



Credits

Written by: Justin Achilli, Kraig Blackwelder, Brian Campbell, Will Hindmarch and Ari Marmell. Vampire and the World of Darkness created by Mark Rein•Hagen

Storyteller Game System Design: Mark Rein•Hagen

Developed by: Justin Achilli

Editor: John "Superintendent Chalmers" Chambers

Art Director: Richard "Good Lord!" Thomas

Layout & Typesetting: Ron Thompson

Interior Art: Mike Danza, Guy Davis, Rebecca Guay, Vince Locke, Matt Mitchell, Christopher Shy, Richard Thomas and Andy Trabbold

Front & Back Cover Design: Ron Thompson

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30083
USA

VICTORIAN AGE VAMPIRE

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Prelude: The Turning of Adam, or Innocence Conquered

It was in the chill fall of the year, and nearly four decades since my grave change of circumstance, that I returned to London. It was, as I recall, a particularly storm-ridden season, and on the very night of my arrival, as my vessel navigated its way up the fetid waters of the Thames, the city saw fit to welcome me with – in no particular order – fog, hail, lightning and winds of a remarkable tempestuousness. It was an honor I graciously accepted. As I saw it, such was my due as a returning dignitary of the nighttime hours. The wilds of Eastern Europe, full as they were of bestial savages (who had recently slaughtered my lovely mortal companions for sport) on the one side and superstitious peasants on the other, had not been to my liking. The worst London storm was sweeter to me than the clearest summer night in Styria, whence I was returning.



Through a proxy, I had arranged lodging in the private residence of some aged and country-bound minor lord named Trobury who no longer found the journey to London worth his while. These fine apartments, while more than comfortable, were decidedly removed from any major thoroughfares, being situated in a neighborhood that had, evidently, seen a notable reversal of fortune in recent years. Lacking proper upkeep, the buildings along that and other nearby streets evinced a pronounced shabbiness, even in the wan illumination of the gaslights. The street lacked anything resembling a wholesome character, a fact that troubled me not at all. Neither rake nor doxy posed any threat to my welfare, though I was likely, in the fullness of time, to pose one to theirs. All the same, if one sets up one's situation so as to be entirely insulated from the very possibility of danger, then one has already been bested by the circumstances of existence and may as well acknowledge as much and be buried with all due ceremony.

From my pocket, I produced the key to the door of my new sanctuary. In correspondence with my proxy, I had been most particular with regard to my lodgings, particularly certain of the more... unusual elements.

I walked around the squat tower to insure that everything was in order. The place was at once simple, solid and unassuming. As I had been careful to stipulate, it was built quite sturdily of stone. Alluding to London's aggressive criminal element, I had requested that all of the pointed Gothic windows be boarded up before my arrival in the interest of my personal security. From without, the place looked rather like the tower of a prison or an abandoned fortress.

The exterior meeting with my approval, I unlocked the enormous oaken door. The single oil lamp I had requested burned dimly, barely banishing the shadows to their corners. Taking it up, I toured my new rooms.

The various chambers were so luxuriously appointed as to verge on the Dionysian. Silk and velvet were the only fabrics in evidence. Blocking the view of the boards, the sharply arched stained-glass windows were exquisitely wrought, and should I ever tire of looking at them, I could pull the heavy velvet draperies. Every color in that room was as rich and deep as nature allowed, and the room was beautiful, though the walls were so busy with draperies, tapestries and queer old paintings as to render all of the rooms a touch claustrophobic. The large stand-up mirror in the boudoir only served to multiply the sensual richness of the room.

After a bit of necessary settling in, I donned my cape and went back out into the night. There was much to do in this old, new city.

As I made for busier and brighter streets, it seemed as though I was walking a gauntlet of whores. They lingered in doorways and rippled into and out of alleyways like cats, frequently shadowed by the nervous looking men they entertained. One young and tender strumpet had the temerity to block my path.

"Dressed right nicely you are, guv. Too nice for these parts. Lookin' for somethin', I'd say. Care to give it a toss?"

I feigned bashfulness, stared alternately at the ground and at her bosom, and she became bolder and took my hand.

"Y'r 'and's cold, guv."

"I'm sure you could warm it for me, my dear."

"Aye, I'm sure too. I 'ave a nice warm alley I can show you right over 'ere, if you'd care to follow me. Get your 'and real warm like."



trabhold

I followed her, returning moments later from that shadowed alleyway, much warmer for her sacrifice. I soon hit bright lights and peopled streets, and the newly pink glow of my complexion allowed me to pass through the more upstanding citizens of London without alarming the more superstitious amongst them. My hunger sated, it was time to acquire a companion. It would not do to present myself to London's nighttime society without one.

A proper gentleman's companion is not to be found among the rabble. On the contrary, I pride myself on having extraordinarily fine taste in such matters. We were rapidly approaching the winter solstice, and though it had been dark for some time, it was not yet especially late, and there were still couples walking arm in arm down many of the more populated thoroughfares.

The lights of those fine places, where the fine people walked down the fine streets wearing all their finery,

THE TURNING OF ADAM

seemed to banish the constant fog, the soot and the despair for which London was known. It was along such streets that the haves gathered with other haves to discuss the filthy and uneducated have-nots. A man named Marx had not so long ago written a book on such matters, and so, it was quite frequently the topic of conversation among the clean and learned upper classes.

And there, in the midst of all the strolling couples, was I, a thing of superstition and old wives' tales, walking amongst them, noting their pretty ways, their pleasant, empty chatter, their formal and eloquent manners, their glaring hypocrisy, their pent up, unspeakable desires. The ardent student of everyday behavior can gain insights into human nature that, after just a few years' study, seem like telepathy. It's what allows mediums to read their marks well enough to feign a departed loved one's postmortem *je t'aime*. It's what had just allowed a Viennese doctor named Freud to write books cataloguing the commonest forms of hysteria seen in the daughters of the comfortably bourgeois. And, when unbounded by the constraints of a single lifetime, it allowed me to see the soul of a man or a woman and all the stains it bore.

A man in a top hat passed me. He was wealthy, almost certainly an aristocrat. The look on his face was thinly disguised rage. It was his intent to commit murder.

A woman passed me holding her husband's hand. She loathed him, and yet, his family's money provided her with things she otherwise would not have, and his nightly advances were worth suffering through in order that she might flaunt diamonds on her wrist, her fingers and on her sweet, delicate throat.

A block later, I spotted a young couple. She was naïve, idealistic, in all likelihood, still a virgin. Her smile was utterly genuine, and I wanted her. Until I saw her betrothed. When I looked more closely at him, it was his beauty, his innocence that cried out to me.

The English are not, on the whole, an attractive people. It is a nation of ruddy cheeks, crooked teeth and warts. Youth, when gifted by good breeding, can occasionally hold off many of these blemishes, but in the end, time undermines the efforts of even the most desperate Narcissus.

This young man's charm and appeal were dazzling. The girl whose hand he held was completely taken with him — and understandably so. His skin was fine and smooth, his teeth straight and white, his eyes clear and kind. His black hair lay slightly mussed, but no less silken for that. Their postures gave away an excitement, a desire for one another. Their wedding date was imminent, most likely Christmas or New Years. I found that problematic. Were they to wed, he would have been taken, be-

smirched, rendered less able to fly with me amongst the assemblages of London's night birds.

She whispered in his ear, and he smiled, and in his smile was all that I wanted to draw out of him, and from that moment on, no other companion would do.

They walked in search of a carriage. She, delicate virgin, needed to be taken home and safely deposited with her family.

In my own carriage, I followed. I remembered the address of her home and the face of her father as he stood at the front door to take custody once more of his daughter. Although I could not hear the cordial conversation in its entirety, I learned that her name was Annabelle. Her father was referred to simply as "Mister Pfenning."

I bribed my hackney driver not to be suspicious as I told him to follow the carriage in front of us. When our quarry's carriage stopped, I again took note of the house address. Not so grand a place as that of Annabelle's parents, but impressive for a man so young.

We both paid our respective drivers and got out of our carriages at the same time. He began to walk to the gate of his house, and I called out to him.

"I say, excuse me, good sir, but could you tell me where Trobury Tower is? I've only just arrived in town and cannot fathom the organizational principle of this blasted city."

He did not want to hear me. He was too aglow with his evening with Annabelle, but the privilege of being a Victorian gentleman carried a multitude of obligations. He first assessed that I was not a beggar or a criminal of any ilk. My smile, more soothing than a living man's, convinced him that I couldn't possibly be. My strangeness, perhaps some hint of an accent I may have picked up since leaving London, intrigued him.

"I believe I know where it is, sir, but it has not been, for years, the kind of place a gentleman of your evident stature would care to visit — not by night in any case."

His eyes were unable to leave my face.

"Indeed? In that case, I would be most appreciative if you could see fit to accompany me to any quality establishment of your choosing that I may pick your mind with regard to other ways the city has changed in my absence."

His lovely Annabelle forgotten now, he saw only me. He was too naïve to mask the awe that my glamour had ignited within him. En route, I introduced myself to him as Dr. Fordon Fortunato Fell, only recently returned from extensive travels to Europe's most easterly lands. Although he thought my name odd, he had the grace not to say so.

At the tavern, I bought him a potent brandy and questioned him about the city, about his betrothal to the lovely Annabelle, about his vocation and his avocations.

My beautiful young man's surname was Killian, given name Adam. His youth and innocence radiated from him the way that fragrance wafts from honeysuckle. Who would not have desired to possess that boy? Even the great Apollo was humbled by the beauty of his Hyacinthos.

He was not a drinking man, so his mind was loosened after only the second drink.

"Surely, you would be willing to guide a stranger in your city to his lodgings?" I asked.

There was no resistance. He consented, and we took our leave.

Trobury Tower was perhaps all of ten minutes away by carriage. When I invited him in, he could not get the better of his fascination. After locking the door, I showed him my luxurious refuge. While he marveled at the intricacy of the stained glass, I opened the veins on my wrist with a straight razor. Approaching from behind, I pressed my body against his, placed my dripping wrist at his lips and said "Take this."

There was nothing he would not have done at that moment to win my approval. I watched his every movement in the standing mirror before us. His lips closed, he suckled, and I felt his body shudder against my own.

Perhaps half an hour later, I left him at his doorstep. Gazing into his beautiful eyes, I told him that none of this had really happened, that he had left his lovely Annabelle and gone directly home to bed and he therefore had nothing to feel ashamed of.

His absence hurt me. I wandered the streets of London for the rest of the night, reacquainting myself, as much as the fog allowed, with the city of my birth and its institutions. When the eastern horizon turned gray, I returned to my quarters. Within Trobury Tower

was an enormous canopy bed carved from some dark and heavy wood. Beneath it was the casket wherein I rested by day.

My second night in London, I woke and fed quickly. Finding a tavern with a suitably distinguished clientele, I claimed for myself a booth near the dark back of the room. Silently, I called my companion to me.

While I waited for the beautiful Adam Killian, I had the barmaid bring to the table one bottle of vivid green Pernod Fils, an appropriate glass, the absinthe spoon, water and a bowl of sugar.

When, twenty minutes later, Killian arrived, he was furious.

"My deepest apologies for being so late, Dr. Fell. I had to take my leave of dear Annabelle, and I was accosted by not fewer than three of the damned prossies that infest this wretched city. They are an affront to the good people of this city, and the dainty little sodomites who ply their vice in the molly houses are even worse, if such a thing is possible."

His exasperation detracted from his beauty, so I sought to soothe him. "Do not denigrate the whores, Killian, of either sex. I have learned, over the course of years, that they fulfill a myriad of functions and are poorly rewarded for their troubles, simply by virtue of the fact that they labor not in factories like the base classes nor in offices like the privileged



classes, but in darkened alleyways. Work is work, Killian, high-minded morality notwithstanding."

So saying, I saw fit to change the subject. "Have you ever had the pleasure of drinking absinthe, Mr. Killian?"

"I do not fit well into the bohemian set, Dr. Fell, so, no, I have not partaken of the so called 'Green Fairy.'"

"But," I said, "I think that you'd very much like to, would you not?"

His rage forgotten, he waxed handsome again. Almost coyly, disarmed by my graciousness and bonhomie, he said, "Would you like me to?"

"Very much so, dear Adam; very much so."

"Will you join me?"

"Alas, I shall not. My absinthe-imbibing days are long behind me, while you have yet to cultivate an appreciation for the more exotic pleasures."

So saying, I poured a generous portion of the emerald liquor into his glass, filled the slotted absinthe spoon with sugar, more than one would usually use so as to break in my young protégé gently, and poured in the water through the spoon. With the addition of the sweetened water, the contents of the glass changed from emerald green to nacreous white.

Looking him in the eye, I said, "Drink to long life, Mr. Killian, and the catalogue of pleasures it promises."

He drank. And drank. And drank.

Some time later, I carried him to the carriage, and we returned to the stony privacy of Trobury Tower. I laid him gently on the thick quilt, where he could writhe in time to his hallucinations without injuring himself. The wormwood was showing him a world beyond that to which he was accustomed — soon, it would be my turn.

Although I had fed, the sight of his sweet and undefended throat was more than my overtaxed will could forego. Lying next to him on the bed, I reached my hand beneath his shapely skull, grabbed his fine black hair and pulled his head back. I could feel the heat rising from him, smell the scent of his flesh. Letting my lips linger on his neck, my teeth pierced skin, but just barely. I did not want the full flow of his blood; I wanted only to taste him.

This was not feeding; this was exultation.

Had I not gluttoned myself on the blood of whores before our meeting, Killian would surely have passed from this world to the next because there was no control I could have mustered in the face of his unconquered youth and the sweetness of his blood.

