded by and are ruled by Toreador. Members of other clans may petition for entrance, or, if they show the necessary stomach for it, they may be invited to join, but outsiders are afforded few mistakes. In the case of the Chanticleerans, the outsider's first error is usually his last.

The White Company — Modeling themselves after such flowers of knighthood as Galahad and Parsifal, these Cainites hold themselves to strict vows of honor, obedience to God and celibacy (wherein they refuse to drink from women for pleasure or have intimate relations of any kind with Cainite women). They select their members only after observing them in the field and receiving testimonials as to character and honor. These Cainites deal with the honorless and oathbreakers swiftly. Most identify themselves with a white sash or unmarked white tabard.

The Fellowship of Our Lady — This band of knights is small, numbering at most nine, but they are remarkable for their devotion to their ideals of Marianism and the protection of women. This unusual choice is explained by their leader, one William Grey, who claims to have been blessed with a vision of the Virgin when he was on Crusade. According to him, she charged him with his mission to protect and assist women, a mission he believes will cleanse him of his vampiric stain. The fellowship does not drink from women except under direst circumstances, and believes that each woman should be treated as the sister of the Queen of Heaven. William's recent quarrel with a Ventruer prince of Avignon may have undone them, however; the Fellowship's knights are now under suspicion of heresy, and Marianism in general has become highly suspect in the mortal world. Most carry white lilies, the sign of the Virgin, somewhere on their personal devices or their tack.

The Order of Chanticleer — The order's name refers to a wily rooster of peasant folk tales. The order is a more serious matter than children's tales, however, using the rooster's name to identify their order as hunters of demons (specifically the Baali). Chanticleerans carry the sign of a rising sun on their shields to symbolize the cleansing light of morning, or wear a rooster's plume in their helmets. Many attempt to push their endurance to stay awake to greet the dawn, retreating only upon the sun's full entrance. The knights' zeal, xenophobia and overbearing piety have won them few allies, leaving those who call on them with the dubious task of deciding whether the illness or the cure is less bearable. The order's fight against the Baali has brought them into direct conflict with the Toreador's most decadent elders who lair in the South, pinioning the Chanticleerans between two tenets of the Code. Until a decision is made, they hover in uncertainty, unable to make a move in either direction, and exposing themselves to the carefully attentive allies of the Baali.

THE LIBRARY OF MALTA

One might associate forbidding tomes of secret lore with the Tremere and Cappadocians, but most would never consider the Toreador to be repositories of such. While the Tremere pore over their grimoires of hermetic lore and the Cappadocians probe the mysteries of death, the Toreador keep the old libraries of Egypt, Greece and Rome alive.

As the classical world collapsed under the weight of the onslaught of barbarians hordes and the excesses of unbalanced emperors, many Cainites rushed to keep all extant learning from collapsing into the grave with it, often hoarding their own personal collections. In tombs, cellars, musty crawlspaces and caves, the learning of centuries past is collected in scrolls, clay tablets, fragments of stone and papyrus and books. For now, the Cainites are content to hide their treasures away, waiting for something to signal that they may return these works to the world at large.

The greatest of these secret libraries is the collection housed in the dry cool air of a cave on Malta, tended there by a Toreador known only as Simon. Few know if he has a surname, although he has signed some letters as "ben-Jacob," a reference to the mortal past he refuses to speak of. Some clues in Simon's speech and manner have led to speculation that he was Embraced in the Middle East during the Roman occupation, perhaps as early as the time of Christ, and had been well-educated for his time.

Simon receives few visitors, and the mortal knightly order that headquarters on Malta serves to keep the idly curious away. Those who do venture to the house Simon keeps often come on business; unexpected guests are not welcome unless they can convince him of the urgency of their business. If a traveler visits in search of a particular text, he is asked to wait while Simon fetches it from the cave. Only a privileged handful have ever been permitted to follow him down the winding trail that leads through the thickets and into the multi-tiered cavern where the wisdom of the ages rests.

The cavern itself consists of numerous pocketlike chambers connected by a single tunnel, all surrounding a main gallery. On some walls, the remnants of old paintings may be seen by the flickering light of lamps — human handprints and animistic creatures painted in faded indigo and carnelian. In the main gallery is an enormous stone slab, scored with knife-strikes and marks, and often used as a reading table. Directly above the appropriated altar are more paintings, these showing spirals and starlike figures. Simon claims the gallery and chambers are unchanged from the evening he claimed them.

The first chamber houses mostly minor Greek and Roman works, largely histories and records, with a few old orations and dry poetry thrown in for good measure. The second chamber bears strange inscriptions of words written in charcoal and more indigo paints; some claim that a number of the words are written in Enochian, the tongue of the First and Second Cities. Poetry, drama and diaries spanning centuries of Greek and Roman life fill this chamber. Another holds Arabic writings of all sorts, from poetry and religion to royal decrees. The fourth, somewhat lower in level, holds "barbarian" works, including a set of wooden sticks inscribed with Druidic glyphs; a leering human face adorned with animallike ears and teeth watches visitors here. Below the fourth, in a tiny room, the doorpost of which is inscribed with Hebrew letters, Simon keeps a prized collection of Hebrew and Aramaic works. A sixth chamber, painted in carnelian warding symbols and with a Seal of Solomon upon the floor, holds the darker treasures of Simon's collection — occult lore, demonology texts, erotica, and manuals of warfare and torture.

One chamber directly off the gallery remains a mystery even to Simon himself. Blocked off by a single massive stone inscribed with the symbol of a cedar tree, the chamber has been sealed since Simon took possession of the place. He has never been behind the stone, and has refused all offers to have the place excavated. If it is a burial chamber, no irate spirits have made their displeasure known. Simon has sensed a presence now and again while near the stone, but has no other idea what might lurk within the chamber. For now, the room is allowed to keep its secrets.

The scholar is said to take small collecting excursions away from Malta to Salerno, Bologna, Palermo and Naples, where he talks of books with his mortal "peers" and with his Cainite kin of graver matters. He does not answer summons to court, and wise Toreador do not attempt such. He has grown to great influence by virtue of his age and his work, and as such has earned his right to privacy. Indeed, Simon has a number of powerful patrons and supporters who prefer that his collection remain undisturbed, but the scholar himself is quite capable of defending his privacy and his possessions. Once, a loutish Ventrue thought to teach the "doddering elder" a lesson and tore a prized Hebrew parchment to shreds before Simon's eyes. What happened next has remained a secret between the Ventrue and Simon, but the mention of Simon's name causes the Ventrue to cringe.

The new universities have become Simon's most recent "pet project." Supplied with copies of a number of his works, several teachers shape young mortal minds on a study course directed specifically by Simon through the texts "found" in his library. He seems to take great delight in choosing what will and will not be taught, as if he is enjoying a perverse revenge or advancing an agenda known only to him. Other elders who are likewise taking interest in the universities rarely interfere with Simon's whims, either out of friendship or a healthy respect for him.



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RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

ASSAMITES

...My teacher had been largely silent on my progress, except to criticize me. I had begun to believe that I was indeed the fool that Jacques called me for this quest to Andalusia. I had been at the forge for the better part of the evening, striving to master the stroke that Master Ibrahim has said is the basis for all I will learn. The master entered, and did inspect my work, and spoke but little of it, merely pointing out where I had pulled too short or had struck too hard. I was as much angered with myself as with he, and when he had left, I was much downcast. Then, there came a visitor to the forge, another of the Assassin clan by his swarthy skin, and he seemed surprised by my appearance. We exchanged talk, and he inspected my work as well, speaking words of praise, the first I had heard in months. I had not thought they would be such balm to my soul. Then he said how rare it was that Master Ibrahim tolerated the presence of an infidel — I must possess skill indeed if he took such pains with me....

— Denis D'Orleans, from his personal recollections

Many Toreador have been drawn to the Holy Land since before Joshua first marshaled his troops with trumpets, attracted by the divinely inspired architecture and art contained within. As one visitor remarked, "It seems that everything they do becomes art in some way, whether it be the way they make war, forge a sword, or paint tiles in a mosque." The residents of the Levant see these foreigners with justifiable suspicion, but the desire to share knowledge often overcomes distrust. In the end, many artisans (and Artisans) are pleased to have such willing pupils as the western Toreador are apt to be. During the era of the Abassid Caliphates, the exchange program between western Toreador and eastern Assamites thrived, and the very finest Toreador crafters can still boast of some time of study in the Holy Land. In Europe, Moorish outposts in Spain see the occasional Artisan visitor, depending of course on the current state of relations between the Lasombra and Toreador.

Assamites and Toreador would have a great deal more to talk about, if both sides could be persuaded to see the other without the blinders inflicted by their progenitors. Toreador love of philosophy would find a fitting match among those Assamites who debate the issues of the Q'uran as well as the older theories of the Greeks, while Assamite assassins could well use the webs of contacts and favors that the Toreador spin to their advantage.

LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 2

BRUJAH

Hear them now, how they cry at the gates!

My brothers in arms, take up your spears

And know that this is the last of all nights.

Already I hear Tamar, the Rose of the White Wall,

wailing for her lost one,

The Scholar Relan, first to fall, her name upon his lips.

The war-beasts, and the creatures they ride, batter the gates again!

Let us all die together then, if they will not let us live!

—Curran o'Liam, Clan Brujah, from the epic "Dirge of Carthage"

Memories of Carthage and Dacia still ring loud for many of the elder Toreador and the childer they raised to the tradition of humanism. The elders of the clans continue to debate philosophy and history when they meet, and elder Brujah are frequent visitors to Toreador courts. Some of the oldest among both clans maintain friendships dating back to the founding of Carthage, or even earlier. Unwise is the neonate who probes too deeply into the roots of such alliances, though.

Many of the younger Brujah who have become enamored of chivalry find themselves among Toreador, occasionally to the Zealots' disgruntlement. The Toreador insistence on manners and decorum can nettle even the most reasonable scholar-soldier, and many's the Brujah currently on quest as punishment for losing his temper in front of the Queen of Love. Likewise, the Toreador emphasis on certain standards of conduct for battle is even more of a thorn in the Brujah's collective side. Having grown used to a certain measure of egalitarianism from their clan, young Brujah who were not of "noble birth" often receive a rude shock when confronted with the elitism of the Toreador.

CAPPADOCIANS

...I had thought I would but briefly enter to make a quick study of the decaying corpse for my latest rendition of 'Death and the Maiden.' After all, the air in such places is noisome and unhealthy, even for those like ourselves who need not taste it. I was just turning away from the body I had chosen for my examination when it sat up and spoke to me, inquiring as to my purpose. Once I had recovered my ghastly shock, the cadaver assured me that it was of the same great family as I, and proceeded to demonstrate something of its powers by resuming a form more familiar, which was that of a young man just beyond the bloom of youth, with skin as cold and pale as that of one advanced in years within the Embrace. We proceeded to discourse on the nature of death, and such was his skill at debate that I nigh forgot the morning's approach. He suggested that I spend the day within the confines of the crypt, which I did, having little other choice. When I rose next, he had gone, but I returned to find a strange fire suffusing my thoughts, 'Death and the Maiden' having become less a picture and more a window to my strange encounter....

—Sebastien of Tours, excerpt from his memoirs

When they can be dragged away from their books, Cappadocians can make remarkable partners for discourse on mortality and temporality. Most Toreador shudder at the thought of death and the afterlife; to a clan obsessed with beauty, the Cappadocians are uncomfortable reminders of all life's fragility. Rare is the Toreador who can stand a Graverobber's company for long, though. Some Epicureans are repulsed by their corpse-like appearances, and refuse to stay long in the same room with them. However, Cappadocian insights into death provide the more morbid members of the clan with much food for thought. Recently a noted Toreador stonecutter began to cultivate interest in the Cappadocians, for reasons few wish to speculate on. In truth, he has been commissioned to carve gargoyles, and has gone to the Clan of Death, hoping that they might have something to tell him about the inhabitants of Hell. So far, his meetings have been quite informative....

GANGREL

I know them well, brothers and brother-beasts,

Know them by their elf-locks and the spiral

They have painted in blue upon their breasts.

They make songs in their throats like the wolf-songs

That salute the moon when she shows her face.

When they sing their battle-songs — cry aloud, mortals,

And hide your eyes in fear of those that flash by,

Killers of the black Formorian host

Slayers of Rome's shining ten thousand

Whose war-cries are better than a lover's sighs!

—Padraic, "Song of Brendan"

When discussing Gangrel, most Toreador tend use words like "noble," "remarkable," "savage" — words that could be used with equal accuracy to describe animals in the forest. As far as the bulk of Toreador are concerned, there's not much difference. The only places where the Artisans and Animals have reached any sort of understanding is the British Isles. In Ireland, it might even be said that the clans have something of an alliance, though neither would be likely to call it friendship if asked. In England, relations are less "passionate," but the groups at least accept each other as part of the landscape. In other portions of Europe, Gangrel are disdained, if not openly spurned, by the Toreador. Some unfortunate enough to be captured are treated quite literally as animals by Toreador who think themselves droll; the unluckiest are occasionally "kept" at court, as if in a menagerie, although the "keeper" usually keeps such a fact a tight secret — Gangrel who slip their chains are terrifying sights to behold. In short, unless a Gangrel can demonstrate he's not simply another bearskin-clad, muscle-bound savage, then he won't get particularly far with any Artisan.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

...I would sooner hurl myself bodily into the holy fire of our Lord's wrath before following a Serpent to the gates that St.

Peter himself mans. What is truly frightening is that the Serpents' most devoted followers give themselves unto corruption of their own accord, and with all willingness and joy. Truly, the greatest corruption occurs when the follower is unaware that he is so marred....

—Dieter Geisfleisch, from a speech given at the court of Avignon

In the south where decadence rules, the Setites have gained a frightful foothold among the jaded elders. They encourage the excess that has become standard in secret Elysiums, and often supply drugged vitae for these dens of iniquity. Likewise, they encourage traffic in the vice trades — slavery, drugs, prostitution. A member of the White Company, Dieter Geisfleisch, claims to have found evidence that the Setites (and certain of their Toreador cohorts) are responsible for the disappearances of women and children traveling on pilgrimage through the southern regions to the Holy Land. Younger Toreador believe quite firmly that the Serpents are responsible for the elders' descent, and shun them for the devils they are.

LASOMBRA

...In conclusion, Your Excellency, I believe that Lady Isouda will make a fine addition to our circle of friends. A few months without our attendance at the courts, or responses to gambits proffered, and we enjoy the sight of that lovely lady crawling back to us.

—Paulo de Castille, Lasombra, from an intercepted letter to Don Simon Isidore

... As for the ridiculous notion that I could be brought to my knees by the loss of you and your kind from my court, might I remind Your Lordship that your current quest for the Court of Love is yet unfinished, and that you may not return until it is complete — no amount of judicious prestation, dealmaking or outright begging will grant you entrance until then. But, I beg you, do continue your blustering if you wish. Your letters bring us a great deal of amusement.

—Isouda de Blaise, from her reply to the above letter

Most Cainites believe the Ventrue and Toreador to be the ultimate sparring partners, warring with each other over matters of state and Church for greater control. After all, are there few pairs better matched than the stately Patricians and the beautiful Artisans? Propose the idea to a Ventrue, and he will agree. Propose the idea to a Toreador, and she will laugh.

In private, Toreador believe their true counterparts are the predatory and elegant Magisters. It is the Lasombra who are considered the pinnacle of political maneuvering, and the Toreador seek the pinnacle in all things. By this logic, one's opponents, therefore, should be chosen from the pinnacle of achievement as well. Oh, the Ventrue still have their place (someone has to fund those works of art and maintain the courts), but their intrigues are seen, in the end, to be predictable. Ventrue are fine for the childer to cut their political teeth

on, but the Lasombra are a challenge; enemies who will last as long as their opponents, and foes with as much style and grace as their counterparts.

MALKAVIANS

Most astonishing of all was the Malkavian who was kept chained to the throne as a prophet or diviner of some sort. He practiced augury to work his second sight, using the entrails of living kine — the very old, the very young, women, hale men, whatever was brought to him. During the time I spent as your guest, I became inured to a great many disturbing sights. However, voivode, I think that even you would be moved by the suffering that these kine endured for the sake of a Madman's attempt to call upon prophecy.

—Lida Mateuz, from a letter to the voivode Vlad Ionescu

Although the Malkavians are viewed as macabre, pitiable lunatics by the majority of the Toreador, the Toreador of the south have a great deal of use for them as prophets and visionaries. Tales of human-based augury, prophesy by observing spattered blood and using mortals as the "planchette" of certain forms of divination are but a few of the more scurrilous rumors of the behaviors ascribed to the Madmen — and more than a few of those tales are true. Needless to say, such poor deportment has not endeared the Malkavians to their "more civilized" brethren; not only is their scrying inefficiently cruel, it lacks style.

The Toreador who does discover a reasonably lucid Malkavian makes what use she may of the resource. The Madmen are considered to be "sleeper" allies by most, and a sudden rush of Malkavian support to the Artisans' side has been enough to turn the tide of politics in more than one court. The Malkavian who can make himself understood and interpret the madness of his brothers often finds himself tolerated, but rarely beloved. From where the Toreador sit, however, this is sufficient.

In return for whatever help the Malkavians provide, Toreador within the Church have worked to keep inter-clan relations friendly by ensuring that certain monasteries under their auspices care for the insane — herding lunatics where the Malkavians can access them easily.

NOSFERATU

I would give a great deal to be rid of the Leper Ximenes. He grants me no peace, even when I am at Mass. Today he fawned upon me when I came from the church, wailing for all to hear that he was but a poor beggar craving sustenance, when in fact he wished only to embarrass me before the bishop. That he has also besmirched with offal my prize coat with the Virgin broidered upon it in silver thread has given me cause to hate him. Surely there is some task I could set him to from which he would not return....

—Vassily of Kiev, from his personal writings

The average Artisan would rather die than be seen in the company of these ugly and disgusting creatures. The Nosferatu's constant railings about the first being last and whatnot, mixed

with a healthy dose of sundry other pseudo-Biblical rants, make for tiresome company. Even the Toreador chivalric orders find their patience continually tested by the excesses of the Nosferatu. To those seeking information, Nosferatu are invaluable, but the Lepers' attempts to outshine the Toreador in piety does not win them friends. The Nosferatu may have excellent sources of information, but *caveat emptor* is the Artisans' rule of thumb when buying such information; verifying the secrets the Nosferatu sell oftentimes requires going where the Nosferatu go, which few Toreador are willing to do.

There's little worse for a Toreador than getting tricked by a Nosferatu using Obfuscate on his appearance, a trick at which a number of the Lepers are becoming skilled. A Nosferatu who plays such a jape may win the approbation of his fellows, but also earns the eternal enmity of the butt of his joke.

RAVNOS

In short, my lord, I demand recompense for the loss of both my purse and my dignity, thanks to this ruffian who dared accost me outside my very haven. If you have not the strength to deal with the criminal elements of our society — indeed, it would seem that you tolerate them — then perhaps it were meet that the Cainites of this city find one who can.

— Lord Giacomo del Amici, letter to the Duc d'Aquitaine Pierre Capet

If a Toreador knows a Ravnos as anything besides a thief and trash, he keeps it a tight secret or suffers a serious loss of status. The Gypsies are considered fascinating and amusing in the way that a Cathayan puzzle box might be, but most Artisans would never approach or associate with Ravnos, as they are considered "unfit company." Those who dare the wrath and disapproval of their elders find exciting times with the Ravnos, and return as consummate performers, but forever after those venturesome Toreador will be seen as untrustworthy, and will find themselves the first to be suspected of any crime. Toreador who have been Ravnos marks likewise do their best to keep the knowledge a secret, although there's always going to be some overly fastidious lord who demands that the prince "do something" about the ruffians who stole his beggar purse.

TREMERE

It is not so much that we approve of their deeds, but that we have certain ideas about what needs our attendance and what does not. The Tremere situation is one of those things that does not need attention at this time, that is all. This does not mean that I was not annoyed by the antics of that idiot wizard and his pet witch when they invaded court improperly dressed and displaying an appalling lack of manners. I think that the humiliation they suffered will be enough to silence them for at least the next three months, while I choose an appropriate long-term punishment for them.

— Nicolette Foudet, speaking to clanmate Isabeau Monstrelet

For most Toreador, the fact that the Tremere strode in demanding their place among the clans is more of an outrage than Saulot's death. A few elders have grown uneasy about the ease with which Tremere accomplished Saulot's subsumption, and fear that the Tremere will soon be searching for other prizes. The Toreador's slowness to spring into the fray to protect the Salubri has a few Tremere believing they might have allies among the Artisans, but the Usurpers' recent, clumsy attempts at bribery have resulted in their being laughed out of many a court.

TZIMISCE

My dear, I could not begin to tell you of the wonders that I have seen here. Shall I speak of the fires and dances of Kupala's Night? Shall I speak of my host himself, with a face that the Powers and Thrones would mistake for one of their own? Shall I speak of the labyrinth below the keep, wherein I have seen things that not even nightmares can craft? Shall I speak of my lessons and the marvelous gifts my host has awakened in me? Or shall I tell you that when I return, your reign as court beauty will be ended when I have finished with you?

— Isabella de Aragon, from a letter to an unknown rival

Some Toreador strike up strange friendships with the Tzimisce after becoming enchanted with a beautiful fleshcrafted face. Occasionally, the Tzimisce have worked Vicissitude on particularly persuasive Toreadors, granting them the visages of angels (although what the price is for such few like to speak of). As for those Toreador who like to explore the fine lines between pain and pleasure, they prefer to have Tzimisce as their companions. In the south, Tzimisce find themselves much in demand among the dissolute who enjoy pain, whether as spectacle or experience. Younger and less experimental Toreador usually give the Fiends a wide berth, treating them as mad tyrants to be humored but avoided whenever possible.

VENTRUE

...And therefore, my most gracious lord, it is with great sadness that I must decline your invitation to your Christmas court. Lady Franziska, of your clan I believe, sent me a fine offer to attend her at her Christmas court and to oversee certain of the festivities. The choice was quite clear, particularly after you had announced that Edward Blackwater would be selecting the entertainments. Edward, while no doubt a Ventrue of sterling character, lamentably lacks something of your sense of taste. I feared that you would be embarrassed by his efforts, especially before your friends, and as such sought to spare you that embarrassment. I submit to you once again my humblest apologies that I will miss your celebration.

— Corbett Duncan, from a letter to Prince Gerholm

Most Toreador, given their choice on a Sabbath evening, would much rather be ruled by Ventrue princes. Ventrue usually give the Toreador enough space to let them do as they will, but also keep them close to the seat

of power as social advisors and “bringers of beauty” to the courts. Patricians frequently defer to the Artisans with regard to matters of aesthetics, allowing the Toreador to make most of the decisions (so long as the buyer's ultimate wishes are kept in mind). The two clans do find much to keep them interested in one another, but in the end, Toreador find the Ventrue too predictable. However, escalating tensions from one too many clashes between Church and state are resulting in frayed relations between the clans; the German states in particular are fomenting regrettable disagreements.

BAALI

With regard to your last letter, my dear Chretien, your time among the Chanticleerans has quite ruined you. They crow at the slightest provocation, a warning which is usually in vain. You see demons in every corner, and startle like an old woman encountering a mouse in her grain barrel. For the last time, your sources are incorrect. There are no Baali in Rome.

— Lucius Gaius Valerius, from a letter to Chretien de Campienne

It is sad to say, but the worst excesses of the Toreador are Baali-inspired. That's inspired, not performed. In the fine old tradition of demonic temptation, the Baali prefer to give their victims enough rope with which to hang themselves, and then let those under their sway put the final flourishes on some of the knots. Most Toreador simply shudder at the thought of these would-be demonaics, and hope they never meet up with Baali. Those Artisans who wish to study the arts of pain or experiment with some less “respectable” pastimes do seek out Baali, but even they do so with reservation. Only the truly mad or fallen call the Infernalists friends or allies, but the mad and fallen have, alas, never been in short supply. The Chanticleerans make it their personal mission to seek out and destroy Baali; unfortunately the knowledge of certain clanmates' fallings has pinioned them into inaction, and a number have begun to look the other way in an effort to avoid further conflict.

THE BLOODLINES

I have a most remarkable thing to relate, my friend. You have heard by now that I have spent time among the Gravediggers with regard to certain studies of the menhirs on my northern estates. Upon my last visit to my friend Salazaar's scriptorium, I encountered a woman, Cainite certainly, but by my blood I could not determine whence her lineage was derived. She was armed like a man, bore considerable skill at arms, and demonstrated gifts like I had never seen in another of the blood. These tricks she called the blessing of the Dark Mother. My host called this wonderful creature a Lamia....

— Richard Caxton, from a letter to Thane de Charnay

Assuming that the Toreador in question has heard of the reclusive bloodlines, he or she usually holds the opinion, “Well, I've never met them, but they have a certain sort of reputation, and I generally don't associate with such people.” The average Toreador, unless she has a well-traveled companion or has made journeys strange for one of her clan, often has not met a member of one of the bloodlines, and is not likely to seek one out.

SALUBRI

And so, it is to end like this between us — for my refusal to perpetuate an aging Cainite's insulted vanity, you would disown me from clan and country. I have learned much in my time among these people — much of honesty, of skill at arms, of devotion both to holy cause and my liege. That you would give approval to the deeds of a cabal of half-mortal wizards with delusions of grandeur shames you far more than you seek to shame me. If you prize Aucassin's favor and his withered touch more than your friendships or salvation, then perhaps it is better that we part company. I would not seek to spend another night in the company of a lapdog.

— Rafael (formerly Amadeo di Tuscano), from a letter to his sire

One would think that the Toreador would have at least some interest in assisting their Salubri kin, as the Code of Honor certainly calls for such action to be taken. For some reason, though, there has been only an ominous silence from the Artisans and their knights. Current gossip passed from “untrustworthy” sources (largely Nosferatu and Ravnos) has suggested that the knights of Toreador close their ears to the cries of their brethren due to a quarrel between Samiel and a Toreador known only as Aucassin. Aucassin had sought out Samiel to join his band of warriors, but Samiel, unimpressed with the young Cainite's devotion or skill at arms, refused him. Insulted, Aucassin swore revenge against Samiel's kin, and the gossips murmur that an ancient Aucassin takes his revenge by demanding that every one of the Toreador knights have nothing to do with the Salubri.

LUPINES

Werewolves are considered beasts even lower than Gangrel — after all, the Gangrel are at least Cainites. Artisans rarely encounter Lupines, as the Cainites prefer the safety of town and castle, while the Lupines keep to the wilds. On the other hand, some of the talk filtering out from the south of Europe speaks of Lupines being Dominated into performing like dogs or used in perverse hunting games. The Toreador publicly dismiss these tales for now, but call for the local silversmith when the story's audience has retired for the night.

WRAITHS

While most Toreador don't believe in ghosts, they do fear and hate them. It is one thing to get delicious chills from hearing a story about a harp inhabited by the spirit of a murdered girl, quite another to actually encounter that harp and hear its strings whisper your name. Toreador who have attracted ghosts are often shunned by their brethren as bad luck, and it rarely takes long for the news of such an affliction to spread. A haunting in a Toreador castle brings about some very interesting (and often amusing) efforts to keep guests and outsiders from learning the truth. Toreador fear wraiths as a sign of things to come in the afterworld, and despise wraiths for "bringing the subject up."

MAGES

Very few Toreador understand magic beyond simple parlor tricks or illusions. After all, magic is what those untrustworthy Tremere do, isn't it? The differences among hedge magic, parlor tricks and True Magick are lost on the Artisans; as far as they're concerned magic is magic, and a magic-worker is a magic-worker. Toreador are careful not to antagonize mages, but won't go out of their way for them, or even seek them out except in the most dire of straits.

FAE

In Ireland, England and the other places where the fae may still be found, curious friendships spring up between the Toreador and faeries. Many a Toreador falls into madness or hopeless longing after glimpsing a sidhe's face; one such Cainite burned out his eyes after gazing on a sidhe woman, saying that he would never again see such beauty. Fae are often drawn to the creative efforts of the Cainites and their mortal protégés, while the Cainites see the fae as inspiration tantamount to a visit from an angel (or demon).

In Ireland, Cainites have discovered a convenient legend with which to cover their tracks — that of the leanhaun sidhe. Known as the muse of poets, this beautiful (and legendary) fae woman is also a blood-drinker, slowly killing her pet artists even as they create rapturous works as a result of her attentions. A few Toreador have used the legend of the leanhaun sidhe as a way of explaining away their trail of victims, but at great risk to themselves; the sidhe speak of a noble house that goes by the same name, and which has taken grave insult at the Cainites' actions. More recently, a young Toreador monk of the Celtic Church tied himself to a cross to greet the sun after finishing a masterfully illuminated Gospel of St. Matthew. While no definite connection has been made between his death and this legend, his companions speak fearfully of the flame-haired beauty who was seen in his company during those final nights....

BOONS AND FORFEITS: NEW TRAITS

DIVERSITY IN THE RANKS

Artistry is in the mind of the artist, and the best art is found in enjoying one's existence — or so say the Artisans. Representational work has its place, of course, but who is to say whether the Ascetic or the Caligulan has the truer bead drawn on "true" art.

THRILL-SEEKER

Many Toreador become sensation-seekers, not necessarily looking for "excitement" *per se*, but just some way to break out of the rut their eternal existences provide. Such Cainites are looked on with scorn by their brethren, particularly since many engage in "improper" behavior: dabbling with sorcery and hedge magic, traveling with bards and minstrels in disguise, taking vows with religious orders, consorting with heretics, enlisting with mercenary companies or running with the other supernaturals. If a Thrill-seeker keeps to himself, that's one thing. If he's out of control and a disgrace to the clan, that's another matter entirely. Peer pressure, often one of the surest ways to keep wayward members in line, means very little to this crowd, and elders are likely to take extreme measures to ensure that potential embarrassments are dealt with efficiently.

ASCETIC

These Toreador are interested in the beauty found in the serenity of their minds' surroundings. Often they are disenchanted with the dissolution found in the Church or among their own kind. Rather than make a futile attempt at reformation, such disappointed idealists retreat from the world to live in a cave, cell or some other isolated locale. Such a course of action is not taken lightly, if for no other reason than the logistics of feeding. Assorted rumors claim that Ascetic Cainites train their bodies to accept only animal blood, or even to go without feeding for several days at a time. Many Toreador (and not a few other Cainites) believe that the sort of rigorous training that the Ascetics supposedly inflict on themselves is one of the first steps on the path to Golconda; Salubri often recommend it for those who live in a highly secular society (such as the Toreador). Ascetics do not often retreat entirely from the call of their blood, though; a number practice mysticism, taking instruction from Sufis and hermits and producing remarkable writings and poetry on the relations of God and Man. This theological diversion is perhaps the most important reason the majority of Toreador Ascetics do not go insane from boredom in isolation.

PATRON

Patrons enjoy creating people, shaping them and helping them to become their very best — so that in doing so, they become a credit to their patrons. For these self-appointed patricians, their art is the shaping of a new personality from old clay. They take their charges completely under their wings, see to their education, outfit them, and otherwise transform them. How a Patron spots her diamond in the rough varies, but she will put forth her best efforts to ensure a fine finished product, and the subject had better put forth the same. Training methods also vary, and some call upon startling cruelty to make certain the charge learns her lessons. Patrons often call bills due at some later point in time, expecting recompense from their former “projects” for services rendered. Wise beneficiaries comply; fools resist and suffer the slings and arrows of an outraged Cainite’s wrath. A Patron who feels she has been taken for granted or wronged is a frightening sight, for she will not stop until she has taken back her pound of flesh, preferably from her ungrateful protegee’s heart.

HUMANIST

Humanists believe in mortals — specifically, in their ability to commit great good or great evil, and in their creativity and their worth. These Cainites do not see humans as perfect (far from it), but they do believe that mortals have gifts to give and Cainites are wrong simply to shove them aside. Humanists struggle to keep their connections to their own humanity alive, which grants them some empathy with mortal struggles and fears. Their art is frequently some of the most beautiful of all that the Toreador create, for it touches the hearts of its viewers and reminds them, however fleetingly, of what they have lost. The mortals Humanists choose to interact with often come away less “damaged” than they might in dealings with some other Cainites. Humanists frequently have their fingers well-placed on the pulse of the mortal community, and are some of the best-informed Cainites with regards to incipient changes among the living.

