



Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #2E:
Kindred Religions –
Cult of Shalim

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Kindred Religions

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

— Shrug, Nosferatu Mistress of Cardiff

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

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

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

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

Cult of Shalim

“Do you dream? Do you dare to dream? In this place, our dreams may take form, but the ravages of time and endless march of reality render them to nothing. I can show you a way to end the suffering of hope. The pain of dreams.”

— Apolleon the Traveler, founder of the Cult of Shalim

The hopes and dreams of all Kindred hang by a silver thread. Their very belief structures have been fundamentally shaken by their changing. To the scientist, it seems that every angle they discounted in their studies as sorcery and magic has been shown to exist, and all they have worked for has been for naught. To the religious, they are now agents of evil, immortal and outside of God's plan. Kindred survive by hanging on to their core values and hopes, the dreams that make them who they are and convince them to drive on to the next night without falling into despair and, eventually, the death-like sleep of torpor.

The Cult of Shalim preys on this fact in the most unusual way. Its agents pride themselves on uncovering the great loves of a person's life, the small joys and bonds that make their reality bearable. They then call those things into question, expose their temporary nature and sever them, leaving the target of their predations left with no choice but to accept the central doctrine of their faith: that reality is suffering. In some ways, the Cult of Shalim resembles the Ministry in their methods. The difference is the Ministers and their Church of Set wish to replace the void with faith, where the Cult of Shalim cares only for the void.

The adherents of this faith do not seek a blissful, endless orgy of experience where all of the bad is eliminated. Their creed is far less utopian and difficult to swallow for all but the most foolish. Shalim's followers believe that elimination of the suffering of existence can only come at the cost of its joys. It is a fact of existence that happiness will turn to sadness, pleasure to pain, and any utopia will crumble with corruption and heresy. This black priesthood preaches how a perfect world cannot exist while the world itself exists.

This madness is what comes from staring too long into the Abyss, as many Lasombra mystics have done over the centuries, looking for truths in the emptiness that seems to consume their very souls. Many of those who have studied the secrets of Oblivion have spoken of a presence in the emptiness. A formless consciousness that seems to observe them and whisper back. When a methuselah proposes that this is the very creator, not just of the clan but of the universe itself, it is difficult for the egotistic and morbid minds of the watchers of the Abyss to refuse its seemingly simple truth.

The first priests of Shalim have been recruited and their numbers are slowly swelling in cities around the world. As the tendrils of their faith grow, they reach out to other clans, targeting the disenfranchised and the desperate, those who appear to have lost everything in life or unlfe. They call to them and speak of the succor of emptiness and the bliss of the end. Binding them with a baptism ceremony, they ask the questions the cult's founder first asked of them:

"Abrenuntias re? Et omnibus operibus eius? Et omnibus pompis eius?"

With their every tie to reality broken and their mind shattered from loss upon loss, what can they do but answer, *"Abrenuntio."*

Out of Nothing

The Beckoning provides great opportunities for Kindred who would previously have been perpetually held down by their immortal overlords. However, the opportunities come at a cost: something has summoned all those elders away and, whatever it is, it has Kindred guessing all over the world and asking questions of their long-held beliefs. Like any good conspiracy theory, the provision of plausible answers to those questions can turn into certainty in the minds of those most hungry to understand.

Kindred scholars have long spoken of the great and powerful founders of the clans, the Antediluvians. In the modern nights, it seems logical for Kindred to believe these ancient masters have summoned their closest childer to their sides much in the way some of their own sires may call to them through the Blood. Most who claim to be messengers of these entities are quickly struck down by the local authorities as threats to the Masquerade or as agents of the apocalypse. Only the quick-witted and sufficiently powerful remain elusive. One such Kindred is the ancient Lasombra known as Apolleon the Traveler.

The cult says Apolleon travels the world in the form of a great black mass, sliding along the floor of the seabed, constantly communing with what he believes is his sire, the voice in the dark. This semi-torpid state guides him around the Earth as he reaches out into the minds of Kindred of his bloodline he feels nearby, seeking those with the predisposition he needs: those who have suffered great loss and who are asking the existential questions of what it all means.