I lay next to him, watching the rise and fall of his chest. I had healed the small wound on his neck so that it no longer tempted me. When he stirred, I drew close to him. Biting my own wrist, I let the precious, the sacred,

blood drip onto his parted lips, where it looked for all the world like the sweet incarnadine juice of pomegranate seeds.

He sighed and pulled close to my wrist to suckle. I let him drink deeply, knowing that in one night's time, he would belong to me.

When I returned him once more to his doorstep, the sun was threatening to rise into a cloudless sky, and I could barely stay awake.

"Has your home a basement, Adam?"

"It does, though it's rather small. Why do you ask?"

"I should like to sleep the day away there, if you wouldn't mind. I would greatly appreciate it."

The basement was small with stone walls. It was musty and completely lacked windows. Before Killian went up stairs, I caught his eye.

"You will not remember the evening, nor that I am down here, Adam, but neither will you be surprised when I come for you this evening."

"Yes, of course," he said, and then, he took his leave. I had only moments to find a relatively secluded corner before the waves of oblivion washed over me.

I saw not the least hint of light in the basement when I shrugged off my diurnal stupor.

I hungered. The fragrance of his innocence seemed to seep from the very stones of the place, through the boards of the floor, and carried in the air itself.

Walking up the stairs, I heard voices, sharp and accusatory as I entered the living chambers of my new ward.

"...and not return to your home until well past midnight?! Are you under the impression that I, a physician, do not know the symptoms of drunkenness, the odor of absinthe? If you are, then my sister is quite mistaken and you *are* mad, Killian."

I followed the noise to the room of its origin. There were, within the parlor, three persons: the bellicose stranger, the weeping Annabelle and my beautiful Adam, looking stricken.

Loudly clearing my throat, I joined in the fray. "Sir, I was with Mr. Killian last night, and I can attest that the man is very nearly a saint. Although I am a respected man of science and learning, he is a much better man than I, and if you are intent on breaking the poor boy's spirit for a single evening of imbibing absinthe with a friend, then perhaps you and your sister might wish to go elsewhere."

"Killian," said the puzzled accuser, "who is this?"

I replied, unsmiling, "Doctor Fortunato Fell, philosopher of human nature, investigator of nocturnal mysteries and leader-astray of the innocent. The good

Mister Killian here was kind enough to accompany me last night in my rounds of London's gray and haunted streets, something he'll be doing a great deal more of henceforth. His marriage to your sister, I'm afraid, must be put off for the foreseeable future."

"You're mad," stated the interloper.

"I am not." I looked at Adam, caught his eye directly and said "Come stand with me, Adam." He rose at once from his seat and stood near enough to me that I could hear the beating of his heart. "Adam is preparing to enter a new and enthralling period of his life, one beyond your understanding. It would be in the best interest of all involved for the lovely Annabelle to find another suitor and to leave Adam to his amazing discoveries." Into Adam's ear I whispered, "Dismiss them."

"Annabelle... Charles... please go. I'd rather not discuss this at the moment."

The two departed, Annabelle in tears, Charles enraged. After this evening, my companion would happily avoid his former fiancée and her combative brother, but just then, he was in a fragile state.

He looked tired. It was to be expected. Making the transition from his world to the world of the night was bound to take its toll. It always did.

"Poor Adam. You must not dwell on those people, do you understand? Put on your coat, and follow me. There is a most bewitching distraction to which I need must introduce you."

Adam, enrapt, followed. We did not take a carriage. The cold air of night, the exercise, would do my young companion good. As we walked through the fog, I had him tell me everything about Annabelle's brother: where his office was, his home address, the name of his wife and children.

We arrived at our destination nearly an hour later. A young Indian man opened the door. I smiled at him winningly and said, "We are here for the airs of inspiration, my good man."

He ushered us into a chamber of moderate size furnished only with an abundance of silken pillows. In the center of the room was an elaborate hookah.

"Now, dear Adam, you will have a taste of dreams like you've never had before."

The opium affected him both quickly and powerfully. He was soon reclining on the pillows, wholly incapable of conversation. I had errands to run, but I left instructions with our host that Adam not be disturbed from his reverie before my return.

My hunger, by that time, was sharp. I took a carriage directly to Charles Pfenning's home. The lovely Mrs. Pfenning was only too happy to ask me in. Her husband,

she informed me, was upstairs, reading in his study after a most taxing day. I thanked her and told her that I could find my own way up.

Within moments, good Doctor Pfenning was pleased to see me. "Here is what you remember of this afternoon," I said staring into his eyes. "You met privately with your sister, the pristine Annabelle, and in a moment of weakness, you fell prey to her young feminine charms. You forced yourself upon her unnaturally. Your poor violated sister escaped you and fled, no doubt to the authorities, and now, you are alone in your despair, awaiting the justifiably severe consequences of your brutish act."

He grew immediately ashen faced.

"It's a bad situation, Charles, but chin up. As a physician," I offered, "you have access to many... agents of relief, do you not? Lethal curatives to release you from the consequences of your deeds?" He hastened immediately to his apothecary bottles and began searching through them. I watched him formulate, brew and drink, and by the time the good (and inexplicably anemic) Mrs. Pfenning found her dead husband, she never remembered that he had received a visitor.

En route back to Adam, I paid a generous sum to a whore to buy all of her clothes. She was pale as the moon and clearly pregnant. How I wanted to drain the warmth from her! I reigned in the Beast and let her go. Naked, she scuttled back to whatever hovel she resided in to dream of the beautiful new clothes she would buy on the morrow.

At the opium den, I gathered up my charge, and we returned to Trobury Tower, where I set the whore's clothes on a chair in the boudoir.

Behind the tower's great oaken door, I once more tasted my new companion. His blood was rich with dreams and all the sweeter for it. His beautiful eyes lolled languidly behind their long lashes.

I removed my shirt, to prevent its getting stained, and brought out the straight razor once more. I lay next to Adam, placed my arm beneath his neck, allowing his dreaming head to loll backward, parting his lips. I cut my throat and pressed the wound to his mouth and felt him come alive beneath me. The embrace in which he held me was strong, desperate. I gave until I was weak. Had he taken more I almost surely would have fallen prey to my own inner demons, and that I would not allow.

Pushing him away, I saw that his eyes were no longer clouded with fantasies. They were alive, awake, aware.

"We have one last bit of business to attend to, sweet Adam, before our great adventure is over with for the evening. Let us go and pay a visit to your former fiancée."

It was Annabelle's father who answered the door in his nightclothes. He was happy to escort us up to Annabelle's room, just as Annabelle was happy to accompany us on a walk on such a fine autumn night. The old man would never remember our visit and would have no idea how his daughter had left the house.

A carriage took the three of us back to Trobury Tower. Once inside, I looked at the girl and said, "Strip." She had long been trained to obey men. She didn't even balk.

My hunger was growing more insistent, but I refused to allow it to impinge on the virtuosity of this... spectacle.

I gazed at Adam, who looked confused, conflicted. "Sweet Adam, please remove your clothing."

He hesitated, but acceded.

During my time in Eastern Europe, I had the opportunity to attend a performance of the Russian ballet, and if ever a man had the body of a dancer, it was Adam. It was as perfect as the flesh can be.

"Now," I said, "take her."

He did not move. Either his Victorian conscience was rebelling at this notion, or he did not want to offend me. I preferred to believe it was the latter, and I appreciated his sensitivity, but it would not do for my ultimate goal. I looked at my beloved, nodded in the naked Annabelle's direction and said, "Ravish her. As you would have on your wedding night."

He was gentler than I wanted him to be. I watched, jealous, enraged, hungry. I cheered him on to completion even as my jaw clenched in fury. Annabelle alternately



cried and fought, moaned and cooperated. It was over quickly, and I was glad of it.

"Go clean yourself." I directed Adam.

"Stand." I told the girl, and she did. Annabelle's virginal blood stained the quilt and, intermingled with other fluids, still ran still down her thigh, the chief ingredient in a heady, primordial cocktail.

I knelt before her, cleaned her intimately and drank from her as I had never drunk from any vessel. I handed the whore's garb to her and told her to dress herself. She did so slowly and unsteadily as the tears rolled down her pale cheeks.

Adam returned, the stain of Eve washed away.

I gazed proudly upon him. "I've tasted you in new ways, dear Adam. Would you drink from me again?" I handed him the straight razor.

For a moment, he hesitated, until I asked, "Where is your love for me, Adam? Drink!" In a flash, he had snatched the razor from my palm and was on me like a ravenous animal; were it not for my diabolical resilience, his razor stroke would have severed my hand. As it was, he cut deeply enough for a long, deep draught.

"Yes, that's it, take as much as you can. Drain me that I may drain the lovely Annabelle completely."

He drank until sated.

In turn, I beckoned to the weeping Annabelle and, holding her close, drained her dry. Her beauty at that moment was stunning. My little courtesan would never age further, never be seen wrinkled and ugly, never be forced to bear the indignities of pregnancy or childbirth.

Under cover of darkness, we dumped her small body in an alleyway frequented by whores.

I walked through the fog, my companion at my side. "Tomorrow night, we shall buy you beautiful new clothing, and we shall present ourselves to Mithras, whereupon your induction into midnight's demimonde will be complete, dear Adam. So long as you remain with me, you will not die. Your beauty will never fade. If you choose to sing, your song need never end, and should you wish to dance, you will dance forever."





Chapter One: The Empire After Nightfall

*... it was the season of Light, it was the season
of Darkness, it was the Spring of hope, it was the
winter of despair.*

- Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

*The sun never sets on Queen Victoria's empire,
but vampires rule the world by gaslight. By day,
human aristocrats reign, but once night falls, Un-
Dead creatures reclaim their rightful roles as
predators stalking human prey. Here, wealthy
men maintain a pretense of humanity, poor men live like
animals, and gentlemen monsters prey upon the small. It
is an age of stark contrasts: etiquette and degeneracy,
gentility and squalor, sweeping social change and stag-
nant aristocratic traditions. This is the Gothic
Victorian age.*



Those three words express the extremes of this era. The word "Gothic" comes from a literary tradition that flourished in the mid-19th century. By the end of the century, it undergoes a certain renaissance, showing the persistence and endurance of ancient evils in an evolving world. The word "Victorian" refers to the era when the Queen of England governed an empire spanning the globe. Victoria has ruled the breathing citizens of the Empire since 1837; thus, few alive can remember the time before her reign.

As for the "age" itself (for the purposes of this book), it spans almost two decades. The Gothic Victorian age begins in 1880. That same year, a conspiracy of secret masters guides the founders of a new occult society: the Golden Dawn. Although mortals begin the movement, the Kindred soon infest it, finding new ways to attract living initiates. They then spread like wildfire through the secret societies of the age. The rebirth of occult arts and sciences brings wondrous opportunities to those who can marshal supernatural forces — and unspeakable terrors to those who cannot oppose them.

The era ends in 1897, when a Transylvanian count arrives in London. Vlad Dracula whispers in the ear of an Irish author a story that will revolutionize the world — and strain the Masquerade to its very limits. Like his fictional counterpart, he shatters the boundaries between worlds, leaving horror in his wake. By the time of Victoria's death, the Gothic Victorian age has drawn to a close. Only through sagas and stories can we recapture the essence of this fictional world, and that is the very purpose of this book.

The World of Darkness

Welcome to another realm, one shrouded in fog and lit by flame. The history of the Gothic Victorian age is like that of our own world, but it is one in which monsters prowl the night. They could just as well survive in the shadows of our world — or at least in the shadows of our past. Later generations of vampires herald this time as the height of their unseen civilization. Yet, the mists of time are like London's fog: They distort all we think we perceive.

Throughout the era, the inhabited realms of the globe can be divided into two extremes: the civilized world, lit by gaslight, and the barbarous lands, lit by torchlight. In civilized cities, great façades built of marble and stone are stained with the soot of the Industrial Age. By night, they are stained with the blood of the innocent. In the barbarous lands, vampires devolve into humanity's worst nightmares. They revel in the freedom of the old ways and the potency of ancient power.

Victorian tales are florid and overwrought; thus, the vampires of the age serve as paragons of Victorian ideals. With equal pathos, they serve as exemplars of tragedy and ignominious villainy. Some seek redemption or nobility or forgiveness, evincing some sense of moral certitude — even if they are cursed to fail. Others defy civilization itself, displaying extreme acts of amorality that exceed even the most extreme tales of horror.

Rebirth

Perhaps you have seen this world before. Perhaps it is all too familiar. Yet, to fully understand it, you must look at it in a different light: a soft flame



kindled for millennia and held up against the growing darkness that surrounds it. The century to come will almost extinguish that fire. In the decades that follow, technology revolutionizes the world, aristocracy becomes an anachronism, gentlemanly behavior becomes obsolete, and world wars ravage the planet. The idealists of that brave new world become even more jaded and degenerate, forgetting the propriety and etiquette of the Victorian era. Forget these shadows of a future past. History is yet to be written, and the protagonists of our passion plays may rewrite it in their own image.

To recapture the spirit of that bygone age, its very *Zeitgeist*, you must die and be reborn: You must see the world anew as a vampire's child. A deathless monster has exsanguinated you completely, in spirit as well as flesh. For a purpose you cannot fathom, he has drained your blood, leaving you to die. He then bestowed a curse upon you through the strength of his vitae, the power of his blood, condemning you to a state neither living nor dead. He may act as your sire, instructing you in the etiquette and traditions of vampiric society. Or he may be your damnation, burying you alive and leaving you to fight for survival as an animate corpse, an "Un-Dead" creature thirsting for human blood. Regardless of his means, if he has created other childer, you may need to contest against them to ensure your very survival. Just as vampires feed upon mankind, they exploit each other as well. Be careful whom you trust.