CALIGULAN

These Toreador are labeled such by their brethren in response to what more staid Toreador perceive as horror and shame perpetrated on the clan. Cainites dubbed Caligulans believe not only that vampires are monsters who ought to revel in their monstrosity, but also that “the needs of the blood” must be satisfied without remorse or pity. They study forbidden arts of torture and experiment with living subjects, adjusting their works until the pitch of the victim’s scream reaches a pleasing note. Such Cainites also bathe in blood (in Roman bath houses when they can find them) in an effort to keep the bloom of mortality, and often flaunt their vampiric nature before any and all mortals they meet. They use the list of the Seven Deadly Sins as a checklist of an evening’s entertainments, and are prone to murmuring, “Amusing...”, “I had not thought of that...” or “Imitator...” during tales of cruelty.

EPICUREAN

The image of the Epicurean is what most readily comes to mind when one imagines a “typical” Toreador: the fops, the temperamental artisans, the snobbish *padrones* — they are all Epicurean to one extent or another. Some are actively snobbish, others take advantage of luxury after living so long without it, and the rest simply believe this sort of demeanor to be their due as Toreador. It is rare to find an Epicurean looking sloppy or untidy, acting without manners (that is, courtly manners — politeness is another thing), or drinking from slovenly vessels. Many Toreador begin as Epicureans and find other, less stereotypical niches as time passes.

NEW DISCIPLINE USES

ARTIST’S INTENT (LEVEL 3 AUSPEX)

By this gift, a Toreador may penetrate the “soul” of the inanimate artwork she is examining. Through such examination, she may better interpret the work, perhaps even gleaning the artist’s state of mind, the relation between artist and work, and the stages of the creative process itself. Much of this reveals itself through a series of progressively paler images as she looks further back into the work’s past. Some Toreador use this to critique a piece, while others utilize the ability to monitor their patronages for unspoken rebellion or sadness, or get the “real” story behind the letter proposing an alliance.

So far, this Discipline has proven unusable on “living” work, such as a play in performance, songs or pieces of music being played, or a story being told. Speculation on the reasons for this suggests that such work depends on and conveys, however unconsciously, the performer’s intent, whereas an inanimate piece is unlikely to be “tainted” by such.

System: The player rolls Perception + Auspex (difficulty 7) for each work she wishes to examine. The number of successes determines how much she perceives of the work. The difficulty rises if she attempts to “read” a piece with multiple artists or a long creation span. Items such as cathedrals, castles and the like will leave the Toreador a gibbering vegetable from informational overload.

1 success — General feelings, no historical context (“The artist was melancholy while creating this.”)

2 successes — More specific, a vague sense of history (“He was melancholy when she started this, but I believe he grew happier as the work progressed. Perhaps he grew to like his subject, or something changed in his life.”)

3 successes — Details emerge, along with a fuzzy historical outline (“He didn’t like the subject at first, and he hated the work because of it, but after a while, he and the subject got along better, and the work went better.”)

4 successes — You have a definite idea about the artist’s emotional state, and a fairly reasonable idea of the timeline of the work’s creation.

5 successes — You can see the work in stages, and know how the artist was feeling every step of the way.

MELUSINE'S SONG (LEVEL 6 PRESENCE)

Named for the legendary (and supposedly fae) progenitor of the Anjou and Lusignan houses, this power grants a Toreador the ability to sway another through song. If the Artisan can phrase her requests in song form, those words take on the power of nigh-irresistible commands.

System: Initiating this power costs two points of blood and a point of Willpower, at which point the player must write down for the Storyteller both the suggestion she wishes to weave into her song and the nature of the song itself. All those in earshot must immediately roll Willpower (difficulty 8) or submit to the request without realizing they are doing so. The effect lasts for as long as the Toreador continues to sing or until the target leaves the singer's presence. Commands that require the victim to leave the Toreador's presence can be resisted with an additional Willpower roll (difficulty 8) once the sound of that enchanting voice fades.

Those within earshot, but not in the Toreador's immediate presence, may notice something odd (Wits + Subterfuge, difficulty 8) about the ensorcelled singing, but little more than an exceptionally good performance. Toreador within earshot of this sort of performance are immediately entranced.

As an additional bonus, knowledge of this power reduces the difficulty by 1 of all rolls related to singing.

DIPLOMAT'S BOON (LEVEL 5 PRESENCE, LEVEL 3 AUSPEX)

A diplomat's most difficult task is understanding what people need to hear in order to make them agreeable to a suggestion. With this power, a Toreador may learn what it is that a target wants to hear. The power does not necessarily reveal all of the views of the Cainite's target, but it does grant invaluable information which can then be put to good use in negotiation, avoidance of treachery and so on.

Despite its innocuous-sounding name, Diplomat's Boon is not always used for peaceful matters. Enemies may be allied, marriages arranged and wars started with proper application of this knack.

System: The player spends a blood point and has her character concentrate for one turn on her subject. She then knows what to say to elicit a particular response. If the character is attempting to further an idea that the target believes fundamentally wrong (such as convincing a pacifist monk to propose war, or a happy person to consider suicide), the target is permitted a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). The effects last for one turn.

DOUBLE-TONGUE (LEVEL 6 PRESENCE, LEVEL 3 AUSPEX)

The Toreador may cloak her words in such a way that her target hears one thing — the intended message — and those around her hear another thing entirely. The listener does not hear the intended message on a subconscious level — the words sound as clear as if the Toreador had spoken them

herself (which she did). Those who use this power on a regular basis describe it as imagining that the true message is buried in words around it, like so: "Good day. *I am How are a Toreador and you? Would you hear my you like true words to take a thus walk?*" The audience hears: "Good day. How are you? Would you like to take a walk?," while the target hears: "I am a Toreador, and you hear my true words thus."

This power has any number of practical uses. A popular one is to "discipline" a servant or a knight (while in fact praising him for a job well done). Another is during diplomatic relations, when the Toreador may sing melting phrases about a king's goodness, when in fact he's letting his real target know that he finds said king to be a laughable poltroon. In the Courts of Love, Double-Tongue has proved invaluable to many a lady who wishes to inform her knight that she does in fact accept his attentions, but must publicly refuse him. Such an ability also makes for valuable messengers; the most sensitive of plans may be hidden within the earthiest of nonsense rhymes.

System: This lasts for one turn per Willpower spent. To discover out how well the message was conveyed, the player must roll Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty of 10 minus listener's Perception).

MERITS AND FLAWS

FETCH (2 PT. MERIT)

You have access to a mortal who looks just like you. Perhaps she's your twin sister, a long-lost relative, someone who has been Vicissituted or simply very good at disguise. Unless she is ghouled, however, she will age and eventually no longer be your double. Your fetch may move about during the day, conducting your business and keeping up your semblance of a mortal life — but also commits actions for which you will be held responsible. Remember, your fetch should be kept carefully informed regarding your relationships and business dealings.

PATRON (2-4 PT. MERIT)

You have attracted the attention of another Toreador, who has made it her job to see that you succeed. Perhaps you gained her attention because of your lineage, perhaps because of your artwork, or something you did or said. Whatever the reason, you have someone who will champion your work and speak up for you in the courts. She may even arrange for shelter or training. Be careful not to abuse your Patron — no one likes being taken for granted. A two-point Patron is someone who is about your own level in clan station, but is perhaps older than you and has good advice to offer. A four-point Patron has resources at her disposal and occupies a station high enough to make a significant difference in your unlife.

CLOSER THAN BLOOD (3-5 PT. MERIT)

You have an affinity with another Cainite (most likely a Toreador, but possibly one of another clan) not brought about Blood Oath or other artificed means. You would lay down your

unlives for each other, and you feel empty without the other nearby. Such bonds can be same sex or opposite sex, and there is no way to predict who your "twin" will be. A 3-point Merit indicates that you occasionally can sense the other's strong emotions (fear, joy, pain) if your "twin" is in the vicinity. A 5-point Merit means that you often sense the other's emotions, even at a distance, and can feel the other's physical pain or peril.

TOUCHED BY GOD (3 PT. MERIT)

Your art is considered truly inspired and inspiring. There is an essence of life and beauty about your work that moves others. Perhaps you were always gifted, or the Embrace might have opened you to the Almighty in ways you hadn't expected. Your singing voice causes stones to melt, your paintings look as if their subjects might step off the canvas at any moment, or your storytelling holds people utterly spellbound. The difficulty on all Expression rolls is reduced by two. If the art being produced relates to God, the Church or similar high ideals, the difficulty is reduced by three instead. Such perfection, however, can engender jealousy in mortal or Cainite rivals. Some suspicious clergy may believe that you sold your soul to achieve your talent, or that you are guilty of hubris by reaching too high with your endeavors.

VAMPIRIC CONSORT (5 PT. MERIT)

You are in a relationship much like marriage with another vampire. This pairing bestows the benefits of the Merit *True Love* on both of you. Taking this Merit in addition to *Closer Than Blood* allows you a remarkable degree of closeness — you may even be able share Disciplines on occasion. Your consort is most likely your equal in power and status, but together you present a formidable front. You would die and kill for each other, and God help the fool who attempts to come between you or harm your lover.

RIVALRY (1-3 PT. FLAW)

You have an ongoing rivalry with someone (perhaps another Toreador, another Cainite, or even a mortal). You may or may not remember how the competition started, but now you and your rival are inseparable. This rival takes advantage of every opportunity to slander you and advance himself at your expense. There may be ways to cool or end this quarrel, but doing so will take a long time. A 1-point rival is at your own power level, and is often annoying but not too dangerous. A 2-point rival occasionally takes harmful action against you, or his words have some measure of influence. A 3-point rival has no qualms about occasionally attempting to have you killed or has some serious clout with someone of higher standing than you (a mortal authority or a clan elder). For him, your rivalry has become a matter of death or dishonor.

DISPARAGED (2 PT. FLAW)

You married someone beneath your station, and thus have lost social standing yourself. An example would be a countess who has married a knight or a duke who married a baron's daughter. Among your own social class, you are treated with disrespect or even actively snubbed, while your spouse is ignored or treated rudely. Your spouse's peers don't know how to behave with you, resulting in further awkward relations or standoffishness. A+2 difficulty is added to your Social rolls when dealing with your peers. Your marriage may be a happy one, but you have paid a terrible price for it.

USED AND ABUSED (2 PT. FLAW)

For some reason, you have incurred the wrath of those higher in station in your clan. These Cainites have the power to make your life miserable — injuring your reputation, spreading nasty gossip, slandering your lovers — and all for reasons that you can't understand. However, just because you're being abused doesn't mean you necessarily have to endure it meekly. You may be able to find assistance from others who disbelieve the slander — but you may have to prove yourself several times over first.

VULGAR (2 PT. FLAW)

You are rude, crude and socially unacceptable. You seem constitutionally incapable of saying or doing the right things, in spite of all attempts to teach you. Your sire is criticized and ridiculed for choosing you, and you are frequently left off guest lists. You may eventually work off this Flaw, but the Storyteller should make it particularly difficult. At Storyteller option, you may be at +2 difficulty on all Social rolls.

DEMESURE (3 PT. FLAW)

Démesuré refers to sinful pride that results in extraordinary (and sometimes horrendous) costs to the possessor and those around him. The most famous example is that of Childe Roland, who refused to allow his men to retreat as the Moors slaughtered them, his pride goading him to remain so that he would not to appear a coward. A player who takes this Flaw should (with the Storyteller) select one (maybe more) things that his character takes great pride in — his clothes, his horsemanship, his fighting, etc. When that pride is insulted or threatened, the player must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 9). If he fails, he pursues the salvation of his "honor" to the exclusion of all other business. This obsession can result in lost allies, plans gone completely awry, loss of loved ones or even Final Death. Each time the character achieves goals relating to his obsession, he may make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) to see if he can let the obsession rest for the remainder of the night.

Songbirds After Sunset

THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

Quote: A most interesting suggestion, lord, but with respect, I believe you may have overlooked something. If I might—?

History: The second daughter of minor nobility, you were frequently overlooked and ignored in favor of your two brothers and elder sister. While they got the attention, education and baubles, you were shunted aside, scolded and ignored. You wouldn't get anything of the estate with your brothers inheriting, you'd have to wait for your sister to marry before you could (and with that horseface of hers, it would be a while), and about all you had to look forward to was getting old and caring for your querulous parents. At the tender age of 11, you decided that you were going to take your life in your hands and do things your way.

Since you were often ignored, you could spy on your brothers at their lessons and thus learned to read and write. You learned to listen at doors, talk without really saying anything, lie without blushing, tempt without compromising yourself. You learned politics by listening in on your father and brothers, and questioning anyone who came to the keep. This was all well and good, but you wanted a challenge. Someone must have been listening to your thoughts, because your father and brothers died, one after the other, of sickness or accident. While your mother and sister wailed, you got busy securing things for yourself and your heirs. Now the shoe was on the other foot, and your family suddenly found cause to regret ignoring you all this while.

You married a man of means, a newly minted baron, and it was only two months before you found out that he was a vampire. Impressed with your political acumen and skill at subterfuge, he brought you into the clan's presence. When all were sufficiently dazzled, he embraced you and presented you to the prince of the city. Since then, you have

maneuvered into the enviable position of being a prince's advisor without all the fanfare that goes along with being noticed. Your position has also given you an excellent vantage with regard to the rest of the Cainites, and many fear you, for your words can ensure a young vampire's success or failure.

Concept: A weak woman? Hardly. Some may be enchanted with your looks, but underneath the silk and roses lies cold steel. You know what must done and how to get it done, and you have little patience for those with weak stomachs for the demands of power. Few, if any, understand your true role in court. That's their mistake, though, especially when you can ensure that the fop who insulted you at midnight can be staked out for the dawn.

Roleplaying Hints: You change your moods as others might change gowns — all to suit the occasion. Some might call you artificial, but you prefer to think of yourself as adaptable. Whether you need to banter wittily with a knight at the court, or rebuke that same knight later that night for failing at the task you set him, you can reinvent yourself in a heartbeat. So long as you stay one step ahead of those you must charm or misdirect — and you have thus far — all will be well.

Equipment: Fashionable court clothing, rosary, book of Marie de France's *romans*



VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES																								
NAME: _____		NATURE: AUTOCRAT																						
PLAYER: _____		DEMEANOR: GALLANT																						
CHRONICLE: _____		CLIN: TOREADOR																						
		GENERATION: 11th																						
		HAVEN: _____																						
		CONCEPT: The Power Behind the Throne																						
ATTRIBUTES																								
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL																						
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●																						
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●																						
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Will: ●●●●●																						
ABILITIES																								
TALENTS		SKILLS																						
Acting: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●																						
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Heath Wisdom: ●●●●●																						
Athletics: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●																						
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●																						
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●																						
Empathy: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●																						
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●																						
Larceny: ●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●																						
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●																						
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Sensual: ●●●●●																						
ADVANTAGES																								
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS																						
AUSPEX: ●●●●●	GENERATION: ●●●●●	HERD: ●●●●●																						
CELERITY: ●●●●●	RESOURCES: ●●●●●	STATUS: ●●●●●																						
PRESENCE: ●●●●●																								
OTHER TRAITS																								
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Weapon	Difficulty	Damage																						
COMBAT																								
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Weapon	Difficulty	Damage																						
ROAD																								
CHIVALRY																								
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WILLPOWER																								
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HEALTH																								
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Bruised	0	□																						
Hurt	-1	□																						
Injured	-1	□																						
Wounded	-2	□																						
Mauled	-2	□																						
Crippled	-5	□																						
Incapacitated		□																						
EXPERIENCE																								
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BOOK ONE: TOREADOR

THE HERMIT

Quote: By Thy grace, I see, and by Thy hand I am blinded.

History: You were Embraced at the beginning of the century for your skill at songmaking, and at first you enjoyed your unlife. As time wore on, though, you grew first to dislike, then despise your existence. You were plagued with dreams of the horrors that awaited you upon your Final Death, and your music was dissonance in your ears. Your peers tried any number of means to shake you back to yourself, from religion to debauchery, and nothing seemed to work. By the final quarter of the century, you had decided on suicide, disgusted as you were with your dissolute clanmates and Church. Then, you heard about a Cainite, a Toreador who lived by himself as a hermit and who spent his time in contemplation. The idea was so strange that you had to see for yourself if it was true.

The hermit welcomed you graciously to his cave and told you his story. Like you, he had once been a toasted and feted darling of the clan, and like you,

he had grown weary of a life grown stagnant. He had come here on the advice of a Salubri, who

had shared his knowledge of mysticism and faith with a pupil hungry for a change. Upon releasing his student,

the Salubri had asked only that he share his knowledge with others likewise hungry.

By the time the Cainite's talk was done, you knew that you would be his next pupil.

After five years with your mentor, you traveled into Byzantium where you spent time in contemplation near a monastery.

You have taught two other new students to the ways of thought, and recently began to write down your prayers and mys-

tical experiences. You hope to turn your old talents of songmaking into something far more worthy, and are considering venturing back into the world you abandoned for the sake of spreading your music.

Concept: You turned to mysticism looking for an anchor for your soul, and some might say you found a millstone instead. It's a difficult existence, and the solitude is sometimes draining to your spirit, no matter how hard you try to steel yourself against loneliness. The nearby monastery provides necessary company, and returning to your old craft has proven an unexpected solace. The Lord works in mysterious ways, and none more so than the means by which you arrived in this "life."

Roleplaying Hints: You keep silent usually, not because of any vows, but by your own choice. You fear that by speaking, you might miss the whisper of the Lord's voice, or perhaps you feel that words are too slow and clumsy to convey the thoughts you have. When you do speak, your voice is slightly rusty and low from disuse, and your speech slow and thoughtful.

Equipment: Parchment and quills, rough robes, rope belt, sandals



VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES			
NAME: _____		NATURE: PENTENT	
PULVER: _____		DEMEANOR: LONER	
CHRONICLE: _____		CLAN: TOREADOR	
		GENERATION: 9th	
		HEAVEN: _____	
		CONCEPT: THE HERMIT	
ATTRIBUTES			
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL	
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●	
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●	
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●	
ABILITIES			
TALENTS		SKILLS	
Acting: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●	
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Heath Wisdom: ●●●●●	
Athletics: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●	
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●	
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●	
Empathy: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●	
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●	
Larceny: ●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●	
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●	
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Seneschal: ●●●●●	
ADVANTAGES			
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS	
AUSPEX: ●●●●●	GENERATION: ●●●●●	VIRTUES	
CELERITY: ●●●●●	HERD: ●●●●●	Conscience/Conviction: ●●●●●	
PRESENCE: ●●●●●	MENTOR: ●●●●●	Self-Control/Insight: ●●●●●	
		Courage: ●●●●●	
OTHER TRAITS			
ROB: _____		HEALTH	
HEAVEN: ●●●●●●●●●●		Bruised: 1	
WILLPOWER: ●●●●●●●●●●		Hurt: 1	
BLOOD POOL: ●●●●●●●●●●		Wounded: 2	
		Mauled: 2	
		Crippled: 5	
		Incapacitated: 5	
COMBAT			
EXPERIENCE			
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	

BOOK ONE: TOREADOR

Of Historical Note: Centuries of Echoes

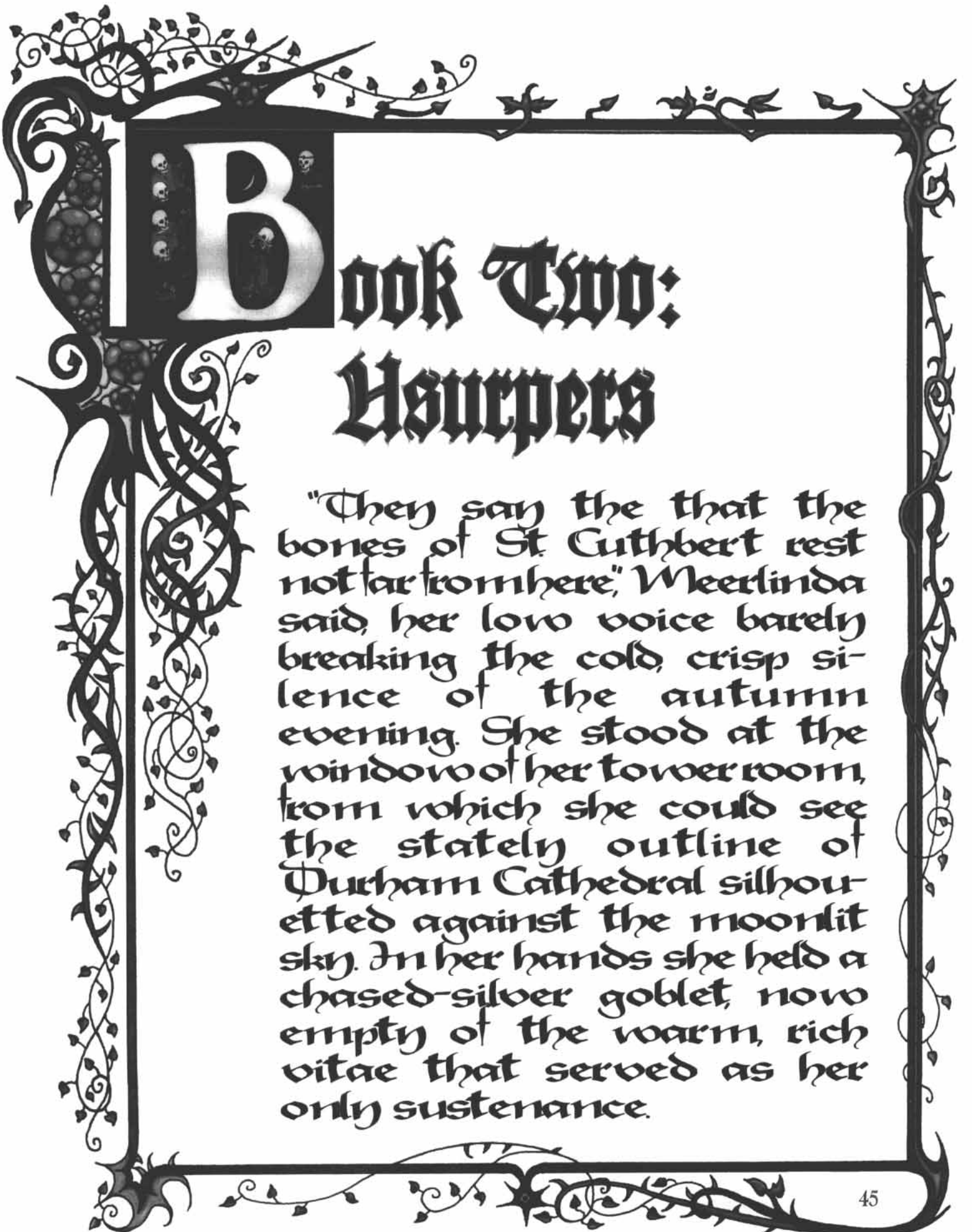
A Toreador once believed she had reached the pinnacle of her singing ability, and indeed had attained the purest sound that mortal or immortal could create. She was capable of holding her clanmates spellbound for hours, and her voice was of such purity that it brought tears to the eyes of its listeners. Then one night, she heard a woman of the fae sing a simple lament to a lover proven unfaithful, and suddenly, she realized that the heights she had attained were as foothills before a mountain — so long as this beautiful creature existed, her own work was like a child's piping compared to the music of the spheres. At first, she was mad with jealousy, and sought every opportunity to slander and ruin her rival in the same way that she had her peers, but without success. Every avenue to vengeance seemed to be closed to her, and her gifts seemed faded and worthless. Finally, her jealousy faded into pain — pain that she could never create music one-tenth as pleasant or beautiful. From envy she turned to contrition, and in sackcloth and ashes she sought out her rival in desperation. At the foot of the *sid*, the proud Toreador begged like a child for the opportunity to learn from the fae woman. "Please, I'll consent to anything," she said. "Just teach me what you know!" After some consideration (and much toying with her one-time pursuer), the lady of the *sidhe* invited her beneath the mound to learn.

The Toreador's departure did not go unnoticed. Songs have been written about the brave singer who entered the fae mound for the sake of her art. The songs all have the same ending, unfortunately for those who like variety — supposedly in a century (or two, or five — accounts vary) the long-lost singer will re-emerge from beneath the *sid*, having mastered the secrets of the music of the Fair Folk. Then, according to the darker versions of the songs, she will wreak a terrible vengeance with fae magic and Toreador art, though what she's seeking vengeance for is not necessarily clear.

Sensible Toreador dismiss these songs as claptrap and pseudo-Arthurian gobbledegook. More prudent ones locate their havens far from reputed fairy forts, and count the years with an eye on the horizon. And there are evenings when Toreador out on rades in imitation of the Fair Folk hear music from beneath the ground, singing more beautiful than anything they have ever heard among mortals or *Cainites*. At such moments, the entire procession halts, transfixed, as the Toreador strain to catch each note.

And the most gifted among the Toreador thus seduced by song? They swear they hear two voices.





B

ook Two: Usurpers

"They say the that the bones of St. Cuthbert rest not far from here," Meerlinda said, her low voice barely breaking the cold, crisp silence of the autumn evening. She stood at the window of her tower room, from which she could see the stately outline of Durham Cathedral silhouetted against the moonlit sky. In her hands she held a chased-silver goblet, now empty of the warm, rich vitae that served as her only sustenance.

"Do you believe the tales, lady?" Geraint de Montfort asked as he came to stand beside her at the window. His gaze, like hers, fastened on the nearby abbey. The young man, ghoulded to her service as an apprentice and companion since a few nights after her arrival in this godforsaken part of England, had helped her secure the tower she now occupied and that served as the Tremere chantry. Meerlinda stole a glance at him from the corner of her eye. Geraint seemed composed, despite his knowledge of this night's importance in his life. Such equanimity in the face of the elaborate ritual of exsanguination and infusion that comprised the Tremere Embrace would stand him in good stead during his first nights as a Cainite. Meerlinda had schooled him carefully, preparing him for his transformation; soon, he would demonstrate the degree of his attentiveness to her lessons.

Meerlinda shrugged. "It matters little," she said. "Once, long before you were born, I might have sought diligently for such a treasure, as much to deprive the Church of a plaything as for whatever power those bones contained. But now," she raised her own goblet before her, in imitation of the priestly elevation of the sacramental chalice, "this provides me with all the magical nourishment I require." She handed the goblet to Geraint and turned away from the window. "Attend to your duties, now," she told her apprentice. "I expect you to have resolved any unfinished business that remains to you before you return to me. I will see you after the midnight candlemark." Geraint bowed and left the room.

A small desk in the center of the room held a pair of opened scrolls — letters, one from the chantry at Ceoris and the other from France. Meerlinda seated herself at the desk and picked up the first of the missives, sighing as she reread Etrius' angled script. As usual, her fellow Cainite's message contained his customary misgivings about his woeful state of unlife. With the first words, Meerlinda shook her head ruefully. Etrius would never change. His horror at the price of gaining immortality had not lessened with the passing of over a century. Neither had his anger at Goratrix, the instigator of the grand experiment that had transformed the leaders of House Tremere from mortal magi to immortal children of Caine.

Her lips moved as her eyes passed over the passages of Etrius' letter and found the "news" that he dutifully conveyed to her.

Our master spends much time in the deep sleep that we have learned to call "torpor." The nightly management of our affairs increasingly falls upon my shoulders. I begin to wonder

just how wise it is for us to remain in these forsaken mountains, surrounded as we are by hostile forces that would like nothing better than to see our complete annihilation. I speak, of course, of the Tzimisce.

I fear we have traded our diminishing powers as mortal magi for an insecure place in a dark and unholy society that does not welcome us. We work feverishly to unlock the thaumaturgic knowledge so vital to our survival, yet our rituals seem paltry in comparison with the True Magick we have sacrificed upon the altar of our greed. By night, we hear the howls of the beasts sent in search of us by their voivode masters. By day, we receive no respite. While we pass the sunlit hours in the tormented sleep of the Damned, the Fiends' mortal servants scour the mountain passes for signs of our resting places. They are joined in this by the minions of the Church, who send their knights against us. Only our wards and the inaccessibility of our halls serve to protect us, and I fear the time will soon come when even those precautions fail.

My only joy in this pitiful shadow-life lies in the knowledge that Goratrix no longer haunts these halls. Yet even that solace is tempered by my fear of what new inquiries his foul intelligence now pursues. France is not far enough away for my liking.

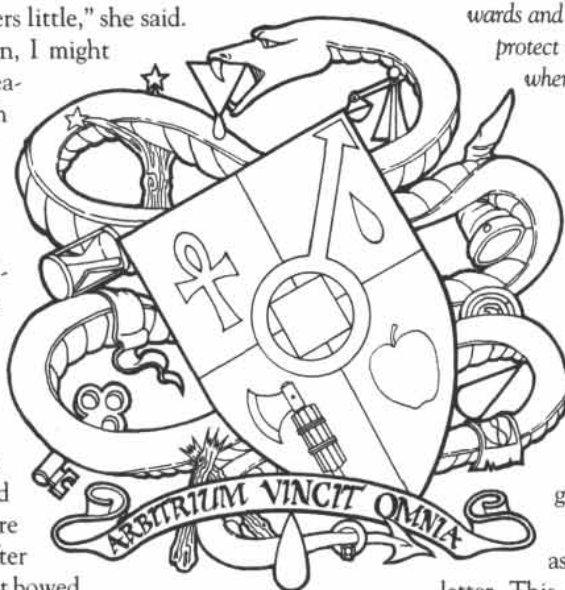
The rest of the letter contained solicitous inquiries about Meerlinda's own position and requests for news concerning the world outside Ceoris — particularly with regard to the activities of Goratrix.

Meerlinda smiled and put the scroll aside, turning her attention to the second letter. This one, from Goratrix in his chantry in France, differed from Etrius' communication in several significant aspects. Most prominent was the author's approach to his existence. Rather than lamenting his changed status, Goratrix gloried in his transformed state.

You and I are fortunate to have escaped the confines of the barbarian countryside for more civilized climes. I have had my fill of listening to Etrius' constant moaning about "our pitiful half-life," as he calls it. You know as well as I that we have attained a transformation beyond our most potent imaginings. More than ever, the breathing world and its puny inhabitants have become as children's toys in our hands. So far removed have we grown from their petty concerns that we need no longer trouble ourselves with aught beyond the pursuit of knowledge, and the power attendant upon it.

A long self-laudatory passage followed in which Goratrix described his latest alchemical experiments upon his "toys." Meerlinda grimaced as she read his words with gruesome fascination.

Laying aside both scrolls, she sat in contemplation of the answers she would inscribe to both her fellow Tremere. Her distance from the heart of her clan had not lessened her



involvement in the ongoing dispute between Etrius and Goratrix. Both still looked to her for advice. And, as usual, she would give it — cautioning each of them to remember their common blood and the bonds that served to unite them in the face of growing enmity from outside the chantries' gates.

Meerlinda pulled her thoughts away from the contentiousness of her fellow elders and fastened instead upon more immediate concerns: the bestowal of the Embrace upon her apprentice. Focusing her consciousness upon the glyph she had placed over the door to her laboratory, Meerlinda scried the room in which Geraint even now busied himself with his preparations for the ritual of the Embrace. She watched with approval as the young apprentice arranged the pewter bowls which would be used to contain his lifeblood. Once, Geraint paused to take a deep breath, visibly forcing himself to relieve the tension manifest in the taut muscles of his neck. His lips moved slightly, mouthing the words of the oath of loyalty he would recite immediately after his transformation. Meerlinda nodded to herself as she watched him for a few more minutes. Satisfied with what she saw, she severed her connection to the scrying device and returned to the task of answering the pleas of both Etrius and Goratrix.



Geraint returned just as Meerlinda finished pressing her gold signet ring into the daub of wax on the second scroll. Tomorrow, one of her retainers — not Geraint — would see to their delivery.

"Are you ready?" she asked her apprentice.

Geraint nodded. "I am, my lady," he replied. "All has been prepared as you have ordered."

"Does the thought of eternal life prove daunting, now that you stand ready to receive it?"

The apprentice turned his face toward the window. The town of Durham now lay occluded in the darkness that followed the setting of the moon. "Why try again for Glastonbury, why search further for the Sangreal, when the cup of immortal life rests here, within my grasp?"

Meerlinda rose. "And have you no fear that this path leads to your soul's damnation?"

Geraint smiled faintly. "You offer me eternity in which to reflect upon that question," he replied.

Meerlinda nodded, satisfied. "Then let us proceed to my sanctum, where you will drink from the cup of bitterness and strife, of joy and learning. From this night forward, you shall stand among those who have embraced the outer darkness in pursuit of the inner light. Tonight, through me, you become one of the children of Tremere."