Nothing. Nothing is the answer he provides; there is no meaning save that which you assign to the act itself. He comforts them with the knowledge that all Lasombra have, deep inside themselves: that they are part of a great destiny, and that destiny lies in Oblivion. Not only will they end their own suffering, but that of the entire world.

This lofty goal can only be achieved through Shalim, of course. Apolleon preaches that Shalim is the first Kindred and the master of the emptiness that existed before the universe itself existed. He speaks of primordial deities, such as Erebus, from ancient cultures, and links them back to Shalim, their “true” identity. Shalim is the Kindred from whom the first Lasombra arose, the progenitor of all bloodlines and guardian of the purest of those, who retain his link to the primordial dark. Once Shalim wakes and hears the calling of his children, he will destroy the cancer perverting his perfect blackness and return the world to the state of nothingness. In a stroke, war, suffering, disease, unhappiness of all kinds will be expunged and all consciousness will become one with Shalim, all will return to God, all will be God.

Several Lasombra have now knelt before him in one of his guises, pledging the remainder of their time in existence to ensuring its eradication, promising to be the scalpel that will cut reality away and reveal the peace of emptiness to a grateful world.

The Flowering of the Abyss

As a relatively new cult, the Shalimites maintain a somewhat covert presence in many cities throughout the world. Apolleon’s priests have been mainly recruited from around coastal Mediterranean cities, where his trek takes him, but they have subsequently branched out to various areas of the world. The most well-known of his followers is Michalis Basaras, a Lasombra in the city of Chicago. However, cells of Shalimites can be found in the United Kingdom, Brazil, South Africa, and even Egypt where they silently exploit the schism within the Ministry and seek to twist their zeal to Shalim’s purposes.

Servants of the Abyss

The rank of priest is the highest a cultist can aspire to; however, rank is generally not a concern of those joining this cult. Once one has embraced the purity and perfection of emptiness, such trappings are mere words in your mind, though the priests are those who speak directly with Apolleon and, through him, to Shalim itself. The cultists consider themselves equal, since they are all part of the same problem. They often meet in what appear to be nothing more than self-help groups or religious discussion classes, discussing their problems and their hopes for the future. This is a guise they use to lure those seeking help to their side, and to gain their trust.

Priests of Shalim are always Lasombra who have been touched by Apolleon. His predations vary from subject to subject: some kneel having only heard the word and accepted it, such as Rabbi Basaras; others must be more directly “convinced,” such as Gamal Hajjar of Cairo whose every happy memory was annihilated by the methuselah over a period of several months. Each one of them is only released by Apolleon when he considers their faith in the coming end to be incorruptible.

Shalimite Rites

Very little of this young faith has been formally codified; indeed, their practices and approaches seem to vary from cell to cell. Only through their correspondence do the priests share their stories of success and failure, refining their methods.

Gematria

They write using a coded cipher that involves translating their writings into numbers using the system of gematria. For that reason, all the coded letters are written in Hebrew and priests are required to learn it by rote to ensure their messages can be understood. These letters are often disguised as missives being sent to their distant sires or friends and it is not entirely

strange for such correspondence to be encrypted, to preserve not only any secrets inside but also the Masquerade should the letters be intercepted.

Abyssal Consecration

“Do you feel it? Do you hear it? Is it not like God?”

— Rabbi Michalis Basaras, Priest of the Cult of Shalim

New cultists, once stripped of their hope, are brought into the service of Shalim through a ritual akin to a baptism. The priest coats the supplicant in shadow, placing their hands on the shoulders of the new member to comfort them and hold them steady in the endless, unfeeling darkness. They ask the convert if they renounce reality itself, and all its various trappings. By the time this rite is performed, the supplicant’s mind is usually broken, however even those with slight doubts as to the presence of Shalim are faced with the dark truth as they feel his presence in that cloud. Some emerge claiming to have heard an indistinct voice, or even to have received visions and instructions from the master of the cult.

Dark Purpose

The end goal of the cult is clear, though the method of achieving it has not been made clear at all. Different priests preach different ideas on how to bring about the coming end, others say the cult need only be ready to embrace it and focus on eradicating those who would prevent it.