If you believed in the mercy of God and the promise of Heaven, then your God has forsaken you. This age is one when faith is strong and damnation is absolute. The progenitors of your race rebelled against Man and God alike, and you have inherited their original sin. It is your birthright, your legacy, your inheritance through blood. More than a mere infection or disease, your very soul has withered under the blight of spiritual corruption. Every church is now a bastion of faith whose walls have been built to hold you at bay. The cross is a sign of a religion that has rejected you, reviled you and would actively seek to destroy you. Sunlight is anathema to you, for through your baptism of blood, you have been reborn as a creature of darkness. The Embrace may have been given as an unholy blessing, but it is soon to become your undying curse.

You shall be the villain in this Gothic tale, whether as a madman hiding in shadows or as a cruel overlord languishing in a crumbling castle by moonlight. Racked with angst and tormented with regret, you must reject your cruel fate with true Victorian spirit. The gaslit streets of a vast city beckon, offering a respite from madness and uncertainty. Yet beyond the reach of its nacreous illumination, the darkness of the wilderness

calls, promising new revelations of the depth of your degeneration. Should you rush toward the light or champion the darkness? Upon rebirth, the first choice you make shall determine your destiny. Will you pretend to be mortal in the civilized world or descend into monstrous degeneracy in the barbarous lands?

The Civilized World

Queen Victoria's empire offers wonders, even to the Damned. Indefatigable engines of industry drive locomotives and steamships around the globe. Webs of telegraph wires unite distant countries in rapid communication. Science attempts to redefine man's role in the evolutionary pageant, tests the limits of human sanity and strains to see eternity in the "luminiferous ether" of space. With similar effervescence, the upper class of Victoria's empire bear what Kipling will call the "burden" of spreading civilization around the globe. Idealism and imperialism are as omnipresent as hypocrisy.

The fictional heroes of this Victorian empire champion these new ideals with a purity few mortals can emulate. Holmes employs reason to eliminate crime. Phileas Fogg traipses around the world in 80 days. Verne's heroes travel to the center of the Earth, the kingdoms of the moon and an airship fortress fit for a man who would be king of the world. Yet, here also we find Frankenstein's monster seeking the meaning of his existence in a meaningless world, mad Nemo forsaking mankind for an ocean kingdom and the Invisible Man driven to bestial acts in gross displays of supernatural power. Even in fiction, the extremes of the Victorian psyche are evident.

The upper crust of society emulates these heroes. Sadly, their counterparts—the impoverished and squalid denizens of the largest cities—hold little significance to idealists, save as object lessons of Dickensian proportions. Within the largest empire in history, ignorance and suffering are as widespread as syphilis and consumption. Children sweep away manure in the streets so that the wealthy may remain unsullied; many of these children die of horrific diseases long before adulthood. The Industrial Revolution has just begun, but there are, as yet, no truly mechanized methods of mass production. If work is to be done, it requires human hands. Men, women and children labor long hours for starvation wages, living and dying in the shadow of the Machine.

In shocking rebellion against this unfair and impoverished world, an underworld thrives—it is a world with its own laws, regardless of what the police may insist. Cracksmen and scavengers, flash girls and whores, beggars and burglars, flower girls and sewer hunters—the pageant of the underworld lives and dies in the same cities of Victorian gentlemen and ladies, sometimes only

a few blocks away from their ostentatious homes. Costermongers wheel carts of goods through the streets, acting as lookouts against the constabulary and their truncheons. The wealthy profit while "unfortunates" perish, sometimes at the hands of innovative murderers. Even the Un-Dead cannot equal the atrocities of mortal slayers such as the Lambeth Poisoner and Jack the Ripper. Fire and faith alone cannot purge this world of corruption... or of evil.

Victorian science presents its own measure of hypocrisy. The sciences have learned to tell how the physical laws of this world work, but not why. Thus, charlatans and visionaries have rushed in to fill a spiritual void. Even educated ladies may consult a spiritualist for the chance to commune with loved ones who have passed on. A host of new faiths arise to challenge established beliefs, often spurred by "secret masters" of supernatural lore. Theosophical wisdom exults the wonders of Lemurian kingdoms and Hyperborean ancestors. Egyptology, Atlantology, Neo-Druidism — numerous exotic and esoteric fields of occult study come into vogue. Secret societies offer living glimpses of magic in a world where faith itself is challenged.

Mysticism and the supernatural become secretive ways to indulge in taboos. Victorian men and women who tire of tragedy seek an escape from the scientific age. They find it — and often find suffering or death at the hands of the night-fiends who would exploit them. For, just as the criminal underworld lurks in the greatest empire since Ancient Rome, the Un-Dead prosper wherever mysticism flourishes. Romantic notions of death and eternity allow creatures of great passion to seduce — and sometimes destroy — those who seek a respite from Victorian propriety.

Just as the opium addict retreats to his den of iniquity to indulge in vice, those who feign propriety may submit to their baser instincts, slaking their lust by submitting to nocturnal predators. The surging lifeblood of the civilized world depends on the cursed vitae of vampires. Powerful Kindred build financial empires, sponsor artists and artistry and protect the herds of mortals that gather in their domains, but the price of progress is paid in blood.

The Barbarous Lands

Far from the elegant metropolises of the civilized world, old ways and older superstitions survive. In the barbarous lands, rustic peasants labor as serfs and endure as squatters, as they have for over a millennium. At night, they shutter their windows and lock their doors, for they know that monsters are real. On the few occasions when the creatures of the night employ subtlety, it

is only to escape the wrath of mobs with torches and pitchforks. Since naming evils gives them power, few would dare speak of such horrors openly. Even in the homes of the wealthy, the fearful dare not even whisper of the monsters in their midst.

The vampires of these domains hold no pretense of civility. They exult freely in barbarism, and mortals fear the night. A pale aristocracy rules from the hidden chambers of modern estates and crumbling castles, sometimes even suborning mortal rulers as their puppets. Yet, as the boundaries of their once feudal domains are shrinking, they serve as the last defenders of tyrannical traditions. Foreign invaders have tried and failed to take their lands, but now, their empires have fallen before time itself — a force they claim to be immune to merely because their cold flesh does not age. Only the myths and legends of their kind age gracefully.

If the Kindred of the barbarous lands are empowered by these superstitions, they are also bound by them. Where belief is strong, faith may protect the virtuous. Those who remember the lore of bygone eras can arm themselves against the perils of the night. Here, one may find churches sanctified so that the *vampyr* fears to enter. Searchers after horror find elders so degenerate that the mere sight of a Christian cross is sufficient to elicit paroxysms of fear. For certain lineages of vampires, mirrors cannot hold their reflections and running water restricts their travels. As cruel fate would have it, however, most Victorian vampires do not suffer these restrictions — and they use these misperceptions to fool the unwary. Feigning their roles as Gothic villains, they exploit ignorance as a powerful ally.

Other sinister creatures lurk in the shadows: Brutal werewolves, demonic ghouls and corrupt sorcerers are but a few. Against such mysterious and shadowy supernatural forces, a few desperate souls look upon the Un-Dead as shadowy saviors, celebrating their hunts against greater evils. The most submissive villagers respond by enacting secretive rites, sometimes employing the sacrifice of blood and lives to petition the thirsting lords of the night for mercy. Vampires of the barbarous lands see this as the proper relationship between predators and their prey. They openly ravage and ravish, lacking the discretion of their more cosmopolitan relations. The eldest may employ Machiavellian schemes of intrigue, but a new generation of Un-Dead rejects such subtleties as ineffective, openly rebelling against humanity and mortal law — and all too often, against other vampires.

Nearly all of these monsters scheme to rise up against the protectors of the largest living herds, those gathered in the civilized lands. In the cities of men, blood is sipped

gently when it should flow freely. Once the guardians of the civilized domains are laid low, the world will be awash in blood. By bringing back the old ways, these monsters would usher in a new age, one in which the lords of the night openly reign over the largest cities. Centuries of festering ambition demand nothing less.

No one better defines this ambition than Vlad Dracula himself, who attempts to cross the boundary between East and West, bringing the strength of the barbarous lands into London, the very heart of the civilized world. By the end of the Victorian age, the boundary between the two worlds lies shattered, ushering in a century of madness.

Secret Societies

In Gothic fiction, vampires are solitary creatures by their very nature. Authors such as Polidori and LeFanu celebrated the monsters they envisioned as lone stalking predators. A vampire might choose to hunt in solitude or to prey upon a select group of mortals. Yet, for creatures who scheme to survive for eternity, the thought of centuries of isolation is a curse far worse than hunger for blood.

Faced with endless nights, vampires seek diversions and distractions. As natural predators, they eventually prey upon each other for their own amusement, contesting with one another over politics, culture and influence.

The societies they form are thin façades erected to obscure their own violent conflicts. Two societies define these conflicts better than any other, for they have warred for centuries over politics and philosophy: the Camarilla and the Sabbat.

Victorian vampires Embraced in this momentous age see the world in extremes. For newly created vampires, these two political sects represent the Good and Evil of the age. Whether this distinction is largely a fiction presented by their elders is a matter of conjecture. The leaders of these two societies author cautionary tales of those who stray too far from their appointed roles as victor and villain.

Elder vampires have little trouble adapting to their ever-changing traditions, but in the Gothic Victorian age, these two sects undergo subtle changes that even the dread Methuselahs ignore at their own peril. In the Gothic Victorian age, the architects of these two societies have taken on new appearances and affectations. Yet, they also hide ugly truths, like a corset laced around a corpse.

The Camarilla

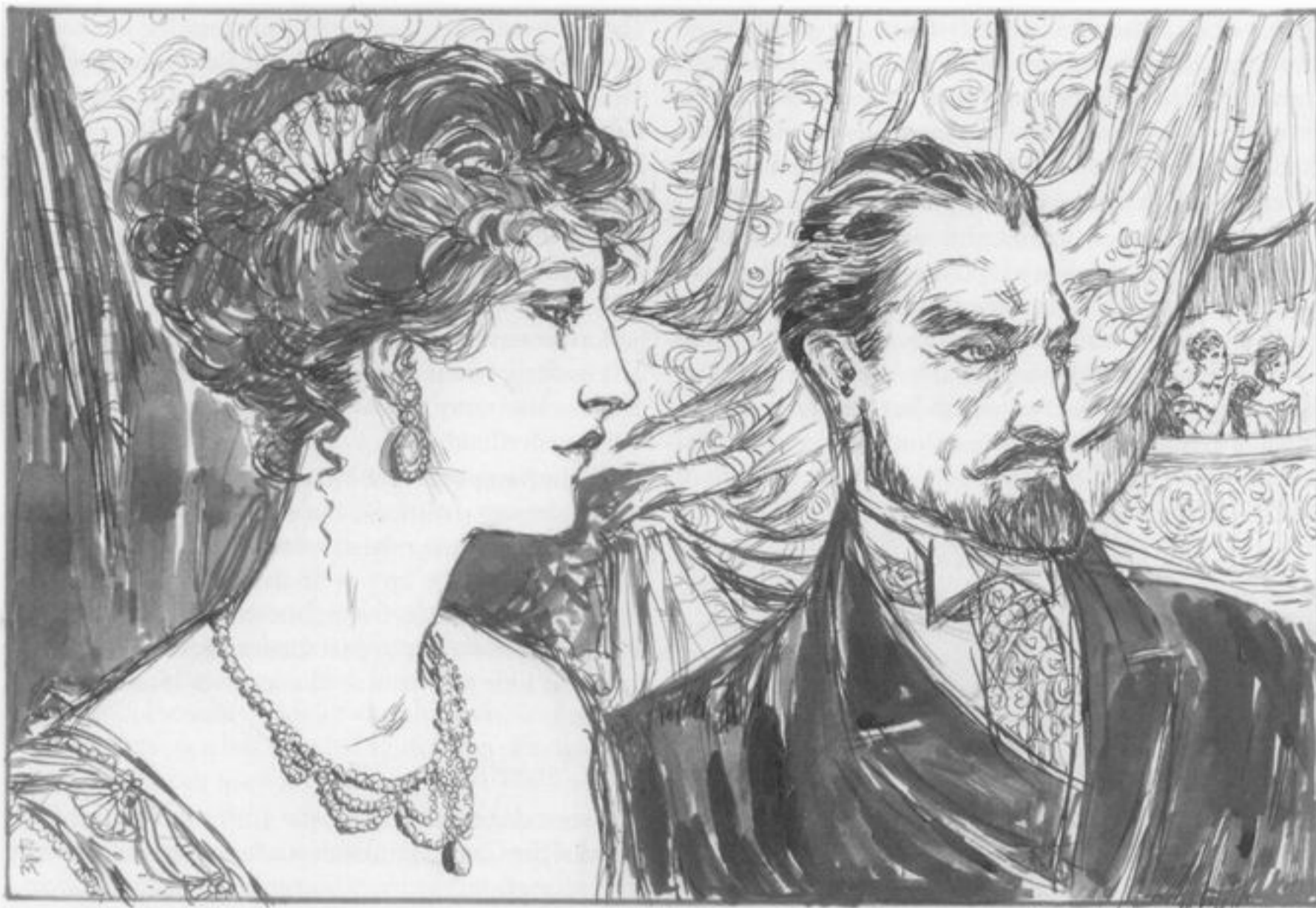
Legends tell us that, in the 15th century, ancients founded the Camarilla as a means for vampires to protect themselves from the ire of humankind. At the Convention of Thorns, they formally recognized seven lineages as the pillars of their society: the seven clans of their

History and Mystery

Faced with the prospect of playing an historical chronicle, you will face a similar choice between extremes. Are you a devotee of Victorian detail, insisting on historical accuracy? Or is the spirit of the age sufficient, allowing you to rewrite history according to your whim? Either approach to **Vampire** is valid.