The Usurper's Seed

And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage... And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

— Genesis 25:30-33

This night has seen your birth into the House of the Usurper. The other clans of the Cainite describe us thus, for we have seized their secret of life eternal and made it our own. We have cut down one of their mighty ones and put our own founder in his place. For this, they hate us. For this, they seek our destruction. Yet, we survive.

Mere survival does not constitute the whole *raison d'être* of our existence, though — no, far from it. The beasts of the field survive, as do the human kine from whose vitae we draw our sustenance. Our clan serves a loftier purpose, for we seek to preserve a power that even now diminishes in the world around us. I speak of magic. For we are a clan of magi, though the nature of our magic has changed.

THE TRANSFORMATION

By will and by magic have we insinuated ourselves into the bloodlines of the Children of Caine. In describing here our transformation from mortal to immortal, from those bound to the cycles of base reproduction and fleshly cares to those freed from those concerns by the eternal darkness we have embraced, I make no idle or frivolous boast. I but present to you, my childe, a true declamation of the means of our genesis as a clan of undying wizards — or former wizards, if the harsh truth be known. For in our achievement of endless existence, I fear we have traded away our birthright as surely as we have seized others' inheritance of immortality.

Think back on the exquisite agony of your Embrace. When the last of your blood flowed from your veins and the first drops of my vitae burned their way into the core of your being, you passed into a state of dying — not death — your living flesh transformed into immortal matter. You screamed as something inside you shattered.

That moment of fragmentation and the slow, agonizing feeling of dissipation that ensued signified the incorporation of magic into your very essence even as it heralded the death cry of

your wizardly power. From a potential worker of magick, you became, instead, a magical creature in *essentia*, no longer able to command the forces or harness the elemental mysteries of the world. Instead, you have become one of those mysteries.

Our transformation lies at the heart of our present dilemma. By infusing ourselves with the *vis* that now entwines itself with our blood, we have set ourselves apart from nature. As mortal magi, we ate from the tree of knowledge and tried to content ourselves with the slow absorption of its fruit. As Cainites, we have swallowed the forbidden seeds of immortality, and now the whole of eternity opens before us like a gaping chasm into the abyss of the unknown. Knowledge has gained a pungency far beyond our mortal expectations.

Yet, we suffer from our sacrifice of mortality. Understand, my childe, that our choice was an irrevocable one. The steps we have taken cannot be retraced; they have changed us forever. I fear that what we have lost can never return to us, and that the path we have chosen to walk, which you now tread alongside us, leads only deeper into the eternal night in which we must dwell. Still, we must embrace that darkness, for without it, we have nothing.

THE PURPOSE OF KNOWLEDGE

In becoming immortal, we have had to rediscover how to use our magic. The ways of mortal wizards no longer avail us. In transforming our nature, we have lost the capacity to perform those magical charms and rituals that once served to impose our will upon the natural world. Instead of harnessing the emanations of magic, we must place that yoke upon ourselves, utilizing our vitae to replace our vanished power. When you learn to see the halo which surrounds all living creatures, you will find that we exude a radiance of brilliant scintillae that marks the dispersal of magic throughout our corporal bodies.

As individuals and as a clan, we strive to master the knowledge of our newfound methods of magic, which we call Thaumaturgy. Already, we have learned to duplicate much of what we lost in becoming immortal. We can only hope that the rest will follow from diligent pursuit and experimentation. Now that we exist outside the boundaries of mortal flesh, the constraints that inhibited us as humans no longer exercise control over our actions.

LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 2

THE ONUS OF SURVIVAL

Apart from recovering our knowledge of magic and comprehending our new state of existence, our clan seeks to establish for us a place in the Cainite hierarchy. The process of self-transformation began in 1022, when Goratrix produced the elixir which initiated our change from mortals to immortals. Since that time, we have had to conduct further dissemination of our vampiric gift under conditions of utmost secrecy. Not all members of House Tremere have as yet undergone our transformation. Further, those other houses of the Order of Hermes who know or harbor suspicions of our great experiment grow increasingly antagonistic toward us. We dare not flaunt our achievement outside our own house, lest those who were once our fellow wizards condemn us out of ignorance.

We cannot maintain our pretense of humanity indefinitely, however, and to that end we have intensified our efforts to complete the transformation of all the members of House Tremere. Until that time, and perhaps even beyond, we must adhere to a rigid code of loyalty among ourselves and obedience to our elders. Only in this fashion can we protect our secrets and pursue our goals without disturbance. Unlike the other Cainite clans, we know the value of presenting ourselves as a disciplined, unified force.

In like manner, we must stay ever alert to the dangers from our supernatural enemies. The other Cainites refer to us as "Usurpers," and the term holds some truth. We have claimed for ourselves a birthright not originally intended for us, and have dared to set ourselves as equals among the Children of Caine. Clan Tzimisce despises us for stealing their vitae in order to effect our transformation and for our expansion into the lands of Eastern Europe, over which they once held sway. That our search for the secret of immortality required the sacrifice of one of their elders — in addition to a brace of our own acolytes — has caused an irreconcilable rift between our clan and theirs.

Further, once we discovered that Cainites dwelled within a highly structured society heretofore unknown to us, we realized the necessity to establish ourselves as a bloodline equal to those of the other vampires. Thus, Tremere took into himself the power and generation of the Antediluvian Saulot. We did not anticipate the scorn and hostility that would be instigated by that action.

Was Tremere's Amaranth of Saulot a mistake in terms of our survival as Cainites? You need not answer that question immediately, my child. In part, it serves a rhetorical purpose. Every action we have taken since that fateful night bears questioning with regard to its unforeseen consequences. Our enemies beset us on all sides and from all quarters. We exist because of our caution and our determination; ironically, our willingness to undertake risks also contributes to our continued survival.

THE SEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE

As we move farther away from our mortal colleagues, we grow more intimately bound up in Cainite society. Notice that I do not refer to it as the "society of the Damned," as I have heard other vampires describe their state — and, indeed, as my friend and fellow Council member Etrius so often pronounces it. Heretical though it may be, I believe that God reserves His judgment for mortals, and for mortals alone. We have become something different.

As important as any of our other pursuits, the gaining of acceptance by our co-equals looms as one of our most immediate concerns. Once we existed as a house of magi among other houses. Now we form a clan of Cainites within a society of disparate and often quarreling clans. Though the other Cainites call us Usurpers, they cannot deny our existence. Already we have formed a few alliances with those Cainites who despise our Tzimisce enemies. No doubt any clan who approaches us believes that it acts out of self-interest; for now, we must content ourselves with allowing them to continue their delusion. Wresting a place for ourselves within the hierarchy of vampires counts as but the first step in a larger and more ambitious process.

THE ATTAINMENT OF POWER

We aspire to more than mere acceptance. With the advantages granted to us by our unique thaumaturgical ability, Clan Tremere possesses the potential to gain dominance over its Cainite brothers and sisters. Despite our relative youth as a clan, we count among our number some of the most agile and resourceful minds in Cainite society. The other clans have grown set in their ways. Moreover, their own petty concerns over ancient rivalries prevent them from assembling a unified force to oppose our ascension to power among their ranks.

Our clan structure provides the necessary stability for our campaign to increase our standing and authority within the fractious shadow realm of Cainite governance. This aspiration, of course, must remain occluded from the minds of any who might oppose us. The obstacles that confront us seem formidable, as did the prospect of unlocking the secret to immortality; yet we succeeded in our first quest. I have no doubt that we shall likewise prove successful in attaining our rightful place of leadership within the world of the unliving.

THE SPREADING OF THE SEED

As a clan of usurpers, Clan Tremere must carve out its own realms of power and influence, taking territory and establishing our presence where we may. As magi, we once held claim to many villages in Eastern Europe and Transylvania. Here we constructed schools of learning that served as our chantries.

BOOK TWO: TREMERE



LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 2

Unfortunately, our presence in those lands of wild and powerful magic aroused the ire of the vampires of Clan Tzimisce. Raids by these undying ones and by other supernatural creatures resulted in the loss of many of our strongholds. Now, only a few remain.

As magic diminished throughout much of the world, House Tremere sought an ingress into Eastern Europe. There we found places where magic still flourished, albeit in strange and often incomprehensible forms. Still, it enabled us to continue to harvest the *vis* we found so necessary for the continuation of our abilities.

Now that we have freed ourselves from the dependency on such external sources of magic, needing only the blood of common mortals to resuscitate our own internal magic, Clan Tremere possesses the capability of expanding its borders and establishing enclaves throughout the known world.

Tremere himself has ordered our dispersal in order to assert our presence in as many countries as possible. In this way, we force the other clans to recognize our existence and give ourselves the ability to present our case to some of the vampires more likely to ally with us against a common enemy. In addition, by locating our elders in various parts of the world, we can decrease the likelihood that any single attack by our enemies can deprive us of our most potent clan members.

EASTERN EUROPE AND TRANSYLVANIA

Despite attacks by the Tzimisce, we still consider the lands around the Carpathians our primary home. The fortress Ceoris, greatest of our chantries and home to the founder of our clan, lies deep within the mountain fastness. As rivals of the Tzimisce threaten the *voivodes'* hold on the region, among them the Eastern lords of Clan Ventrue and agents of the Toreador and Brujah clans, we find it possible to reassert ourselves — though in secrecy — in some of the emerging cities. In Prague and Krakow, where universities rise as centers of learning for mortals, we have established inconspicuous chantries and offer discrete alliances with non-Tzimisce vampires. In the cities of the Siebenburg and in Romania, we extend our presence as well. For us, the long nights of occupation are underway.

In Poland and Lithuania, a few Tremere outposts now rise, feeding on the vitality of the pagan populations of these regions. Although the Tzimisce still hold sway over these realms, other clans beside our own have succeeded in contesting the Fiends' claim to the land.

THE BRITISH ISLES

Mithras and the Ventrue control much of England, although the Toreador contest them vigorously in a few areas outside London. In the city itself, we have acquired a few allies who may yet ease the way for our entrance into Cainite society.

Although the ancient prince of London has no love for our clan, we have managed — as you well know — to make a few inroads. Here in Durham, far from the interference of Mithras and those who hold Glastonbury, we hope to stay far enough away from the affairs of London to pursue our interests in peace and gather the strength that we need to expand our influence. Eventually, we hope to spread into Scotland and Ireland, taking advantage of the residual pagan magic that still permeates those outlying lands.

FRANCE

The Toreador hold nearly uncontested sway over most of the lands of France outside of the region of Brittany, where the Norman Ventrue maintain supremacy. Nevertheless, we have found that the new universities springing up in Paris and some of the other growing cities provide us with ideal locations for building chantries. Tremere has sent Goratrix to oversee the expansion of our clan's interests in Caesar's *Gallia*. His resourcefulness — along with his Gargoyle servitors — should prove useful in protecting our new French chantries.

In the south of France, both Tours and Marseilles hold promise for the growth of our clan. Marseilles, in particular, offers many advantages for us. Lacking a prince and governed by Cainite trading interests, the port city provides us with ample space in which to maneuver, provided we do not conflict with the mercantile aims of the Ventrue and the Lasombra.

HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

In the land of Germany, we stand to gain one of our strongest spheres of influence, due to the interclan rivalry among Ventrue, Lasombra and Toreador. In exchange for certain tokens of assistance, we have had promise of support from the Ventrue. The ongoing — and clandestine — negotiations between Ashram, one of our clan's most subtle agents, and the Ventrue Jurgen von Verden have helped us to insinuate ourselves in the duchies of Saxony, Silesia and Pomerania. We have accepted the invitation of Austria's Ventrue to establish a chantry in Vienna. Already, it shows signs of becoming one of our most productive centers of research.

IBERIA

Insofar as we can surmise, the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Leon, now combined into one state, fall under the dominion of the Lasombra and Brujah clans. Although we have chantries in Toledo and Santiago, we take great pains to conceal our presence lest we run afoul of the strength of the Church in these lands.

In the southern lands of the Almohad Empire, we have only just begun to insert ourselves. The Assamite presence in this land of the Moors makes us exercise the greatest caution in our endeavors there. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the prospect of studying the works of the Islamic scholars, many of them well-versed in occult learning.

ITALY

The merchant cities of northern Italy exist in constant rivalry with each other, in both the mortal and the Cainite realms. We have taken advantage of that fact to establish chantries in a few of these cities, hoping to remain unnoticed until such time as we can afford to act openly. Though most Cainites avoid the Papal States, some of our more adventurous members have attempted to make contacts among the Nosferatu, who are rumored to have access to many of the underground libraries of the Eternal City. The acquisition of knowledge necessary to our great work makes the risk of positioning ourselves in Rome, though great, worth taking.

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AND THE MUSLIM STATES

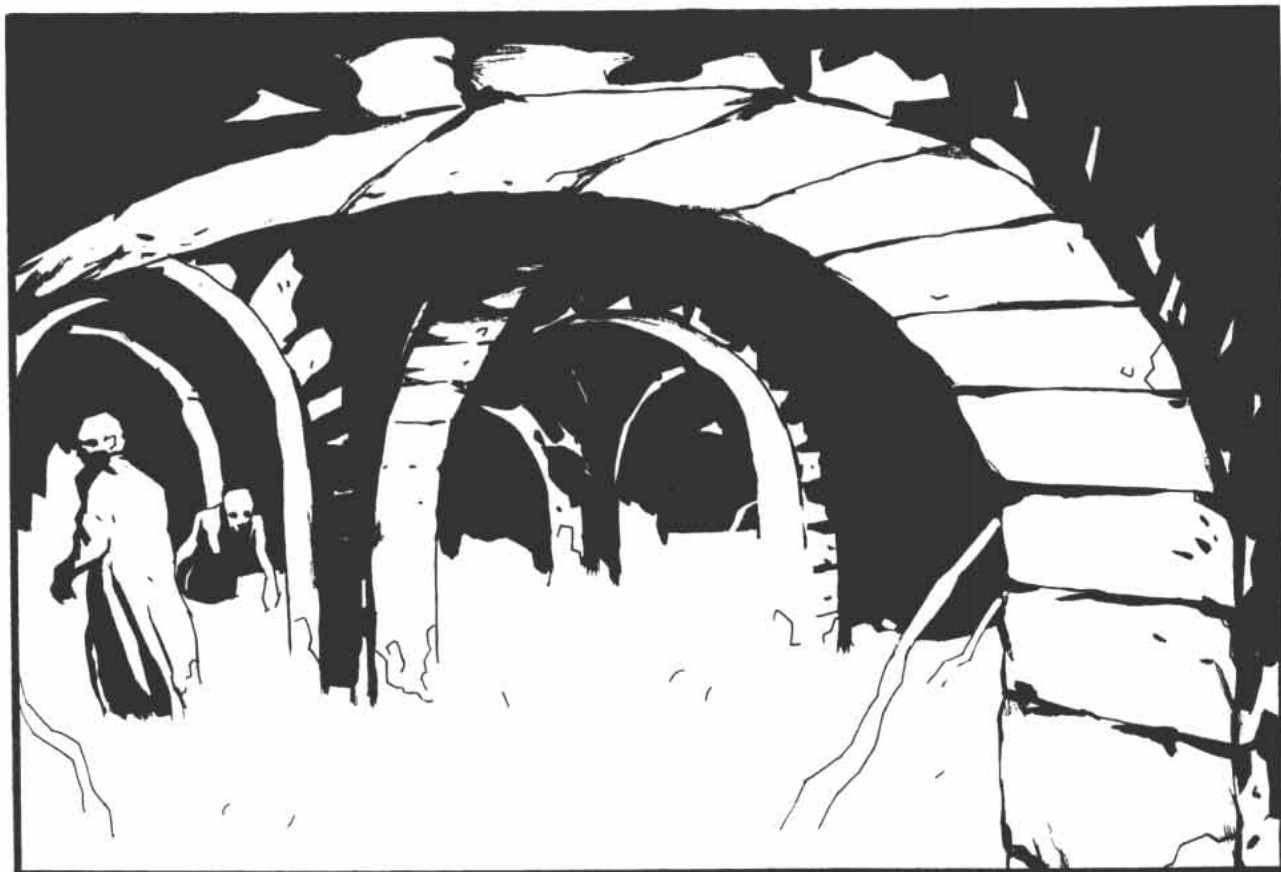
My childe Abetorius — your own elder brother in blood — has the distinction of acting as both our emissary to Constantinople and our agent to the lands held by the forces of Islam. My latest communion with him informs me that he has made progress in his discussions with the Cainite Trinity who rule that magnificent center of civilization. He has received permission to establish a chantry within Constantinople. He has also embarked upon a search for one of our more rebellious childer who conceals herself somewhere within the city. His report that one of the Salubri lies secreted in Constantinople gives us cause for concern, since we cannot afford to allow any of Saulot's line to remain active to conspire against us.

In the lands controlled by the Turks and the Arabs, we must walk carefully and inconspicuously. Although our allies among the Cappadocians may allow us passage through lands they control, the veneration in which many local Cainites hold Saulot's children makes an open presence difficult to sustain.

CHANTRIES

Unlike most Cainites, who prefer to dwell in solitary havens, we find our strength in numbers. As mages, we lived, for the most part, apart from the world, secure in our chantries. There we conducted our magical experiments and passed on our knowledge to our acolytes. The communal nature of our existence helped us form a bond of loyalty to one another and made our house strong.

We continue with the practice of residing in chantries, both for our protection and for the benefits we gain from the society of others like ourselves. In those chantries that still contain human magi, we strive to keep the truth of our natures hidden until such time as we can complete the transformation of all members of House Tremere. We, therefore, move quietly among our ignorant mortal colleagues lest they discover our secret before we have had time to administer the Embrace to all of them.



Our newer chantries — such as our own here in Durham — need maintain no such pretense. You have known of my vampiric state since your first draught of my vitae. The mortal servants and retainers who keep watch over us during the daylight hours believe what we condition them to believe. Our transformation has given us an astonishing control over the limited minds of our human servitors.

Within the safety of our chantries, we pursue as many interests as there are childer of Tremere. Each of us has her own research into the nature of our changed magic. You have seen the thaumaturgic experiments that I have conducted in my own laboratory and have helped dispose of my failures (and in some cases, of my successes as well). Each chantry strives to make some contribution to our clan's growing storehouse of occult knowledge.

Most chantries house a library of scrolls and tomes collected during our days as magi of House Tremere. More recently, we have acquired other valuable books and writings from our dealings with other clans or through the efforts of the intrepid Celestyn, whose exploits have achieved an almost legendary status among our elders. In particular, his written accounts of his contacts with the Tzimisce have provided us with much material on our enemy and proven advantageous in helping us to combat them.

While a few of our chantries resemble fortresses or monasteries, thus affording us with a formidable array of physical defenses, some chantries — the smaller ones — use magical wards to render them unnoticeable and to provide proof against discovery and intrusion. In some cities, we disguise our chantries as herbalists' shops, while in other places we must content ourselves with inhabiting the catacomb chambers beneath a ghouled chirurgion's or alchemist's establishment. Even our largest chantries seldom hold more than two or three of our clan, but such numbers are enough to give us a venue for expansion.

Although I cannot divulge to you the locations of all our chantries, I may mention a few of the most prominent — and intriguing — ones.

CEORIS

Once the heart of our Hermetic Order of magi, Ceoris now occupies a central position for our clan. Deep within the Carpathians, its stone walls steeped in the magic of the land itself, the fortress has survived wave after wave of assault from the Tzimisce and their minions, as well as from other supernatural enemies that haunt those desolate mountains. I cannot yet speak to you of the defenses that protect Ceoris, except to state that both magical and physical protections exist and that they have served to deter those who would come there unin-

vited. Were I to attempt to breach the wards that surround Ceoris without the express permission of its residents, I fear that even I would meet with an unhappy fate.

From his sanctum in the bowels of Ceoris, Goratrix discovered the means of our transformation. There, too, he created the Gargoyles, who served to turn the tide in our war against the Tzimisce. You have undoubtedly noticed the creature who perches high atop this tower — a gift from Goratrix to make certain that I was not without guardians here in Durham. I will speak more of it — and those like it — later.

Our founder now sleeps in Ceoris, or so I believe. Etrius, one of the original seven who underwent the ritual of change along with Tremere, serves as the unceasing guardian of our clan's Antediluvian. Even in his torpid state, Tremere still exercises a compelling presence throughout the clan; his efforts serve as a model for our own personal achievements as well as for our attainments as a lineage.

DURHAM

This chantry, as you know, lies just outside the city of Durham, within sight of the cathedral that houses some of the holiest relics this isle offers. The tower we occupy has been here since Roman times. I have found it sufficient for our current needs, in particular because of its underground chambers and the passageway our servants have just completed. Upon my arrival here, I saw to the setting of the magical wards of Durham Tower as well as the strengthening of the fortifications already in place.

Here we are far enough away from Prince Mithras' court in London that we do not threaten him unduly with our presence. I have heard that he does not take kindly to our presence. That is something I hope to change, once we have established our right to this small plot of ground. And if this place fails, there will always be another — this green and pleasant land contains an abundance of suitable homes for us.

Legends claim that the bones of the sainted Cuthbert are here, as are the long-lost Lindisfarne Gospels. There are the usual tales of pagan magics and standing stones as well, though you'll find those anywhere in England that two rocks are piled on one another. Certainly, magical energies still course through the ground here, fed by the belief of the populace and the encouragement of the monks. The overwhelming aura of magic that permeates this ancient land, sacred to both pagans and Christians, reminds me of the magical resonance present throughout large parts of Transylvania.

Ceoris rose to prominence due to its proximity to the magic-rich soil of Eastern Europe; I have hopes that our Durham chantry will, in time, absorb some of the pervasive emanations of magic that surround it. Although we can no longer imbue ourselves with the *vis* of the land, its mystical energies — I believe — assist in our thaumaturgical endeavors and experiments and seep into the blood of the mortals upon whom we feed.



BOOK TWO: TREMERE

PARIS

Once head of the chantry at Ceoris, Goratrix now leads our spearhead in France. His chantry in Paris, so I hear, lies not far from the university district there. Goratrix and his followers have constructed an underground labyrinth that serves to dissuade unwanted visitors. His Gargoyles act as guards and defenders, in addition to serving as his spies throughout the city.

The Paris chantry should prove one of our strongest centers of scholarly research, as I am certain that Goratrix himself spends most of his evenings in his laboratories. His continuing efforts in studying the vampiric form have increased our knowledge of what we have become.

VIENNA

The Vienna chantry has only recently come into existence. Invited to the city by the Ventrue in order to help them strengthen their hold on the region, we have established a small but thriving community of Tremere near the heart of the city. Although I have few details as to the defenses of the Vienna chantry — overseen by Etrius himself, I am told — much effort has gone into concealing its location from the other Cainites of the city. Reports have come to me that the chantry's library rivals the one in Ceoris.

LITHUANIA

Perhaps the strangest of our chantries lies near the outskirts of Riga. Since its formation shortly before Tremere formalized our clan through his assimilation of Saulot's essence, the Riga chantry has preferred to remain only peripherally connected to the rest of our clan. We have received minimal communication from the Tremere of Riga, who hint that they have discovered a way to extract latent power from the land itself. This goes against everything we currently know about our state. Efforts to compel them to elaborate on their findings have proved unsuccessful. My personal belief is that the Lithuanian Tremere walk a dangerous path, which may lead them outside the auspices of our clan.

THE TIES OF BLOOD

I must now speak to you of the strength of our blood and how we use it to bind us to one another and to the leaders of the clan. Along with the draught of my own vitae, which brought you into your new existence, you also took into your body a mixture of the blood of the members of the Inner Council. Tomorrow evening, upon rising, you will repeat this process, thus bringing you to the edge of confirming a Blood Oath to the clan's elders — myself included.

I hope this does not dismay you. We require it of all newly Embraced Tremere for several reasons. Our existence at this moment — and for the foreseeable future — relies on our ability to exert a unified presence in the face of those who oppose us. That we must enforce such a predisposition of

loyalty upon you reflects the depth of the precautions we must take to preserve the secret of our existence. Our best childer understand this need; our worst feel "insulted" by the lack of trust. I have no doubts that we will number you among the former, however.

The current war for survival against mortal and immortal foes demands that we cleave to one another. The world views us as the monsters that we are; other Cainites view us as intruders. We have no allies save each other, and we must do everything in our power to excise any hint of betrayal from our ranks. You bear within you the mystical reminder of your kinship with those who first crossed over into the forbidden garden of the undying. Consider your draughts an oath of fealty rather than a link in a chain of servitude. We all have masters. Yours are the elders of Clan Tremere.

SIRE AND CHILDE

Blood binds you not only to your clan, but to your sire as well. In most clans, so far as we have discovered, the bond that exists between a new Cainite and her creator resembles the relationship between parent and child. This holds true for our clan, as well. More than that primal bond, however, are the other ties formed by the passing of my blood into your body. Just as a fledgling wizard serves a term of apprenticeship under his master, so, too, does your education into the ways of our clan fall to me to oversee. You have become my apprentice in thaumaturgical magics, and my legacy for the continuation of our clan.

Do you feel this connection? Once you learn the means, you may commune with me at any time and at any distance, merely through the enactment of a simple ritual. Our common blood enables this magic.

THE ORGANIZATION OF CLAN TREMERE

We observe a rigid hierarchy within our clan for a number of reasons. We draw from our experience as a house of magi the importance of maintaining a stable order of prominence. The lines of instruction pass from elder to younger, from the more experienced to the less knowledgeable. This pyramidal structure gives us a strength and harmony of form.

At the apex of our clan stands Tremere himself. Just below him in authority are the members of the Inner Council, those of us who first experienced the vampiric transformation. All clan policies come from this level of authority; Tremere has weightier matters to attend to. Below that are the chantry heads, who instruct those within their chantries and pass down the decisions of the Inner Council.

For the most part, those of us whose blood is stronger exercise power over those who are weaker. Most Cainites agree that this is the established order of our kind. Within our clan, however, strong blood alone does not constitute the sole criterion for authority. The most potent in blood are also, in

most cases, the most knowledgeable. The possession of knowledge and its attendant power sustains our right to guide those with lesser expertise.

Since we fight a war for survival, we must consider ourselves as an army of sorts. This lends additional justification to our need for leaders and followers. Thus, we have derived our present structure as the best means possible whereby we may defend ourselves from outside attack.

CONCERNING OUR NATURE

There remains much to impart to you with regard to our nature as Cainites. You must forgive me for a momentary expression of my personal bitterness in this matter. Unlike the clans who trace their beginnings to the early reaches of time, we came to this state of being as neophytes — unprepared in many ways for the restrictions of our unlife and untutored in the powers we possessed. Our road to self-knowledge has taken more than a century of study and experimentation, often at great cost. Other Cainites have been loath to assist us.

For decades, we labored under many misconceptions. We have had to struggle for every scrap of information we now possess about our heritage, our strengths, our weaknesses and our limitations. Remember that, and you will never feel the temptation to open yourself to anyone outside our clan. We stand alone on the fringes of the darkness, illuminated only by the light created by our own efforts. If we bloody our hands by our quest for enlightenment, it is because our enemies have forced us into a battle we did not begin.

Besides making him equal to the other clans' Antediluvian founders, Tremere's incorporation of the essence of Saulot also provided him with that ancient one's knowledge of the ways of Cainites. Thus, we have corrected many of our early notions about ourselves. There exist two explanations of the origins of Cainites — one which identifies us with the cursed descendants of the murderer of Abel and one which proclaims us as the bastard children of Lilith, Adam's exiled first consort and the mother of all witches. From time to time, Tremere has hinted of yet a third origin of the race of vampires coming from somewhere in the East, but refuses further elaboration.

From our own experiments, we have learned to beware both sun and flame, but immersion in water has no adverse effect upon us. We need not slay those upon whom we feed, though we must take precautions to ensure that our vessels do not remember what has transpired or that, if they do, that they keep silent on the matter. We have still not solved the mystery of why a wooden stake through the heart only immobilizes, but does not destroy, us. Experiments with both living and non-living wooden weapons have proven inconclusive.

We have yet to comprehend fully how our transformation affects our inability to tolerate certain items or our reactions to certain natural phenomena. The vampiric condition expresses itself in a variety of ways among individuals within our clan. Some of us recoil from the symbols of faith, while others find that crosses and saintly images have little effect on them unless wielded by those of righteous fervor. In the Carpathians, the peasants use garlic to ward their homes from Cainite intrusion; in some cases, but not in all, this precaution proves successful. Some Tremere have discovered they are unable to cross running water. Others, like myself, have no difficulty negotiating even the swiftest streams.

The nature of our resting places also remains a topic of study. In the beginning, we imitated the habits of the captive Cainites we studied, sleeping in crypts or digging graves for ourselves in the grounds beneath our chantries. Now we know that such practices are not necessary, and that we only need conceal ourselves completely from the rays of the sun in order to survive the harsh hours of daylight. Nevertheless, some of us still persist in these morbid habits, whether out of fear or out of a necessity to remind themselves of their closeness to the world of the dead.

SPECULATIONS

While other Cainites content themselves with survival or sate their ambitions with dreams of political power, we Tremere find the need to formulate a precise understanding of the cause of our supernatural state. Our wizardly tradition compels us to pursue the secrets of our undead nature regardless of the consequences. As a result, most of us have adopted one of several theories concerning our nature.

Some members of our clan believe that the vagaries of our existence stem from alchemical impurities engendered during the Embrace, when the sire's blood fuses with the dying body of the childe. Imbuing the initial vitae fed to a childe with tinctures and infusions and then studying the resulting eccentricities has led to ambiguous and inconclusive observations. The transmutational process from human to Cainite seems to defy many of the known laws of material transformation.

Another group, led by Celestyn — when he is not engaged in his exploratory endeavors — has attempted to link the variations that exist among us with astrological significance, plotting the conjunctions and oppositions of the stars at the hour of a new Tremere's Embrace. The conviction that our exclusive attachment to the night proves our connection with the starry firmament seems to offer some promise of providing answers to why we differ from one another in small ways. By the precise calculations of the constellations' movements throughout the heavens, the proponents of stellar attraction hope to ascertain why some of us awaken as soon as the sun has set while others remain in slumber until the first stars appear or until the rising of the moon.

A third school of thought seeks to measure the precise balance of bodily humours at the time of the Embrace, searching for correspondences between an overabundance of one of the four elemental fluids and its expression within the Cainite temperament. Thus, an imbalance of choleric humour results in a predisposition toward the condition known as frenzy, while an overly sanguine individual suffers from an excessive need for blood. Those individuals with an excess of phlegmatic humours often require longer periods of rest, while their melancholic counterparts succumb more easily to torpor.

One group examines our separation from the natural order of life. By passing through the state of death without the departure of our souls to the place of judgment, these "naturalists" believe that our removal from the processes of life, death and the afterlife is responsible for our aversion to the sun as well as our extreme trepidation in the presence of flame. Proponents of this theory have yet to explain why the other elements — air, water and earth — do not affect us so adversely as fire.

My own particular interests lie toward the mystical experience of our transmutation. It is no coincidence that Tremere chose to send me to the Isle of Britain and that I elected to attempt to establish a chantry near the reputed resting place of the Holy Grail. The ingestion of the blood of our Cainite ancestors and our resulting transformation bear

some similarity in my own mind to the miracle of transubstantiation currently under dispute by Church theologians. Whether this means that we have transgressed or fulfilled divine law, *that* is the substance of my research.

I must also mention those among us who firmly believe that we have embraced the Devil's works by becoming Cainites. These diabolists actively engage in all manner of barbarism and exercise their basest instincts toward humanity. They contend that, since we have transformed ourselves into minions of Hell, our true vocation lies in the proliferation of damnable actions. I fear for what might result if these debased members of our clan gain ascendancy within our ranks.

EXPERIMENTS

Through alchemical and magical experimentation, we have increased both our knowledge of our place in the world and our ability to defend ourselves. Do not be afraid to use your keen mind in the pursuit of occult understanding. Had Goratrix not dared to combine the essences of Gangrel, Nosferatu and Tzimisce Cainites into a mystical amalgam, we would not now control the Gargoyles who so ably interpose themselves between us and our foes.

In addition to the work of Goratrix, other Tremere are engaged in studying the effects of our vitae upon mortals; so far, we have learned its efficaciousness in promoting rapid healing of near-fatal wounds and its retardation of the aging process in



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our ghoulish servants. You yourself benefited for many years from the life-prolonging essence of my blood before I bestowed the Embrace upon you.

My most recent experiments have to do with, not the nature of our vitae, but rather the bestial transformation that overwhelms us when we succumb to frenzy. Tests that I have performed upon the few Gangrel I have been able to capture have enabled me to understand, in part, the odd metamorphosis that results from their losses of control. It is my hope that by provoking my current subject into repeated bouts of fury, I can determine the stage at which a Cainite ceases to resemble anything remotely human and gives herself over entirely to her bestial inner nature. So far, I have been unable to reverse the process, but all knowledge — even the awareness of one's failures — has its uses.