In general terms, the cult targets anyone who seeks to gain knowledge of their activities with a view to shutting them down. Usually, they seek to utterly discredit them instead of killing them at the first instant. Of course, the cult thinks nothing of killing if necessary; the reality of a person is simply another part of what must be ultimately destroyed. Kindred in their service find themselves twisting their Humanity and replacing it with a horrific version of the cult’s credo.

Fundamentally, though the methods vary, the goal remains united. The cult seeks to awaken Shalim from his dreaming and bring about the end of reality, uniting everyone in their great heaven and bringing them back into Oblivion from whence they came.

Enemies

The cult has no known apostates, or at least any who may have tried to leave the cult haven’t been willing or able to speak of their experience. But it does have many critics: failed conversions would be the first among them, since nothing embitters a person more than finding out the people who purported to be helping you were sabotaging your every attempt at happiness. Investigators and Kindred who tend toward cynicism are also opposed to the view of this cult and tend to treat its members or those who spend too much time around them with suspicion.

Some Princes are aware of the cult’s presence but see them as little more than an esoteric distraction for the Kindred of their city. If the cult seems benign and gives no sign of their intention to annihilate the Prince’s domain, those who are aware are willing to tolerate their activities. The first defense of the cult is its secrecy, however, and they tend not to formally announce themselves and avoid associating outside of their joint activities in places where they know they can speak freely.

Malkavians often feel nervous in the presence of Shalimites; they recognize madness when they see it, regardless of the veneer of civility it is hidden behind.

Artifacts and Symbology

The cult's symbol is of a hollow person, often portrayed as a simple human figure with a hole cut out from the center. While this may seem a quite morbid symbol, evincing a great depression, the cultist would tell you that it is the hollow they revere above all. Take away the human shape around it and the sadness of the symbol is gone. There is nothing depressing about emptiness unless you obsess yourself with the never-ending task of filling it.

It is rare for cultists to identify themselves by such outward signs. Instead, they speak the phrase "Shin-lamed-mem" to identify themselves to each other. This simple greeting is unusual enough for cultists to recognize it without being suspicious to outsiders, since it is the root of the traditional Hebrew greeting, "shalom," and of their cult's eternal master.

Cult priests carry with them small books, normally bound in black leather, containing lists of dates, places and names. These indicate sightings of Apolleon by their brotherhood and list the names of targets of his predations for induction into the priesthood. Through their network, they also suggest promising members of their own cults who the methuselah may be interested in converting or who may be ripe for the embrace, being raised as Kindred in the emptiness of Shalim's truth.

Mortal Servants

No creature is considered anathema to the cult if it truly seeks to supplicate itself before the Master of the Abyss. While many of their members are Kindred, there are a good number of mortals within each cell, often chosen for their positions in the local society or the access they can afford the cultists to materials or information they require to conduct their activities. The religious community are often among the most widely targeted by cult historians and archaeologists, particularly those with interest in Mesopotamian and ancient Greek culture.

The cult in Palermo, Sicily is determined to gain ownership of the site of Castel d'Ombro and reconsecrate it as the first altar of Shalim. Through various organizations, both religious and criminal, they seek to achieve this aim. However, the cult fears crossover with the Hecata in this area as they share much of the cult's knowledge of Oblivion.

Shalimite Convictions

The Cult of Shalim practices a regular dance with self-destruction. Nihilistic cults are, as the word implies, prone to implosion. Such behavior leaves a mark on one's soul, especially if a Shalimite is drawn to destroy others in an effort to prove the pointlessness of existence. The following Convictions are common, if just to stave off the inevitability of Oblivion for long enough to spread their word:

- **Never allow yourself to celebrate life**

Life's purpose is to end, and you can help hasten it. What you must never, ever do, is make the mistake of seeking joy through life's existence.

- **Never lose your temper with failure**

Whether faced with your own failure or that of a new convert, anger is a wasteful emotion and failure is best addressed through passivity or correction.

- **Always work to impede those who would control chaos**

You are not a Setite, so allow misrule to unravel naturally or remove its obstructions without attempting to channel it.

- **Only allow Embraces that further the destruction of society**

There is no gain to be had from Embracing someone as a reward or permitting others to do so. The Embrace is Oblivion channeled into an unliving vessel.