If you insist on accuracy, a host of reference works promise the opportunity to indulge in your scholarly pursuits. Detailed maps of the largest cities are sufficient for everything you should need, save perhaps for the spotting of artillery. For stories set in the heart of the Empire, a resourceful Storyteller can find everything from London train schedules to lists of prices accurate to the last shilling. Should you err, however, remember that this world is not our own, merely one in the shadow of our own past. Unless you choose to present the details of your chronicle in a dissertation for a graduate degree in history, its virtue lies in the essence of its story. To the devil with the details! If events unfold in the Gothic Victorian world exactly as they did in our own, the very mystery essential to horror is defeated.

Some Storytellers care only for evoking the spirit of the age, concerned more with theme and mood than the exact details of settings and locations. Their template is not the outline of a history book, but themes and moods worthy of a story or novel. Yet, if the game is too inaccurate, the story is cast adrift in time, divorced from the very details that give the Victorian era its meaning. If you don't care to memorize dates and prices, historical works can at least grant inspiration, and that stokes imagination as readily as any work of fiction. The Storyteller must strike a balance somewhere between minute attention to detail and freeform historical improvisation.



kind. They codified the Six Traditions they had obeyed for generations, demanded all within their purview obey them and then enforced them with brutal efficiency. Paramount among these laws is the practice of the Masquerade, the need to obscure all traces of their existence from the common populace.

Camarilla society's greatest ideals are the humanity and the civility mortals exhibit. To prevent their own annihilation, Camarilla vampires struggle to maintain the faint spark of humanity they have preserved across endless nights. While dwelling hidden among mankind, they claim to rule the civilized world from the shadows. United in the belief that they should not act as monstrous beasts, they refer to themselves as the Kindred. The Victorian age is arguably the golden age of the Camarilla's history. Throughout most of Europe, Kindred consider the major cities of the civilized world their domain.

In the gaslight era, imperialism is rampant, and the Camarilla has benefited greatly from it. Queen Victoria's empire spans the globe, governing realms from Hong Kong to Jamaica, Canada to Capetown and London to Delhi. The Kindred egotistically claim credit for this expansionism, reaffirming that they have forced back the other creatures of the night so their herds of "kine"

can grow. Regardless of whether this is true or not, it has enabled them to spread their politics and traditions around the world. Although London is undoubtedly the jewel in the Camarilla's crown, the vampiric sect now dominates more cities and territories than ever before — and more than it ever will again. As part of this conceit, the whole of Camarilla society is commonly referred to as the Empire, used interchangeably to refer to the kingdoms of Kindred and kine.

The Victorian Camarilla defines each Kindred's place in society. Status is paramount, often defined as much by clan and lineage as by deeds. Elders hold obligations over their progeny for decades, punishing wayward childer who stray. Gatherings of Camarilla vampires are often very formal and ostentatious affairs, recognizing and reinforcing these beliefs. While they may take on the appearance of the current fashions of Victorian high society — entailing everything from regal balls to African safaris — they are, at best, pale imitations of mortal innovations. The roles played by the participants usually reflect their political status. Under new and stylish guises, those who conform are praised, while those who stray are condemned... or excluded.

Even when a small society of Kindred allies, it does so in obeisance of propriety and tradition. Kindred who

come to depend on each other form social coteries that cross boundaries of lineage and status. Yet, when they act outside the understood roles of their clan, lineage or generation, their motives become suspect. Society has high expectations.

Princes and elders reflect upon this as a golden age because they hold more power than they have in centuries. They have seized much of this power by vilifying their greatest enemies: the Sabbat. Legends tell of the Camarilla's rivals seizing and desecrating holy land for their own defense, raising armies of freshly killed childer from graveyards and even making pacts with the Devil himself to gain supernatural power. Elders greatly exaggerating these and other threats to their domains justify tyranny in those domains. Spreading fear, they warn of Sabbat spies in their midst and, thus, enforce the Traditions according to their whims, exploiting an aegis of terror. Any who cannot uphold strict expectations may have "fallen to the enemy's corruption."

For Camarilla childer, existence is perilous. A Camarilla vampire's true nature is defined by the conflict between an individual and the expectations of others: his sire, his prince and his sect. Above all else, it is a society in which "each knows his place." Victorian beliefs serve as the foundation for many modern stereotypes. Defying these expectations calls society itself into question. Because Victorian ideals are so lofty, it is an enterprise an ambitious vampire cannot help but eventually pursue.

The Sabbat

In 1394, the vampires who would later become the Founders of the Camarilla held their first conspiratorial gatherings in response to a conflagration known as the Anarch Revolt that had pitted elder against neonate, sire against childer. Anarch soldiers led by a Brujah visionary assaulted several of the chief conspirators. Soon thereafter, rebellious childer reputedly destroyed the Lasombra and Tzimisce Antediluvians, two of the progenitors of the vampiric race. These Un-Dead revolutionaries organized a rival society — the Sabbat — in defiance of all who would rule them. Since that time, Sabbat vampires have abandoned all pretense of humanity, following older codes of vampiric behavior instead. They see no need to feign mankind's civility. While indulging in their monstrous natures, they blaspheme in word and deed against all mankind holds holy. It is this motif that best defines the Victorian Sabbat — as rebels against Man and God.

Save for a few cultured domains in Spain and Italy, the Victorian Sabbat claims the barbarous lands of Europe as its territory, preying on peasants who preserve ancient superstitions and religions as their only defenses

against the Damned. As some learned Victorian occultists state, the very fact that vampires gather in ritualistic sabbats shows that they are enemies of God, cursed creatures who shall never know the grace of Heaven. Vampiric occultists are perhaps a bit more informed, attesting that the very structure of the Sabbat as a whole is modeled in part on that of the Catholic Church, replete with an elaborate hierarchy of bishops and archbishops. The eldest Sabbat vampires revel in this blasphemy, preserving one of the oldest secret societies in the world.

Younger vampires are far more concerned with the alliances of their smaller packs. This animalistic term shows these vampires' contempt for all things human — for, after all, they know that they are more than human. Many packs connive to destroy the eldest vampires. In so doing, they bring themselves closer to Caine, the progenitor of their cursed race; thus, Sabbat vampires refer to themselves as Cainites. Sabbat elders would wield the sect like a weapon against their enemies; thus, the order is also known as the Sword of Caine. Some truly powerful creatures see the Sabbat as naïve for indulging in such monstrous urges, but this display of solidarity fits the very spirit of the age.

In the Old World, Cainites hide from science and light, skulking through the remains of ancient kingdoms. They do not merely embody the most monstrous legends concerning their kind — they are the very inspiration for them. Even scholars of the forbidden are quick to describe these vampires as "evil," but more precisely, they embody the evils one finds celebrated in Gothic horror, the stuff of scandal sheets and penny dreadfuls. Each act of infamy that spreads throughout the civilized world works against the Sabbat's hated enemies: the Camarilla vampires that hide within it, creatures who would pretend to be human. Cainites preserve the ancient ways of true vampires — and usher in a new era of darkness.

Where one of the Camarilla Kindred would spare a victim out of simple mercy, a Victorian Cainite would kill, drinking deeply from a vessel and brutally casting it aside. Where one of the Kindred would pride himself on a façade of gentlemanly behavior, a Cainite would instead aspire to a masterpiece of victimization, mutilation or bloody carnage. Tales of horror depict vampires as inhuman murderers slaking their obscene lusts at the cost of human life. The Cainites of the Old World inspire, equal and exceed those expectations.

The Sabbat vampires of the New World are far more progressive. Cainites have descended upon America, Canada and Mexico like a plague. Without restraint, they have created too many childer in the largest cities and, thus, are eager to repeatedly assault the few Camarilla

domains they encounter. Yet, even in the Americas, they have begun to expand into the lands of the "red-skinned savages," incorporating the rituals and myths of Native Americans. In true Victorian fashion, Camarilla vampires equate this with degeneracy, miscegenation or madness.

The most important treaty in the Sabbat's history, the Purchase Pact of 1803, defines its members allegiance against all who would oppose them. The pact forbids them from warring from each other, and thus, they have turned against the territories of their greatest enemies. In so doing, these Victorian vampires have become the enemies of civilization itself. They launch continual crusades against the civilized lands, enacting their will through violent fervor. The youngest among them know no other way of existence.

Autarkis and Anarchs

Much of the character of the Gothic Victorian era is defined by the conflict of its two largest Un-Dead societies, yet some of the Damned eschew this undying rivalry. The Sabbat's Crusades serve to unite its own order, while the Camarilla demonizes and vilifies its enemies to keep young vampires obedient. Some suspect that these dramatic roles ensure that those in power remain in power, regardless of their sect or affiliation. Others speak of ancient vampires who manipulate the rulers of both sects like pieces on a chessboard, defining black and white pieces according to their whims. Few dare profess such beliefs openly. Skeptics harbor such suspicions in the depths of their dead hearts.

Those who withdraw from the concerns of the Camarilla and the Sabbat are considered autarkis. Those who actively work against both societies, attempting to slay or reform all who would rule, regardless of sect, are known as anarchists — society itself is their enemy. Forsaking both sects is a dangerous stance to take. The Camarilla claims all vampires who exist within their domains as nominal members of the sect, while the Sabbat considers all Kindred who trespass in their territory to be enemies of the Sword of Caine. Nonetheless, autarkis and anarchists reject authority, whether by prince and primogen or by bishop and archbishop. They insist that they can coexist without such affiliations. As one would expect in the Victorian age, they are not tolerated as outcasts, but hunted as enemies of society.

Conspiracies

Autarkis may enter the domains of either sect, but to do so, they must keep their activities secret. Because of this, they gather in conspiracies, covert alliances that endure beyond the evolving political climate. Several

independent clans also exist within the Empire, owing allegiance to none but their own, if even that. Unlike a pack or a coterie, these gatherings are not restrained by the definition of sectarian elders. If, for example, a Brujah and Gangrel have worked together since the darkest times of the Long Night, they may find cause to conspire again, even if one accepts the Camarilla and the other rejects it utterly.

A Kindred or a Cainite might even work with a more extensive autarkis conspiracy. A prince may conspire with Ravnos agents provocateurs to make an archbishop's unlife a constant hell. A jealous elder may betray his oldest rival to a cult of Setites, especially if the scheme results in her rival's annihilation. As long as one vampire has the means to manipulate and exploit another, intrigue can cross all boundaries of sectarian philosophy.

Some anarchists whisper that even the elders of the Sabbat and the Camarilla form their own conspiracies. After all, some of them are old enough that they predate the conflict between the two sects. As rank has its privileges, an elder may choose to openly communicate or interact with elders of another sect. For instance, a Ventrue intellectual may spend centuries debating with a Tzimisce who once welcomed him in his domain. The shifting politics of the centuries need not interrupt their correspondence — ancient creatures have long memories, after all.

A Malkavian who used to raise hell with a Ravnos, a Toreador who once loved a Lasombra, a Nosferatu owing a boon to the Assamites who spared him — all of these associations are the sort that might endure for centuries but must be kept secret in the Victorian age. As soon as a Kindred or a Cainite conspires with someone outside his sect, his loyalties become suspect. The transgression is regarded as treachery against the sect, and the scandal may destroy the respect his lessers once accorded him. Revealing one's true loyalties can undermine the vampire's status — a nearly fatal blow to one who must contest for power with the Un-Dead. As one would expect, conspiracies work best when they're kept secret.

Gentleman Monsters

Whether a neonate chooses to defend the Empire or to overthrow it, Camarilla society is the standard against which all other vampiric politics are measured. If a vampire craves the company of his own kind, he must endure the culture of the Camarilla. And if he undergoes the rites and *ritae* required to join the cults of the Victorian Sabbat, his very existence is defined by his desire to destroy the Empire.

Legacies of Undeath

All things grow old, but some never die. Kindred and Cainites recite their lineage to illustrate how close they are to Caine, the progenitor of their cursed race. The number of generations between a given vampire and Caine speaks of his potential for power. Childer struggle to gain prominence, but because the older generations of vampires have endured for centuries — or even millennia — their ambitions are routinely frustrated. Thus, the hierarchy of the Victorian Un-Dead remains stagnant, at least until childer either destroy their elders or forsake them entirely.

Victorian Kindred neonates are less than a century old. Most are 10 to 12 generations removed from the first vampire. Mentored and instructed with a thorough understanding of Kindred Traditions and etiquette, the very existence of Camarilla neonates confirms the wisdom of their elders in selecting them. As part of this, older vampires seek to stifle them in a class structure even more rigid than the ones mortals endure.

Ingenues in the aristocracy of the Damned, neonates are expected to maintain certain standards, uphold responsibilities to their chosen domain and participate in the whirlwind of social activity. Failure to carry out the requests of their sires can result in an accompanying (if temporary) loss of status. When neonates stray from this straight-and-narrow path — an inevitable occurrence — society itself turns against them. Many fervently hope that with the coming of the new century, such staid traditions will become a thing of the past.

Sabbat neonates are not chained by such social burdens. Although a bishop or archbishop wields enough influence to destroy them one by one, he knows that packs of Cainite neonates are best left to their own devices. A newly created Cainite revels in power and freedom that the mortal world of the Victorian age could never accord her. Politics do not concern her. Cainites who inhabit the barbarous lands roam where they will and kill as they please. Clever creatures who infiltrate civilized cities disguise themselves behind masks of propriety — softly and silently scheming to raise hell in the midst of Camarilla cities.