One area of experimentation fills me with trepidation; only my trust in you allows me to mention its existence. There are some Tremere who seek to discover what effect our Cainite nature has upon summoned spirits. As human magi, we had strong prohibitions as to the nature of spirits we could command and the conditions under which they might be summoned. We do not know if our altered state of being has affected our ability to make compacts with creatures from the spirit realm. Unfortunately, I suspect that some members of our clan have decided to test our influence over infernal spirits. I believe that the idea of summoning and binding demons does not appeal to you. See that it continues to exercise no pull upon your inquisitive mind.

Your own inclinations will undoubtedly draw you toward experiments of your own devising. For the time being, I shall act as your instructor in the proper procedures, in order to bring you to the point at which you may pursue your own theories without my constant supervision. Above all, you must learn to exercise caution both in choosing your experimental subjects and in disposing of the remains of your studies. The monks of the nearby abbey believe us to be a community of cloistered scholars and, thus, do not interfere with us. I desire that this situation continues, so that our work may proceed without interruption.

FINAL EXHORTATIONS

The hour grows late; the darkness of the night will soon give way to false dawn, at which time we must make our way below ground. Your exile from the sunlit world begins with this day's dawning. Do not give in to the temptation, however great, to test the truth of your susceptibility to the sun. With the passing of time, if you are fortunate, you may forget your longing for the sun's warmth and the garish colors of the day. Learn to content yourself instead with passing your nights in such a fever of study and learning that the coming of day brings only thoughts of repose.

Never forget that we dwell among those who would destroy us. Until we have completed the transformation of the rest of House Tremere, we cannot afford the smallest hint of our secret to filter to the other Hermetic houses. Yet, at the same time, we must not Embrace too many of our kind without the means to ensure their survival. I cannot caution you too much about our beleaguered state.

Here in England, we do not experience the constant sense of peril that our clanmates in Eastern Europe feel, yet we must maintain our vigilance. We prefer to provoke as few conflicts as possible. It is enough that the Tzimisce, Nosferatu and Gangrel desire our destruction; we do not need to add other clans to the ranks of our foes. Our prospects for achieving acceptance in a land not dominated by our enemies gives us some latitude; we must, therefore, make the best use of our relative security to further our advancement without antagonizing other elements of Cainite society.

We cultivate the appearance of supplicants among those clans who fall prey to flattery; among those who value learning, we assume our most scholarly mien; to the dilettantes, we strive to emphasize our aesthetic sensibilities. Those who seek political power need to see us as worthy supporters of their ambitions. To the mortal world, we must appear — when we appear at all — as scholars, pedants and recluses. If this dissembling strikes you as deceptive and furtive, keep in mind that in being false to others, we remain true to ourselves. Usurpers they may call us, but we only take what we deem is our rightful portion of eternity.

Tomorrow evening, after you have partaken once more of the elders' vitae and thus entered fully into the communion of blood, I will begin your instruction in thaumaturgical magic, along with the other abilities innate to our clan. We will also seek to determine whether you possess any aversions or repulsions to garlic, holy symbols or other objects so that you may know what, if anything, you must avoid. The process of finding vessels to satisfy your hunger for blood will grow easier as you learn to separate yourself from the kine upon whom you feed. In time, your growing powers will act as proof to you of the distance you have come from your mortal life.

For now, rest content in the knowledge that you have successfully passed your first night among the undying. From now on, in an endless procession of nights, your existence belongs not to God or the Devil or even to yourself, but to all of us who dared to abandon the carefully tended garden of humanity for the limitless vista of eternity. No longer must you dwell in terror of that which you cannot comprehend. In becoming one of the Usurpers, you have become the terror that others cannot fathom. This is your legacy, bequeathed to you, through the gift of my blood, by Tremere himself. May you prove worthy of the trust that has been placed in you this night.

The House of the Supplanter

Unlike the other Cainite clans of the Dark Medieval period, the Tremere cannot call upon millennia of history and experience to guide them through the complexities of survival in a world grown suddenly unfamiliar and perilous. They have had to learn through trial and error how to cope with the dangers created by their transformation. The Usurpers' relative youth as a clan has resulted in a curious mixture of naiveté and inventiveness. Although it has learned much about Cainite nature since 1022, Clan Tremere's knowledge of Cainite society and the fine points of vampiric existence remains incomplete. In some instances the Tremere commit howling errors of etiquette and tactics; in others gain advantage from unique and creative solutions in situations where other Cainites' responses are bound by the shackles of tradition.

Above everything else hangs a sense of urgency. Clan Tremere's genesis as vampires has embroiled it in a bloody conflict with several clans, most notably the Tzimisce, whose blood formed the basis of the elixir that allowed the wizards to become Cainites. Clan Tremere's penchant for experimentation on captured Cainites has also aroused the anger of both the Gangrel and Nosferatu, the Usurpers' favorite subjects for magical and alchemical research. Furthermore, the danger of the vampires' discovery by the other houses of mages within the Order of Hermes (with which House Tremere still remains affiliated) grows nightly. The Tremere realize that they cannot maintain their ruse indefinitely, and thus frantically seek to complete the transformation of all the magi within their house. Within five years, in 1202, the scandal of the house's vampirism will rock wizardly society. As a result, the Tremere will be declared anathema and targeted for destruction by most of their former fellow magi.

An aura of resignation also permeates the House of the Usurper. Having embarked on their fatal journey into the realm of undeath, the Tremere see no recourse but to make the best of their decision. Nightly, the horror of their existence

impresses itself upon the Usurpers, impelling them to delve even deeper into their damnation in order to understand its demands in hopes of overcoming them.

THE COMPLEAT TREMERE (SELECTION)

The need to swell their ranks in order to increase their chances for survival has led the Tremere to begin an active search for promising recruits. The Usurpers still give priority to those mortal mages already within their ranks, marking them as primary candidates for the Embrace, but there are simply not enough mortal magi remaining within the house for this to be anything more than a short-term solution. As the clan expands outward from their stronghold in Ceoris, after Tremere's diablerie of Saulot, the Usurpers have undertaken a concerted effort to find and Embrace other likely individuals.

Mortals with a strong interest in magic, alchemy, academics or astrology attract the Tremere. The Usurpers frequently choose promising candidates as "apprentices," leading these talented mortals to believe that they have embarked on a study of the occult arts. After a suitable period of training, which sometimes includes making the apprentice into a ghoulish servant of her master, the candidate receives the Embrace.

The Tremere have also recognized the need to include skilled warriors and diplomats among their number, and have thus Embraced veteran soldiers and individuals with highly developed skills for negotiation and etiquette. Occasionally, the Tremere select mortals connected to the Church in order to gain influence within that powerful institution, but the Lasombra and Toreador jealously weed these Usurpers out.

MAGI AND MAGES: A POINT OF TERMINOLOGY

The earliest members of Clan Tremere came from House Tremere of the Order of Hermes; as such, they were *magi* (the plural of *magus*). Modern practitioners of True Magick refer to themselves as *mates*. In the Dark Medieval world, the word *magus* pertains to practitioners of True Magick, although some Tremere continue to refer to themselves as *magi*.

THE NATURE OF THE EMBRACE

For the Tremere, the Embrace takes the form of an initiation rite, surrounding the process of transformation with the trappings of ritual magic. By maintaining the charade of an advanced occult ritual, the Usurpers

may thus entice even the most unwilling members of House Tremere into the vampiric fold. In Ceoris, where many unconverted members of the house still reside, mortal magi targeted for the change are summoned without warning into the presence of one of the Inner Council. Informed that they have been chosen to undergo a unique ritual of advancement, these human wizards usually submit willingly to the bizarre ritual of blood-draining and forced infusion of their sires' vitae. The fledgling Cainite realizes the true implications of her transformation only when it is too late. While a few transformed magi rebel against their changed circumstances, most of them quickly adapt to their new existence — particularly after they have been placed two-thirds of the way under the bonds of a Blood Oath to the elders of the clan.

Rather than allowing her childe to feed directly from her veins, a Tremere sire usually first drains her blood into a goblet and forces her childe to drink from it. This practice both enhances the ritualistic aspect of the Embrace and re-enacts the ceremony of the founders' original transformation. At least two and sometimes more draughts of blood are thus fed to the new Tremere. The first goblet contains only the sire's vitae, thus establishing the all-important bond between sire and childe. The second goblet, however, also contains a drop or two of the mixed blood of the clan elders. The



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fledgling Tremere receives a second infusion of founders' vitae (but not her sire's) on the evening following the Embrace, bringing the child to the verge of a Blood Oath to the founders of the clan.

A Tremere who desires to Embrace a mortal usually makes extensive preparations before doing so — including securing the necessary mixture of blood from the clan's founders. Special couriers, known as "redcaps," serve the Order of Hermes (including House Tremere) by traveling from chantry to chantry, delivering messages and transporting valuable items for their masters. Occasionally, these servitors' duties include delivering a vial of precious liquid (founders' vitae) to certain chantries. At other times, this responsibility goes to trusted ghoulish servants or to recent neonates (and their unsuspecting coteries).

USURPER ROGUES

Despite Clan Tremere's attempts to enforce loyalty through a dual infusion of founders' vitae, occasionally a newly Embraced Tremere refuses to submit to the demands of the clan. If she succeeds in fleeing sire and chantry, a rogue Usurper faces a difficult existence, devoid of sanctuary among others of her clan. All too often, such a renegade falls prey to one or another of her many enemies — the Tzimisce, Lupines or mortal hunters — or else finds herself without a safe haven from the ravages of sunlight.

Rogues who manage to avoid such perils represent a constant danger to other members of the clan. Because of the liability they constitute, Clan Tremere pronounces a ban of anathema upon all such defiant childer. Rogue Tremere avoid other members of their clan, seeking the company of Cainites from other clans instead. Even then, they are rarely trusted by their companions.

Few rogues learn more than the most basic form of Thaumaturgy, for no Tremere in good standing will share more advanced thaumaturgic teachings with these fallen ones.

Rumors persist of a chantry, hidden deep in the Carpathians, that holds several Usurper rogues. Search parties sent to validate such rumors have so far managed to discover no real evidence that such a chantry exists. Nevertheless, Clan Tremere maintains its vigilance against the possibility that its rogue childer may one day unite with the clan's enemies in a concerted attempt to usurp the Usurpers.

RITUAL OF CLAN LOYALTY

The ritual swearing of an oath of loyalty to Clan Tremere and its founder forms an integral part of the Tremere Embrace. Although the wording of the oath will grow ever more complex over time, its essence remains unchanged from the clan's earliest nights. Taking its form from the original oath sworn by members of the Order of Hermes, the Tremere oath enjoins its swearer to remain loyal to the clan, its founder and all its members. Administered to the newly created Tremere immediately after the Embrace, the oath serves to impress upon the fledgling not only her place in the clan but her responsibilities to her superiors.

In the Dark Medieval world, an oath often carries within it a true compulsion, making it difficult (though not impossible) to break. Enhanced by the use of Dominate, the loyalty oath of Clan Tremere has a terrible strength that goes beyond the impetus even the most fearful mortal oath can bear. Though this ritual of oath-taking does not irrevocably bind the will of the swearer to the clan, it does act as a deterrent to many actions that might go against clan goals.

While there are no set rules to compel a Tremere character to obey her elders slavishly because of the oath, a Storyteller may, at his discretion, require a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) whenever a Tremere character wishes to act in direct defiance of her clan or her elders.

Each newly Embraced Tremere formally swears an oath of loyalty to Tremere, the elders, her sire and her clan. Conducted either during the ritual of transformation itself or shortly thereafter, this complicated oath carries with it a mystical compulsion that makes it a difficult one to break.

Although the Tremere occasionally resort to the "battlefield Embrace" in circumstances which require spontaneity, individuals so transformed receive the founders' vitae and formally swear their oaths of loyalty as soon afterward as possible.

UNIQUE BLOODLINE

In Lithuania, Clan Tremere has transformed itself into a unique bloodline. Since it separated itself from the main branch of the Tremere before the clan founder diablerized Saulot and solidified his place as an Antediluvian, this cadet bloodline has diverged from its parent in several significant ways.

TELYAVELIC TREMERE

Taking their name from the Lithuanian god Telyavel, the protector of the dead, the Tremere of Lithuania form an exclusively pagan branch of their clan. Unable to recover from the original horror of their transformation into Cainites, a small group of new Tremere left Ceoris purportedly to assist in the spread of their new clan's influence in the world. In reality, they desired only to search for some means of reversing the catastrophic change they had undergone.

In the wilds of Lithuania, these Tremere discovered a refuge among the pagan population, who saw them as incarnations of Telyavel (or Kaleval) and welcomed the newcomers into their midst as priests and shamans. Discarding the name "Tremere," these Cainites began referring to themselves as Telyavs, reserving their former clan name only for blessedly rare interactions with chantries outside Lithuania.

In addition, the Telyavs sensed a mystical emanation from the land, one which permeated the soil, forests and animals. They learned from their pagan followers that this "emanation" came from the *Siela*, the part of the spirit that remains bound to the world after death and also inhabits animals, plants and even stones. Excited by this discovery, the Telyavs soon developed a Thaumaturgical Path based on combining their vitae with soil, the sap of trees or the blood of animals, producing a variety of effects. In addition, their deliberate closeness to the *vis-rich* soil itself enables them to draw upon the metamorphic aspects of their Tzimisce blood.

Unlike their colleagues elsewhere in Europe, who prefer to distance themselves from mortals and conduct their business in secret, Telyavs operate openly among the pagan population of Lithuania. Their nocturnal habits and sanguinary tastes seem utterly appropriate for their roles as servants of the protector of the dead. While they do insist on keeping their chantries' locations secret, they move about in human society with relative freedom.

Though the Telyavelic Tremere are no closer to restoring their original humanity than they were when they first separated themselves from their parent clan, they have managed to attain a compensatory sense of connection with the living world. By assuming the duties of priests and shamans, they have also carved out for themselves a place in pagan society as a bridge between the living and the dead.



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Sobriquet: Shepherds

Appearance: Unlike most Tremere elsewhere in the Dark Medieval world, the Telyavelic Tremere actively Embrace women, seeing them as embodiments of the dark mother-goddess figures of local paganism. Although the majority of this group is still male, nearly a third is female, and many of these were Embraced in middle age. Eschewing the somber clothing of their more scholarly parent clan, the Telyavs dress to fit in with the local population, adopting either the dress of the common folk or the robes and symbols of their newly adopted patron deity.

Haven: The majority of Telyavs occupy a chantry near Riga. Situated in a copse of trees atop a sacred hill, this chantry remains one of the clan's best-kept secrets. While other Tremere know that it exists, only the Telyavs know of its location. A few other chantries of this bloodline exist throughout Lithuania and Poland. Occasionally, a lone Telyav dwells among her pagan followers, protected by ghouls. In addition to their chantries, Telyavelic Tremere often have secondary homes, which also serve as shrines for pagan worship.

Background: Candidates for the Embrace must come from the ranks of pagans. Many of them are priests and priestesses of the old religion. Lithuania has become a battleground between the pagan tribes and the Christian Order of the Sword, so a few Telyavs also come from warrior stock.

Character Creation: Telyavelic Tremere generally have shamanic or druidic concepts. As in their parent clan, Mental Attributes and Knowledges assume primary importance in most cases, although a warrior may emphasize Physical Attributes and Talents. Natures and Demeanors usually reflect the Telyavs' pagan outlook. Backgrounds include Allies (their mortal pagan followers) and Influence. Most often they follow either the Road of the Beast or the Road of Humanity.

Disciplines: Auspex, Presence, Thaumaturgy

Weaknesses: Telyavelic Tremere find it difficult to counteract the effects of True Faith or the display of Christian holy symbols. Difficulties to resist frenzy are two higher than usual when confronted by an enemy who uses her True Faith as a defense, and Telyavs recoil from the sight of the cross or other symbols of the Christian faith.

Organization: The Tremere of Lithuania adhere to a modified pyramid. Each generation drinks twice of the blood of the previous generation, thus bringing them to the verge of forming a Blood Oath with their sires' generation. Typically, a number of Telyavs gather together to oversee the Embrace of a new member, thus ensuring a sufficient supply of elder blood to establish the hierarchical bond between generations.

Destiny: The Telyavelic Tremere continue to exist until the 16th century, when the union of Lithuania and Poland results in the triumph of the Christian religion over

paganism. Hunted by the Church, they are eventually wiped out in a grand conflagration that destroys their main chantry and most of its members. Within a few years, the remaining Telyavs are captured and destroyed by the Inquisition and the armies of the new Christian state.

Quote: *The Earth and all that dwells within and upon it expose their secrets to me. Through the power of my blood, I become all things.*

ON ROLEPLAYING TELYAVS

While the Telyavs do fill a role explicitly within the bounds of the pagan culture to which they have fled, that doesn't necessarily make them nice. The local paganism is alien to many of the original Telyavs, making their integration into the Lithuanian culture uneasy at times; other Telyavs can take their putative role as protectors of the dead a touch too literally and wreak havoc on the living.

In short, these are not shiny, happy, friendly, vampires who spend their evenings dancing in the woods and communing with nature. The Telyavs, despite whatever good qualities they may possess, are still bloodsucking monsters who have appropriated a mythological role that was never intended for them. To ignore the essentially artificial nature of the Telyavs' place in Lithuanian society is to render them caricatures.

NEW TRAITS

MERITS AND FLAWS

NATURAL VICISSITUDE (5 PT. MERIT)

You have "inherited" more of your clan's stolen Tzimisce blood than most of your clanmates and have thus become something of a throwback to your "parent" clan. You may, therefore, choose Vicissitude, rather than Dominate, as a clan Discipline. Improving your rating at Vicissitude, however, may present difficulties. Unless you can locate another Tremere willing and able to teach you further mastery of Vicissitude's higher levels, you must seek further instruction from the Tzimisce (most likely through coercion).

FALSE THIRD EYE (4 PT. FLAW)

For reasons unknown to you or your sire, your Embrace left you with the imprint of a third eye upon your forehead. This reminder of Tremere's diablerie of Saulot renders you both an embarrassment to other members of your clan and a figure of distrust to all except those who know you. The "third eye" does not open or function. Unless you conceal it under a hood or beneath your hair, the stigma is obvious to all who see you. All Social rolls are at +2 difficulty whenever you interact with any Cainites other than your coterie or closest allies. Attempting to pass as a Salubri is not advisable.

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NEW THAUMATURGICAL PATH (NON- SIELANIC)

The war between the Tremere and the Tzimisce in Eastern Europe often involved more than combat between Cainites. Both Usurpers and Fiends pit mortal armies against one another on the battlefield and in siege warfare. The necessity of maintaining and moving troops and supplies from one place to another in a timely fashion led to the development of a form of Thaumaturgy to assist in rapid transportation. This path lasts until the 19th century, when scientific discoveries enable the invention of steam-powered travel (such as the railroad), thus making this form of Thaumaturgy obsolete.

WAY OF PASSAGE

This Path allows the thaumaturgist to endow swifter than normal movement and, in some cases, increased endurance to objects or creatures other than himself. Thus, horses can run faster and farther, and draft animals can pull wagons and siege machines at greater speeds and for longer periods of time.

System: In addition to the standard expenditure of blood and a Willpower roll, the player rolls Manipulation + Animal Ken (difficulty 7) and spends an additional Willpower point for each Attribute the vampire wishes to affect. Only one roll needs to be made regardless of whether or not the vampire is affecting a mount's speed or endurance or both. The number of successes determines the number of days (24 hours) the effects last. Note that this is not useful in combat. Although the mount moves faster, the rider does not benefit from this with extra actions and, in fact, may find the increased speed of his mount a detriment to successful combat maneuvers. Rapid travel from one place to another remains the primary focus of this power. This power does not act as an alternative to Celerity or Fortitude and cannot be used on humans, Cainites or other supernaturals.

No individual descriptions are necessary for each level of this Path, since the effects remain consistent; only the number of individuals or objects affected increases as the thaumaturgist gains mastery of the Path. The Storyteller may modify the following effects to allow for combinations of ridden mounts and those used to pull wagons.

- One mount
- Up to six mounts or one laden wagon
- Up to 12 mounts or four supply wagons
- Up to 24 mounts or eight supply wagons or one siege machine
- Up to 48 mounts or 16 supply wagons or four siege machines

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NEW THAUMATURGICAL PATHS (SIELANIC)

Utilizing the power of the *Siela*, or the animistic spirit latent in the earth, stones, plants and animals, the Tremere of Lithuania have devised a pair of Thaumaturgical Paths that allow them to assume aspects (and in some cases, the forms) of animate or inanimate objects. Based on shamanic practices, these Paths combine aspects of both nature- and spirit-based magic. Some Tremere outside Lithuania believe this Path to be an offshoot of *koldunic* sorcery, a province of the Tzimisce, and look upon those who practice the Sielanic Paths with suspicion and distrust.

Telyavelic Tremere always learn one of the two Sielanic Paths as their primary Thaumaturgical Path. Other Tremere may learn either Path by studying with a Telyavelic Tremere. Non-Tremere may also learn this Path, provided they already possess knowledge of Thaumaturgy and can convince a Telyavelic Tremere to teach it to them.

The Sielanic Paths disappear with the extinction of the Telyavelic Tremere bloodline; with the resurgence of paganism in 20th-century Lithuania, a few Cainites there attempt to rediscover the lost principles of Sielanic Thaumaturgy based on incomplete and sketchy records.

PATH OF THE WORLD'S BLOOD (SIELANIC)

This power allows the vampire to become part of the natural world that surrounds her, partaking of the abilities inherent in the earth, trees, rocks and life forms of any ground to which she has attuned herself. While most practitioners of this Path regularly use it within their "home" territories, a simple ritual (see below) enables the character to attune herself to any plot of ground provided she has sufficient time in which to do so.

This Path occasionally requires the vampire to ingest some rather foul concoctions of her own blood mixed with animal blood, soil, even leaves and grass. It remains a continual mystery (particularly to those outside the Telyavelic circles) how the practitioners of this Path can drink these mixtures without promptly heaving them. Some Telyavs claim that study of the Path prepares one for such necessities, while

others posit that a form of transubstantiation, such as that which is said to change the bread and wine during Mass, is at work. Whatever the reason, the Telyavs continue to swallow and work their magic without difficulty.

Note: Sielanic Thaumaturgy is not quite traditional Thaumaturgy. As a result, it uses the same roll as the normal Discipline *except when specifically stated otherwise*.

• EYES OF THE EARTH

The vampire “sees” everything that goes on within 10 miles of her haven (or shrine) by utilizing the spirits of the grass and other plants, trees, rocks and animals in the vicinity. Thus, a Telyavelic Tremere dwelling within her chantry may know instantly of the approach of worshippers or strangers. In addition, she can also view events transpiring within the range of her attunement. Such visions do not come with handy explanations, though. No sound comes through, and unless the Telyavelic can read lips, she cannot know anything that is being said in a spied-upon location. Further, if the sorcerer wishes to keep track of a particular person as he travels, and if she views him for longer than one night, she must locate him once again after each broken contact (to sleep or perform other actions, for example).

System: The vampire ingests an infusion of her own vitae mixed with soil, grass shoots, leaves, animal fur and bird feathers (or blood from these creatures). The number of successes achieved on the Willpower roll determines the duration of the subsequent “earth-sight.”

1 success	one turn
2 successes	one hour
3 successes	one night
4 successes	one week
5 successes	one month

•• ROOTS OF POWER

This ability enables the Sielanic practitioner to draw upon the power latent in the earth itself to enhance her own physical abilities — so long as she remains in contact with the soil.

System: The vampire expends a blood point by cutting the soles of her feet and letting her blood soak into the naked earth. The number of successes gained from the Willpower roll determines the number of points the vampire can add to her Physical Attributes. No single Attribute may be raised above 5. For example, three successes allow the character to add one point each to Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, three points to any one Attribute, or two points to one Attribute and one point to a second. The duration of this effect is one scene, and the effect covers an area of approximately 50 feet around the vampire’s original position (i.e., where the Cainite’s blood first touched the soil).

••• ARBOR OF PROTECTION

The vampire uses this ability to seek refuge within the living wood of trees. Thus, he is able to encase his body within any tree that stands inside his realm of attunement. In this fashion, he may conceal his presence from enemies. His aura blends with that of the tree in such a way that increases by two the difficulty of detecting his presence through Soulsight. In addition, the character may use any Disciplines and abilities not dependent on physical gestures that he possesses; although the vampire can “see” his surroundings, he cannot make eye contact with specific creatures, so any power which requires meeting the victim’s gaze does not function. Should the vampire enter a tree to avoid the coming dawn, he is protected from the sun so long as he stays within the tree. If the tree is chopped down, the vampire suffers five levels of damage and is forced out of the trunk; setting the tree afire inflicts the same amount of aggravated damage.

System: The vampire drinks a mixture of blood and tree-sap prior to the player expending a blood point and making a Willpower roll. A single success allows the vampire to remain inside a tree for one turn; two successes extend the duration for an entire scene. Three or more successes allow the vampire to maintain his position within a single tree for up to 24 hours. When the time limit expires, the tree ejects the vampire.

•••• COURSE OF THE BEAST

This power give the Sielanic practitioner the power to assume the shape of any animal that exists within her domain and, in some cases, to change from one animal form to another. The vampire gains all the physical attributes and skills of the chosen creature, although she retains her undead nature in all forms. While transformed, the vampire may use any mental Disciplines she possesses, as well as other powers the Storyteller considers reasonable within the limitations of her form. The ability lasts from moonrise to moonrise.

System: The vampire mixes her own blood with that of an animal and drinks it, then expends three blood points to activate the power. Each success on a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) grants the character the ability to shift into one animal form. Thus, three successes enable the vampire to assume the shape of a deer for swift travel, then transform into a fish to conceal herself and move about easily under water, and, finally, take on the form of a bird to fly to safety.

••••• WAY OF THE STONE

The vampire uses this power to transform himself into what resembles a stone dolmen. As such he can withstand the rigors of daylight and is immune to flame. In addition, he can even move about in a very limited fashion. The legends of stones that walk and move about during the night come from the practice of this potent art.

System: The vampire expends three blood points by allowing his blood to drain onto a boulder, at which point he assumes the boulder’s rough shape and consistency. The num-

ber of successes gained on the Willpower roll (difficulty 7) determines how long he may remain in his stone form. The features of the vampire become indistinct, taking on a semi-carved aspect with barely discernible facial features and body parts. Nevertheless, his eyes, ears, mouth and appendages all function normally, except that the difficulty for all physical actions are increased by two and movement is at one-fourth normal rate.

1 success	1 turn
2 successes	1 scene
3 successes	1 hour
4 successes	1 night
5 successes	1 week
6+ successes	1 month

These durations represent the maximum time limit; the vampire may abort the effect earlier if he wishes.

PATH OF THE SHADOW WORLD (SIELANIC)

Through this power, the Sielanic practitioner reaches across the border between life and death, using her own unliving body as a conduit for contact with the world of the dead. In addition, at more advanced levels of this path, the sorcerer is able to touch the essence of Telyavel himself.

This path disappears with the demise of the Telyavelic bloodline, though it is rumored to have become subsumed as part of Dark Thaumaturgy and other Infernal Disciplines (see *Dark Ages Companion* for more information).

(Note: For more information on dealing with the souls of the dead, see *Wraith: The Oblivion* and *Vampire: The Dark Ages*, specifically pp. 255-258)

• SEE THE DEAD

The vampire can view the ghosts of the dead that inhabit the area upon which she focuses her attention. In addition, she can determine the general attitude of these wraiths. Relatives of a person who has recently died often seek out the local shaman to ask whether the soul of the departed seems content or if it needs propitiating in some fashion.

System: The vampire must expend a blood point and concentrate on a specific area. The player then makes a Willpower roll. A single success allows the vampire to detect the presence of any wraiths (or Spectres) in the vicinity of her concentration. More successes allow her to determine details about the ghost's attitude.

•• REPEL THE ANGRY DEAD

With this power, the vampire can banish hostile ghosts from a designated area, such as the home of a relative of the angry wraith. In some cases, the banishment is only temporary or is attendant on the performance of some action intended to appease the ghost.

System: The vampire must first locate the angry wraith (through the use of See the Dead). His player then spends a blood point and rolls the character's Willpower. The number of successes obtained determines the number of hours the banished ghost remains away from the designated location (a house, a grave, etc.). The vampire can determine if certain actions need to be taken to ensure the permanent repulsion of the ghost through a second Willpower roll (difficulty 8); only a single success is necessary for the vampire to ask the ghost what must be done to satisfy it.

••• COMMAND THE FRESHLY DEAD

The vampire can command any ghost that she can see to obey her. With this power, the practitioner may receive answers to questions within the ghost's realm of awareness or require the soul to deliver a message to someone else. Additional simple tasks fall within the parameters of this power, although the vampire cannot compel the ghost to do anything that requires a material form to accomplish.

System: The vampire must first use See the Dead to locate a desirable ghost. Then comes a contested Willpower roll against the wraith (most ghosts have 5 Willpower). For each success the Cainite achieves over the successes scored by the wraith, the ghost answers one question or performs one action at the command of the sorcerer.

•••• ARMY OF SOULS

The Sielanic practitioner uses this power to raise a spectral troop to act as defenders or to deliver warnings to her enemies. These ghosts appear as ethereal images of warriors long dead. Although the tattered images cannot materialize completely in the physical world, they can use their own powers to hurl objects or frighten away attackers.

System: This power costs two blood points and demands a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines how many ghosts (mindless shells of the dead, called Drones) the Cainite can summon. The ghosts return to their rest at the end of the night upon which they were summoned.

••••• WALK THE ROAD OF SHADOWS

This power enables the vampire to cross physically the barrier between the world of the living and the world of the dead and enter the Underworld (or Shadowlands) for a brief period of time. While she is in this dark and barren realm, she appears to its denizens as a particularly solid wraith. She can interact with wraiths freely while in their realm, although she has no control over how they will regard her. Any combat that ensues causes real damage to both the sorcerer and her wraithly foe. Sielanic practitioners who function as priests sometimes use this ability to transport mortals into the Underworld as part of a shamanic initiation ritual.

System: This power costs three blood points and two Willpower, and requires a Willpower roll (difficulty 8). A single success allows the Cainite to penetrate the Shroud and enter the

Underworld. Three successes enable her to take another person along with her. The sorcerer may remain in the Underworld until dawn forces her to leave, until she flees, or she is driven out by its residents. This power does not allow travel into the deeper Underworld.

SIELANIC RITUALS

BECOME ONE WITH THE LAND (LEVEL ONE RITUAL)

This ritual enables the Sielanic caster to attune herself to a specific plot of ground; the area covered may not exceed 10 square miles but may be less than that. The caster combines her own blood with several handfuls of earth from the land she wishes to claim. By covering her body with this mixture before going to sleep for the day, the vampire is able to absorb the essence of the land into herself. Thereafter, she is able to enact the powers of the Path of the World's Blood within the area designated before the enactment of the ritual. Whenever a Sielanic practitioner relocates or travels to another place, she may attune herself to her new location in the same fashion. She may only be attuned to one place at a time, although she may renew lapsed attunements by repeating the ritual.

System: The vampire combines her blood with some natural substance (such as animal blood, tree sap or soil) to effect the desired result. After the ingestion this mixture, the next step is the expenditure of two blood points and a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). The number of successes determines the duration, intensity or range of the desired effect.

SOUL OF THE LAND (LEVEL FOUR RITUAL)

This extremely powerful ritual grants the caster an almost complete identification with his domain. He becomes "one with the land" and, through this intimate connection, instantly knows of anything that threatens the land or its creatures. He can tell if something is wrong with the soil (and thus give advice on how to ameliorate the problem). Additionally, he knows the location of any hostile forces, can predict weather patterns that affect his domain, and can exercise subtle control over the features of the land itself. He can cause trees to move slightly to obscure paths through forests, change the course of streams or widen them to make crossing difficult or cause boulders to rise out of the earth to block a mountain pass.

System: The caster buries himself in a grave near the center of his domain, remaining within the earth for one full day. Upon arising the following evening, he imbibes an infusion of his blood combined with the soil in which he has lain, thus uniting his essence with that of the land. Periodic expenditures of blood (eight blood points per week) can maintain the connection indefinitely. If a week passes without the caster spilling his blood into the ground, the connection breaks; the caster must repeat

the ritual to reestablish his tie with the land. The Storyteller should assist the player in determining the precise manifestations of this ability so that its uses don't wreak undue havoc on the story.