- **Do not succumb to the allure of prosperity**

The less you own, the closer you are to nothingness. Absence is utter freedom and material objects tie you to life.

- **Never maintain or protect more than a single mortal of importance**

While the need to cling on to the kine is recognized as an anchor in a tempestuous ocean, more than one is an extravagance.

Shalimite Operations: Fukuoka

On one hand the Cult of Shalim is one of the least expansionist cults, rarely seeking converts with any passion. On the other, the Shalimites are among the most pernicious, corrosive cults in Kindred society, even when they're not trying to be so. It's difficult to convince a vampire to give up all hope and material purpose, which is why the Shalimites usually target those already on the edge of losing everything, or vampires who have already experienced exile, a loss of Touchstones, or the death of their last remaining mortal family member. The cult has experienced dramatic success in finding targets and converts in the domain of Fukuoka, which spells ill tidings for the other Kindred in the Japanese city.

A conservative domain with a rigid hierarchy, Fukuoka has a defined way of rewarding the elders, the Mawlas, and the powerbrokers, while keeping the fledglings and Anarchs under heel. Most move on to other domains when they realize raging against the machine in this city is fruitless, but some remain, because Fukuoka is what they know, because the underground Anarch scene embraces everything insane about Fukuoka's nightlife and myriad of subcultures, and because it feels like abandoning Fukuoka is abandoning a city with a pulse.

This is where the Cult of Shalim come in. The Shalimites in Fukuoka appeared organically, with their first member — a clanless vampire named Ryoko — having been the victim of the domain punishment named “oyogu” or “the swim,” where a vampire Embraced without permission has their hands, feet, and tongue removed and their body cast into the Chikugo River. The trial takes place before dawn and few vampires survive the ordeal. Ryoko herself disappeared for three months before returning with her body healed and her mind committed to the worship of void, which she only recently gave the name “Shalim.” Ryoko spoke with her fellow mistreated fledglings and told them of the wisdom she experienced in the dark waters, and while few listened, a couple tried to replicate her experience. They likewise returned three months later, changed and possessed of a desire to erode the fabricated society that for so long has kept Kindred from wisdom.

The Cult of Shalim appeals to the young vampires of Fukuoka in a few ways. For those with a genuine esoteric interest, the idea of finding wisdom buried in the city's waterways holds appeal, as their elders never pass down such knowledge. The vampires of Anarch leaning see the water burial — which many have since attempted, with more casualties than returns — as a proof of commitment to the Movement, and the Cult of Shalim as the vanguard against the establishment. Many other fledglings just feel a worship of nothingness is cool, that destruction is enjoyable, and joining a group where wearing black is “in” and influence and wealth mean less than action is a more rewarding way to spend an unlife than playing gopher for their sires.

Perspectives

Anarchs: *They seem to want to exterminate us wherever they find us. They believe we serve powerful elders who seek to crush their freedoms. They are blind. We serve the absence of all things.*

Camarilla: *While it's not ideal, this is just another way of getting our childer through the long nights. The Camarilla preaches blissful ignorance in all things, and one cannot find fault in that, if it redirects those with curiosity to our ranks.*

Clan Lasombra: *The clan from which we draw our greatest number and inspiration, yet many of them look upon us with horror, as if worshiping the tools we use is some kind of sin.*

Clan Malkavian: *I believe sensory deprivation is the key to soothing even the wildest of minds. Find a Malkavian and introduce them to our cause. They will eat it up.*

Hecata: *Interesting idea, narrow vision. I'm sure it's comforting to them to think that everything is about flesh and spirit, but for us, it goes much deeper. The Hecata who worship what we worship are known as Nagaraja, but they are so few.*

The Ministry: *The snake may shed its skin and pretend to be something it is not, but we know. Their Church of Set is a half-measure. They exist only to satisfy their own desires.*

“Porcelain” Patricia Montgomery

Epitaph: Cultist or Apostate?

Quote: *“I may be a little touched but I can't be the only one who sees.”*

Clan: Malkavian

Mortal Days: Thrill Seeker

Patricia was the youngest child of a wealthy family from Denver. Her parents made sure that Patricia and her brother, Morgan, fell in love with the great outdoors, regularly taking them out to their holiday home near the Rockies, where they would engage in pursuits from horse rides to rock climbing.