Camarilla ancillae have survived long enough to secure positions of authority in the cities of the civilized world. They are eager to take credit for many of the major institutions in modern cities, and, in doing so neatly ignore the mortals who are almost universally the true driving force. As guardians of the most esteemed locations in major metropolises or as petty manipulators in minor political positions, they are eager to demonstrate their loyalty and receive recognition. Yet, they are also caught between the class distinctions of elder and neonate, watching both groups with equal vigilance. Against the city elders, the ancillae plot endlessly, scheming for an opportunity to advance in a political system as sluggish as the ancient vitae in their elders' veins. With considerable fervor, the ancillae also watch neonates' actions carefully, ever wary that they themselves may be unseated from their own precarious positions of authority.

Camarilla elders are typically the princes and primogen of the cities. A few are old enough to remember a time before the political distinctions of the Camarilla and Sabbat. As such, they often have secretive, personal ties that transcend such boundaries. Through faithful intermediaries, they may call in promises or return to conspiracies made centuries ago. If discovered, the resultant scandals may annihilate them. To divert attention, they may choose to persecute younger vampires who would question them. Exploiting privilege and power, they defend the stagnant traditions of society until the very last.

The Sabbat has no ancillae. The sect's priests are the closest equivalents, as they often act as intermediaries between the sees of a bishopric and the childer they attend. Successful Sabbat elders ascend to power as curates in this unholy church. A Sabbat elder is not rewarded for years of service and complicity; instead, he must challenge his rivals for power. Ordeals preserved since the Dark Ages — trials by fire, flame and ritual combat — demonstrate who is worthy of rank. In the untamed lands of the New World, Cainites have learned other methods of testing strength, rituals emulating the savage tribes of the wilderness. The sect places limits on such conflicts, stoking the fires of conflict just enough to forge elders into deadly weapons — each one a Sword of Caine that will smite the weakened defenders of Camarilla cities.

Methuselahs are deeply occulted during the Victorian age. If legends are true, the fate of nations rests on their undying intrigues. It is said that many rest in the hearts of great kingdoms of Europe, using nations as weapons in their arsenal. With preternatural power, they quietly and invisibly suborn elders in their schemes. Yet, in some rare cases, Methuselahs may still play a direct role in nightly matters, much as they did in the Dark Ages. For instance, an infamous Ventrue Methuselah named Mithras has served as the Prince of London for centuries. Although much of his night-to-night affairs are conducted by his childe, Valerius, the excesses of his principedom established a tradition that will survive well into the next century.

The precursors of these Ancients, the Antediluvians, have faded from view so thoroughly that most have come to doubt their very existence. They survive as icons of the age, vividly and brutally portrayed in vampiric legends. Since Biblical times, these bloody gods have preyed upon mankind, building empires one century and draining them of life the next. The petty machinations of distant progeny do not concern them. Princes and archbishops alike bicker over such trivialities as temporal power, but the terrible Antediluvians are timeless. They wait, patient and potent, for the end of civilization — the End Times of the world. When they arise, it is said, the culmination of all they have created will be Hell on Earth. Even the wisest fear them, if only secretly, and nervously wait for signs of their imminent return.

Noblesse Oblige: The Victorian Prince

If a prosperous Victorian city exemplifies Camarilla society, then its prince is a paragon of its beliefs and practices. With the well-tempered manners of a Victorian gentleman, he must uphold tradition to the letter. Of course, it is equally possible that a prince may be a lady of ambition, pursuing power and respect she could never hold in her breathing days. Either way, a prince's failure invites chaos — and perhaps destruction. In many cities, elder vampires insist on the same stability as the living expect under Victoria's reign, condescending to endure the same princes for centuries. Questioning one's prince questions the whole social order. Society assigns status so that one may know one's proper place. As such, Victorians know that a prince's word might as well be law.

Before the apex of this cultured society, princes conspired to claim vast domains. In grasping for more land, the tyrants of the Dark Ages only attracted more rivals, vitiating the potency of their claims. The Victorian prince is more secure, taking a single city as his domain. In a city, he may still watch over vast herds of mortal kine, along with the Kindred who gather to feed off them. Unlike his forbears, he is far more likely to hear of nearly every transgression that takes place within his realm. Behind this mask of civility and ruthlessness, he hides his true self, concealing his scandals and secretly struggling to control his lusts and passions. The obligations of aristocracy override his own needs. He is, at best, a gentleman monster; thus, through his machinations, he must deceive himself as thoroughly as those around him.

Clans

A prince rises to power because he has inherited certain desirable and charismatic properties through the very blood that passes through his dead veins. Breeding and birthright define character, after all. In a similar fashion, Victorian vampires may be quick to judge a Kindred by the lineage of her sire. Princes define their "modern" world by contrasting it against the barbarism of the Long Night, the dark ages of vampiric society, and the War of Princes that followed. A thousand years ago, vampires followed many different philosophical paths, but by valuing humanity and secrecy above all else, the Camarilla has survived. In the same way, these same princes espouse, each clan has certain expectations and obligations.

When a childe first introduces herself to a prince, she often recites her lineage, defining herself not by what

she has done, but by which ancestors have inflected her own character. The clearest indicator of her quality lies in her clan, the "consanguineous family" that has chosen her as progeny so that she may carry on its essence in her very veins. Of course, this is a highly Victorian conceit. Kindred aspire to craft their own destinies. By acting as individuals, they inevitably rebel against vampiric society. The vast majority of Victorian vampires are static creatures complacent with the status quo — if heroes are to be found among their kind, they are invariably the Kindred who inevitably challenge them.

By contrast, the Victorian Camarilla depends upon the idea of each clan measuring up to society's ideals. When an errant childe defies her breeding, the vampires of the prince's city must punish her. When she goes against the least of these traditions, she meets with righteous defiance, and if she goes so far as to defy its laws, she must be destroyed. Childer often learn this lesson the hard way. It is much easier for sires to begin their proper education by teaching their childe the seven rightful lineages of vampires: the seven Camarilla clans described below.

Camarilla Clans in the Victorian Age

The *Brujah* are regarded as revolutionary, intellectual and unpredictably violent. As the growing masses of humanity are suppressed through politics, poverty and squalor, Clan Brujah is eager to exploit their dissent, supporting any movement to displace the status quo. The Brujah are drawn to modern movements of political activism, from anarchism and syndicalism to communism and collectivism. For these vampires, this is the era of the Fabian Society, Bakunin and the first inheritors of Karl Marx's legacy. Accordingly, many see themselves as the proletariat of vampiric society. In hidden rooms, they fervently debate how to liberate mankind, if only for their own benefit. Often, in their fervor, the Brujah turn on each other out of egotism and fanaticism, but when they are united, they lash out in violent retribution, sending shockwaves of discord through the Camarilla like a satchel of nitroglycerin in a crowded room.

Traditional Kindred regard them as *Rabble*. Their violent natures suit them for the purpose of war; thus, some princes tolerate their presence as soldiers to be drafted when the threat of a Sabbat Crusade is near. Unconventional Kindred value them instead for their intellectual idealism, even if it does often extol the virtues of the lowest strata of society.

Gangrel vampires wander the wilderness. While human in form, they feel greater kinship with the beasts of the wild than the race of men. As increasing populations of Kindred have drifted toward the greatest cities, the

Gangrel have remained true to older ways, prowling vast domains as they feed. This places their very existence in jeopardy, for the Gangrel are among the first to notice when the enemies of the Camarilla are on the move. Yet, these Kindred have not completely forsaken mankind. Gangrel routinely return to the cities where princes claim dominance, for even they crave the company of their own kind. Even the most animalistic vampire knows that, if he were to ever abandon the Camarilla entirely, the slow degeneracy into monstrous abandon would be inevitable.

Traditional Victorian vampires expect these *Animals* to protect the boundaries surrounding their domains and to be aware of threats to their cities. Such beasts shouldn't be so uncouth as to hunt mortal prey within their domains; instead, they should spend that time scouring the countryside for trouble. This attitude is not unlike that which a servant inside an estate would have toward the groundskeepers and wardens of the property. Princes tolerate the Gangrel's help if they are content to act as hunters and guardians; many find acceptance by serving as coachmen, couriers and bodyguards. Unconventional Kindred welcome the Gangrel as equals, knowing that their sharp fangs and claws may well be needed should danger enter the midst of their city havens.

Victorian *Malkavians* are masters of the mind. As Victorian science explores the nature of human intellect and the very boundaries of sanity, these vampires eagerly await its revelations. Once they were prophets of darkness, but scholars such as Freud have given a new meaning to their madness. Insanity is no longer seen as a commination; instead, Victorian alienists have found new and daring methods to study it. Just as they analyze their patients in drawing rooms — or herd them into madhouses — *Malkavians* manipulate both doctor and patient unseen, acting with an insight instilled in their very blood. In larger gatherings, they turn this same insight upon other *Malkavians*, rapturously analyzing concentrated madness.

Traditional Kindred refer to this whole clan as one of *Lunatics*, dangerous creatures that should, perhaps, be kept on a leash. Most are capable of feigning sanity for long periods of time, but when hard-pressed, their afflictions manifest in unsightly and distasteful ways. No matter how well they may emulate proper behavior, insanity surges through them like a roiling tempest. No doubt their attempts to understand mortal madness are little more than a shallow attempt to portray themselves as something other than what they are. Unconventional vampires value the *Malkavians*' insight and perspicacity

— if one can reason the method behind their madness, one often gains a fresh perspective on one's situation.

Nosferatu are drawn to the squalor and decay of the age. The curse of vampirism transforms them into hideous creatures; thus, they are drawn to the ugliest quarters of the Victorian underworld. The lowest classes of humanity victimize each other for a scant chance at survival. When their blood flows freely, the *Nosferatu* swarm to feed. When this bloodlust has passed, they organize with preternatural cunning. Throughout the age, many of the largest cities expand their infrastructure underground, from the arching waterways of London's Athenium to the subsurface trains of Victorian Gotham. *Nosferatu* elders and primogen have come to regard these new lands as their own private kingdoms. Strangely enough, few princes have the courage to challenge such claims — or the power to wipe out the denizens of their kingdoms. As such, princes accept such boasts so as to draw as little attention to the *Nosferatu* as possible.

Traditional Kindred regard the *Sewer Rats* as vermin, particularly since it may be difficult to ascertain their true numbers in a city. Who knows what foul plots they conceive underground? Who do they talk to when they unearth secrets no prince or primogen can find? While their ability to gather such facts make the *Nosferatu* an asset to a sagacious prince, welcoming one to a social gathering is madness. In true Victorian fashion, most Kindred believe that a *Nosferatu*'s hideous exterior no doubt reflects the moral blight within the monster's very soul — much as the phrenologist may note evidence of a criminal mind in the deformations of a degenerate's sloping brow. Unconventional Kindred cannot forgive such moral laxity, but they may find innovative ways to exploit it. Some tortured *Nosferatu* eternally strive to achieve humane ends as penance for the sins that have condemned them to such an unkind fate. By giving them that chance, some good may come from the evil that lies within such bestial creatures. One must remember, however, that the *Sewer Rats* are the basest and most bestial creatures in the Race of Caine. It is just and right for society to afflict them with the stigma of social ostracism.

Toreador flourish where mortals thrive and the mortal arts evolve. They praise humanity more than any other clan, even if they do not emulate it as well as they would prefer. *Toreadors* master the intricate dance of high society, often claiming to lead it by example. They would act as the shepherds of humanity — though, sometimes, only to feed off the flock and sate their hunger for life. Art reflects the highest aspirations of Victorian society, and as such, the *Toreador* treasure artistic achievement. Drawn to the luminaries of the artistic world like moths to the flame, these Kindred



hunger for the spark of brilliance living artistes possess. Sadly, many Toreador have lost such vital qualities. Vampires are inherently static creatures, relics of bygone ages, and most lack the fire of mortal creativity. Their figures are preserved in undying flesh, but they can only marvel at the transient state of life. The Toreadors' flesh, like the marble edifices of the Elysiums they protect, has grown cold, but the blood of passionate men and women keep them warm.

Traditional Kindred praise this clan as one of the pillars upholding Camarilla society, but secretly, they regard the Toreador as indulgent and hedonistic *Degenerates*. They scandalously sully themselves by mingling a bit too freely with the herd of humankind, allowing themselves to be ruled by passion. What they cannot feel, they appropriate from their living victims. Of course, it was one of their own, Rafael de Corazon, who spoke so eloquently at the founding of the Camarilla, and thus, his brethren should be welcomed — if only to keep up appearances. Unconventional Kindred know that Toreador hold insights into human society their elders have all but forgotten. On rare and wonderful occasions, they can even recapture the passions they once held in life.

The *Tremere* preserve a centuries-old society of mystics and sorcerers. For them, the age heralds a renaissance

of the occult, and they eagerly follow and document its evolution. Visionaries like Blavatsky, Whyte, Gardner and even Crowley follow different reflections of the light of true knowledge. Tremere warlocks study their innovations and adapt them into their own thaumaturgical practices. For House Tremere, this is the age of spiritualism, theosophy, Masonry and the Golden Dawn. Many of these orders speak of secret masters who will guide them to greater knowledge. Clan Tremere is ready to fill this spiritual void, acting as enlightened masters who will elevate select scholars to undying status, enslave those who may one day achieve greatness and victimize the rest. For centuries, they have acted as usurpers of supernatural knowledge and power.

Traditional Kindred know that these *Witches* have seized a remarkable amount of power within the Camarilla, forming a united front against all who would question their Council of Seven clan elders in Vienna. Of course, the leader of that council, Tremere himself, has disappeared, no doubt slumbering in torpor for centuries because of his blasphemous acts. Wise Kindred know that Tremere routinely betray each other in their schemes for power within their clan, so all of them must be closely watched. Unconventional Kindred know that the Tremere's command of Thaumaturgy is a potent

weapon, one many childer loyally wield in support of allies outside the clan. However, more than any other lineage, Tremere are expected to place loyalty to their clan above all other associations. Those who exploit the clan's secret lore or teach it to others outside the clan may be recalled to Vienna to be properly "instructed" in obedience.