TOUCH THE PROTECTOR'S MIND (LEVEL FIVE RITUAL)

This ritual links the caster's mind with that of Telyavel, the protector of the dead. This ability is only used in extreme circumstances, such as when an invading army threatens the protected realm of the sorcerer. By drawing upon the essence of this ancient being, the vampire is able to enhance her Physical and Mental Attributes and gains access to powers beyond her normal abilities.

System: The vampire spends one hour in meditation, focusing her thoughts upon establishing contact with the mind of Telyavel. The Cainite's player then expends five blood points and makes a Willpower roll (difficulty 9). A single success puts her in contact with the mind of Telyavel. The caster immediately gains 10 dice to allot to her Physical or Mental Attributes in any combination, though she may not increase any Attribute beyond its normal maximum. In addition, all her Disciplines function as if she had one additional level in them, including enabling her to use powers she has not yet mastered. The ritual also confers upon the vampire the ability to remain awake during daylight hours and provides some immunity from sunlight, provided the caster does not directly expose herself to the sun's rays (i.e., she must remain in the shade or under some sort of cover). This ability lasts from one moonrise to the next. No successes means that the caster fails in her attempt to touch the death god's mind. A botch means that the vampire takes five levels of aggravated damage (which she may attempt to soak). In addition, the vampire may acquire a permanent Derangement (unless her player is successful in a Willpower roll) from touching the god's mind too closely without receiving his favor.

NEW BACKGROUND

FAMILIAR

Although your Embrace has deprived you of the ability to function as a magus, it did not break the bond you had with your familiar. This bound spirit may take the form of any small animal, such as a cat, raven, mouse, frog or other creature normally associated with magi or witches. Conversely, the familiar may appear as a homunculus or mannikin. Large animals (horses, goats, bears and the like) as well as magical creatures (such as dragons) are *not* available as familiars. The number of points you put into purchasing your familiar indicates its relative power. Only Tremere characters who were magi *before* receiving the Embrace may take this Background.

Although it no longer acts precisely as a magi's familiar might, your bound spirit still performs simple tasks and minor guardianship duties for you. It also holds you to the agreements

BOOK TWO: TREMERE



made upon initially binding it to your service, however, so you must adhere to those terms in order to keep its favor. The benefits purchased at each level include all the ones from lower levels.

- Your familiar performs minor services but does not risk itself for you.
- Your familiar acts as an early warning to alert you of the presence of intruders, but does not prevent them from entering your haven.
- Your familiar can perform fairly complicated tasks and act as a messenger for you. It also attempts to deter hostile creatures from entering your haven, although it does not confront them directly.
- Your familiar has developed a true fondness for you despite your unliving state and your lack of standard magic. It not only acts as an assistant (within the limits of its form), it may incur minor risks to its own material form in order to protect you from harm.
- Your familiar has a very strong bond with you and serves you as faithfully as any retainer sworn to you by Blood Oath.

RELATIONS

Because of their recent arrival in Cainite society, the Tremere have only just begun to establish relations with many of the other clans. While their origins and certain of their practices have placed them at odds with a number of clans, the Tremere yet have hopes of allying themselves with a number of the remaining Cainite groups. Above all, the Tremere have made it a habit to study Cainite society carefully in order to learn as much as possible about the interactions between clans and, armed with that knowledge, take advantage of each clan's weaknesses. This mixture of curiosity and the Tremere's innate arrogance combine to grind the lens through which the Usurpers view the other supernatural denizens of their world.

ASSAMITE

As the Tremere spread their influence eastward to Constantinople and westward to Spain and the Almohad Empire, they encountered the seemingly exotic **paynims**. The Tremere's familiarity with some of the ancient occult lore of the Levant, Asia and northern Africa has given them an interest in learning more of the secrets of the Assamites, but opportunities to indulge that interest have been few and far between. Since they have occasionally found themselves targets of these Cainite assassins, the Tremere have quickly developed a healthy respect for the

Assamites' powers of stealth and their death-dealing ability. Usurpers regard most Assamites with wariness and keep their distance from them.

BRUJAH

While the Tremere understand neither the Brujah's infatuation with lost Carthage nor their undying hatred of the Ventrue, the Usurpers recognize a potential enemy in the Zealots. The diablerie of Saulot has incensed many of the older Brujah, who harbored great respect for Saulot and his childer. In areas where the Brujah hold power, the Tremere attempt to go about their business as quietly as possible.

CAPPADOCIANS

The Tremere view the Cappadocians with outright envy. These Cainites seem to have a profound understanding of the secrets of death, and it is for merely a fraction of this understanding that the Tremere have already given their very lives. The Tremere actively seek out members of the Graverobbers in order to exchange knowledge with them, hoping to increase their own body of mystical information through discourse and the occasional theft. Unfortunately, the Cappadocians do not hold the Tremere in high regard, as the Cappadocians feel there is little knowledge the Tremere can offer them that they do not already possess.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

Unlike many of their fellow Cainites, the Followers of Set immediately saw the advantage of cultivating friendly relations with the new clan of "wizards." The Tremere, for their part, realized that the Serpents' Egyptian origins gave them access to some of the hoary secrets of the Pharaohs. Thus, the Tremere welcomed the attentions of the Setites and quickly formed an alliance with them.

Only later, as they observed the mistrust and suspicion which other clans harbored toward the Followers of Set, did the Tremere question the wisdom of their overt and open cooperation with the Serpents. Bowing to discretion, the Usurpers have since cooled in their public attitude toward the Setites, while privately continuing to cultivate their favor in the interests of knowledge.

GANGREL

The Tremere view the Gangrel as little more than bestial creatures, devoid of any trappings of civilization. In fact, some Tremere do not even consider the Animals to be a separate clan, believing them imperfect and degenerate Cainites unworthy of official recognition. As such, they feel no compunction in using Gangrel in their unholy experiments, such as the ones Goratrix used to create his Gargoyle servitors. The Gangrel, for their part, hate the Tremere with a single-minded, animalistic passion — and with good reason.

LASOMBRA

The Magisters' political subtlety impresses the Tremere. Their own experience in the fractious society of warring wizard houses has alerted the Usurpers to the importance of treating with other Cainites from a position of power, and the Lasombra provide the Tremere with an abundance of good examples of how to do so. The Usurpers recognize that their own survival relies on achieving recognition and approval from the most important clans — of which the Magisters rank among the leading contenders. Whenever possible, Usurpers seek to ally themselves with powerful Lasombra, while at the same time exercising wary caution when dealing with these "shadowy" Cainites.

MALKAVIANS

By discounting the Madmen, the Tremere have opened themselves up to their unwelcome attentions. Many Tremere believe that the children of Malkav are either possessed by infernal spirits or else have become maddened by the Embrace. Secretly, the Tremere fear Malkavians, since the lunatics' often discomfiting ravings defy the Usurpers' concepts of reason and propriety. A few Tremere, however, realize that these mad Cainites possess uncanny insights. These rare and forward-thinking Usurpers advocate studying the Madmen in order to test their potential as oracles and seers.

NOSFERATU

To the Tremere, the Nosferatu represent the most horrific and foul aspects of Cainite existence. While they have recently learned of the Lepers' status as masters of acquiring information and collecting rumors, the Usurpers' instinctive dislike of the Nosferatu makes it almost impossible for them to treat with the Lepers as anything approaching equals. Indeed, Goratrix' experiments upon captured Nosferatu have made enemies of most members of that clan.

RAVNOS

The Tremere regard the Charlatans as little more than fakes, holding them in the same contempt as they hold beggars, serfs and traveling buskers. The Ravnos' chicanery and "false" magics are viewed as merely the hallmarks of a tribe of thieves and mendicants. Unfortunately, the Tremere's disdain leaves them open to the most malicious tricks the Ravnos can devise.

TOREADOR

The Tremere hold the Toreador in high regard, not only for their grasp of culture and history, but also for their political influence in the Church and in many parts of Europe. However, the Usurpers temper their admiration for the ease with which the Artisans maneuver in both Cainite and mortal society with a faint disdain for the

apparent frivolity exhibited by many Toreador. The Tremere have yet to realize just how much power the Toreador have in formulating Cainite opinion.

TZIMISCE

The Tremere's relationship with their "parent" clan is complex. Although a state of outright hostility exists between the two clans, as the Tzimisce attempt to drive them from their ancestral lands and eventually obliterate them, the Tremere find their own hatred of the Fiends tempered by the knowledge of their common blood. Until Tremere's act of Amaranth upon Saulot confirmed him as an Antediluvian and gave his followers the status of a clan, the Tremere were considered by many Cainites as little more than an offshoot of the Tzimisce. Although most Tremere would hotly deny such an allegation, they do, in private, acknowledge that without the blood of the Tzimisce, they would not now exist in their current vampiric state. Of course, they hasten to point out, Zeus owed his existence to Cronos, and that the Tremere view their relationship to the Tzimisce as similar.

Above all, the Tremere both hate and fear the Tzimisce. The Fiends' mystical compact with the soil of their homeland and, some say, with the dark, Infernal deity whose essence permeates the Transylvanian vastness, haunts the Usurpers. This, if anything, only increases the Tremere's desire to establish themselves outside of the lands around Ceoris and the Carpathians.

Encounters between Tremere and Tzimisce usually do not last long enough for verbal exchanges. Instead, they are brief and bloody clashes that end in the Final Death of at least one of the participants.

Whenever the Tremere are fortunate enough to subdue and capture one of the Fiends, the unfortunate Cainite becomes the subject of further experimentation. The fate of a Usurper taken by one of the *voivodes* is, if anything, worse.

VENTRUE

Although the Tremere acknowledge the Ventrue as the current leaders of Western Cainite society, this just makes them the ultimate targets of the Usurpers' ambitions. In the meantime, the Tremere attempt to cultivate the favor of the Patricians whenever possible, the better to learn from them how best to go about relieving them of their power. For their part, the Ventrue admire the Usurpers' successful bid for Cainite recognition even while condemning their methods of achieving "legitimacy."

The Tremere are aware of the antipathy that exists between the Ventrue and the Brujah, although they do not quite understand why Carthage occupies such an important place in the rivalry between the clans. Nevertheless, the Usurpers attempt to make use of the Ventrue-Brujah conflict to better their own position with regard to both

clans, playing them off against each other whenever possible. In areas where a Ventrue is prince (i.e., in much of Europe), the Tremere seek to establish clandestine alliances with the Brujah while paying lip service to the Patrician ruler. In those regions under Brujah control, they secretly attempt to curry favor with the Patricians in hopes of "civilizing" the area. The Tremere are only partially successful in these endeavors, however, for they have not yet learned the extremes of subtlety and intrigue that their potential dupes have had millennia to practice.

In Eastern Europe, the Tremere often find themselves allied with the Ventrue against the Tzimisce. Although the Usurpers dislike incurring obligations of loyalty to the so-called Eastern Lords, they recognize the pragmatic advantages in cooperation with the Patricians against a common and terrible enemy.

OTHER CAINITES

BAALI

Although most Tremere reject outright Infernalism (a holdover from their training as magi), a few Usurpers grudgingly admire the power wielded by these possessed Cainites. Some Tremere fall prey to the Baali's lures and succumb to their schemes without realizing, until too late, that they have done so. The Tremere destroy those among them who show any overt evidence of traffic with the Baali, but are sometimes slow to destroy the Baali themselves. After all, who knows what secrets the Infernalists might be tempted to reveal if spared....

SALUBRI

The children of Saulot are an affront to the Tremere by their very existence. The Usurpers actively hunt the remnants of the slain Antediluvian, fearing that the Salubri will succeed in rallying other Cainites against them. At least one subset of the clan, famous for its ability as warriors rather than healers, has sworn vengeance upon the Tremere for the diablerie of its founder. Thus the Tremere seek to destroy all remaining Salubri in order to protect themselves, wrapping their mission of extermination in a cloak of rumors of Salubri depravity.

MAGI AND MAGES

Although their Cainite natures preclude the practice of True Magick, many members of Clan Tremere find it difficult to separate themselves from their connections with mages. At present, mortal magi still exist within Tremere chantries, still oblivious to the undead creatures who walk among them. Nevertheless, Tremere typically treat mages with extreme caution, their respect born from their own knowledge of the powers these individuals command.

HOUSE TYTALUS

This group of mages does not seem to share the same aversion to the existence of vampires as other mages. The vampiric Tremere hope that, in the event that the other mages discover their identity as Cainites, the mages of House Tytalus, at least, will not entirely abandon them.

WEREWOLVES

The Tremere have incurred the wrath of the Transylvanian werewolves (mostly Shadow Lords), who consider them intruders on their domain. In addition, many Tremere seek to hunt and trap werewolves in order to use them for experimental purposes and to take advantage of their potent vitae in alchemical research. As they expand across Europe, the Tremere encounter other tribes of werewolves, which they also swiftly antagonize by virtue of their incorrigible tendency to experiment on the Lupines they capture. To the Tremere, the Lupines are animals and resources, nothing more — an attitude the werewolves find less than appealing.

OTHER SUPERNATURALS

The Tremere know of the existence of wraiths, faeries and mummies. They both respect these other supernatural creatures and desire to learn as many of their secrets as

possible. As usual, the Usurpers are not above attempts to use their thaumaturgical powers to gain control over other supernaturals whenever possible.

Those Tremere who engage in traffic with the dead do so in order to discover the truth about the afterlife or to attempt to learn as much as they can about the nature of the Underworld, but to date have been frustrated by the seemingly contradictory information they have garnered. Even erstwhile informants have been known alter their *personae* and tales in the blink of an eye, making it extremely difficult to sift wheat from chaff. More than one Tremere has written off the entire Empire of the Dead as a pack of liars, and has begun researching ways to try to extirpate the troublesome ghosts.

A few Tremere have attempted to capture faeries in order to use their blood in their magical experiments; the unforeseen effects of fae blood, however, make this practice risky at best. Those Usurpers who were magi before becoming vampires are aware of the dangers inherent in arousing the anger of the Fair Folk.

Some Tremere actively look for evidence of the Pharaonic immortals, hoping to discover from these true immortals how to reverse their own undead state. Most Tremere, however, realize the folly of attempting to wrest the secret of eternal life from these creatures by force and merely study them from afar.



Children of the Usurper

FAILED APPRENTICE

Quote: *You need not thank me for my assistance. No one else has ever done so.*

Prelude: Your mistress bought you from your parents at the Royal Market in Buda-Pest. You were seven and only a girl, but the cloaked woman paid for you in silver and took you away with her to a huge castle high in the mountains. You traveled by night to reach your new home and, once there, you saw nothing of the world outside.

For seven years, you labored for your mistress, cleaning her workroom — her laboratory, she called it. You learned to read and write Latin and Greek. Then your real work began. Your mistress taught you about magic. You studied until alchemical formulas, astrological conjunctions and all manner of mystic theories came unbidden to your mind. Still, she forbade you to learn any conjurations or spells.

When you asked your mistress when you would receive training as a magus, she refused to answer you. You turned away in shame and never spoke of it again. You felt that, somehow, you had failed her.

Then the others came — gaunt men and women with pale faces and hollow cheeks. They spoke to your mistress about you. Then they asked you questions. You answered them as best you could, but felt that nothing you said satisfied them.

The following evening, your mistress ordered you to bathe and gave you a crimson robe to wear. She asked you if you would learn the secret of immortality. "Will I become a magus like you?" you asked. "You will become like me," she replied.

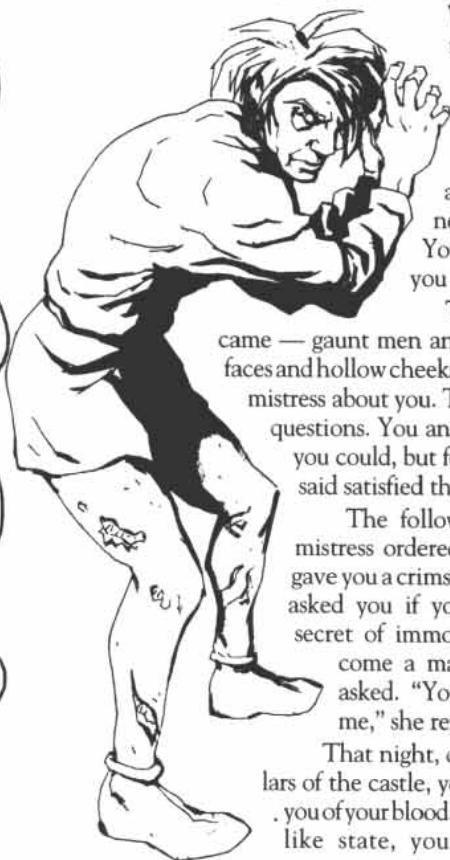
That night, deep within the cellars of the castle, your mistress drained you of your blood. In a dreamy, trance-like state, you watched as your

life-force seeped into your blood-red robe. Too late, as your mistress' fiery vitae burned your lips and charred your soul, you realized what kind of immortality you had received. You would never become a magus, for you had become one of the Tremere.

Concept: Throughout your long apprenticeship, no one ever praised you. Even when you succeeded, you believed that you had failed. Intellectually, you know that the harshness of your training helped prepare you for your existence as a Cainite; tenderness and affection do not suit the demands of your unlife.

Roleplaying Hints: Despite your competence in many areas of knowledge, despite your success in learning the beginnings of Thaumaturgy, you cannot shake the certainty that you fail to measure up to the expectations of your sire. Apply yourself to whatever task is assigned to you with determination and resolve. You have learned to motivate yourself, since no one else seems to encourage you.

Equipment: Crimson robe and cloak with cowl, scrolls and treatises in Latin and Greek, alchemical tools, astrological compendium



VAMPIRE The Dark Ages			
NAME: _____		NATURE: LONER	
PLAYER: _____		DEMEANOR: SURVIVOR	
CHRONICLE: _____		CLAN: TREMERE	
		GENERATION: 9th	
		HAVEN: _____	
		CONCEPT: FAILED APPRENTICE	
ATTRIBUTES			
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL	
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●	
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●	
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wit: ●●●●●	
ABILITIES			
TALENTS		SKILLS	
Acting: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●	
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Hearth Wisdom: ●●●●●	
Athletics: ●●●●●	Craft: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●	
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●	
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●	
Empathy: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●	
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●	
Larceny: ●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●	
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●	
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Sensschal: ●●●●●	
ADVANTAGES			
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS	
THAUMATURGY: ●●●●●	MENTOR: ●●●●●		
AUSPEX: ●●●●●	RESOURCES: ●●●●●		
	GENERATION: ●●●●●		
OTHER TRAITS			
●●●●●			
●●●●●			
●●●●●			
●●●●●			
●●●●●			
COMBAT			
Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	
ROAD			
HUMANITY			
●●●●●●●●●●			
WILLPOWER			
●●●●●●●●●●			
●●●●●●●●●●			
BLOOD POOL			
●●●●●●●●●●			
●●●●●●●●●●			
HEALTH			
Bruted		□	
Hurt	-1	□	
Injured	-1	□	
Wounded	-2	□	
Mauled	-2	□	
Crippled	-5	□	
Incapacitated		□	
EXPERIENCE			
□			

TWISTED LORIST

Quote: *No knowledge is too dark, no secrets too dangerous. Let me show you my latest discovery, but hurry, before my subject expires!*

Prelude: Your family sent you to Paris for an education, but nothing in the libraries of the university satisfied your thirst for the kind of knowledge you desired. Then you heard whispered rumors of a secret cache of scrolls beneath the library. The other students claimed that those who read these forbidden writings lost their souls, damned by the teachings contained therein.

You had to see these damning documents for yourself. That very evening, you secreted yourself within the library until it closed and the last musty scholar left for the safety of his home. Groping your way through dark passages, candle in hand, you found the stairway that led to a small room below the streets of the city.

Suddenly, a voice muttered in the darkness and a gentle light illuminated the room. That night, you discovered both the knowledge you sought and the man who would teach you even more.



You led a strange and exhilarating double life — studying the works of the Church fathers by day and delving into the library of the Damned by night.

You don't remember sleeping, or even needing to sleep. The ancient scholar who supervised your clandestine education soon introduced you to even more bizarre and satisfying practices. You studied the workings of the human body by experimenting on living subjects in his laboratory, also below ground. You soon learned to ignore the plaintive screams of your victims. The quest for knowledge justified everything.

One evening, your mentor pronounced you ready for the next phase of your study. He told you to pack your things and prepare for a journey into Hell. He laughed as he spoke, but somehow, you believed him.

A week later, you had satisfied the head of the chantry in Paris that you were a suitable candidate for eternal unlife. The following night, your sire initiated you into Clan Tremere. You sometimes ponder what ultimately led you on the path to your damnation — the books, your tutor or yourself. Then you consider your newest experiment and realize that, in the end, it does not matter.

Concept: The lure of forbidden knowledge compels you to push your mind into stranger and stranger places. Your laboratories of vivisection provide you with an endless source of entertainment, as well as increasing your comprehension of the mysteries of the universe. Unlife has freed you from the cares of your soul and the petty laws of king and Church. Only the clan has any hold over you, and their dominion has liberated you from the rule of others.

Roleplaying Hints: You are first and foremost a seeker of knowledge — of anything and everything. The forbidden exercises an almost irresistible pull on you and you follow your urges to their ultimate conclusion. You do not fear damnation; that comes, if it comes at all, after death — and your existence stretches before you in a potentially endless continuum of discovery.

Equipment: Scholar's clothes, laboratory, tools for your experiments, expendable victims

VAMPIRE The Dark Ages			
NAME: _____		NATURE: FANATIC	
PLAYER: _____		DEMEANOR: CELEBRANT	
CHRONICLE: _____		CLUNE: TREMERE	
		GENERATION: 5th	
		HAVEN: _____	
		CONCEPT: TWISTED LORIST	
ATTRIBUTES			
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL	
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●	
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●	
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●	
ABILITIES			
TALENTS		SKILLS	
Acting: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●	
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Heath Wisdom: ●●●●●	
Athletics: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●	
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●	
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●	
Empathy: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●	
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●	
Larceny: ●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●	
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●	
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Seneschal: ●●●●●	
ADVANTAGES			
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS	
Thaumaturgy: ●●●●●	Mentor: ●●●●●	Virtues	
Dominance: ●●●●●	Contacts: ●●●●●	Emancipation/Conviction: ●●●●●	
Auspex: ●●●●●	Herd: ●●●●●	Self-Control/Instinct: ●●●●●	
	Generation: ●●●●●	Courage: ●●●●●	
OTHER TRAITS			
Roid Devil: ●●●●●		Health	
Willpower: ●●●●●		Bruised: ☐	
Combat		Hurt: ☐	
Weapon: _____	Difficulty: _____	Injured: ☐	
		Wounded: ☐	
		Mauled: ☐	
		Crippled: ☐	
		Incapacitated: ☐	
		Experience	
		●●●●●	

BOOK TWO: TREMERE

SILENT SLAYER

Quote: *You needn't bother asking me to spare your pitiful unlife. But you needn't fear, either. I, unlike you, deliver death swiftly and relatively painlessly.*

Prelude: Your family committed the unpardonable crime of offending the *voivode*. For that, they died. You survived only because you hid until dawn. Then you fled into the forests, preferring to die from the fangs and claws of savage beasts than at the merciless hands of your overlord.

The wolves found you after dark. You fled through the pitch-black forest, fear quickening your steps and heightening your awareness. Cornered, you turned to face your death, seeing nothing but glowing red eyes and hearing only the anticipatory snarls of the enormous, slaving beasts. Your carving knife seemed such a puny weapon, but it was all you had. You held it out in front of you and waited for the end.

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning struck the ground in front of you, charring one of the wolves. The others fled in howling terror. A tall, muscular man stepped out from behind a tree and clapped an icy-cold hand on your shoulder. He told you that you were safe, and you believed him.

Your rescuer brought you to Ceoris, where you related to him the tale of your family's agonizing death. He listened gravely and then asked you if you wanted revenge. You nodded eagerly. "Then you will have the opportunity, in time," he told you.

You lived with the apprentices, but you studied the art of killing rather than the mysteries of alchemy and sorcery. You rarely saw your savior, for he spent most of his time away from Ceoris, searching for ancient stores of knowledge and lost treasures of the past. You had other teachers.

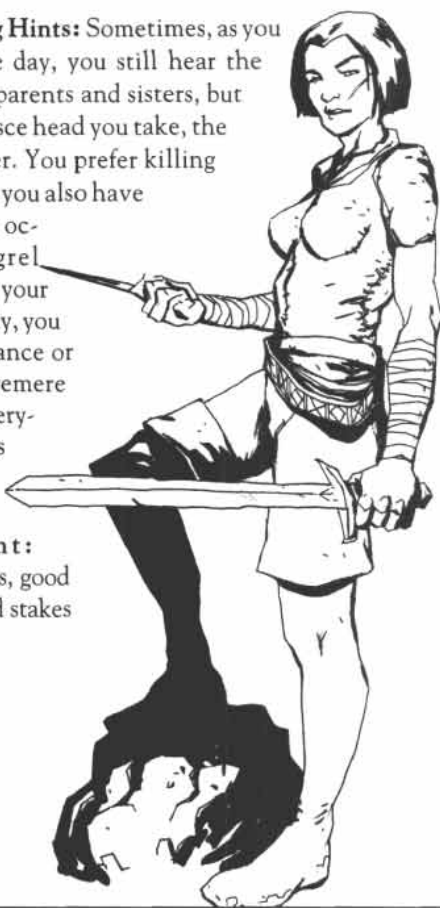
You received the Embrace because it was necessary. "The Tremere have many enemies," you were told. "Most of them are immortal. To bring death to the undying, you, too, must join their ranks."

Twelve years after the *voivode* slaughtered your family, you tracked him to his haven. Your Thaumaturgy gained you admittance into his stronghold, but your sword removed his head. His death was the beginning of your quest for vengeance.

Concept: Unlike most Tremere, you are a trained killer — an assassin for your clan. Originally, you sought only to avenge your mortal family's death. Now, you take a professional pride in eliminating Cainites and any others who threaten your new family.

Roleplaying Hints: Sometimes, as you sleep during the day, you still hear the screams of your parents and sisters, but with each Tzimisce head you take, the cries grow fainter. You prefer killing the *voivodes*, but you also have Lupines and the occasional Gangrel and Nosferatu to your credit. Eventually, you will travel to France or England; the Tremere have enemies everywhere, and it is your job to deal with them.

Equipment: Traveling clothes, good sword, sharpened stakes



VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES			
NAME: _____		NATURE: FANATIC	
PLAYER: _____		DEMEANOR: DEFENDER	
CHRONICLE: _____		CLAN: TREMERE	
GENERATION: 10th		HAVEN: _____	
CONCEPT: SILENT SLAYER		_____	
ATTRIBUTES			
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL	
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●	
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●	
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●	
ABILITIES			
TALENTS		SKILLS	
Acrobatics: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●	
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Heath Wisdom: ●●●●●	
Athletics: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●	
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●	
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●	
Empathy: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●	
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●	
Larceny: ●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●	
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●	
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Senses: ●●●●●	
ADVANTAGES			
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS	
THAUMATURGY: ●●●●●	MENTOR: ●●●●●	RESOURCES: ●●●●●	
DOMINATE: ●●●●●	CONTACTS: ●●●●●	GENERATION: ●●●●●	
AUSPEX: ●●●●●			
OTHER TRAITS			
ROD: ●●●●●		BEAST: ●●●●●	
WILLPOWER: ●●●●●		BLOOD POOL: ●●●●●	
COMBAT		HEALTH	
Weapon: _____	Difficulty: _____	Bruised: ☐	
		Hurt: -1 ☐	
		Injured: -1 ☐	
		Wounded: -2 ☐	
		Mauled: -2 ☐	
		Crippled: -5 ☐	
		Incapacitated: ☐	
		EXPERIENCE: _____	

POLISHED SCHEMER

Quote: *In return for ceding these minor holdings to my clan for the purpose of establishing a chantry, my lord, you have the assurance of Tremere support in your claim to the recently vacated principedom. We ask no other favors from you save your good will and your gratitude.*

Prelude: Some call your work diplomacy; others refer to it as lying. Regardless of the details, you are an expert at the art of subtle negotiation and arbitration. You enjoy the interplay of give and take necessary to bring opposing interests into a mutually agreed upon accord. Others achieve victory with the sword; your weapons are your mind and your carefully considered words.

You learned your skills from your father, who was a renowned mediator in the Holy Roman Empire. Like him, you saw the advantages of seeking to prevent the ravages of war by establishing cordial relations among the petty nobles of Eastern Europe. When you felt ready to strike out on your own, you traveled to France, where you offered your services to the local nobility.

Your successes in France brought you to the attention of the Church, and so — although you remained a layman — you traveled throughout Europe as a papal emissary. Finally, you negotiated a delicate agreement between the Pope and a local noble. The Baron de Granville congratulated you on your expertise and hosted a feast in your honor, claiming he wanted you to meet some of his friends.



Those friends proved to be an unusual group of learned men and women, who questioned you as you supped at your host's table although they ate nothing themselves. You answered them as honestly as you could, explaining to them something of your methods of achieving agreements between supposedly intractable parties. They asked you if you planned to work for the Church's interests indefinitely; you

replied that you would continue to represent the Pope until someone made you a better offer.

That offer came within the fortnight. Although you found it hard to believe your new patrons' promise of eternal existence, you found their insistence difficult to refuse. Now that you have received the Embrace and belong, unbeating heart and damned soul, to Clan Tremere, you realize that Cainite powers influenced your decision. Now you wield those same powers to sway the thoughts of others. You have no regrets.

Concept: The Tremere selected you for your diplomatic and political acumen. You exist to smooth the way for your clan's expansion and to gain entry into Cainite society for the Usurpers. The risks are greater than any you have ever taken before, but the satisfaction you receive from successfully gaining the advantage for your clan exceeds your previous dealing with mere mortals.

Roleplaying Hints: Always choose your words carefully — not just when you engage in serious discussions with the agents of the local Ventrue or Toreador prince. Even casual conversation serves your — and your clan's — interests. Study everyone you meet to ascertain how best to win their support.

Equipment: Traveling clothes, court finery, letters of introduction

VAMPIRE The Dark Ages			
NAME: _____		NATURE: AUTOCRAT	
PLAYER: _____		DEMEANOR: INNOVATOR	
CHRONICLE: _____		CLAN: TREMERE	
		GENERATION: 12th	
		HAVEN: _____	
		CONCEPT: POLISHED SCHEMER	
ATTRIBUTES			
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL	
Strength.....000000	Charisma.....000000	Perception.....000000	
Dexterity.....000000	Manipulation.....000000	Intelligence.....000000	
Stamina.....000000	Appearance.....000000	Wits.....000000	
ABILITIES			
TALENTS		SKILLS	
Acting.....000000	Animal Ken.....000000	Academics.....000000	
Alertness.....000000	Archery.....000000	Hearth Wisdom.....000000	
Athletics.....000000	Crafts.....000000	Investigation.....000000	
Brawl.....000000	Etiquette.....000000	Law.....000000	
Dodge.....000000	Herbalism.....000000	Linguistics.....000000	
Empathy.....000000	Melee.....000000	Medicine.....000000	
Intimidation.....000000	Music.....000000	Occult.....000000	
Larceny.....000000	Ride.....000000	Politics.....000000	
Leadership.....000000	Stealth.....000000	Science.....000000	
Subterfuge.....000000	Survival.....000000	Senseschal.....000000	
ADVANTAGES			
DISCIPLINES		BACKGROUNDS	
THAUMATURGY.....000000	INFLUENCE.....000000	VIRTUES	
DOMINATE.....000000	STATUS.....000000	Conscience/Conviction.....0000	
	ALLIES.....000000	Self-Control/Innermet.....0000	
	CONTACTS.....000000	Courage.....000000	
	RESOURCES.....000000		
OTHER TRAITS		ROAD	
		HUMANITY	
		0000000000	
		WILLPOWER	
		0000000000	
		BLOOD POOL	
		0000000000	
		HEALTH	
		Bruised.....-1	
		Hurt.....-1	
		Injured.....-2	
		Wounded.....-2	
		Mauled.....-3	
		Crippled.....-5	
		Incapacitated.....	
		EXPERIENCE	
			
COMBAT			
Weapon	Difficulty/Damage		

Of Historical Note: The Sleeper of Georís

THEY SAY OUR FOUNDER SLEEPS WITHIN THE HEART OF THIS FORTRESS, AND THAT, FROM THE DEPTHS OF HIS SLUMBER, HIS SPIRIT TAKES NOTE OF ALL THAT TRANSPIRES ABOVE HIM. ETRUIS IN PARTICULAR CLAIMS TO FEEL TREMERE'S PRESENCE, BUT HIS EXPRESSION SHOWS THAT HE TAKES LITTLE JOY TO HIS WORDS.