As she grew older, with the trust fund afforded by the family business behind her, Patricia dedicated herself to the enjoyment of life. She eschewed further education and concentrated on scaling her own personal mountains, real or metaphorical. She targeted being the first female to scale all the great peaks of the world and became something of an internet personality in her attempts to do so. This brought her attention and niche fame as a fitness guru and socialite, with energy drink and health supplement companies lining up to gain her endorsement on social media.

While she traveled the world, met and slept with interesting and beautiful people, and performed stunts in exotic locales, her brother managed the family business into the financial crisis. His risky investments had funded Patricia's lifestyle and his parents' retirements. When those investments came home to roost, Patricia's fledgling career could have saved the company from bankruptcy. However, Morgan refused to ask for her help. By the time Patricia discovered the full extent of the problem, her brother faced several charges of insider trading and a string of angry creditors who wanted blood. He answered those charges with the blare of a pistol into his own mouth.

Patricia returned to Denver to mourn her brother only to find her parents embittered at how she had seemingly abandoned him, too ignorant to notice what was going on in the “real world.”

After a major falling-out at the funeral, they never spoke again.

Afterwards, Patricia threw herself into dangerous activities. She garnered ever more followers who saw her as an inspiration, while others called her a fraud, nothing more than a

rich girl who always had everything handed to her, who made more money selling products than the people that produced them.

Her descent into depression, as well as her torn state between the life she forged and what she saw as the responsibility of home, caught the attention of her sire. As she enjoyed an exclusive concert by the band Baby Chorus in an underground club in Chicago, she threw herself upon their suave bass player and became his childe.

Kindred Nights: Empty Eternity

Patricia had many problems to overcome as a Kindred. Her sire, Raymond Falcon, disappeared almost as soon as he had Embraced her. Whenever he reappeared, he seemed different, like he didn't remember her or the night they shared.

Her tutelage was left to the Primogen of Clan Malkavian, and he was only too happy to have a new plaything to break. He had her perform one final stunt for her followers to enjoy, hanging herself in a hotel room on live stream.

After Son recovered her from the morgue, he introduced her to two things. First, the many comments mocking her death. "Another dead rich bitch" could have been the carving on her headstone.

Second, Patricia's face was far too famous to be seen roaming around the city. She'd have to travel incognito, and he had just the way to do it. A Porcelain Noh mask was surgically stapled to her head, etched with a beatific smile. Son stated that were she ever to take it off, she would be burned as a Masquerade breach.

"Don't worry," he mused, "Now you always look happy, no matter what!"

The Kindred at court were no kinder than internet trolls when Patricia was introduced at Elysium. "Porcelain Pat" they called her. Patricia's eyes swiveled around the room, her anguish stifled by the saintly smile of the mask. Everyone laughed, all but one.

The rabbi approached her, seeming genuinely interested in her and the losses she had suffered. Even in her depression, she found him sitting silently by her, a reassuring presence. He whispered to her and spoke of salvation that she could find if she would let go of her pain.

After a year of listening to his sermons, the rabbi felt she was ready. He offered her a place in the Cult of Shalim and an answer to her cries for deliverance from the suffering of her life.

Patricia wanted to believe him, but the idea that everything she had seen meant nothing proved too much for her. She had dreamed of climbing all the great peaks. Maybe she couldn't do that now, but could she accept that the mountains themselves were abominations that should be expunged so humanity could finally know true peace?

She fled the synagogue and threw herself upon the mercy of anyone she could find. The Prince, her sire, her clanmates. As she ranted of the lowly rabbi's great plan of destruction, it was clear to the court that she was truly mad. Son seemed amused by it, far too amused by her sudden isolation and pariah status to consider that she might be right.

To this night, she continues her crusade to expose the cult for what it is. But even as she does so, she can't escape the nagging doubt at the back of her mind that maybe Basaras was right.

Plots and Schemes:

- **Expose the Cult:** Patricia is horrified at the existence of the Cult of Shalim. Even though her mind is racked with doubt and depression, she attempts to convince anyone who will listen of their threat.