Victorian *Ventrue* are the aristocracy of the night, culled from noble dynasties — many of the living leaders of the world are their descendents. While a few *Ventrue* are recruited from the leaders of business and industry, they are currently regarded with scorn by those who follow older, nobler traditions. The civilized world reveres status, and none demonstrate the virtues (or folly) of the upper class of society like Clan *Ventrue*.

Traditional Kindred acknowledge the *Nobles* as the aristocracy of the Un-Dead and even concoct fictions that different *Ventrue* dynasties uphold different ideals. *Camarilla* vampires may praise the clan as a whole but secretly malign them as individuals, remembering the shortcomings and failures of each one in meticulous detail. Unconventional Kindred find little scandal in a *Ventrue* who chooses not to rule, even if he should pursue a profession so base as dabbling in business or industry.

Clans and Countenance

Vampires of the same clan are called consanguineous, for they share the same blood. Just as the Victorian aristocracy insists that breeding passes on certain intangible advantages from one generation to the next, so do *Camarilla* elders insist that the childer of their clans must display such proclivities. Childer stoically endure being defined by these stereotypes, for they know it is their lot in unlife. Within their own coteries, they may have little tolerance for such expectations, but they face untold difficulty gaining the favor of their sires without dutifully following such traditions in public. To do otherwise questions society itself, leaving a vampire as little more than a lone monster defined by the terrified victims upon whom she preys. The *Camarilla* would have a Victorian Kindred believe that without the esteem of his sect, he is nothing.

One of the reasons for such high expectations of conformity is, not surprisingly, fear of the Sabbat. Childer are taught to be vigilant, for it is well known that the Sabbat may send spies into the very heart of a *Camarilla* city. This fear is somewhat justified, but then again, many elders who remember the nights before either sect was founded may still owe favors to, or even secretly work

Storytelling Option: Individual Status

In Victorian society, rising to a higher caste in the social order is an arduous process, but it can be done. For the greatly simplified purposes of storytelling, the Victorian *Camarilla* can be divided into three strata of status: a lower class, a middle class and an upper class. This status is primarily influenced by one's clan, but belonging to a notable lineage or performing notable deeds can enable a social climber to rise above such distinctions. In game terms, this aspiration is reflected by the Status Background. Storytellers desiring additional detail may consider the following additional guidelines.

The Upper Class: Most *Ventrue* and *Toreador* belong to the upper strata of the Victorian *Camarilla*. To qualify as a vampiric aristocrat, a character should belong to one of these clans, be actively involved in the sect's affairs and have at least one dot in the Status Background; otherwise, he is middle class. A Tremere or Gangrel with Status 5 also qualifies as upper class. A *Ventrue* or *Toreador* with Status 5 is a paragon of *Camarilla* virtues.

The Middle Class: Tremere and Gangrel are the "bourgeoisie" of the sect. The Witches have damaged their clan's reputation by repeatedly meddling in occult affairs, while many Gangrel have raised the esteem of their clan above the hopelessly rustic by risking their very unives in the defense of *Camarilla* domains. To qualify as middle class, a character must be actively involved in the sect's affairs. A Malkavian with Status 3 qualifies as middle class; one with Status 5 is upper class.

The Lower Class: Brujah, Malkavians and Nosferatu qualify as the lower class of the sect. They face enough scorn for their ambitions that they have formed their own societies within the *Camarilla*, recognizing ideals that may seem cryptic to the aristocracy of the sect. A Brujah with Status 5 is still, at best, middle class. Except through extremely meritorious service to the *Camarilla*, Nosferatu have little chance of social advancement.

with, vampires who have chosen a different political path. Employing a remarkable double standard, elders not only use fear of the Sabbat to keep their childer obedient, but also prevent childer from even speaking with Cainites. When an elder is shown to be in communication with the Sword of Caine, the revelation is scandalous, but his status allows him privilege and immunity childer simply do not have.

The elders of a clan may treat consanguineous vampires as their family, claiming to represent them in the most esteemed political gatherings. Truthfully, they do not. Victorian etiquette holds that those of various classes uphold certain responsibilities to the social order. With the enthusiasm of the new age, a growing number of childer rebel against such notions. They may feign conformity in the largest conclaves of their kind, but away from watchful eyes, they secretly pursue their own agendas. In sharp contrast, to gain the favor of their elders, promising childer uphold the ideals of their sires — and use this leverage to oppose, expose and destroy prodigal childer.

Cosmopolitan Lore

When one arrives in a new city, one must obey certain proprieties. After making an introduction to the prince, a “guest” may learn where others of his kind typically gather. While local Kindred maintain their own havens, the most influential maintain a few places for the benefit of childer. Such places are not usually exclusive to particular clans. A vampire of any clan or generation may be invited into one of these places, but many are exclusive or exclusionary. Yet, as one would expect, each particular place may be favored by a particular gathering of consanguineous Kindred.

Salons are fashionable places where idealistic Kindred discuss the affairs of the modern age. Many are stationed perilously close to places where the living gather, such as coffee houses, fine dining establishments and even the estates of wealthy mortals in thrall to the Un-Dead. In private rooms cautiously guarded by retainers, the politics and rivalries of the Damned are discussed eloquently over untouched glasses of wine or coffee. The most fashionable salons may be guarded as Elysiums. The most scandalous ones are condemned by the city’s harpies and summarily closed. The most successful salons are often patronized and sponsored by Toreador.

Gentlemen’s clubs are another refuge for the well-heeled, for many affluent men prefer the solitude one can enjoy in retreating to a private club. Membership is exclusive, so it is no accident that many ancillae open clubs that are open only at night and are accessible only to Un-Dead of particular breeding. Among mortals,

clubs form based on preference in politics, hobbies, military service, enthusiasm for different sports or even the antisocial criteria of the Diogenes Club (where no member dares to speak aloud). Behind a similar façade, clubs of Kindred have even stranger standards of admission, some relating to accomplishments achieved centuries ago. The most exclusive clubs recognize only certain elders of Clan Ventrue but may grudgingly tolerate the childer who enjoy their patronage.

Chuntries elicit a more rarefied atmosphere, one of a more spiritual essence. Temples and lodges attract seekers hoping for a taste of forbidden knowledge, but only the “inner circles” of certain secret societies are allowed within a chantry’s sanctum. In many such orders, members may die and be reborn in a baptism of blood, taking oaths of obedience to their new masters. A few favored Kindred who are also allowed to dabble in Thaumaturgy enact disparate rituals from a host a different schools and paths of magic. The Tremere often look askance at any Kindred or Cainite who dares to operate a chantry without their blessing. In fact, many chuntries sponsored by the clan force a blood oath as a condition of initiation.

Rookeries are dark places where the destitute gather. Impoverished masses desperate for shelter crowd a dozen or a score to a bed. Unsanitary and unwholesome, they become breeding grounds for vermin and disease. The squalor is so monumental that most mortals dull their senses with alcohol to endure their surroundings. Such places may be found on the highest floors of buildings, often connected from building to building by passageways, or frighteningly close to the underworld of cities. One of the most notable, the St. Giles Rookery in London, stretches across several city blocks. As one would expect, rookeries are perfecting hiding places for indiscriminate predators as well, including Nosferatu, who love to witness such suffering.

Asylums are the playgrounds of the mad. Their Un-Dead inhabitants stalk unseen, watching the extremes of human existence. For them, truth lies not in religion or Cainite prophecy, but in the revelation of the mind itself. Here the Kindred experiment on mortal subjects, sometimes directing living doctors who are driven by the same passions. The Malkavians are obviously familiar with these domains, coming and going as they please, but they have been known to lock others away deep within the confines of their personally crafted hells.

Universities attract intelligentsia. In their environs, philosophical vampires debate deathless ideas. Elder vampires often claim universities as part of their domains, hosting private gatherings where conventional and occult scholarship can be exchanged. Under the

guise of secret societies, some even invite breathing guests to share in such discourse, though through certain supernatural powers, they may be made to forget they ever held such conversations. Radical political debates thrive in this rarefied environment. Intellectual Brujah often face off in these arenas, like pugilists circling in a canvas ring. Sadly, hot-tempered childer find such debates a little too engaging and, all too often, resort to actual displays of fisticuffs.

Flash houses are the iniquitous dens of criminal mobs, gangs and other institutions of the Victorian underworld. Here, thugs plot their crude tactics, stolen goods are fenced, and young scofflaws learn the tricks of the trade. Of course, a flash house may also serve as a recruitment ground for those who serve the Un-Dead in a more direct capacity. These areas of illicit activity are often protected by lurkers: beggars, mendicants, "street Arabs" and urchins who can warn their unseen benefactors when enemies arrive. Of course, depending on whom they serve, they may be on the lookout for the authorities, hunters or even rival vampires. Many serve as resources for independent clans of vampires (including the Giovanni and Setites described below).

Victorian necropoli are (by definition) cities of the dead, and as such, they fascinate the Un-Dead. Cemeteries hold great religious power and significance, especially in the Gothic Victorian age. Mortal legacies preserve excessive displays of anguish in marble for all eternity. Victorians treat the subject of death with the typical reverence and excess. With similar enthusiasm, vampires who gather in such revered places employ certain unspeakable rites, though many childer do not even know these practices exist. The reanimation of dead flesh, the horrors of living burial, hidden rites furtively practiced in elaborate mausoleums — in a world where vampires are real, far more blasphemous things are possible.

Both graveyards and churches are the sorts of holy sites one would expect the Sabbat to desecrate. It is clear to the most stalwart and traditional supporters of the Camarilla that their enemies perpetrate their foul deeds in rebellion against God himself. The very structure of their society is an elaborate attempt at blasphemy, and it is rumored that the most powerful Cainites sell their very souls to demonic forces in exchange for supernatural power. While Kindred are discomfited, or even actively wounded, by holy ground, it is obvious for what purposes the very enemies of civilization seek to desecrate such sacred sites. If some elders maintain their *humanitas* in an attempt to elicit God's mercy, then it doubtlessly cannot compare with the suffering that awaits sabbats of vampires who forsake such noble ideals entirely.

Legacies in Vitae

Civilized vampires value the merits of creating progeny, not for a lifetime, but for all eternity. Tiring of the transient pleasures of hunting living prey, a Victorian vampire hunts for a mortal worthy of the gift — but more importantly, who the vampire thinks can bear the weight of the Embrace. Of course, the very fabric of Victorian society is predicated on the importance of class structure. The paragons of mortal society, the upper class, are regarded with esteem because it is believed certain desirable traits pass from one generation to the next. So it is with the Kindred, for one does not really "join" a clan. A childer inherits a legacy, and thus, he must be representative of the Victorian virtues that legacy respects. Even the basest and most degenerate Nosferatu searches for a childer who can weather the curse of undeath with moral fortitude and courage (or bestial cunning, depending on the character of her sire).

The creation of childer is also a way for Kindred society to adapt to the current age. Kindred sired during the Victorian age are fluent in its culture. While childer are only rarely accorded the genuine esteem of their elders, they are sometimes held up as experts in current mortal society. Elders thus not only emulate the fashions of the mortals they prey on, but also choose their progeny as exemplars of these fashions. Sadly, vampires are static creatures by their very nature, preserved with many of the attitudes and affinities they demonstrated in their breathing days. The very spark of brilliance a sire hopes to nurture in the nocturnal world of vampires fades compared to the innovations of the sunlit world of humanity.

Havens and Domains

A childer must eventually assert his independence by establishing a safe place to call his own. While travel certainly broadens the mind, a wanderer can never be accorded the same respect as an urbanite who has carved out a niche in his city of choice. One's social standing is defined not only by lineage and the company one keeps, but also by the location of one's haven, the resting place to which one returns at dawn to escape the merciless rays of the sun. Gangrel sleeping in the very ground of the wilderness, Tzimisce ensconced in coffins with the soil of their native land, Ventrue surrounded in their darkened estates by carefully chosen retainers — each vampire in his own way seeks a haven where he might find respite from the hurly-burly of the mortal world.

Every haven has a few basic requirements. The slightest ray of sunlight can cause a vampire to burst into a furious conflagration, so his haven must remain undis-

turbed and immersed in darkness during the day. It should be isolated, discouraging the most curious mortal from interrupting (or discovering) the vampire's torpid slumber (while a stake through the heart cannot kill a vampire, a hunter who finds a sleeping vampire may paralyze it by this method). The haven must also be secure, especially when the sun rises, for an awakening vampire rouses himself sluggishly, particularly if his countenance is bestial or monstrous. Urbanites believe the haven must be fitting with the character of the vampire, for if the location is visited or discovered, it speaks of the Kindred who resides there.

The eldest vampires extend this last criterion one step further, claiming the area around their haven as their domain — only the most powerful and influential vampires may do so, particularly in the Victorian era. This realm is not only an area of responsibility, but also the geographical boundary of the Kindred's authority. Vampires do not "control" these areas, *per se*, but according to custom, others who wish to pass through one must ask the permission of the vampire who declares it under his aegis.

A childe would do best to limit such claims to the neighborhood surrounding a haven — declaring much more invites challenges from all who would pass through it. An elder may test the childe's mettle by merely leaving a calling card with the childe's retainer, while a prince may hold the childe responsible should any suspicious or threatening activities take place within it.

A prince by definition claims the largest, most populous and most prestigious neighborhoods of the city as his domain. The nights when one would claim a vast stretch of land as one's territory are gone, however. Such arrogance is considered particularly old-fashioned and, with the danger of intrusion by the Sabbat, immensely impractical.