I TOO, HAVE FELT SOMETHING – OR SOMEONE – STIRRING RESTLESSLY IN THE DEEPEST PART OF THE NIGHT. THE WALLS CREAK AS IF AN UNSEEN FORCE PRESSES AGAINST THEM, AND THE VERY AIR WITHIN THE CAVERNIOUS HALLS GROANS WITH THE PASSING OF SOME MOMENTOUS BEING. IT IS NOT A PLEASANT SENSATION, I FEAR, SOMETIMES, THAT THIS IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS SHOULD COLLAPSE FROM THE WEIGHT OF THE TERROR THAT PERMEATES ITS STONE FOUNDATIONS.

WHILE THE OTHERS PRACTICE THEIR SECRET ENDEAVORS IN THEIR LABORATORIES OR PLOT THE DEMISE OF THE LATEST OUTSIDE THREAT TO OUR BELEAGUERED CLAN, I REMAIN WITHIN THE SANCTUARY OF THIS LIBRARY, ENSCONCED AMONG THE DUSTY PARCHMENTS AND SCROLLS AND FORGOTTEN BY MOST OF MY FELLOWS. HERE, IN SOLITUDE, I PORE THROUGH THE ACCOUNTS OF THAT FATEFUL NIGHT WHEN TREMERE TOOK SAULOT'S ESSENCE TO FORTIFY HIS OWN VITAE AND ESTABLISH OUR BLOODLINE AS A CLAN.

THOSE WHO WITNESSED THE EVENT HAVE LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY TRANSPIRED, IT IS AS IF SOME GREAT CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE FELL UPON THEM. THEY REPORT ONLY THAT TREMERE FOUND THE ANTEDILUVIAN, THAT HE SUCCEEDED IN SUBDUING SAULOT'S TORPID FORM (HOW COULD HE NOT!) AND THAT HE EMERGED TRIUMPHANT WITH THE POWER OF THE THIRD GENERATION COURSEING THROUGH HIS VEINS.

I SAW OUR FOUNDER ONCE, JUST AFTER HIS RETURN FROM SAULOT'S HAVEN. HIS BODY RADIATED A PALPABLE AURA OF MAGNIFICENCE AND GRANDEUR, BUT SOMEHOW, HIS EYES SEEMED GUARDED, AS IF HIS ACTION HAD SPARKED AN INNER WAR.

I STOOD AMONG THOSE WHO WAITED TO WELCOME HIM BACK. I DOUBT HE EVEN NOTICED ME, FOR I WAS STILL OF INSUFFICIENT STANDING TO MERIT HIS ATTENTION. HE GAZED UPON US ALL, APPEARING BOTH EXULTANT AND WEARY.

"IT IS DONE," HE PROCLAIMED IN A VOICE THAT BARELY ROSE ABOVE A WHISPER YET ECHOED THROUGHOUT THE MEETING CHAMBER. "WE ARE A CLAN BY BLOOD AND BY DESTINY." THAT WAS ALL HE SAID, OR ALL I CAN REMEMBER. THE REPORTS WRITTEN BY OTHERS VARY LITTLE FROM THAT TEXT. PERHAPS IT IS WHAT HE WISHES US TO REMEMBER.

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, HE CALLED ETRUIS, GORATRIX, MEERLINDA AND HIS OTHER CLOSEST ADVISORS INTO HIS PRESENCE. WE HEARD LATER THAT TREMERE HAD VOLUNTARILY ENTERED TORDOR, FOR THE REPOSE OF HIS SOUL AND FOR THE GOOD OF THE CLAN. I HAVE NOT SEEN HIM SINCE.

NOW, SOME 60 YEARS LATER, I SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUE IMPORT OF TREMERE'S SACRIFICE.

YES, I SAY TREMERE'S – AND NOT SAULOT'S – SACRIFICE, BECAUSE I HAVE CAUSE TO WONDER JUST WHO SUFFERED MORE AT SAULOT'S DEATH. MOREOVER, I QUESTION WHETHER THE PRICE WE PAID – OR RATHER, THE PRICE TREMERE PAID – TO ACQUIRE THE NECESSARY CREDENTIALS FOR OUR CLAN'S LEGITIMACY WAS NOT TOO HIGH.

THE COUNCIL OF SEVEN GUIDES US, AND THEY DO THEIR BEST TO ADMINISTER JUSTLY THE AFFAIRS OF CLAN TREMERE. STILL, WE ARE BEREFT OF TREMERE'S DIRECTION. IT IS AS IF HE HAS CUT US LOOSE TO FEND FOR OURSELVES IN A DARK AND HOSTILE REALM, WITH ONLY OCCASIONAL TUGS AT THE MINDS OF ETRUIS AND THE OTHERS TO GUIDE US THROUGH THIS MURKY QUAGMIRE OF CAINITE EXISTENCE. IT IS NOT ENOUGH.

AND THEN, THERE ARE THE DREAMS.

THE NIGHTMARES COME TO ME - THEY COME TO ALL OF US - IN THE MIDST OF OUR DAILY REST. I HAVE TRIED TO SPEAK TO MY CLOSEST COMPANIONS ABOUT THE TERRORS THAT CAUSE THEM TO WAKE SCREAMING FROM THEIR FITFUL DAYTIME SLUMBER. THEY DO NOT SPEAK OF WHAT CAUSES THOSE OUTCRIES OF DESOLATION, BUT I MUST RECORD FAITHFULLY MY OWN EXPERIENCE.

SOMETHING UNSPEAKABLE WALKS THESE HALLS. SHAPELESS, WITHOUT REAL SUBSTANCE YET PREGNANT WITH MALEVOLENCE, IT WATCHES US ALL.

YET, FOR ALL I KNOW, THIS ENTITY MAY NOT WALK AT ALL. I THINK THAT EVEN AS I SLEEP, I HEAR IT SLITHER PAST MY RESTING PLACE, PAUSING FOR AN INTERMINABLE MOMENT TO LISTEN FOR SIGNS THAT ANYONE HAS DETECTED ITS PASSING. AT SUCH TIMES, I AWAKEN, MY SKIN GUSTENING WITH BLOODY SWEAT. WANTING TO SCREAM, I BITE MY LIPS INSTEAD TO COMPEL MYSELF TO SILENCE BECAUSE I KNOW - I KNOW - IT WAITS JUST OUTSIDE MY DOOR.

AND THEN IT LAUGHS, INDULGENTLY AND MAUCIOUSLY, IT SNEERS AT ALL US PITIFUL USURPERS. AND ITS LAUGHTER HAS THE SOUND OF TREMERE'S VOICE - BUT NOT HIS VOICE ALONE. THEN I TRULY AWAKEN, A SCREAM FORCING ITS WAY PAST MY BLOODIED LIPS.

I LOOK UPON THESE WORDS AND READ THE RAVINGS OF A MADMAN. PERHAPS THE CURSE OF MALKAV HAS DESCENDED UPON ONE OUTSIDE HIS LINE. PERHAPS NOT.

I HAVE MADE MY DECISION. THIS NIGHT, WHEN I COME TO THE END OF THIS PARCHMENT, I INTEND TO DESCEND INTO THE HEART OF GEORIS AND DISCOVER THE TRUTH FOR MYSELF. IF TREMERE HAS SOMEHOW TURNED AGAINST US, WE NEED TO KNOW THIS. IF HIS STRUGGLE TO COME TO TERMS WITH HIS CONSCIENCE HAS DRIVEN HIM TO MADNESS, WE MUST DISCOVER SOME MEANS TO HELP HIM. I GO NOW, BEFORE I WITHDRAW MY RESOLVE.

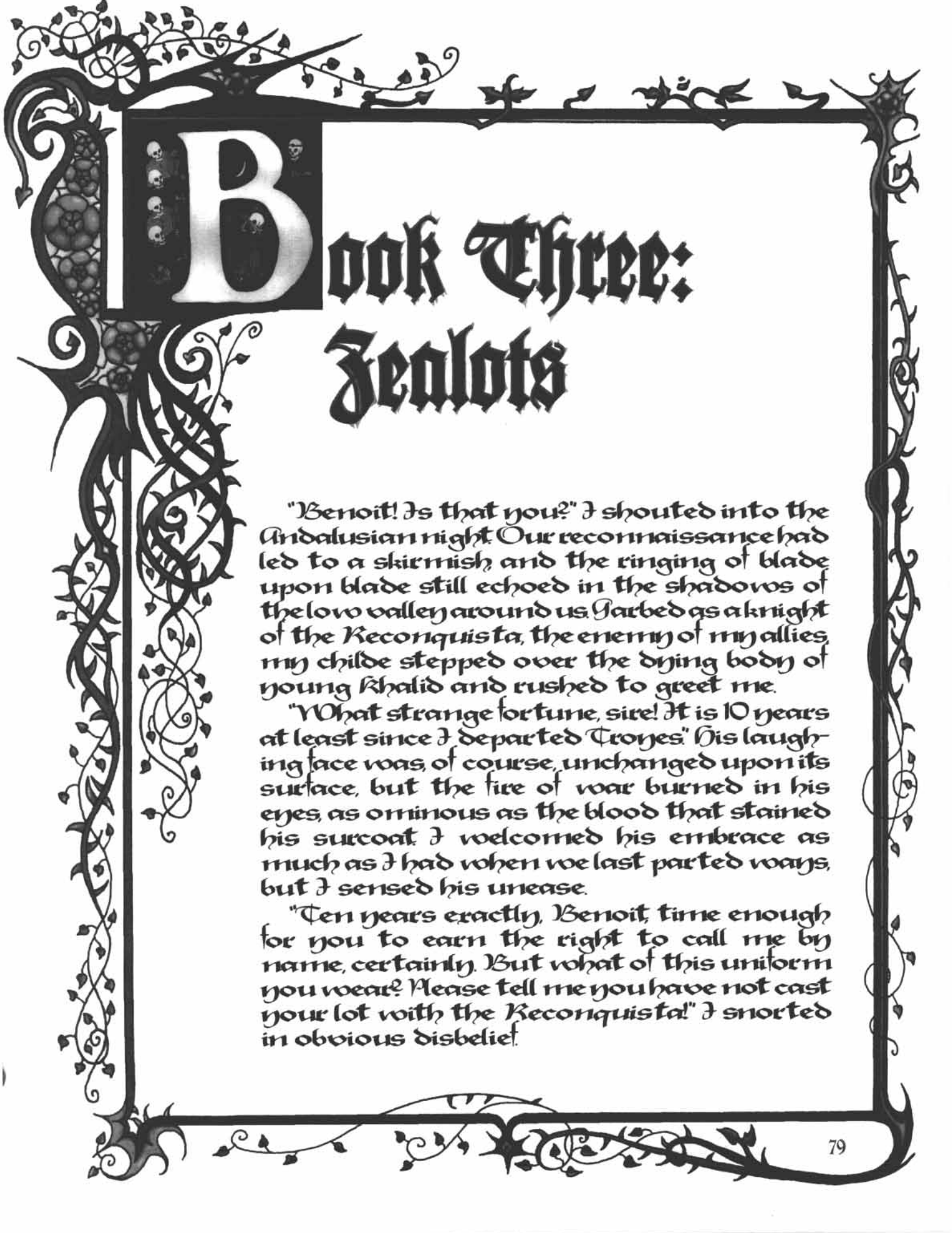
Meerlinda,

I direct this document to your attention; it has remained within my possession since the disappearance of its author, Domokos, three years ago. I feel, for reasons best left unvoiced, that it is too perilous for me to retain it any longer. Please, for the sake of our clan and for the respect I bear for you and your work, keep it safe regardless of your thoughts as to the veracity of its contents.

All I can say to you is this: I, too, have nightmares such as Domokos has described. I, too, hear my own screams pull me from my daily rest. Count yourself fortunate to be far from this place of growing unease; my thoughts grow lighter when I think that you, at least, are safe from that which threatens us in ways even I cannot begin to comprehend.

*Written this 12 night of October, in the year 1198, by my own hand,
Etrius*





B

ook Three: Zealots

"Benoit! Is that you?" I shouted into the Andalusian night. Our reconnaissance had led to a skirmish and the ringing of blade upon blade still echoed in the shadows of the low valley around us. Garbed as a knight of the Reconquista, the enemy of my allies, my childe stepped over the dying body of young Khalid and rushed to greet me.

"What strange fortune, sire! It is 10 years at least since I departed Troyes." His laughing face was, of course, unchanged upon its surface, but the fire of war burned in his eyes, as ominous as the blood that stained his surcoat. I welcomed his embrace as much as I had when we last parted ways, but I sensed his unease.

"Ten years exactly, Benoit, time enough for you to earn the right to call me by name, certainly. But what of this uniform you wear? Please tell me you have not cast your lot with the Reconquista!" I snorted in obvious disbelief.

"I have, Michel." My childe's voice was defiant, but his eyes sought the bloodied ground. I took his arm and guided him from the battlefield. Enough time remained before dawn for me to rejoin my companions *after* having words with my misguided childe.

"I trust you realize whom you serve," I said, more brusquely than I intended. Whoever held his allegiance, it was good to see him again. The journey from Troyes had been lonely, and despite my current alliance I spent most of my nights in battle or solitude. Granted, Benoit had left me long before I deemed him ready, but he was still my childe.

"I do. I am not proud of this, but it is a matter of necessity. In return for my services to Christendom in ridding Iberia of the Moors, Maffeo Altieri of the Lasombra has agreed to assist my allies in expelling the Ventrue and their English slaves from the Aquitaine."

His words stunned me. "Have you lost all sense, Benoit? What possessed you to do such a thing?" Benoit *knew* I hated them even more than the Patricians. He *knew* such a deal would alienate him from the rest of our clan. He — I struggled to regain my composure, knowing my fight against frenzy was plain for him to see. "It is not the way of the Magisters to become directly involved in anyone's conflicts. A Lasombra's word carries even less substance than his reflection. Whatever comes of this devil's bargain you have struck will be far from what you intended, my friend."

He looked away from me, brows crooked and dark above his eyes. "Do you think me a fool, Sir Monvignier? Childe of the most famed and learned Alypius? I have not been sitting idle in my little French keep for 10 years gathering cobwebs and waiting for Divine Providence to banish my enemies back across the Channel. I have garnered allies from Normandy to Toledo, allies who would be more than happy to drive the Patricians back to their little island!"

"You and your allies may smash the Ventrue into powder, but it will not displace the English taint from French soil. Do not suppose, as the Magisters do, that vampires govern the world. Influence it, yes, but it is the mass of humans who guide nations' destinies, not the Cainites above them. Seek your allies among the kine, not

the damned Lasombra! It is up to the French people to expel the English from our homeland. Do not expect the Lasombra to do it for them!"

We laughed then, and for a moment it was not as sire and childe nor as old friends, but the laughter of brothers. Ten years ago we laughed that way, but 10 years ago he would not have made bargains with the devil. Benoit sobered suddenly, and gazed out upon the wreckage of the valley. Despite our laughter of a moment ago, tension still weighed in the air.

"No, I will not turn from my path. This *feels* right, Michel. Altieri has ensured us passage through the port of Bordeaux. We plan to spare one Patrician's life, so that all his clan will know that a Lasombra loosed the blood-crazed Brujah onto their city. It is my hope to turn the two clans upon one another. I am not alone in this—"

"You play their game," I warned, "a game in which you know nothing of the true stakes. Join me, instead! Surely this mad pact you have made cannot be so momentous as to pit you against your sire and clan. I promise you, whatever bargain you have contrived the Lasombra will twist to their own ends."

"You know full well Magisters occupy both sides of the *Reconquista*. Perhaps one pulls your strings, yes? And how long until one of your Saracen allies sinks his teeth into your neck? Better to serve Christendom and the war against the Ventrue than Assamites and Moors."

"There are better ways. Our brethren in Portugal are already putting their plans into effect."

"Bah! You plan, you debate, you bide your time with pretty speeches and tales of how marvelous the world shall be when we have won the final battle, but you *do* nothing! No more, Michel. I have allies, I have brothers of our clan behind me, and I am prepared to overcome anyone who would stop me. He who is not with me is against me."

A thousand replies hung upon my lips, unspoken, as I watched him stride into the darkness.

"Farewell, Michel," he called back to me. "If there are any men among the elders of Lisbon, tell them I await their visit." Then my childe left me for the last time, consumed by the shadows of al-Andalus.



21 Clan in Descent

Listen carefully to what I have to say, Francisco. We may be immortal, but that does not mean I will spend my time repeating myself. I have already told you *what* you are; it is time you learned *who* you are. Only by understanding every facet of what it means to be Brujah can you hope to play a role in bringing about the Ideal. I have wandered Europe from east to west, spoken and fought with brothers of every faction and heard arguments for and against every cause. Everything I have learned I tell you, but remember, this is my version of the truth. Clan Brujah is diverse in attitude and belief; though I strive for a balanced view, not a one of our brotherhood will agree with me on all points.

The blood of Brujah that now suffuses your flesh has passed down to you from the finest thinkers and leaders of Cainite society. We are warriors, yes, but proficiency with the blade is meaningless without a strong mind to guide the hand that holds the sword. Prior to the fall of Carthage, our clan blended perfectly the arts of war and philosophy. Each decade since, we have faltered a little more in our discipline and our dedication to the preservation of Brujah's line and the pursuit of the Ideal.

Clan Brujah is splitting, Francisco, and the fault lies within our own house. The *Gerousia* — the “old men” of our clan — and their followers espouse patience and consolidation of the ancient social and military wisdom that we command. They say they will lead us to victory, but I have yet to meet an elder who leads from the front lines. Younger Brujah, especially those Embraced since Rome's fall, challenge the old men at every turn, unwilling to sit idly by while the clan's enemies tighten their grip upon the reins of power. The most unruly we call the Ruck; they are brash, follow no rules but their own, and never shirk from a fight. Those few, like myself, who stand between these extremes urge compromise and peace, but as a clan we are becoming less and less capable of sustaining either.

Note that when I speak of our brothers I speak of all Brujah, male and female. The women in our ranks are as capable in thought and action as any male member, and take pride in demonstrating this to the unbelievers. Be careful how you address them.

OUR NOBLE HISTORY

THE BRUJAH IDEAL

Brujah's Ideal, as my sire and friend Alypius tells it, codified a system adjudicating the manner in which Cainites were to deal with mortals and with each other. However potent our gifts, mortals, through sheer numbers, are far more dangerous than the handful of Cainites who live among them. The Ideal thus forbade the killing of a human for sustenance or whim. Vampires expected mortals to serve willingly and to pay a tithe in blood each month, lest they be entirely consumed. The code likewise forbade war between Cainites, for in those days mortals held vampires as gods, and if they discovered that the gods could be slain, Brujah reasoned, it might mean the end for us all.

The Ideal recognizes all Brujah as brothers and all childer of Caine as equals, but few agree on that last point. Remember, Francisco, this is an ideal. The elders point to the Six Traditions as evidence that Caine himself countenanced Brujah's code. This only reaps further derision from our peers and the suspicions of our younger brethren, who bitterly point out that even among the Brujah elders are typically equal only to themselves. It is ironic but telling that the Ruck war against the supporters of the very Traditions their own elders worked to enact.

The Ideal may have its faults, but what could possibly be wrong with a sharing of power among our Cainite peers? What better way to still the Jyhad and provide voice to the fractious childer that plague all our clans? All that stands between the present and the Ideal are immortal egos, most especially those of the Ventrue and Lasombra. What Patrician would gladly step down from his throne to share a commoner's table with his Brujah fellows? What Magister skulking in the shadows would not take every opportunity to bind a Cainite council to his will? It is the hauteur of such as these that keeps the Ideal from reaching its fulfillment, Francisco! It is the greed of petty tyrants and manipulators that thwarts our own efforts to achieve harmony among our kind! One night, we will raise up again our fallen cities, not for ourselves, but for all Cainites. The wise will then choose between our Ideal and the promise of eternal subservience to the Ventrue. If our enemies wish for peace, we shall have it. If they make war upon us, we shall have their heads.



LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 2

HELLAS AND CARTHAGE

You cannot understand our present without some familiarity with our past. The history of our clan extends to the very beginnings of mortal civilization, but the Golden Ages of Carthage and Hellas were our own, the highest points of our success. The Brujah chose Hellas — always Hellas, never Greece — as a philosophical proving ground. Despite the lack of traditions to bind them, our elders expended little effort in influencing mortal affairs. How can one conduct an experiment if one influences the results? How can we judge a mortal worthy of the Embrace if his every action has been according to vampiric dictates?

Though all of Hellas received our attentions, Athens became the focal point. Every generation brought new leadership, and often a new form of government, which our scholars studied and refined with further generations. How many of the codes and reforms of the city originated with the Brujah and how many with Solon, Peisistratus and other leaders only the eldest know? It is hardly significant. What is important is that as Athens took steps to suppress corruption and become increasingly democratic, the ability of a single Cainite to effect change diminished significantly. This is the key to subversion, Francisco — the more mortals collectively empower themselves, the weaker our enemies become. Humanity is the key; through them all our successes.

Such was the clan's prosperity that we allowed other Cainites entrance to our lands. By our leave, Toreador inspired the artisans of Hellas to achieve ever greater works, and the Salubri found their wisdom welcome within our walls. So long as our guests abided by our laws, we welcomed all Cainites. Through human ingenuity and immortal guidance the Golden Age of Hellas achieved new advances in every field of endeavor. Alas that it could not last forever.

Why is it the loss of Carthage and not the fall of Hellas that so calls forth our fury against the Ventrue and Lasombra? In the answer lies the earliest source for the dissent that wracks our clan. The twilight days of Hellas saw our eldest abandon the cities, supposedly to meditate on all they had learned over the previous millennium. All the magnificence of Hellas, and it was only an experiment! This undertaking, the evolution and manipulation of the greatest civilization the world had yet witnessed, came to an end. So devoted were these *Praedicanda* — the “most renowned” of the Brujah — to their quest for the perfect society that they gave up Hellas and all it had produced to mortal care and the mercy of Rome. Beware such hubris, and the corruption of ages that turns you from the Ideal.

Many of their childer fought, and met Final Death, during the war that ensued. Others spread to the corners of the earth in hopes of founding a new Athens or Sparta, or fled to Carthage, unaware that Scipio's armies already doomed that city. A small contingent of our brotherhood decided upon a different course. Any citizen of Hellas, mortal or Cainite, who did not oppose their enemies became an enemy himself. One

by one, as Troile to Brujah, they slaughtered their elders. The *Praedicanda* slew those rebellious ones they could find, and claim to this night that the Baali foment played a role in the betrayal. Word of this atrocity leaked to the other clans, and since that day they have named us Zealots. Few Brujah today know of the treachery committed by the *Praedicanda* and their childer, but the clan bears its burden nonetheless in the schism that divides us, young from old. Alypius posits that the source of our rage, too, lies in the betrayal of Hellas, not the fall of Carthage, but the truth may never be known.

If Hellas represents our heritage, Carthage embodies our pride. The Brujah of that time instituted the perfect integration of mortal advancement and immortal guidance. This was no experiment, but the triumph of our clan's most essential beliefs! Neither before nor since has the clan orchestrated such a focused effort to recreate the Ideal we perceive the First City to have been. Then, as you know, our city fell, razed to the ground by Publius Scipio Africanus Minor and his Ventrue allies. Those of our clan who still lived fled to every point on the earth, and to this day the fury of our loss boils our blood. We are a tenacious clan, Francisco; we do not give up our causes without a fight. The Brujah built Carthage to be the Third City of the childer of Caine; memories and the thirst for revenge fade slowly among immortals.

Be warned, even among our kind the victors too often write the histories, and Brujah survivors of the final days of Carthage are few indeed. The Ventrue take great pleasure in denouncing our ancient triumphs, and many believe them. Their version of history speaks of Carthage as some devil's pit of demon worship and human sacrifice. They beguile listeners with stories of our complicity with the Infernal and portray our city as some great sacrificial altar to the Devil — a devil who had not yet been invented! Is there any mention of the advancements of Cainite and mortal society that our creation fostered and which Rome could only hope to emulate? Never! Cold within our enemies' hearts swells jealousy at the very thought of Rome's insignificance next to the splendor of the Third City of Caine. And in such a wonder as this we would cast infants into flaming pits? Engage in blood orgies and Infernal rites worthy only of the foul Baali? We, who fought side by side with the noble Salubri against that same accursed bloodline?

Learned Alypius will not lower himself to speak of their absurd fabrications. A pity he could not have lived in the time of Carthage, for all who know him accept his word as truth. These fictions are vilest slander, and those who spout it, Ventrue or otherwise, shall answer for them on the points of our blades. And many have! They cry innocence when I begin, but they scream, "Mercy!" before I finish. The things they say, childer — the lies they tell to others.... We must make these perjurers suffer, Francisco! We must make these liars *burn*!

STRENGTH OF BODY, FOCUS OF MIND

The more cynical detractors of our clan remark on how we have degenerated in our Disciplines. Why, they ask, should philosophers and scholars pursue Potence and Celerity rather than endowments more applicable to intellectual pursuits? They ask if it is not a symptom of the clan's ultimate failure that we now rely on the powers of war and passion. What these fools fail to understand is that Brujah dedication to unearthing the still-hidden potential of our vampiric forms made these Disciplines what they are today.

We Brujah have always been a clan of focus. Whether in search of a singular piece of knowledge, experimenting with some newly conceived philosophy, or working to bring change to a stagnant society, our ability to concentrate on a single goal is unparalleled among the descendants of Caine. As the notion of civilization flourished, the elders of our clan felt it wise to hone the body as an exercise of the mind and a means of protecting it. They referred to this perfection of body and mind as Entelechy, the realization of potential. Though hardly the limit of our focus, perfection of Cainite powers has been the clan's consuming passion since the earliest times. In those days our Cainite powers were still developing, and very rough in practice. The strength of an ancient could crush a friend in greeting were he not careful, and his speed was useful for little else than running on an open field. Disturbed by this lack of focus, the Brujah took it upon themselves to master these abilities to the point of total control, and to teach their skills to any who wished to learn.

Now there is no need for special training to utilize these arts efficiently. Only the meanest of our clan cannot saddle a horse or garb himself for war at many times the speed of a mortal, and all can embrace a loved one or raise a portcullis with the strength appropriate to either action. Still, our elders are never satisfied, and seek now to improve Celerity beyond what it currently offers. It will be interesting to see what they gift us with when those researches finally bear fruit.



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OUR DYING TRADITIONS

UNITY

It is a cruel irony that by Embracing only the most revolutionary and idealistic thinkers, our elders ensured the very dissent that tears at the Brujah. The clan is no longer greater than the sum of its parts. The change has been gradual, but the distinction between the Brujah of the past and the future grows more noticeable with each passing year. Alypius tells me that our gatherings once consisted of brilliant orations and polite debate, but in 70 years I have heard nothing of the sort. The *Gerousia*'s laments for nights none of us remember drown under the Ruck's ranting against enemies and each other. Such foolishness! The elders utter little sighs of disappointment and trot back to their demesnes as if they expected the young ones to beg their pardon. Neither accomplishes anything but further decay.

I think the elders spent too many years of their lost youth in meditation. They while away their nights trapped in antiquated memories and endlessly plotting retributions that they never carry forth. I have no doubt that the strength of their beliefs equals that of our younger brethren, but fear of meeting Final Death tempers the fire of their willingness to act. The Ruck think them as caught up in tradition as the damned Ventrue and manipulative as the Magisters, and I cannot dispute their case. Elder obsession with rebuilding a lost city in a world that will not tolerate it alienates at least as many brethren as it attracts. They are powerful, and they are wise, but if the *Gerousia* are to rebuild Carthage they must adapt to a world 1000 years changed from their own.

Do not think me one-sided in my viewpoint, Francisco. The Ruck are capable of being every bit as intolerable and intolerant as our elders. They will argue any point merely for the sake of arguing. Why bother with diplomacy when strength, speed and numbers favor them? Why become bogged down in the traditions of the past when they have already failed us? One cannot blame the *Gerousia* for characterizing their wayward childer as impulsive and illiterate wastrels squandering the legacy of their clan. In the eyes of the Ruck, skill with a sword and hatred of nobility alone warrant the Embrace. A process that once took months, even years, they consummate in but a week. I do not think they even know *why* they fight.

This is what we have become. While our clan retains its name, the rift between the young and old, the sense of "us versus them," persists. I am hardly a neonate, but even

I find it difficult to feel a sense of true brotherhood with a clanmate Embraced three centuries ago. Unless those of us caught between the young and old force understanding and compromise between the two, the schism within the Brujah clan will break us all. The ties that bind us loosen more with every passing year. If ever you call upon a brother for aid, and he does not come, you will know the end of our clan draws near.

THE TRAINING HALL

This room, in which I Embraced you, is my training hall, what our Hellenic elders call a *sphairisteria*. The training hall is a Brujah's sanctum, his retreat from the outer world. Here, I can study from the books and scrolls I have collected during my wanderings, practice with my blade or sharpen control of my physical Disciplines. Even a century past my Embrace I exercise my skills at every opportunity. Levering a 500-pound block of granite three handspans from the floor is simplicity. Maintaining that exact distance while playing an entire game of chess is not, no matter what your strength. Practice at archery is one way to hone your control of Celerity; this peg board is another. Precision is everything, Francisco.

This hall is small when compared to the edifices some of our brothers erect. The Hellenic Brujah construct their *sphairisteria* to resemble ancient temples to the gods (which is an honest indicator of these brothers' estimations of themselves). Brujah of Portugal and Spain prefer open courtyards and drill no matter what the weather; indeed, they relish training even in the fiercest storms. Outside of al-Andalus, though, nearly all training halls are enclosed buildings hewn of stone or small, hidden chambers like this one. Most brothers still build their halls from stone quarried by their own hands or tear down trees for lumber where good stone is limited. We use a minimum of tools to construct our *sphairisteria*, in the belief that building the hall with one's own hands and blood is the first step on the road to Entelechy.

The training halls of the Brujah are as individual as the brothers who build them, but some common traits exist. As we emphasize the mind as much as the body, all worthy halls contain writings well-suited to developing our intellect. Some authors in my collection you will not recognize. They are the names of Brujah philosophers whose writings I am most fortunate to own; you *will* read them.



Even at such a low point in our history as this, we are a proud clan, and decorate our halls with trophies of our victories. The coat-of-arms and morningstar you see beneath my own belonged to the Lasombra Guillaume Duese, whose "superior" blood spattered my blade as I hacked him into mincemeat. He was arrogant, in the manner of all Magisters, and underestimated my prowess. I wish I could better recall the look in his eyes as I lopped off his head.

We commemorate all our victories with such mementos except for those won against the Baali. Not a one of us defiles our sanctums with the filth of that accursed bloodline. Leave their flesh and bones to the sun, that the heavens may deal with them appropriately. Anything else in their possession, whether it be a church or a child, destroy without pause.

Some well-traveled brothers keep exotic weapons garnered from lands ranging from unknown Africa to the lands of the Mongols in their halls. Elders possess grand and ancient works of art from a hundred long dead civilizations. Euristocles of Thessalonica creates miniature working models of the cranes and siege engines of Archimedes. Salassa of Amastris is famous within the clan for the chess sets she carves from the mystically preserved bones of our most hated enemies (white from Ventrue, black from Lasombra). Near Lisbon lies Hamilcar's Palaestra, perhaps the largest of all training halls, in which hang the ivory tusks of Hannibal's famed elephants.

It is customary for Brujah who possess halls to Embrace their childer within them, as I did with Benoit and yourself, but this is a rare unanimity in Brujah tradition. Hellenic Brujah wear no clothes within the *sphairisteria*, regardless of gender and company. Italian Brujah keep the bones of their mortal families and friends in sepulchers built within their halls. I have seen this tradition followed by our Iberian brethren, who set aside a single night in May to meditate upon the bones of their dead and perhaps commune with their souls.

It may sound to you that training halls are universal within the clan, but this is no longer the case. True, it is exceptionally rare for an elder not to have a training hall. Alypius abandoned his long ago to travel, but I cannot think of another such example. It is equally rare, however, for the young Brujah among the Ruck to build halls. Their knowledge of the tradition is typically sparse and their transience too great to devote themselves to the construction and care of these shrines to Entelechy. I never refuse a brother who asks entrance, though, no matter what his age or beliefs might be. Once a guest enters these walls, however, I am his master, free to inflict whatever form of instruction upon him I deem fit. It is a rarely appreciated honor for us to invite vampires of other clans into our halls, but few Brujah can resist the temptation to flaunt their skills.