- **Recruitment Target:** Although she is currently campaigning against the Cult, the mockery of her contemporaries, coupled with the complete absence of her sire, leaves her wondering if she shouldn't step into the darkness herself.
- **Famous Face:** Patricia is shackled by her fame. Though it causes her pain, both emotional and physical, she must continue to wear her mask at all times or face the Blood Hunt, feeding through its detachable lower quarter. Furthermore, she cannot travel freely and relies on the patronage of Nosferatu who pity her plight.

Domain and Haven:

- **Apartment, Lincoln Park (Haven 1)** What little money she was able to secret out of her personal funds has gone into purchasing a modest apartment for her use. She has no other haven or domain, though she does not always sleep here if other Kindred are willing to put her up for a day to avoid her predatory stalker.

Thralls and Tools:

- **Cultists (Herd 2)** Mortal members of the Cult of Shalim often approach Patricia as sympathetic ears and easy meals and whisper heretical thoughts into her broken mind.
- **Connected (Influence 3)** Although she cannot act on her own these days, Patricia's knowledge of who to talk to inside many of the social circles and advertising companies in the city is rivaled by few.
- **Montgomery Trust Fund (Resources 2)** Son had himself placed as the executor of her trust fund but continues to disburse it with mocking contempt, always reminding Patricia that she's just "another dead rich bitch."

Kindred Relationships:

- **Evan Klein (Occasional Lucidity)** In the guise of Raymond Falcon, Evan is Patricia's sire. Though often absent, he's likely to believe her tale — for all the good his support would do her at court.
- **Alphonse Gabriel Capone (Exploitative)** Capone is in search of new allies and he has one eye on Patricia's former contacts as well as the remains of her family's estate. It could be just the score he needs to get back on top.
- **Rabbi Michalis Basaras (Erstwhile Mentor)** Though she is attempting to expose the cult, Basaras holds out hope that Patricia will return to the fold once her final ties to the world fall away. He aids in this by making sure she remains a laughing stock at court.

Whispers:

- **Remember Me:** Patricia has been known to favor those who treat her with kindness, especially if they talk to her positively about her former life.
- **Followed by Day:** Not content to plague her waking hours, someone is haunting the places where Patricia sleeps and following her wherever she goes.

Mask and Mien:

- Patricia is a short, but well-built woman with straight black hair and green eyes. Her features are usually obscured by the mask she wears, however many photographs of her exist and she was a very attractive woman with a broad smile and pearly white teeth. She carries herself with a slouched and withdrawn demeanor but the power within her frame is evident, even to the casual observer.

- Aside from the mask, Patricia wears cotton summer dresses, often flecked with blood from reapplying the staples to her head each night. These are offset by the hiking boots she always wears, which were one of her trademarks during her life.
- Patricia rarely ventures out in public, but on rare occasions when she does, she is mistaken for a street performer, occasionally handed a pocketful of change with comments on how genuinely scary she looks.

Sire: Evan Klein

Embraced: 2018 (Born 1996)

Ambition: Find my own peace, one way or another

Convictions: Don't forget where I came from

Touchstones: Frances Gault — fan, following in Patricia's footsteps

Humanity: 7

Generation: 10th

Blood Potency: 1

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

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Skills: Athletics (Rock Climbing) 4, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Wilderness) 3; Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 2, Insight 3, Leadership 2, Performance 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1; Academics 1, Finance 1, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Science (Nutrition) 2, Technology 2

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Obfuscate 2

General Difficulties: 5/2

Ceremonies of Shalim

Shalimites practice their own brand of Oblivion Ceremonies, and while vampires outside the cult can learn them with a suitable Mawla, it's rare for a member of the cult to teach an outsider. The rules surrounding learning and practicing Oblivion Ceremonies are addressed on p. XX, but following are some example Ceremonies rare to anyone outside the cult.

Note: The Shalimite Ceremonies use Oblivion powers from **Chicago by Night** as their pre-requisites. If you do not own this book, the Storyteller is free to suggest another Oblivion power to act as a pre-requisite.

Level 1

Traveler's Call

This simple Ceremony is taught by the cult to all priests before their release into the wider world. Since all priests of Shalim are linked by their common bond with Apolleon the Traveler, they are able to use his presence in eternal Oblivion as a nexus between themselves and their followers.