Hunting and Humanity

The vampire craves human blood and must learn to temper that hunger. Hunting is not merely a means of sustenance, but an art form. Kindred of this age do not merely feed on blood. They ravish, savoring the slow death of their victims. Those they would take are not merely drained of blood, but sacrificed on the altar of innocence.

Both degenerate Cainites and civilized monsters find the thrill of the hunt an exercise that sharpens the mind and quickens the blood. True epicures of the terrible are not content to victimize random strangers; instead, they find one source of vitae who they may exploit over days or weeks or months. Such is the fashion of the age. Men and monsters dwell side by side in this

world. When night falls, the distinctions between them fade away in the London fog.

The gaslight that illuminates these nocturnal stalkings forces discretion. Save for a few progressive places blessed with electric light, every twilight gathering of humans is illumined by flame. As the Un-Dead well know, vampires who lack control over their passions lapse into frenzies of unspeakable slaughter when confronted by what they fear, including one of the few substances that can harm them: fire. Monstrous creatures succumb to paroxysms of terror at the sight of flame; thus, those perpetually surrounded by gaslight must master their passions. In the civilized world, hunting by gaslight requires restraint.

Kindred who are indiscrete may openly display supernatural powers while hunting or even kill their vessels outright. These incautious fools become the very monsters of Gothic fiction. Mortals believe that vampires (if they even exist) must sustain themselves through murder. Sabbat Cainites further this reputation, slaughtering their victims like cattle. In the barbarous lands, such revelry is entirely possible, for mere peasants cannot adequately arm themselves against the lords of the night. Yet, in the heart of London, an armed and educated populace can quickly turn on the killer in its midst.

Civilized vampires esteem other fictional examples. Consider LeFanu's *Carmilla*, in which an Un-Dead temptress befriends a young woman in the prime of her life. By introducing her to strange new sensations, the vampire suborns her over many months, until the girl herself is more dead than alive. Regard Dracula in Stoker's novel, slowly draining Harker's fiancée of her life essence over many weeks. As this is an era of romanticism, romantic vampires are drawn to the same vessels over and over. They may even consummate their union by offering the victim the Embrace, baptizing her in darkness and, ultimately, damning her for eternity. This is a truly Victorian ideal, and like many others, it often goes tragically awry.

More practical creatures of the night feed where and when they can. The lone traveler may fall prey to a roving Gangrel. A poor unfortunate may find some surcease from suffering by submitting to a Nosferatu's Kiss. Ventrue often sup upon the blood of the aristocracy, while Tremere may take succor from blood offered up in ritual. Kindred who themselves seek oblivion imbibe vitae polluted with absinthe, opium or laudanum, "chasing the Dragon" through the bloodstream of a thousand victims. The taste of blood comes in many exotic forms, enough to sate esoteric tastes acquired over countless feedings.

In Gothic fiction, a villain may come to represent the sins of the hero, whether that sin is originally of his ancestor or the faults and flaws of his own personality. This fiction may very well have some basis in fact: Vampires seem drawn to prey that either defies or defines the flaws of their own character. A victim who can elicit pity, inspire rage or call the predator's very existence into question may be killed swiftly. After this act of murder, a remorseful predator may allow the dying victim to taste the vampire's own blood — creating another childe as a result. In this way, hunting is more than a means of gaining sustenance. Vampires may hunt for centuries searching for the one victim who is actually worthy of the Embrace.

The Feast of Souls

Cursed by God, Caine was the first of the vampires. His legend grows with each generation. Victorian childer view him in almost religious terms, for legend holds that the Almighty destroyed Caine's soul, forever banishing him from the Kingdom of Heaven. There can be no greater curse than losing all hope of salvation.

Camarilla legends hold that vampires who can ascend to states of "perfect humanity" can renounce the sins of their Un-Dead flesh and return to God's grace. A pure soul redeems the dead flesh through mystical rites of resurrection, known as the suspire of Golconda. Whether this is true or merely another ideal created to manipulate idealistic childer is a point of debate. Regardless, hopeful Kindred take it as a sign that there is a chance, however faint, that a vampiric soul may be redeemed.

Victorian vampires often insist that, while their flesh has been corrupted, their souls endure. Kindred elders also insist that their enemies in the Sabbat know

the rituals of Amaranth, blasphemous practices that allow them to consume the souls of the vampires they destroy. After slaughtering an older vampire (most notably, one of a lower generation), the vampire consumes his victim's blood and steals the power of his soul.

Since this rite is one of blackest treachery, the practice is commonly known as diablerie; its practitioners are condemned. By diablerizing an older vampire, a cultist of the Sabbat effectively steals the elder's power, lowering his generation and bringing himself closer to Caine. This is one of the reasons why sabbats of monsters are demonized as villains, for they threaten not only the

domains of the Camarilla, but the very souls of the Kindred.

It is unthinkable that a Kindred of the Victorian Camarilla would commit such a crime. Those with supernatural insight may detect an aura of unwholesomeness around a diablerist. Under the custom known as the



Tradition of Destruction, such a villain must be destroyed. Yet, once again, there is a certain amount of hypocrisy. It is widely suspected that the very founder of the Witches' clan, Tremere himself, ascended to the ranks of the 13 Antediluvians by devouring the soul of an Ancient. In typical Victorian fashion, many childer are thus taught that all Tremere carry this certain streak of vileness, even if it is duplicitously reproduced in the six other clans of the sect.

Bonds of Blood

Elders often fail to mention that they have their own, albeit weakened, variants of diabolical rites. Despite what Roman scholars may have said, blood is not merely life, but also a measure of one's very soul. When

one vampire feeds from the veins of another, they become soulmates: The servant becomes enthralled with her new master, enslaved in some small measure. The act of consuming another's blood defines roles of dominance and submission. The master is sometimes known as a regnant, while the servant becomes a mere thrall. If the thrall feeds three times upon the blood of the regnant over the course of at least three nights, he becomes subservient to her for all eternity — or so goes the whispered rumor. In truth, blood bonds fade over time, but elders rarely deign to tell their childer of this, lest they prove resistant to taking draughts of their own heady vitae.

With overwrought Victorian sensibility, this blood bond has been elevated to new heights of romantic significance. It is now quite the rage to host grand fetes for childer who honor their elders by submitting to bonds of blood. Accepting a blood bond is seen as an acceptance of one's rightful place in society. While childer are taught to honor their sires, it is hardly surprising that the thought of being enslaved for all eternity terrifies them. Often viewed as a punishment, the blood bond has become a powerful incentive to conform — or, at least, feign conformity. Most Kindred are taught that a blood bond endures only when an older vampire holds a younger one in thrall. As with much of Camarilla society, this is a lie.

Secretive blood bonds are not recognized by society's rituals, and thus, they may be far more terrifying. Bonds furtively forged often defy the very status society demands. A childer may enslave an elder, if both fulfill the necessary acts, and the bond will endure as surely as any other. With sufficient treachery and intrigue, a madman may enslave a sane man, a peasant can exploit a nobleman, or a primogen councilor may hold regnancy over her prince. By the power of her blood, a woman vilified by Victorian society can secure power over the men who maligned her. Once the thrall submits to the regnant, the ritual binds them in sanguine union. As one would expect, such possibilities are not discussed in polite company. By publicly displaying what are considered "proper" blood bonds between sire and childer, or elder and neonate, the structure of society is reinforced.

At this time, the elders of Tremere chantries insist that all of their initiates undergo two such feedings upon the blood of each of the seven clan elders. The occasion is accompanied by all the trappings of high ritual. While elders may claim that the Camarilla may offer salvation to their childer's souls, they neglect to stress how imperiled they really are. An unwise childer may soon find himself enslaved by the very elders who Embraced him.

Aristocracy of the Un-Dead

Civilization requires just governance. Camarilla elders claim dominion over the cities of men, enforcing social conformity through draconian law. Just as Kindred can mirror the rituals of gentility and grace, their social contract is typically used to support much older beliefs. Elders cannot truly "rule" these cities, but they do exploit them for their own benefit. If a childer wishes to benefit from the ideas, artistry and, most importantly, lifeblood of the largest cities, she must obey the "rule by blood" established by the aristocracy of the Un-Dead.

The prince of the city is advised by a council of primogen. In the largest cities, a wise prince recognizes a primogen for each of the largest clans in his domain. However, there is no guarantee any one particular clan will be represented. The very concept of the council is based on a communal conceit. In theory, they "represent" the vampires of that clan; in practice, any claim to democracy is a façade. The council actually advises the prince on current issues, typically ones concerning each clan. Each primogen may claim that his clan is unified, but this claim is little more than a way to strip lessers of their individuality. All too often, the Victorian Camarilla enslaves as well as empowers.

Should a childer disagree with one of the Kindred of this august council, she may face the sting of a primogen's "whip," a councilor's assistant assigned to enforce loyalty. A few idealists believe that, because of relation by blood, consanguineous vampires must support their primogen's ambitions. Most whips, however, are hypocrites at best and bullies at worst. Accepting the demands of your clan can provide a resource — or become a burden. The local primogen often defines the differences. Fledgling vampires know they can turn to their primogen for advice, since they can advise aptly on what "the clans believe," yet the favor must be repaid in kind, as society demands.

Many of the most onerous of these societal obligations are defined by the city's harpies, Kindred obsessed with the scandalous concerns of status. Recognized by the prince's favor (or occasionally acting in spite of it), they attend Camarilla fetes and functions within the city. As monitors of acceptable discourse, they praise and scandalize according to their whims. With long memories, they are quick to point out any transgressions against social etiquette. While this may seem trivial, the support of the elders may depend on the blessings of the harpies, as they bestow the very approval of society as a whole.

Centuried Traditions

Custom is never absolute — it is a weapon wielded absolutely by those in power. Kindred society was founded upon the Six Traditions, a code of social “law” defended since the Dark Ages (and even before according to some Kindred historians). Although the deathless Kindred are static, unaging creatures, their customs are highly situational. The prince interprets these customs according to circumstance, and if he is wise, enforces his interpretations ruthlessly. The words of each dictum change little over the years, yet each generation sees them exploited in new and innovative ways.

The First Tradition: The Masquerade

Thou shalt not reveal thy true nature to those not of the Blood. Doing so shall renounce thy claims of Blood.

While most ordinary people cannot easily prove the existence of vampires, they may still suspect such monsters exist. Fear often prevents them from voicing what they suspect. Society may shun those who openly profess such beliefs. For Victorians, superstition holds strength. While science inexorably drives unseen horrors further into the shadows, even the most jaded urbanite may still sense their presence. Educated gentleman may scoff at fantastic tales in the safety of their brightly lit drawing rooms, but they will no doubt look over their shoulders on the carriage ride home.

In this atmosphere charged with the frisson of suspicion, a solitary vampire exposed as a monster may reveal the vast conspiracies of the Un-Dead. Secret societies can survive only when they remain secret, after all. At a time when the war against the Sabbat is at its height, this Tradition demonstrates the greatest difference between their two societies. Kindred believe that revealing the existence of vampires to the mortal world would be disastrous to civilization itself. Victorian Cainites contest that vampires should take their rightful place as the masters of the night and, thus, contest for supremacy in Camarilla domains. Since belief in, or at least suspicion of, the supernatural is so pervasive, many childer are willing to endure the tyrannical whims of ruthless princes if it will keep them safe, keep them secret and keep them secure.

For these reasons, “shattering the Masquerade” is the most serious crime a Kindred can commit. Not surprisingly, it may also be one of the easiest accusations a prince may use to slander his enemies. Openly using supernatural power is the most overt transgression, yet a prince may claim that maintaining social contact with mortals or aspects of mortal society may threaten the safety of his city. Communicating with the Sabbat may be considered a violation of the Masquerade as well but

only if the elders aren’t (demonstrably...) guilty of such activity. It is also currently fashionable for a romantic Kindred to take a mortal paramour — the threat of discovery makes the pleasures of living flesh and blood even sweeter. Toreador tell tragic tales of lovers who were discovered and destroyed.

Those who reveal the powers of the Blood seal their own damnation, for they are then hunted by their own kind and destroyed. Victorians are ruthless about enforcing the First Tradition. There is no clemency for those who erase all evidence of their transgression, for the deed itself shows the amorality of the fiend who committed the crime. Superstitious mortals may choose to forget such horrors, but Kindred rarely forget them, especially if they can destroy an enemy with such punishments. Thus, Victorian vampires must not only hide breaches of the Masquerade from mortals, but also be thorough enough to hide their transgressions from other vampires. A fool who commits this crime once may be careless enough to commit it again. Because of the mysticism of the age, the deadliest dangers vampires face from breaking the Masquerade don’t come from the threat of human retaliation — they come from their elders’ sense of “justice.”

The Second Tradition: Domain

Thy domain is thy concern. All others owe thee respect while in it. None may challenge thy word in thy domain.

During the Long Night, a vampire could justify killing another creature of the night simply because he trespassed on his domain. Since the largest cities now host a score or more of the Un-Dead, these struggles for territory are no longer practical. Instead, the prince is first among equals. In the Victorian age, a city or region under the protection of a prince becomes his domain immediately upon “taking the throne.” Elder vampires cannot make claims to territories other than the ones surrounding their havens without the blessing of the prince. In fact, assigning a domain is one of the surest ways for a prince to recognize those who support his principedom. In these assignments, he makes certain elders responsible for certain territory. And what he can give, he can also take away.

Elders may also consider “spheres of influence” as within their domain, particularly if they correspond to the neighborhood around their havens. For instance, a Brujah elder may be granted domain over transportation and shipping along a stretch of river, or a Malkavian’s mastery of medicine may extend from his an aegis over a hospital or sanitarium. Childer rarely hold such privileges — and if they question this system, they will never get them.