IN THE TRAINING HALL

In time, Francisco, you will become capable of lifting these stones, even throwing them while using the speed your blood provides. The levers and pulleys exist to help you perfect control over your strength; what I know of their making and uses I will show you. Archimedes demonstrated that the proper arrangement of cogs and pulleys allowed a single mortal man to draw a fully laden ship from the water. Think of what a single Brujah can do with the same learning!

I will not allow you to make the mistake that too many of our clan (including my first childe) now make, namely that of hardening their physical abilities at the expense of all else. My library is small, but you will read every word of it before I declare you fit to leave my mentorship. Over games of chess and backgammon you will memorize your lineage and stories of your clanmates. You will test your powers over emotion upon my retainers. I will expose you to fire, so that you know the fear it incites. You will learn everything I have to teach you, and I am not a gentle master. I will beat you with sword and stone, test you upon every word you read and hunt you down by moonlight. I pounded iron nails into Benoit's skull when he failed me, and still he is no better than the rest of the Ruck. If you force me to resort to harsher means of discipline, I shall.



THE OLYMPIC IDEAL

The personal goal of every Brujah, traditionally speaking, is the perfection of mind and body; I urge you to make it your own. What constitutes "perfection" I will let my brothers debate. What is important is that we continually test ourselves in ways that will prove our development. The Hellenes encouraged athletics to keep their warriors in fighting condition, and developed the Panhellenic games as an incentive for the physical training of all their citizens. Every decade, the Hellenic Brujah call a *panegyra*, a universal gathering for the clan on the island of Chalcis, where we sponsor Cainite versions of traditional Olympic games. If you wish to impress your elders, and to trade tales and viewpoints with brothers of every nation, attend the games.

Mind you, our brothers in Hellas carry their traditions like a coat of arms. Athletes compete in the nude, and the javelin and discus are still part of the pentathlon, with wrestling, sprinting and the broad jump. The judges group competitors by strength of blood to prevent the elders from dominating the contests, and channeling vitae for Celerity is frowned upon.

I never want to strike a brother so much as at the games. The victors grow more haughty with every decade, but beware goading a loser into frenzy! The punishments vary, but the judges strive to inflict humiliation rather than serious injury on offenders. I am proud to have personally pulled the lever that catapulted Erik Guntharson and the elder Afaya into the Aegean Sea. Such a bath is a fine way to cool tempers, yes?

We do not restrict the games to vampires of our own clan, but it is rare for others to join us. Toreador who appreciate the physical body come to observe our athletes, allegedly to study movement and form but just as likely to whet their lusts. The judges keep a watch for Malkavians interested in disrupting the events. The judges deal harshly with those caught, but this does not dissuade the Madmen from their efforts. Seventeen years ago they dug a veritable abyss in the broad jump sand pit, concealed their work, and howled like fiends when Galayne fell into their trap. The one Malkavian foolish enough to be caught still lingers in that very pit.

Our clan's Hellenic Games have altered little over the past millennium, and serve as a proud reminder of our heritage. Time brings change, however, and new blood into the clan, with their own ideas of what constitutes amusement. The



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Gerousia think them degenerate, but in truth these games represent new traditions being forged to unite our clan. Such pastimes might repulse you, but they are very much a part of what it is to be Brujah. I have yet to meet the elder who does not revel in his strength and speed, sensations felt even more profoundly by neonates. Our pursuit of *Entelechy* begins with the advancement of these traits, and our entertainments demand it.

Following the destruction of Carthage and annexation of Hellas, our surviving brothers fled to all ends of Europe in the Brujah Diaspora. Some Ventrue, not content with conquering our homelands, hunted us down like animals. That we slew many of the Patrician hunters during that dark time does not ease the memories of those who survived their persecutions. The Nemesine Hunt began as a means of vengeance against the Ventrue, but our brethren no longer restrict themselves to that class of prey. Hunters participating in this rite set a captured vampire free perhaps a league from the nearest town and give him a few moments lead before giving chase. Through speed and numbers they act as a pack of wolves, driving their quarry in whatever direction suits them. I have heard of hunters guiding their Cainite game into the forest to be slaughtered by shapeshifters, but that may only be a braggart's tale. The edge of the wood is no boundary to those devils spawn, who would be as content with the flesh of Brujah as Ventrue. Most often, the hunters drive the prey throughout the night, beat it into torpor and leave it for the morning sun. The most brazen, or vengeful, packs even go so far as to leave messages for their victims, informing the unfortunates of the impending hunt.

Perhaps no single act of our clan inspires the malice (and fear) of other Cainites than the Nemesine Hunt, but the Ruck who pursue this tradition care nothing for others' opinions. I find this a fitting punishment against the Lasombra and Ventrue, but it is foolishness to assault other Cainites this way if we are to gather more allies. There are other, equally entertaining, ways to deal with our foes.

I favor the *barathron* to the hunt, an honorable trial by ordeal. Combatants fight honorably, and many win their freedom (the very reason why many brethren prefer the hunt). The *barathron* is similar to other Cainite trials by combat, but as the name implies, both combatants duel within a pit dug for the purpose. The accused receives a choice of weapons but not opponents. Brothers often fight among themselves for the privilege, but invariably the strongest and fastest claims the right. Ingenuity occasionally conquers brute force, but the lesson rarely leaves an impression upon the Ruck. Elders find use for this ordeal as well, employing it not only as a form of trial but to demonstrate and practice their skills. The *Gerousia* may be a secretive and arrogant lot, but they are frightening in their power.

Duels between brothers are as popular now as in the clan's Hellenic days, when boxing and wrestling depended upon skill rather than brute force. The latter factor domi-

nates such competitions now, even between elders. The single rule of these challenges disallows the use of weapons. Opponents gouge out eyes, break limbs, snap fingers, crack spines and twist necks at amazing speed, all the while balancing the use of Celerity with the healing of wounds. Ah, nothing generates such feelings of exhilaration and camaraderie as pummeling your brothers with all the strength our nature grants us! We hold mortals nearby to replenish ourselves, especially in event of the occasional accidental removal of a limb, but we try to choose only the aged, or pawns of our enemies. We obviously cannot allow human witnesses to report what they have seen, regardless of whether anyone would believe them.

Sometimes mortal witnesses serve a valuable purpose, however, as much for entertainment as subversion. The Ruck favor the tactic of preying upon mortal superstitions, to the detriment of those who govern over them. Whether caving in the homes of peasants, slaughtering mortals' livestock in gruesome ways or Dominating townsfolk into leaping from city walls, our brothers cause such terror among the people that they often rebel against an aristocrat unable to protect them. The lack of subtlety of this tactic often calls the attentions of other Cainites — a curse or blessing, depending on who seeks to confront us. The real danger of this approach lies not in vampiric opposition but the intervention of the Church. There exist in this world beings of such faith as to burn your flesh to ash. Remember what I have told you: Whatever other vampires may claim, the mortals are infinitely more dangerous than we.

THE GAME OF KINGS

As a clan determined to achieve perfection, we constantly test ourselves, even in our choices of entertainment. I know you enjoy dice, but to develop your mind, and impress your elders, we shall play games of skill. Backgammon and *pachis* are the classical favorites, but chess dominates the interest of most Brujah, who consider it the perfect blend of art and strategy. Many brethren possess a nigh fanatical attitude toward the game, and pay high prices for boards and pieces of gold, silver or ivory. Salassa, among others, takes pride in carving her own pieces, and training halls of the most ardent players contain dozens of sets. You would receive more respect from these masters defeating one in chess than if you single-handedly rebuilt the tallest tower of Carthage.



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BOOK THREE: BRUJAH



PHILOSOPHY

A perfect physique is only so much meat without a strong mind to guide it. This charging bull mentality that has evolved among our younger brothers sickens me. Clan Brujah includes the wisest, most original thinkers of the Cainite race, and these childer find nothing better to do than duel one another with fallen trees! Through lack of teaching I failed Benoit; I will not fail again with you.

First, do not look to Plato or Aristotle to answer questions about what you are. You are a vampire. Plato did not write for you. Brujah tradition, however, claims one who did, called Heracleitus of Ephesus. You will not find two Brujah who interpret his words identically, but I will teach you as my sire taught me, albeit briefly.

Heracleitus sought a single idea that would govern all things at all times. This idea, he decided, was fire. Through fire, the universe exerts change. Wood turns to ash, water turns to steam. The universe itself is static, but always in motion. Precisely — like a vampire! The sun is as constant as we, but by its light is everything possible.

Without day there can be no night; so it is with all opposites. If God is the divine fire of the universe, then God must encompass all things: good and evil, winter and summer, human and Cainite. Through the conflict of opposing pairs does all change occur. Strife, therefore, is necessary, even if it takes place within our clan. Brujah serve, then, as agents of change. In our blood burns the divine fire, and it is our duty to pass this fire to mortal and Cainite alike. The manner of this passing, of course, depends on to whom you speak.

This is an old belief in our clan and rarely passed down anymore, but just knowing the name of Heracleitus highly impresses the *Gerousia*. Even the Ruck appreciate his theories, since it all but excuses their refusal to find common ground with their elders. Mind you, this is not the final word of Brujah belief. Thrasyarchus of Chalcedon promoted the idea that might makes right. Most of the Ruck follow his creed whether they know it or not. Another, Anacharsis, held that no lasting justice can be established for men, since the clever will twist any laws to their own advantage. What you choose to believe is your choice, but never forget that your blood is also fire. If you do not guide it, it will rule you.

FOR THE GREATER GOOD

In working toward the Ideal, we wish for nothing more than the betterment of Cainite society. Let the damnable Lasombra think what they will, we are all equals, some just older than the rest. Some Brujah even consider us no more superior to mortals than we are to one another, but I think you can see that view for the absurdity it is. To better achieve this goal our clan has plumbed the depths of its vampiric and human natures, believing that through perfect understanding and integration of these aspects of the self we can bring about perfection, Entelechy, in those around us. The means by which we seek to attain this ultimate state have changed over the centuries, the focus shifting from inner exploration to the exertion of influence on the world without.

We may no longer be human, but by clinging to human values we discipline ourselves to face the Beast and maintain our empathy with mortals. No clan has such a rapport with humankind as we, nor is any as effective at implementing its vision through mortal channels.

The urge to question prevailing beliefs and formulate new ones, not as a clan but as individuals, leaves us with a weak grip upon our creations. When focused, we Brujah are masters of planning for the moment, but once that moment is past we hold our course no better than a storm-caught ship. Somehow, the very act of organization brings dissent to our brethren. Idealism breeds a suspicion of order, and what infighting begins, the manipulations of our enemies often completes.

Over a half-century ago we gained power in Italy and Sicily through the ascendance of Roger II. Through him we opened the gates of freedom and enlightenment to all mortals and, eventually, our fellow Cainites. Ah, it was as close to Paradise as the Brujah had achieved in 1000 years! It was also a trap. Our brothers in Palermo gave the Toreador entrance as the first step in integrating other Cainites into their new society. The weak-willed Artisans made perfect pawns for the Lasombra. Their most innocuous suggestions, flawlessly worded to appeal to our brothers' idealism, lulled the Brujah *ekklesia* into false security. Damn them all, but the Magisters excel at their art! Our brethren never saw the shadows thickening around them until the trap was sprung. The *ekklesia* might have succeeded in turning back the Lasombra, but something old was on the Magisters' side. Numerous as the Brujah were in Palermo, they could not match an ancient with the element of surprise. Few escaped, but those lost to the shadows will be avenged! Let us see if they reflect my blade when it is buried in their livers! Let us see if they can command shadows cast from their burning corpses! Let us see their hubris turn their bodies to ash....!

My apologies, Francisco, you may come out. The Ventrue may be our greatest enemy, but the Lasombra inflame my wrath like no other. Puppeteering cowards, all of them! This brings us to an important question, one that even the eldest consider more with each passing year. Can we fulfill the Ideal while other Cainites yet live? Can a place such as Carthage exist in a world torn by the Jyhad? More and more I think not, and I am hardly alone. Some clans, such as the Gangrel and Toreador, are amicable or indifferent enough to our goals as not to present a problem. Then again, I wish you luck in telling one of the Tzimisce about brotherhood! Try explaining to a Lasombra the meaning of equality! They may nod and smile and applaud your wisdom, but they only wait for you to turn your back.

What, then, can we do? As impractical as the Ideal seems in this age, very few of us wish to abandon it entirely. Some dream of making war upon all our fellows, but they are as deluded as those who think we can all be friends. I agree with our brothers who submit that only by total separation from other Cainites can we come closest to fulfilling Brujah's Ideal. Our brethren in the fledgling kingdom of Portugal support this very theory, but they make more noise in bickering than do the Tzimisce in torturing! Still, I see them as holding the best hope of creating a new Carthage.

Our most profound success of recent years originated, ironically, not from immortal machinations but from human dreams of independence from the nobility. In the year 1020 the king of Castile granted the city of Leon the first communal charter for self-rule, freeing the populace from noble domination. We seized upon the opportunity to plant a thorn into the Magisters' backside, only to see it blossom into something more: a revolution. Our ability to guide mortals along chosen paths served us well. By the end of the century, Burgos, Toledo, Barcelona and others received communal charters of their own, and the fire had spread to Lombardy, England and France — where it still burns brightly. Oh, if you speak to a Magister he will crow proudly about his plottings coming to fruition, but with every charter granted their trembling increases.

Remember this lesson; the greater the power wielded by ordinary mortals, the more difficult it is for our enemies to maintain control over their noble and ecclesiastical puppets. This sort of quiet subversion may seem contrary to our nature, but if the commoners have the power and the Brujah support the commoners, we will sweep our enemies' chessmen from the board!

The French nobility and clergy and their Cainite masters still resist communal expansion bitterly, the reason I returned with you from Portugal so quickly. The fighting in Tournai ended in our favor; even threats of papal excommunication could not overcome the mortals' passion for independence. In Troyes I severed Guillaume Duese's head from his neck, and

in Rouen I urged the people to ransack the homes of the cathedral canons. Remember, Francisco, that mortals are the key to victory against our enemies. They are the lever of Archimedes with which we can move the world. Let the Lasombra and Ventruue have their ways with aristocrats and bishops; so long as the Brujah mold the will of the masses, they must ponder us with fear!

THE DEDICATED

Though few in number, the Dedicated dominate the affairs of the clan whenever they make themselves known. They carry the pursuit of Entelechy far beyond the bounds explored by the rest of the clan, seeking to become the eidolon of Brujah perfection in mind and body. The Dedicated carry the clan's Hellenic heritage strongly within them. Through Lycurgus they came to dominate Sparta, implementing the code that transformed artists and aristocrats into the mightiest warriors of the age. They study philosophy and science with the same diligence as they labor over sword and bow, and even those Embraced today must learn the language and customs of Hellas.

The Dedicated profess three bases of the pursuit of Entelechy, which they refer to by their Hellenic names: *enkrateia*, inner strength; *andreia*, manliness and courage; and, most importantly, *saphrosyne*, control of the self. These are not trained skills but requirements for any candidate being considered for the Embrace. Neonates, through rites and training the Dedicated keep as their own secrets, polish these qualities to unrivaled heights. Those who fail to improve sufficiently are destroyed.

The Dedicated retreat from civilization as sire and childe, maintaining only enough contact with human society to ensure a steady flow of vitae. They pursue a rigorous regimen of physical and mental development for decades, perfecting their Disciplines as far as their strength of blood allows, and honing their physical and mental attributes to the utmost.

Only upon achieving total mastery of himself and his powers is a neonate recognized as Dedicated, and allowed to emerge from his exile. The freshly dubbed Dedicated then immediately seeks out and takes command of any brethren he can find, either through sheer presence or through trials that prove his superiority. The Dedicated's methods are systematic and often brutal, justified as their right by perfection and the cause of the Brujah Ideal. These brethren rarely act alone, preferring to convert "lesser" Brujah to their purposes, by force if necessary. The Dedicated hold the concept of brotherhood sacrosanct only among themselves. They never disguise the fact that they consider the rest of us inferior, to be guided and directed as they see fit. It is not unknown for them to "cull" one of our fellows from the clan if the unfortunate disobeys or does not perform favorably.

Not all Brujah regard these near-mythical Cainites with favor. The Dedicated version of the Ideal demands coldness, efficiency and the endless pursuit of perfection. The one I spoke to, who called himself Mandari, told me of an assault made upon an enemy some centuries ago. He had the lesser Brujah with him Embrace the men of a village used as herd for this enemy — whose nature Mandari never revealed to me. The village's women and children served as food for these childer, also ensuring that his foe would starve even if the siege failed. With this small army he overwhelmed his opponent, then left the newly created vampires to the morning sun. Effective tactics, certainly, but few other Brujah would utilize such methods.

Some brethren accuse the Dedicated of Infernalism, but I think their motives both more obscure and less monstrous. Neither the one I spoke to nor those told of in stories explain exactly who their true enemies are. They question us endlessly about other Cainites we have encountered, and brothers who have fought with the Dedicated often cannot recall the details of their opponents. Whatever secret these haughty brethren of ours share, they obviously think us unworthy of its keeping. But despite their incredible arrogance and obvious disdain for the vast majority of the clan, the Dedicated are powerful allies — if your stomach is strong and their cause is your own.

BATTLEGROUND OF EUROPE

HELLAS

The city-states of our ancient homeland passed into history long ago; now the Byzantine Empire claims the entire region where once we dwelt. Ironically, the same Brujah who abandoned Hellas to its fate never left Hellas itself; they just contented themselves with watching the collapse. These ancients refer to themselves as the *Praedicanda*, the "most renowned" brothers of the clan, but one rarely hears that name used by any others save themselves. "Gerousia" may refer to all our tradition-bound elders, but the self-proclaimed *Praedicanda* fit that title best. They are haughty and aloof, but not so uninvolved in mortal and Cainite affairs as they would have us believe. They keep their secrets well, but the very arrogance that drives their belief in their own infallibility opens the *Praedicanda*'s motives to those with patience and perception.

The offspring they create they scatter across Europe, in the hope that their ideologies will entrench themselves within the belief systems of an enlightened humanity. By pitting monarchs against nobility, these Brujah hope to make commoners the deciding weight in the balance of power. To gain decisive advantage, one side or the other

must curry the favor of the lesser classes, which can only result in greater freedoms for the downtrodden rabble. The benefits to humanity are incidental to the ploys of the *Praedicanda* in this equation, however. Reduction in the power of mortal leaders means a proportional weakening of the Ventrue and Lasombra powers behind the throne. What the *Praedicanda* plan beyond this is a mystery to me, but I have no doubt that all Brujah fit into their scheme. They affect knowing smiles when you mention the rise of the communes and claim it is just the beginning. I wonder if any of them realize how much they have alienated their brethren. I doubt it, and I doubt they would care if they knew.

The eldest dwell primarily in Attica and Laconica, even as their most devoted childer spread throughout Boetia and the Peloponnesus. They come together annually at the Acrocorinthus, a 2000-foot-high mountain fortress near Corinth. There the *Praedicanda* continue debates begun countless centuries ago, to predictable effect: Invariably, they resolve to table all matters further until the next meeting, at which the cycle repeats itself. One cannot deny our elders' claim that they are the finest speakers in existence.

The *Praedicanda* do allow other Cainites residence in their lands but watch them closely and warn them against interference in Brujah affairs. How a vampire can interfere in the affairs of those who do nothing I know not, but considering the power of the Brujah who enforce these decrees few argue the conditions of their residence. Indeed, many of the elders' visitors come not to interfere with the *Praedicanda*, but rather to beg their favor in the matter of scholarship. It is the libraries these elders keep — thousands of old tomes, papyrus scrolls and bits of cuneiform line the rooms and training halls of *Praedicanda* acropoleis — that draw strangers to Hellas. The lifetimes it would take to pore through so many works almost excuses our elders for their inaction.

Rumors persist that the volumes to which these ancients give visitors access are but a fraction of their true collections. Ancient writings of the Salubri, dissertations upon the realms of spirit, dark sorceries and information on other supernaturals of the world supposedly remain hidden from the eyes of the curious; I'm certain there are rumors that the elders keep the Sangreal and the True Cross as well. I myself have seen nothing unusual in the havens of the two true elders I have stayed with, but Alypius believes the *Praedicanda* practice highly demanding rituals of self-enhancement that they keep secret from all outsiders. If this is so, it would present another barrier between elder and neonate.

How can I describe our clan's feelings toward these progenitors when I cannot explain my own? All that we have become, fair and foul, originated with the *Praedicanda*. They guided one of the greatest civilizations the world has



BOOK THREE: BRUJAH

ever known, then abandoned it to the Roman barbarians. They justify their actions by pointing to the resultant spread of Hellenic culture and thought to the rest of the world, but was this the only way? We had a chance to break Rome and the Ventrue who ruled her, and thus to save Carthage, but they would not fight! They may be the "most renowned" of our clan, but they are not the most worthy. Imagine what their childer felt upon realizing they stood alone in resisting the power of Ventrue elders bent on conquest. The *Praedicanda* are as much my brothers as you, Francisco, but I cannot condemn those childer who rose against them.

Still, it was long ago and our clan must remain as one soul, if not one mind. For now the *Praedicanda* content themselves with observation and debate. If these old men ever choose to set aside their books and involve themselves with the outer world, we may yet stand a chance of rebuilding our dream.

ITALY

Two primary lines of Brujah carry on the fight in Italy, and one, the Hellenes, is further split. The elder Hellenes have made southern Italy their home since the settling of *Magna Graecia*. Much like their sires among the *Praedicanda*, the Graecians are patient scholars concerned more with the dissemination of knowledge and the quest for En-telechy than with making war against our enemies. Some make a habit of debating matters of scholarship with Lasombra in the University of Salerno, even going so far as to invite the Magisters into their training halls for a game of chess! Were the Graecians not such ardent keepers of Brujah tradition and lore, they would be entirely worthless to our cause. They claim their "methods" could make allies of our enemies, but even I can see the strings of shadow slowly being tied around these brothers' wrists. Their contentment has led to complacency. The Graecians are capable, but too willing to fluff the Lasombra's pillows in return for a quiet life of board games and conversation.

The other Hellenic line of Italian Brujah descend from those same brothers who turned against the *Praedicanda* during the elders' abandonment of Hellas. These Zealots' rage against those ancients — impressed into them from sire to childer for a thousand years — could ignite stone, but they hold themselves above reenacting the revolt that first split our clan. Instead, they channel their fury against Ventrue merchant princes, Lasombra nobility and whoever else impedes their efforts. Theirs is the lesson of Palermo, but I think it falls to the rest of us to learn it. Most of their number died there, and the rest of these berserkers care for nothing but vengeance, or, failing that, violence. Unpredictable except in their hate, they worry me as potential prey of the Infernal. Pray with me that my fears have not already been made truth.

The non-Hellenic Brujah, the Byzantines, were responsible for the transmission of Hellenic knowledge from Constantinople to Italy during the reign of the Iconoclast emperors. Like the Graecians, they are learned and maintain our traditions well, but they refuse to squander their opportunities to further the Ideal. Of all Brujah, the Byzantines are most adept at using our enemies' own tactics against them. For a century they have spurred the communal revolution in Italy with magnificent success. Nobles now swear allegiance to city consuls in Genoa, Pisa and elsewhere. Through the *arti*, the Italian craft guilds, they resist the Ventrue merchant princes. By fanning the flames of animosity between Guelf and Ghibelline they entwine Ventrue conquest through the Holy Roman Empire with Lasombra political and ecclesiastical interests. Their preference for quiet subversion rather than confrontation earns scorn from those who think of victory only in terms of the quantity of blood spilled — but that scorn comes only from the unlearned and the unworthy.

Alas, the Byzantines are coming out of the shadows, and as they do they are falling. One by one they are broken or hunted down, and for what? The Byzantines believe that by putting themselves in direct peril they force other Brujah to come to their aid. Were these the days of old, they would no doubt be correct in that assumption, but in these fallen times, who knows? I only hope that if the Byzantines do fall, they do not drag too many of our brethren into the abyss with them — assuming any answer the call. What have we become, my childer? I fear the answer this crisis shall give.

IBERIA

Here, the descendants of Carthage's few Brujah survivors represent some of the most famed tacticians and thinkers in Cainite society. During the final days of the Punic Wars, many of our ancestors, realizing the inevitability of their defeat, left the city with what troves of art and knowledge they could carry. Those who did not disperse throughout northern Europe or descend into torpor migrated to unclaimed regions of Iberia to start anew.

The Iberian Brujah settled mostly in the region that would someday be known as Portugal. There they have remained for centuries, through invasion and darkness. Great admirers of many aspects of Almohad Islamic culture, they lament the arrival of the Assamites and the danger they pose to Cainites of elder blood. However, the advent of the *Reconquista*, and their mutual hatred for the Lasombra of Castile and Leon, has provided grounds for truce between the two clans.

Our early attempts to limit the extent of the *Reconquista* failed miserably, humbled by the might of religious fervor and Lasombra influence. Our Iberian generals have there-



fore decided upon a new tactic, not far removed from the Lasombra's own *modus operandi*. The Magisters may be masters of political maneuvering, but most, especially those ensconced in the Church, leave soldiering to the mortals. Capable Brujah tacticians have taken opposing sides in the *Reconquista*, and are now ready to lead the forces of their Lasombra patrons directly against one another, unbeknownst to their benefactors. Proper coordination of their efforts shall lead to heavy losses on all sides, and perhaps even direct conflict amongst the Magisters themselves. And if we persuade the Saracens to ply their skills against the appropriate targets, we could destroy Lasombra power throughout the region!

As serious as their efforts to destabilize the region are, the true purpose of the Iberian Brujah is the re-establishment of Carthage. No greater concentration of Carthaginian Brujah exists, and belief in the Ideal burns hot within their hearts. However, a millennium of change has made fulfillment of their dream all the more difficult. These remaining elders cannot find the same degree of cooperation the simpler times of the past afforded. Too many distractions prevent them from finding focus, and the nights when vampires could walk openly in mortal society are long since past.

Through the port of Lisbon we have access to Italy and Hellas, France and the British Isles. We hope this capacity, if used properly, can increase clan unity and cooperation between our various factions. Also, some of our Portuguese brethren claim that the Gangrel are spreading rumors concerning lands far across the ocean. Elder Brujah who remember the daring sea battles of the Punic Wars have taken utmost interest in these tales and plan to encourage further mortal exploration of the world. Perhaps they feel that if they fail to consummate their plans for Iberia, new lands will bring further opportunities for expansion and pursuit of the Ideal.

ENGLAND

The heart of the clan is changing, and nowhere is this more apparent than in England. Anarchs of the clan abound throughout Europe, fighting for whatever momentary cause fires their passion, but no other band can match the tightly focused fury of the growing contingent of rebels and bandits called the Agitators. Alas, no other group of our youths fallen so far from the Ideal. They denounce our traditions as antithetical to the equality of all Brujah. They long ago discarded the master-student relationship of the training hall for undisciplined practice at swordplay or the

hurling of boulders. They choose their leaders, wisely, I think, based not by age or strength of blood but by the ability to organize their packs against the British monarchy and its Ventrue backers. Through their current leader, Robin Leeland, they have allied themselves with outlaw Saxon nobility against Norman rule, albeit with mixed success.

The rise of the ancient Ventrue, Mithras, has negated everything we accomplished during the reign of Henry II. His grip upon the outlying fiefs weakens with every mile from London, however, and Leeland's band is quick to exploit any potential weakness. Hidden throughout the forests of southern England, the Agitators and their allies prey upon brigands and unwary servants of the crown. The former is less a good deed for the local townsfolk than a means of practicing their skills and gaining sustenance. Ah, nothing compares to the look in a bandit's eyes as he flees from you on horseback and realizes you are gaining on him by foot! Such are the entertainments of our jolly English brethren.

These young brothers do not satisfy themselves with mere highway banditry, though—I must admit to nights when I wish they would. The Agitators may care nothing for Carthage or Hellas, but their hatred for the Patricians is unquestioned. The presence of Mithras makes London a dangerous place, but on occasion draws Leeland's band to the city. If the Agitators cannot attack the Ventrue directly, they can still strike at their Achilles heel: the Patricians' herds. Leeland would not divulge the source of his knowledge, but his packs have culled the mortal livestock of several Patricians over the past decade. The fear and chaos this tactic incites is pleasing, but until they bring their efforts to bear directly upon Mithras, the Agitators doom themselves to be nothing more than a thorn in the Ventrue lion's foot. Furthermore, sources outside the clan would seem to indicate that these raids are perhaps more costly to the Agitators than to the mortals they hunt.

These childer personify the spirit of rebellion that is becoming more and more prevalent within the clan. Most of these youngsters cannot trace their lineage any further than their sires, and care nothing for any philosophy more complicated than a doctrine of anarchy. Devotion to scholarship is rare among these highly militant rebels, and their relations with their elders are strained at best. As the traditions of the *Praedicanda* fade into disuse, these Zealots embody the new heart of Clan Brujah.

VIEWS CONCERNING OUR CAINITE BRETHREN

ASSAMITES

The peoples from whom this clan draws its numbers are rich in art, science and thought, and for this many of our scholars hold them in high regard. We regret that so

few of the so-named Saracens share these qualities. Indeed, one will decry to your face all of Europe as primitive and uncivilized while his companion in the shadows plunges a knife into your back. Nonetheless, many Brujah ally themselves with the Assamites against the Lasombra of Iberia and the Ventrue in the Holy Land, though more often from hope of a chance to strike against our most hated enemies rather than out of any shared ideology.

We impart limited respect to the Assamites, however. The society the Assamites allegedly serve and protect is captivating, but such attraction holds great danger. More than one of our elders has journeyed to the Almohad Empire to drink in its splendor only to have his own splendor drained instead. A clan pact with the Assamites would benefit us all, on and off the battlefield, but until they forsake the road of blood they follow we will never be more than occasional allies.

CAPPADOCIANS

We have little truck with these lovers of corpses. We cannot fathom the eschatological fantasy world they dwell in. We rarely come into conflict with the Graverobbers, so long as they restrict themselves to the cemeteries they so love to defile. Many serve in Ventrue courts as advisors, however, and thus bear our enmity. The eldest of our brethren remember the Cappadocians as enemies in Roman days, using the dead of Hellas and Carthage for their studies. The victims of those studies may have been mortals, but they were *our* mortals, and deserved far better ends than the ones they met at the hands of the necromancers.

The Cappadocians favor live mortals for "participation" in their foul experiments, often by the dozens. They invariably slaughter these humans, and invariably draw the conclusion that more such sacrifices are necessary. The Graverobbers allege to knowing many secrets, but they have not the inclination to use them for any cause but their own. No few of us ask ourselves if we should not give these Cappadocian "researchers" the opportunity to plumb death's secrets firsthand. Their waste of mortal blood and mortal lives nets us nothing. If they lay one decaying hand upon your herds or servants, do not hesitate to cut it off.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

Were we ever to ally ourselves with a Ventrue cause, it would be to exterminate these shameless tempters. Indeed, our support of a Fourth Crusade is contingent upon a drive into Egypt to lay siege to the Serpents' strongholds. It is a marvel that Egyptian lore could have progressed so far with such strong Setite influence upon the priesthood. Some fools seek out the Serpents' knowledge, suggesting that there must be more to these Followers of Set than simple vice. Such brothers lose the trust of the clan when they return from their journeys, regardless whatever miracles of insight they claim to have witnessed. I take



Egyptian advancements as further proof that Cainite control of mortal affairs is not so strong as our fellows would like to believe.

The Setites are feeble warriors and tread carefully around us, but delight in laying snares for our feet. Too often we must undo what their machinations have wrought, many times going to war against a local prince or aristocrat who has fallen to their corrupting influence. Such actions as these earn us the name of Zealot! The craftiest among us let the Setite drown within his own decadence for a time, then lead our fellow Cainites against him. Thus the Followers of Set become our unwitting allies, but are not spared our steel. In time we shall march into Egypt, rouse the populace against their corrupted priesthood, and tear the forked tongue from every Setite in the land.

GANGREL

The Gangrel are strangers to most Cainites, preferring to live as they do outside the cities of mortal men. Rather than cleave to the humanity that is their birthright, they embrace the nature of the very beasts they surround themselves with until, over time, Gangrel and beast become indistinguishable from one another. Nonetheless, they

have a form of honor that is rare among our kind, and we counted many of them as friends during the diaspora. If you cannot find a brother of your clan to trust, seek a Gangrel as ally, and call him a man, rather than Animal (as do the other clans).