Pre-required Power: Oblivion's Sight (see **Chicago by Night**)

Ingredients: The black book gifted to them following their indoctrination into the cult

Process: By using the Traveler's Call with their black book in hand and the name of another Shalimite in mind, a priest can send a ripple out across Oblivion, calling the target to their location. Unlike a true summoning, this power does not place a compulsion upon the victim, but does alert the Shalimite being contacted to the vampire's current location through a repetitive, flashing vision of the scenery surrounding the calling Kindred.

System: The cultist must possess their black book and know the name of another Shalimite. The vampire's player makes a Ceremony roll (Difficulty 3). The contacted vampire can choose to ignore the call, but the flashing vision gives them -2 dice to all rolls involving concentration for the remainder of the scene, at which point the call disappears. A critical win by the vampire allows them to send a single-word message to their point of contact along with the vision.

Level 3

Name of the Father

Priests of Shalim have all been trained to use their voices as weapons, slicing through the sugar coating their victims wrap around their love for the world. By invoking the name of their dark master and calling for his aid, they channel a fraction of his power into an adversary and cloud their very mind with shadow, causing them to stand dumbstruck by the emptiness of Oblivion.

Pre-required Power: Shadow Perspective (see **Chicago by Night**)

Ingredients: The ability to speak ancient Greek, eye contact with a victim, five charcoal sticks

Process: The priest invokes an incantation in a dialect of ancient Greek, invoking the name of Shalim as they crush five charcoal sticks in hand. These words are spoken while making eye contact with the victim, therefore the victim must be able to see and hear the user for this power to be successful. If successful, a shadow crosses the eyes of the priest and those of the victim, leaving the eyes of each participant entirely black as the victim succumbs to a crushing sense of despair. Those who have experienced this power and lived to tell of it speak of an all-consuming darkness closing in around their thoughts and robbing them of all sensation. The last thing they recall is a distant, rumbling laughter echoing in their mind.

System: The vampire's player makes their Ceremony roll vs. the victim's Resolve + Composure. The victim is paralyzed with despair for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled. While under this effect, victims cannot see, hear or experience any form of sensory input except touch and physical pain, which brings them out of the effect. The victim can expend Willpower equal to the number of turns they would remain paralyzed to break free of the power.

Level 5

Pit of Contemplation

Only the most powerful of Shalim's priests have been able to manifest this ability, but the effect is one of the most terrifying and demonstrative uses of Oblivion yet seen in modern nights. The ability to cast an enemy into Oblivion terrifies even the toughest of Kindred.

Pre-required Power: Tenebrous Avatar (see **Chicago by Night**)

Ingredients: Pot of ink, three pints/six liters or more of blood from an innocent the user murdered, an unlit room (this power does not work outside)

Process: The vampire personally murders an innocent mortal, incurring Stains unless they have a Conviction that enables them to mitigate this cost. While innocence is subjective, traditional sacrifices are children, virgins, and holy individuals. The vampire then takes at least three pints/six liters of the deceased's blood into an unlit room and uses it to paint a doorway on a wall in the chamber. Finally, the vampire splashes a pot of ink onto the blood-painted portal. Focusing their will upon the gateway, the priest opens a tear through to Oblivion.

Anyone foolish or unfortunate enough to fall into the gap is immediately transported into a pocket of eternal black nothingness for as long as the priest sees fit. If the priest is destroyed without releasing their prisoners, any undead prisoners remain trapped in the void (unless and until another vampire reverses the Ceremony).

Priests may choose to pass through the door, but doing so condemns them forever. Some Shalimites do this when they feel they have completed their work as a part of the cult.

System: Following the Ceremony steps, the priest's player makes their Ceremony roll, and on a success the effect is quick and implosive. A hole opens at the point where ink and blood mix. The hole draws objects, air, and people toward it and, if they fail a Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 4), sucks them into a pocket within Oblivion.

While trapped, victims are suspended in an endless blackness. They cannot see or hear anyone or anything around themselves. Only the priest who conjures this blasphemous gateway can free those held within, by pouring a vampire's vitae over the painted door (sufficient to provoke a Rouse Check). Mortals sucked into Oblivion are instantly killed.

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