Despite their barbaric ways, the Gangrel are of interest to our clan for two reasons. Firstly, they harbor a deep resentment against the Ventrue, and have united with the Tzimisce against the Eastern Patricians and their sorcerous Tremere allies. Whatever the cause of their disaffection may be, cultivate it carefully. The Gangrel are solitary people, however, preferring to strike at their enemies from the forests and then to the forests return. If the Gangrel would only organize under our leadership, what a force we would have!

Additionally, no Cainites have explored so much of the world as the Gangrel. None are so adept at travel, and the tales they return with never fail to engage the mind patient enough to hear them. Some bring rumors of a land far across the ocean that excites our elders with the possibility of a new beginning for the Brujah Ideal. We take care to keep such talk of our plans far from the ears of the Gangrel, all the while encouraging them to tell us more.

LASOMBRA

As we teach the wonders and lessons of Carthage to our childer, so do we teach the role of the Lasombra in its destruction. They hold high places in Cainite society, but the supposed superiority of their blood could not prevent the fall of Rome nor keep Italy and Sicily secure from its recent mortal conquerors. Likewise does it not prevent these cowardly lurkers from falling to our blades whenever we root them from the churches and palaces in which they hide.

The Magisters are behind the throne in every major town and city in the civilized world. They spark conflict or arrange the downfall of a fellow Cainite merely to prove they can do so and to slither further up the ranks of Lasombra status. Recent centuries have witnessed the Magisters worming their way into the core of the Church, blaspheming it with their feigned devotions and assumption of religious titles as markers of clan prestige. Currently the strength of their ties to the nobility and the Church is beyond our means to break. They continuously underestimate the potential held by the lesser classes, however, whom none influence so well as we. As the communes of Europe have broken the stranglehold of noble authority, so will we break the Lasombra when the time is right.

MALKAVIANS

They alone of the conspirators against our fallen city have we forgiven, for seeing their broken clan reminds us of the fading Salubri and of what we ourselves fear to become. They make poor allies, for their minds are fraught with confusion, but when left to their own devices the Madmen often work toward the very goals we seek. Their disdain for convention and ability to make the most capable and cruel tyrant look the fool earns them our gratitude, if not necessarily our respect. Do not enlist their aid when they come to your city, nor go out of your way to make yourself and your causes known. Likely as not they will react against you in a manner you cannot expect for reasons you cannot hope to comprehend, for reason does not concern the Malkavians. It is far better to let them be, then exploit whatever chaos they bring to bear upon the chosen target of your wrath.

Many Malkavians, particularly the elders (who are disturbingly great in number) make excellent, if brief, companions for all manner of discussion once you recognize and circumvent their particular affliction. Though conversations with Madmen typically take bizarre turns, these Cainites understand more than most credit to them. Astounding insights have been realized through such dialogues, often to the apparent surprise of the Malkavian herself.

NOSFERATU

The Nosferatu are a paradox. Though no longer made in God's image, they seem the most genuinely reverential of all Cainites. By necessity, they dwell far apart from mortals and vampires alike, but know all that transpires

around them. They cry out against the damned nature of our unholy existence, but they cry out in ever-growing numbers of their own. Their humble reserve seemingly removes them from the heart of the Jyhad, but the treasure of information they possess puts them in a powerful position to manipulate its outcome.

The Lepers rarely become overtly involved in our crusades, but make tremendous allies when their hearts can be won. Such an alliance is difficult to forge, but couch your goals in terms that appeal to their religious fervor, and the Nosferatu will quickly add their strength to your own. Beware, however, trusting the Lepers too well. The Nosferatu are a mercenary clan, and will share their secrets with whoever is willing to pay the highest price, be it Ventrue or Brujah. Be certain to emphasize the future that can be theirs in alliance with us, versus the prospect of further servitude under His Lordship the prince.

RAVNOS

Every year witnesses more of these rogue Cainites venturing into Europa. Wanderers like the Gangrel, the Charlatans are of completely different character, and one would be wise not to confuse the two, lest one find her purse, and prestige, much drained. These tricksters have no fear of the open road and come and go as they please, as often as not with a Blood Hunt upon their heads. Despite the dangers inherent in associating with the Ravnos, many of us have benefited from tutelage in their arts of deception.

The Ravnos are useful in much the same way as the Malkavians and, like the Madmen, are best left to their own devices. Their open disregard for authority and the skills their larcenous arts develop make them effective allies, but one should never trust them. Upon encountering a Ravnos, the best tactic is to grace his palm with a hint of silver, point out a far better source of the same, then await any the opportunities the inevitable chaos will present. If you find his hand in your purse, cut it off, along with any other extremities that merit removal.

TOREADOR

Our relations with the Toreador stretch back millennia through the histories of Carthage, the Greek city-states, Etruria and beyond. While we molded those nations into the most powerful and influential lands of their time, the Toreador fueled the creation of arts the like of which have never been produced since. The glory of our success inflamed their passions, however, and while Rome rose against us the Artisans chased after wanton pleasures that belie their undead flesh. Rather than fight for their beliefs they betrayed the Ideal and fled to Rome with centuries' worth of knowledge and art as their spoils. They have escaped our wrath, but whether due to the potential the clan has for supporting the Brujah Ideal or the belief that fighting a Toreador is akin to beating one's hound is a matter of personal opinion.

A few of the more focused elders now hold seemingly the Pope's leash, but the remainder of this clan consumes itself in the pursuit of hedonistic extremes or the construction of new works for Church or monarch. Alypius tells me the Artisans have composed themselves since the nights when they engrossed themselves with the pleasures of Roman courtesans and Hellenic *hetairai*, and perhaps they have. Many still accept the patronage of the worst of tyrants, their artistic skills producing naught but fuel for their chosen lord's vanity. A few still combine their efforts with ours to keep the craft guilds strong in the face of merchant princes and greedy nobles, but even these call upon the Brujah when threatened. One day we shall press swords into the hands of the Toreador, and they shall either see beauty in the art of war or die whimpering upon their knees.

TREMERE

These foul sorcerers have taken the blood of Saulot, and now seek to defame and destroy his noble lineage. Even the dullest of childer can see that the Tremere have no other purpose than the acquisition of power. If we allow them to gain a foothold in the Cainite community, they shall surely use that power to destroy us all. Can one find greater proof of the Ventrue's iniquity than in their alliance with the Usurpers?

In the past decade the Tremere have come west in greater numbers, arriving in secrecy and concealing their true natures, then feigning innocence to Cainite ways after their true natures are revealed. Believe none of their promises, for you are more likely to find honesty and honor among the Ravnos than these diabolists. If possible, slay them to the last; if not, remind your fellow Cainites of Saulot's fate. We cannot permit the expansion of the Tremere to continue.

TZIMISCE

Can it truly be said that these beings were ever human? Are they even true childer of Caine? The Fiends go to great lengths to alienate themselves from their fellow Cainites as well as the people over whom they rule, laying waste to either according to their whim. They speak much of tradition and the importance of hospitality, but neither the innocent wanderer nor the people they rule over can expect safety within the borders of their territories.

The oppression of mortal leaders is nothing next to the tyranny of the Tzimisce. So intensely do they deny their mortal roots that they do all in their power to refute and destroy them. The ideology of the Fiends, as much as we can understand it, is in direct opposition to our own, but this can be suffered. What we cannot bear are the horrors they make of their people and their homelands. I have seen with my own eyes what lesser monsters these monsters create from the flesh of their lands. With my own sword I have cleansed these creatures from the world, and from their own misery. The night will come when the

peoples of Eastern Europe will realize the power they truly wield, and on that night the Tzimisce shall fall! No one will mourn their passing.

VENTRUE

The elders of our clan hate the Patricians for the destruction they wrought upon Carthage, the young for the hauteur with which they command obedience within their fiefdoms. Even the most patient *Praedicanda* find it difficult to stomach Ventrue traditionalism and claims of "divine right to rule," and so we fight them. We bring unrest to the principalities of the Holy Roman Empire to prevent the Ventrue from further expanding their domains. We encourage tax-burdened peasants of the British Isles to revolt against the monarchy, straining the Patricians' grip upon that land. And we burn the ships and rob the wealth of their merchant princes, driving into poverty those who would feed their treasuries.

The Ventrue hunt us with mortal hounds bound into their service, but for every aristocrat that benefits from their patronage a thousand commoners rally to our cause. They can only hide so long behind their kings and counts before they must face us on the field of battle. There will be a day of reckoning, my childe, when we shall channel a millennium of rage into our swords, and we shall whet our blades upon Ventrue flesh and drench the hilts in Ventrue blood. My sword shall be among them, for there can be no reconciliation, no truce, and no quarter given! If I must face Lord Mithras myself, I shall tear out his "divine" throat, bare his decayed intestines to the wind, flay his waxen skin from his bones and feed his shattered brains to my hounds.

BAALI

These servitors of the Infernal would unleash the most unthinkable of horrors upon the world, and for this we have battled them for millennia. Still they spread, and with them spread their temptations, for even among our immortal kind there are those for whom the legacy of Caine is not enough. It is not the Baali that one must fear most, for once they are rooted out we easily dispatch them to their pits. Rather, it is the Cainites they have swung to their sinister cause who represent the greater threat, for who can say how many among our number have formed such a pact, and what dark powers they have gained thereby?

Let no temptation encourage dealings with them. Let no doubt stay your hand when the opportunity arises to deliver them and their allies to Hell. Consider any alliance necessary to rid them from our world. *These are the enemy!* The only good ever spawned by these demons was the league of Cainites that broke their power long ago. It is a shame the lessons of our cooperation were so quickly forgotten.

SALUBRI

Have pity for the Unicorns, Francisco, for none of our kind are so noble as they. Now broken by the death of their founder, the Unicorns flee the persecutions of the foul Usurpers and scatter to distant lands. Other clans either ignorantly support the destruction of Saulot's childer or repose in the soft cushions of indifference. Only the Brujah remember the courage of Salubri warriors in battle against the Baali. Only the Brujah remember relief at the hands of Salubri healers; it is we whom they trust most when seeking aid and shelter.

Legends tell of Saulot's journey to the East and his dealing with all manner of foul beasts and demons. These legends of Salubri as Infernalists are believed only by fools, for it is the diabolist Tremere who utter these blasphemies. The Salubri are mystics, and have knowledge of powers perhaps best left alone, but their aims are pure, and no demon spawn would wish to face them.

The Salubri recognize the Ideal for the noble dream it is, though they consider it first and foremost as a means to better coordinating strikes against our Infernal foes. For their crimes against the Salubri, verily against all the childer of Caine, the Tremere shall pay dearly. Never fail to assist Saulot's childer, for in their wisdom may lie the salvation of us all.

OTHERS

WEREWOLVES

The stink of cities is displeasing to these monsters, and those cities are in Ventrue and Lasombra hands. Do nothing to anger the Lupines, and they will do your work for you. Draw attention to yourself, and you are ash on the wind.

MAGES

From their ranks came the Tremere. What more need be said?

GHOSTS

We have created more than our fair share of ghosts, and you should be wary of these. Their hatred for their murderers burns as hot as ours does for the Ventrue. On the other hand, the Dead can be directed to pour out their wrath on our enemies as well, a risky game to play but occasionally a worthwhile one.

THE FAE

As patrician as the Ventrue are the lords of the fae; as rowdy as we are their subjects. There is no dealing with these creatures, for there is no reason to them save the logic of madness. Leave them to Malkav's childer, and be wary of angering them. Beyond that, you may safely ignore them and they, in turn, will ignore you.



LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 2

NEW TRAITS

MERITS AND FLAWS

BEARING OF KINGS (2 PT. MERIT)

Unlike their primary rivals the Lasombra and Ventrue, Brujah do not concern themselves with embracing mortals of noble lineage. The Zealots, more than any other clan, encourage humans to influence change for their own well-being, rather than that of vampiric masters. Such leaders as the Brujah seek require rare qualities. While they may not possess a single drop of noble blood, certain Brujah possess a force of personality that could make the most confident of monarchs show deference. A Brujah with this Merit is at -2 difficulty for all rolls involving Presence.

FURY'S FOCUS (3 PT. MERIT)

Whether they accept the truth of it or not, susceptibility to frenzy is a distinguishing characteristic of the Brujah. Certain brethren of the clan, through their devotion to Entelechy, have more fully integrated their awareness of Beast and Self. While unable to resist the call of the Beast any more than their less disciplined brothers, these Brujah can for a brief time control the direction their frenzies take. A player with this Merit must spend a Willpower point and roll her Self Control or Instincts at a difficulty one higher than the original difficulty to resist frenzy. For each success achieved the character may control her actions for one turn.

MENTOR'S TUTELAGE (4 PT. MERIT)

The character has a scholarly mentor, not necessarily his sire but one with the patience and resources to school the character in various courses of study. At the end of each story, so long as the character has extended contact with his patron, the player may roll as many dice as he has in the Mentor Background (difficulty 10 minus the character's Intelligence). For each success, the character gains one experience point to spend on increasing a Knowledge. No more than half the points spent to increase a Knowledge can be from use of this Merit. Obviously, a Brujah with this Merit must possess at least one dot in Mentor.

LACK OF CONTROL (1-3 PT FLAW)

For whatever reason (thin blood, an uneducated lineage), the character's control over one or both physical disciplines is lacking.

Brujah with this flaw have demonstrated numerous deficiencies:

Celerity may only be used for running and combat movement. Any attacks made while using Celerity are at +1 difficulty. Activities requiring precision such as saddling a mount or garbing oneself in armor are impossible with Celerity activated (one point).

The character cannot control his own Strength and must concentrate on keeping it in check lest havoc result (breaking a friend's hand in greeting him, for example, or snapping his spine with a hug). If a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) fails, the character must apply his full Potence in damage to the target object. Additionally, an unsuccessful attack with a melee weapon necessitates a Dexterity + Melee roll (difficulty of the character's Strength + Potence). An unsuccessful roll means the character loses his next action while recovering his balance (two points).

The blood of the character does not focus his strength effectively. Potence successes are not automatic, but instead are only added as additional dice for Strength and damage rolls. A physical action such as lifting a gate or overturning a cart requires a Strength + Potence roll (difficulty 6). The result is the number of dice that the character can apply to the task (three points).

Some truly inept Brujah have flaws in their control of both Celerity and Potence, and face the constant derision of their peers. With proper tutelage from a trained elder, the character might be able to remove this Flaw, but she had best set aside a lifetime or two to devote upon the task....

A Cainite should not be hindered with more than one expression of this Flaw at a time.

PARIAH (2-4 PT. FLAW)

The Brujah consider themselves a clan of brothers (and sisters) working toward common goals, if by different means. The clan encourages self-determination, but the character has taken her individuality too far and is now outcast. At the two-point level she has insulted, by word or deed, one of the two extremes of the Brujah clan. As a descendant of ancient scholar-kings, she may have vigorously denounced the rash brutality of her more radical clanmates. Alternatively, the Brujah might feel that the goals of the elders are mere fantasies, and has acted according to her own whims — whims that have come in direct conflict with her more conservative brethren. Difficulties of all Social rolls in dealing with Brujah holding the opposite viewpoint increase by three. This penalty is reduced to one for more middle-of-the-road Brujah (a difficult thing to find in the Dark Medieval world).

A character with the four-point Flaw has committed an act of treachery or murder against a clanmate. Word of this crime has spread throughout the clan, resulting in her ostracism. Brujah will neither come to her aid nor speak with her, nor will they accept her assistance unless at risk of Final Death. The clan considers the character Caitiff. While it is conceivable for a pariah to be restored to good standing within the Brujah, many do not bother to seek such opportunities.

NEW DISCIPLINE POWERS

The Brujah ever seek to extend their mastery of themselves and their Cainite heritage. This quest for knowledge has brought to light new powers both within and without their triad of core disciplines. Most such powers were designed for the medieval style of warfare, and thus fade from use with the centuries.

COMMAND THE WARY STEED (PRESENCE 3, ANIMALISM 2)

Through use of this power, the Cainite can cause his enemies' mounts to rear and bolt, singly or *en masse*, by the strength of his gaze alone. The player can also elect to bolster the courage and tractability of his allies' steeds, allowing greater control in battle and the ability to manipulate the animals into performing actions or entering places they would normally avoid.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Animal Ken (difficulty 7). Enemy mounts affected become terrified and nigh uncontrollable. Difficulties of all Ride rolls are increased by 3, and mounted combat becomes impossible. Friendly mounts affected by this power become much more pliant (-2 difficulty on all Ride rolls), and may be coerced to remain calm in situations they would normally avoid.

ESPRIT DE CORPS (POTENCE 5, PRESENCE 5)

A Brujah with this power can stir the hearts of his allies, granting them courage and strength in the cause for which they fight. Once the power is employed, those affected will fight fearlessly and with great strength, following the Cainite into battle against even the most overwhelming odds.

System: The player rolls Strength + Intimidation (difficulty 7). Any opposing power that would inspire fear or otherwise mentally prevent those affected by *Esprit de Corps* from fighting faces a +2 to its difficulty. Also, all allies affected receive one dot in Potence for the duration of the scene per two success, whether mortal, ghoul or Cainite.

The number of successes rolled determines how many of your allies the power affects:

1 success	One person
2 successes	Two people
3 successes	Six people
4 successes	20 people
5 successes	All allies in the vampire's immediate vicinity (e.g., a courtyard or battle group)



LIBELLUS SANGUINIS 2

Brethren of the Clan

HAUGHTY PERFECTIONIST

Quote: *You bested me now, but in a year we shall meet again. Then we will see who is the better man.*

Prelude: You never doubted your fitness to lead the family once your father passed away. With a healthy, if dull, brother ahead of you in the succession, however, you knew your chances of inheritance were slim. Divine intervention seemed unlikely and assassination carried heavy risks, so you decided upon the course of simply proving your superior worth to the family patriarch. Equally adept at academics and fisticuffs, you made few friends at university. None could deny your talents, however, and you graduated with well-deserved honors.

Even your scholastic achievements and skill in swordplay could not overcome the heavy weight of tradition; your brother remained heir. You protested and you raged, but your father's will was explicit: to your brother went wealth and the estate, to you went a recommendation to take holy orders. Certain that a better future than the cloistered life of a monk awaited you, you set off to chart your own destiny.

While employed as tutor to the son of a wealthy merchant you saw an opportunity to attack your brother, if not physically. Through your employer you convinced town officials and other tradesmen to purchase a charter of self-government from the king. Once granted, the charter reduced your brother's political influence to nothing. The town rewarded your efforts in organizing the commune with a minor clerical position which you graciously declined.

Your deeds were not without an admirer, however, one who sought you out one evening just after sundown. He commended your many talents and explained his offer, an eternal one — if you felt yourself worthy and interested. Old pride welled up in your breast. Of course you were interested! Of course you were worthy! And, of course, you were Embraced.

Concept: Fervently determined to prove your superior worth, you strive for self-betterment. You practice incessantly in your sire's training hall, and intend to design one of your own some night. The lure of physical mastery has eclipsed your devotion to mental development, but your confidence in both areas remains high. You have all eternity to advance yourself, and plan on taking every advantage of the chance.

Roleplaying Hints: The day you bested your sire in swordplay was a proud one. Emancipated from his authority, you seek other Cainites out for friendly duels. Victory swells your pride, defeat incites your rage, and you learn from both. You prefer physical challenges to political intrigue, but would consider attending to any worthy cause. Stories of a line of clanmates devoted to absolute perfection have excited your interest — one day you are sure you will number yourself among their ranks.

Equipment:
Worn finery,
broadsword,
basic text-
books, diploma



VAMPIRE The Dark Ages		
NAME: _____	NATURE: TYRANT	GENERATION: 12th
PLAYER: _____	DEMEANOR: AUTOCRAT	HAVEN: _____
CHRONICLE: _____	CLAN: BRUJAH	CONCEPT: HAUGHTY PERFECTIONIST
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Heath Wisdom: ●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Musical: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●
Larceny: ●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Senseshal: ●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
CELERITY: ●●●●●	RESOURCES: ●●●●●	Conscience/Conviction: ●●●●●
POTENCE: ●●●●●	INFLUENCE: ●●●●●	Self-Control/Insight: ●●●●●
PRESENCE: ●●●●●	ALLIES: ●●●●●	Courage: ●●●●●
Other Traits: ●●●●●		
Other Traits: ●●●●●		
Other Traits: ●●●●●		
Other Traits: ●●●●●		
Other Traits: ●●●●●		
COMBAT		
Weapon: _____	Difficulty: _____	Damage: _____
ROAD		
CHIVALRY		
●●●●●●●●●●		
WILLPOWER		
●●●●●●●●●●		
□□□□□□□□		
BLOOD POOL		
□□□□□□□□		
□□□□□□□□		
HEALTH		
Bruised	□	
Hurt	-1	□
Injured	-1	□
Wounded	-2	□
Mauled	-2	□
Crippled	-5	□
Incapacitated		□
EXPERIENCE		
□□□□□□□□		

BOOK THREE: BRUJAH

THE DISILLUSIONED REBEL

Quote: *Speak to me no more of causes or justice! My nights of fighting others' battles are over now!*

Prelude: As the daughter of a freeman living in the shadow of the duke's manor, you lived little better than the serfs, but your father held his head high. From an early age, you learned that fate was not a kind mistress, and that you had to fight for everything you had. To this day, you remember the day the duke's troops marched through your fields and trampled the crops, and the long, hungry winter that followed.

Summers later plague struck; of your family, you alone survived. Unable to work the farm alone and unwilling to bind yourself in marriage, you left the farm and joined a traveling band of mercenaries. You performed menial duties: mending saddles, cooking, minding the horses — whatever the warriors did not wish to do themselves. It was little better than life on the farm, but you were your own mistress, and your freedom was worth any price. You fought to earn the respect of your companions, and soon carried a sword with the rest of them.



You cared little for whom you fought. Baron, bishop and brigand were all the same to you, so your sword went to the highest bidder. One night, your current "employer" sought to take his liberty with a servant you had befriended. As he dragged the girl away, you put a knife into his back.

You fled, knowing full well the penalty for his murder would be execution. Your victim's men caught up to you, but a figure from the shadows cut them down as soon as they arrived. Confused but in need of aid, you let the woman take you away. She claimed to have watched you for several months, and deemed you worthy of joining her long

struggle for justice. Her offer of immortality struck you as obscene, but she would not take no for an answer. You stayed with your sire long enough to learn of your new powers and the dangers of the world, then struck out on your own. You detest your undead state, but now you have all of eternity to support the one cause that matters: your own.

Concept: You travel where your fancy leads you, enjoying a freedom more profound than any you could have known in your living days. Occasionally you accept a companion for a time, but eventually each road comes to a fork and you part ways. Memories of that hungry winter still burden you, however, and the temptation to finish the business you have left behind tugs at you.

Roleplaying Hints: Your years as a sell-sword have not cured you of your cynicism regarding the aristocracy. Let your fellow clan members worry about the princes of the undead; you are far more concerned with your own unlife. If something tries to control you, avoid it. If someone steps in your way, cut him down. It's that simple.

Equipment: Sword and dagger, traveling clothes, several scrolls with royal orders calling for your execution

VAMPIRE The Dark Ages		
NAME: _____	NATURE: REBEL	GENERATION: 10th
PLAYER: _____	DEMEANOR: SURVIVOR	HAVEN: _____
CHRONICLE: _____	CLAN: BRUJAH	CONCEPT: DISILLUSIONED REBEL
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Will: ●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting: ●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●
Alertness: ●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●	Hearth Wisdom: ●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●
Larceny: ●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Senschal: ●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
CELERITY: ●●●●●	CONTACTS: ●●●●●	Conscience/Emotion: ●●●●●
POTENCE: ●●●●●	GENERATION: ●●●●●	Self-Control/Instinct: ●●●●●
PRESENCE: ●●●●●	_____	Courage: ●●●●●
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
OTHER TRAITS		
_____	ROAD HUMANITY	HEALTH
_____	●●●●●●●●●●	Bruted: ☐
_____	_____	Hurt: -1 ☐
_____	_____	Injured: -1 ☐
_____	WILLPOWER	Wounded: -2 ☐
_____	●●●●●●●●●●	Mauled: -2 ☐
_____	□□□□□□□□□□	Crippled: -5 ☐
COMBAT	BLOOD POOL	Incappeditated: ☐
Weapon: _____	□□□□□□□□□□	EXPERIENCE
Difficulty: _____	□□□□□□□□□□	_____
Damage: _____		

Of Historical Note: Warnings of the Sire

Be silent for awhile, Michel, and let me speak. I've traveled far to be with you; I've no time for extended greetings or farewells. I will relate all I have learned, and then I am bound for Greece.

It was my intent to spend two seasons exploring the remnants of Carthage, seeking any artifact of greater note than the bones of those poor mortals caught within the wars that destroyed her. In truth my stay lasted only four days, but I will explain that in due course. Truly, Scipio did not leave a single stone set upon stone. The razing of our Third City was as complete as the stories say, but I've learned much of Carthage and its final days that was new to me. I'll not repeat tales already told; I trust you've not forgotten all I taught you.

It is a far different land than I remember. Christendom has all but faded from sight, and the churches of Hippo, Thagaste and Alexandria stand rotting and abandoned. Earth once fertile dried into sand long ago, and the glory of Carthage is a lost memory. A few broken pillars and scattered bits of pottery alone remain of the Third City. My Cappadocian colleague, called Pietro Caetani, and I were forced to depend on natural landmarks to lead us to the areas where monuments once stood and battles had raged.

Immeasurable luck and the skills of my colleague, or so we thought, helped us unearth a deeply buried cairn. I confess, I tore at the rubble with my own hands as though in frenzy, heedless of the digging tools we had brought and the warnings of my friend. The stones were jagged, and scraped the flesh from my hands, but the pain only encouraged my efforts. Pietro lent his strength to mine, but with his usual calm, my jest concerning "the Graverobber at work" drawing only a sincere nod.

As vigorously as I attacked the earth, it was Pietro who broke through the final layer of rubble first. I remember during one of our many discussions, I slammed shut the heavy tome that occupied him and demanded his attention. He set the book upon its binding and tapped at its center. The book fell open to the exact page he'd been reading when I closed it. He bore the same smug expression then as he did upon unearthing the barrow. Then a hand lunged out and caught Pietro by the throat, snapped his neck like a dry twig and dragged him into the cairn. Then the grave's occupant tore open my friend's gullet and consumed his vitae.

Damn me, Michel, I could but watch! Pietro struggled but could not break his captor's grip. My friend fought but died, while I just stood there, immobilized. I saw his body crumble into ash and scatter upon the wind like sand. But that horror was forgotten in a heartbeat, for Pietro's murderer then rose from the grave. The man who climbed from the crypt was of small stature but perfect build. He possessed but a single eye, Michel, but it burned, not like those of the Gangrel but like my memory of sunrise.

"Greetings, brother," he said, the dialect he used barely comprehensible to me. "I have been waiting for one such as you to return home." He laid bare my mind as easily as he had ravaged poor Pietro's throat, forcing loose a torrent of memories I could do nothing to staunch. In time, he ended his search with a sad exclamation, then took my hand like I was a child. Leading my unsteady footsteps, he walked toward the sea. "You wish to know our shame," he said. "I will tell you, then, as recompense for the loss of your friend."

There were six of them, six of the eldest who gave themselves over to Baal-Haman and inspired his worship among the people of Carthage. In return for the sacrifices – up to 300 children in one day! – Carthage grew into the Third City. It was everything you and I have heard, both from our brothers' accounts and Ventrue slander. The blood of these children fed vampiric cravings and mortal superstitions, and in that way the practice was endorsed by all.

Of the wars that destroyed our city he would say infuriatingly little, and I feared to press him. Three of the six sought to break from the pact, secure that their strength and that of the Cainites of Carthage could overcome the rot that gnawed at the heart of the city. It was not so simple. In short, chaos swept over our home, the Ventrue induced the Romans to attack, and Scipio and his Cainite allies let the city burn for 17 days. At this point my captor reached his destination, a deep pit on the western arm of the harbor. It resembled perfectly the cavity from which he had emerged, only time had eroded its edges and filled in part of its depth.

"There are two more such tombs not far from this place," he said, "but here is where my journey ends." I was unsure of his meaning when at last I beheld the lightening sky. Instinctively I struggled, but my guide made no move to seek shelter or release me from his unbreakable grip.

"You see, brother, of the three who rebelled against the pact, I am the only one to have survived, and I have survived for longer than I can bear. The Baali have exhumed my old enemies. Beware of them, for they are potent and aided by the Infernal." With that the sun's first rays lanced over the horizon, mirroring my brother's eye. He cast my smoldering body into the pit and blanketed me with earth. Not even ash greeted me when I awoke.

I am sharing this story with but a few of our brethren, lest the Brujah become as hunted as the Salubri. What was once a wary eye must become the eye of the hunter. Whether the fallen Brujah have woken from their sleep I do not know, but many years have passed since they entered torpor. Tell only those you trust, and guide the rest as you can. It is such a shame that Francisco abandoned you for our English brethren; he showed great potential. No matter, I must journey to hellas to speak with our elders. Perhaps this is news enough to rouse them from their indolence. Farewell, Michel, until we meet again.

VAMPIRE

THE DARK AGES

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
DEMEANOR:
CONCEPT:

SIRE:
GENERATION:
HAVEN:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength _____●○○○○○○○○
Dexterity _____●○○○○○○○○
Stamina _____●○○○○○○○○

SOCIAL

Charisma _____●○○○○○○○○
Manipulation _____●○○○○○○○○
Appearance _____●○○○○○○○○

MENTAL

Perception _____●○○○○○○○○
Intelligence _____●○○○○○○○○
Wits _____●○○○○○○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Acting _____○○○○○○○○○○
Alertness _____○○○○○○○○○○
Athletics _____○○○○○○○○○○
Brawl _____○○○○○○○○○○
Dodge _____○○○○○○○○○○
Empathy _____○○○○○○○○○○
Intimidation _____○○○○○○○○○○
Larceny _____○○○○○○○○○○
Leadership _____○○○○○○○○○○
Subterfuge _____○○○○○○○○○○

SKILLS

Animal Ken _____○○○○○○○○○○
Archery _____○○○○○○○○○○
Crafts _____○○○○○○○○○○
Etiquette _____○○○○○○○○○○
Herbalism _____○○○○○○○○○○
Melee _____○○○○○○○○○○
Music _____○○○○○○○○○○
Ride _____○○○○○○○○○○
Stealth _____○○○○○○○○○○
Survival _____○○○○○○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics _____○○○○○○○○○○
Hearth Wisdom _____○○○○○○○○○○
Investigation _____○○○○○○○○○○
Law _____○○○○○○○○○○
Linguistics _____○○○○○○○○○○
Medicine _____○○○○○○○○○○
Occult _____○○○○○○○○○○
Politics _____○○○○○○○○○○
Science _____○○○○○○○○○○
Seneschal _____○○○○○○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

DISCIPLINES

_____○○○○○○○○○○
_____○○○○○○○○○○
_____○○○○○○○○○○
_____○○○○○○○○○○
_____○○○○○○○○○○

BACKGROUNDS

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VIRTUES

Conscience/Conviction _____○○○○○
Self-Control/Instinct _____○○○○○
Courage _____○○○○○

OTHER TRAITS

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ROAD

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WILLPOWER

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BLOOD POOL

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HEALTH

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

WEAKNESS

VAMPIRE

THE DARK AGES

EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

INFLUENCE

CLAN PRESTIGE

MENTOR

CONTACTS, MINOR

RESOURCES

CONTACTS, MAJOR

RETAINERS

HERD

STATUS

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FEEDING GROUNDS

TRANSPORTATION

HAVENS

LOCATION

DESCRIPTION

VAMPIRE

THE DARK AGES

HISTORY

PRELUDE

TITLE _____

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS _____

APPEARANCE

Age _____

Apparent Age _____

Date of Birth _____

RIP _____

Hair _____

Eyes _____

Race _____

Nationality _____

Height _____

Weight _____

Sex _____

VISUALS

COTERIE CHART

CHARACTER SKETCH



Do you see these scrolls? Do you know what they contain? Here is all the majesty and knowledge of Athens and Rome, of Carthage and of forgotten Ur, kept against the ravages of the centuries. And who has held these secrets in safety, childe? I have. For in knowledge there is power, and my knowledge is great indeed. Perhaps someday you will understand this; for now, it is enough to know that as my knowledge is great, so too is my power. Prepare for your instruction, childe. It is my fervent hope that you will survive it.

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