Some wise princes have begun to recognize certain realms as the domain of a particular clan. "The salons of this city are the domain of Clan Toreador," a Degenerate may opine, "because they have always been ours." Similarly, when Robert Peel first established the London constabulary in 1829, the Ventrue of London united to define the police as part of their domain. Any attack on a police officer was thus defined as an attack on the London Ventrue, a tradition that continued for decades. Every vampire of the chosen clan shares in the obligation of protecting its clan's domain; a Kindred who denies this call to arms should not look to his clan for support or favors.

The Third Tradition: Progeny

Thou shalt sire another only with permission of thine elder. If thou createst another without thine elder's leave, both thou and thy progeny shalt be slain.

Within the Victorian Camarilla, a would-be sire not only needs to obtain the permission of her own sire before creating a childe, but also her prince. This reflects more than just the need to ask if another vampire can exist in the city. The progeny must be worthy of inheriting the lineage of the clan. If the childe falls short of this ideal before he is "released" by his sire (as defined by the Fourth Tradition), he may be destroyed. In many cases, princes and primogen may see a childe as a resource to their goals before the creature is even Embraced.

As princes justify seizing absolute power over their domains, they enforce their interpretation of this dictum with a brutal convention: the scourge. Kindred existing on the outskirts of a city are granted the right to scour the surrounding countryside looking for vampires who would hide from the prince. Gangrel are expected to perform this duty whenever they hunt outside their city. It is an ancient custom, one as old as the First City, but some recalcitrant young Gangrel believe it to be a new convention. When they are older, no doubt they may take offense at such crass exploitation. Perhaps this and other Camarilla expectations of the Gangrel may fall out of fashion as a result.

If a vampire is found who has not presented himself to the prince and cannot prove an accepted lineage, he is to be brought before the prince and primogen to accept judgment. Such affairs are often short-lived, resulting in "society" destroying the offender. The huntsman who found the criminal and brought him to justice is then praised. This is perhaps analogous to a hound being valued more than a mere lapdog. The practice encourages all childe to obey the Traditions rigorously, if only for the sake of their own survival.

The Fourth Tradition: Accounting

Those thou create are thine own childer. Until thy progeny shall be released, thou shalt command them in all things. Their sins are thine to endure.

A sire is accountable for her childe until she is "released," typically when she is formally introduced to the prince. Victorian vampires may require their progeny to wait for this occasion for several years (a remarkably long time by some standards). During this time, the childe should take risks and make sacrifices for her clan when called to do so. Should she stray, the prince is under no obligation to recognize her rights, and other vampires may kill or feed from her as they see fit. Of course, doing so invokes the wrath of the sire, so it is a privilege that is rarely invoked.

When the childe is released, she is formally referred to as a neonate. Even then, she must continue to uphold her obligations. In a sense, her obligation to her sire is complicated by her obligation to her clan. The requests elders make may be as simple as regularly patrolling an area of domain, investigating possible violations of the Traditions, delivering correspondence personally or even representing an elder at a social gathering far from a safe domain. Vicious elders may demand that childe perform tasks that skirt the limits of the Six Traditions; if the neonate "strays," the expendable tool is then discarded or broken by Camarilla justice.

How well a neonate answers to the demands of elders influences her status within the clan and the city. The most difficult requests test a Kindred's loyalties or create a conflict of interest. If a Kindred's sire has ambition, her prince may need to quash it. As a result, a neonate may be favored by her sire yet hated by her prince. She may take a great risk for the elder of one clan, yet earn the enmity of another. These conflicts between coterie and clan and between one's clan and one's prince define the very character of Victorian vampires.

The Fifth Tradition: Hospitality

Honor one another's domain. When thou comest to a foreign city, thou shalt present thyself to the one who ruleth there. Without the word of acceptance, thou art nothing.

A vampire traveling to a new city must present himself to the prince (and, in some cities, to an elder or primogen of his clan as well). Victorians fulfill this observance often with strained and calculated formality, accompanied by a recitation of lineage and ancestry. The largest cities may demand visitors introduce themselves to the prince upon their first night (and possibly even certain elders within a week). Many Kindred maintain regular correspondence with the elders of cities they intend to visit, preparing themselves for such eventualities. Formal letters of introduction, calling cards delivered



by minions and meetings arranged at high society functions all encourage social mobility — and survival.

The traveler who is ill prepared risks his very unlife. If a rebel flees a city and survives, he may be destroyed in the next domain he visits because he hasn't prepared a proper introduction. If the prince is overwhelmed by duty, he may appoint a primogen to receive visitors in his stead, leading to further loss of status if the visitor cannot figure this out quickly enough. Discouraging neonates from traveling freely keeps them in their proper place within a city's hierarchy.

Paranoia heightens these tensions when the Kindred of a city fear the Sabbat. A newcomer may be mistaken for an enemy or, at the very least, a spy or sympathizer. If the task is not performed quickly enough, a prince may invoke the Second Tradition to harry, hunt or punish the transgressor. A prince has a right — nay, a duty! — to question any who enter his domain uninvited. He may even refuse hospitality, particularly if he holds some bias or grudge against a given clan or the childe of a certain sire.

Ancient vampires are above such concerns. They often consider themselves immune to this obligation because they do not acknowledge the prince's authority over them. Independent vampires, such as Ravnos and Giovanni, may flout a prince's authority, especially if they're only "passing through" his domain. Autarkis quietly defy such rules, not only forsaking the privileges bestowed by hospitality, but even tempting fate by risking their own destruction. Pitiful childer who were Embraced and abandoned remain ignorant of such distinctions, until the scourge finds them and forces their complicity — or destroys them utterly.

The Sixth Tradition: Destruction

Thou art forbidden to destroy another of thy kind. The right of destruction belongeth only to thine elder. Only the eldest among thee shall call the blood hunt.

In its original meaning, this Tradition gave a sire the right of destruction over his progeny, as upheld by Kindred custom. Victorians have extended the word "elder" to include princes as well. Thus, the prince may call for the destruction of other Kindred within his domain if they have violated one of the Six Traditions. If any other vampire destroys one of the Kindred without holding the Right of Destruction, it is an act akin to murder. Of course, this applies only to Kindred and, more specifically, those recognized by the Right of Accounting.

Status weighs the scales of justice. The higher the status or generation of the Kindred, or even his clan, the swifter the prince's hounds are to find their quarry. Traditional Kindred have taken this as license to destroy

autarkis and anarchs with impunity. A wise prince does not tolerate the existence of these outcasts, for he then vitiates his own Right of Destruction.

Lextalionis and the Hunt

An eye for an eye, sayeth the Good Book, and a tooth for a tooth. A prince is as strong as his sense of righteous vengeance; thus, he must slay those who challenge his Traditions. All who hear this call have an obligation to assist the huntsmen in a swift and brutal exercise known as a blood hunt. Victorian Kindred know that only a prince may invoke this "Lextalionis." The honor is not yet accorded to elders — and certainly not to ancillae.

Spreading across a city like a net, the city's Kindred track their quarry. Because the speed of communication and travel are limited in the Victorian Age, the hunters must be swift. If they are delayed in the slightest, it is possible their prey may escape. Some princes have come to consider this "sport" fashionable and, thus, invoke it regularly to keep their huntsmen in practice. Yet, even in the most ruthlessly patrolled domains, the event often becomes little more than a deadly way to run an errant Kindred of the Camarilla out of town, demanding that he never return.

Efficient slayers are praised as the prince's hounds. For many Brujah, Nosferatu and Gangrel of doubtful lineage, it is their clearest opportunity to be esteemed as more than mere Rabble, Sewer Rats or Animals. While the Masquerade is still observed, the lower classes regard these occasions with all the passion of an English foxhunt. On those few occasions when the prey is caught, the monster is hauled before the prince for trial, torture or immediate execution, depending on the character of the prince. For all the claims of civility of the Victorian Camarilla, when a prince is at his worst, the distinction between the brutality of a blood hunt in the heart of London and the monstrous practice of impaling bodies on spikes in a Transylvanian *tirsa* becomes academic. The Beast Within maintains many guises, yet the face of brutality remains unchanged.

The excesses and brutality of the Victorian blood hunt are currently all the rage, yet some wonder how long the practice will endure. For now, princes exploit their strength, citing precedents of Lextalionis as their rationale. And as one would expect, that same excess, combined with the low status of childer and ruthless interpretations of the Six Traditions, has convinced many childer to pursue alternatives to serving the Camarilla. Faced with injustice, neonates may secretly conspire with more independent vampires — or fall prey to the recruiting efforts of the Sabbat.

Cainite Society

Stark contrasts define the Gothic Victorian world. Outside the "civilized lands" of the Empire, the Sword of Caine has been raised to strike at the very heart of the Camarilla. The Victorian Sabbat sees no reason to hide from humanity; instead, these vampires would subjugate mankind. A Cainite does not pretend to be mortal. She freely indulges her monstrous nature. If the Camarilla's accounts are to be believed, the victimization of the innocent, the corruption of the virginal and the desecration of the holy are all high rituals to the Sabbat.

With typical arrogance, the Victorian Camarilla paints its portrayal of the realms outside its influence in broad strokes. What the Kindred do not understand, they demonize. Yet, the elders have glimpsed a few fragments of truth. The Victorian Sabbat rebels against civilization itself. Having tasted freedom the rigid society of the Empire neither tolerates nor understands, Sabbat childer savor improprieties the Camarilla condemns.

While the wisest Sabbat elders counsel discretion (particularly after the Purchase Pact, which has served the purpose of redirecting the sect — or, at least, claiming to), a new generation of degenerate vampires have flooded the sect, venerating all that is unholy. Like aesthetes rejecting conformity, Sabbat childer play with fire. They are amused by savage rites, opium and absinthe, Baudelairean blasphemy and mock attempts to feign sexual degeneracy. From travels in the East, they bring Oriental delights ranging from the intricacies of Asian tattoos to the grotesqueries of innovative torture. Yet, what begins as a shocking descent from the civilized world all too often becomes a downward spiral into an abandonment of all that is human. Ultimate madness and ultimate freedom are inexorably intertwined.

Cainites are not Embraced and raised as childer — certainly not with the lengthy periods of tutelage in etiquette and propriety Kindred endure. Instead, their fervor is inculcated with Creation Rites. The childe is victimized, then carried across new thresholds of experience through pleasure and pain. After a mortal drained of blood consumes a vampire's vitae, the rites allow him to cross the boundary between the living world and a monstrous existence.

In this barbarous age, one common Creation Rite involves burying the fledgling alive, forcing him to fight for undeath by clawing his way to the surface. Weakened and weary, the childe is assaulted and forced into submission, after which, the next of the dehumanizing rites begins. While this is a ubiquitous method of inculcating loyalty in Sabbat — particularly when a Crusade is at its

height and more shock troops are needed — it is by no means the only one. The creation of a monster is often a highly personal experience, one tailored to the victim. A Sabbat Toreador may introduce her lover to new roles of dominance and submission, demonstrating knowledge a proper Victorian woman would never dare profess. A Sabbat Malkavian might use insight and torture to flay a fledgling's mind of its fragile sanity, slowly creating a bestial and demented monster. Tremere *antitribu* succumb to rituals of demonic mastery, while Brujah *antitribu* teach childer new strength by forcing them to victimize the very peasants they once defended. Corrupt creativity destroys the childe's former identity, liberating him from the constraints of mere humanity.

As the fledgling vampire recovers a whit of sanity, he may choose to ally with others who have suffered as much as he has. He then submits to the *Vaulderie*, a ceremony in which Cainites share their blood in a communal chalice. By feasting on the blood of their own kind, they form a pack devoted to a crusade against humanity itself. Cainites loathe the necessity of hiding from mankind. They cannot openly act as vampires because of the sheer numbers of lesser creatures (including Camarilla Kindred). *Vaulderie* confirms that a Cainite's first loyalty is to his own kind.

Kindred would fervently deny that any choice is involved in submitting to the *Vaulderie* — an ironic accusation, since so many Camarilla neonates are dutifully exploited by their sires. The practice of *Vaulderie* is placed in stark relief by the Sabbat's contempt for the willing subjugation evinced in the Camarilla, the suicide of submitting to Antediluvians and the oppression displayed by Kindred elders. A Kindred childe may be forced to form a blood bond with one trusted elder, but a pack forms this same bond of loyalty willingly between all of the beasts who run with it. The liberation of the *Vaulderie* is so profound that the childe may forget all transient concerns he pursued before the ritual — it is a very different (almost spiritual) form of "rebirth."

Eternal Revolution

When the Founders first proposed the society of the Camarilla, vampiric sabbats reviled it. Clearly, it was a way for the Ancients to keep their progeny enslaved. The elders of the movement were merely puppets enacting the will of unseen masters. Their society has thus become stagnant and submissive, keeping younger vampires enthralled as servants of an illegitimate and unaging aristocracy. Legends suggest that one night, the Antediluvians will awaken to destroy the very creatures they have spawned. Cainites claim that the Camarilla keeps their young docile so that, when the Antediluvians

awaken, hoary vampires can destroy and devour the Kindred with little or no opposition.

The Sword of Caine would strike these elders down. When a Sabbat Crusade threatens a Camarilla domain, pack leaders use rituals of diablerie to seize Kindred elders and steal the power of their blood. As a pack extinguishes its victim, the Feast of Souls steals the victim's spirit. Each time a younger vampire diablerizes an elder, he lowers his generation. In this manner, packs of Cainites grow closer to Caine, strengthening themselves for the night when they will take down the Antediluvians themselves. Sabbat vampires revel in such villainous ambitions. Of course, if they do not learn to act with greater subtlety, they may reveal themselves as obvious evils to be destroyed. If they do not achieve some measure of success quickly, they shall perish.

Vaulderie

While Camarilla vampires speak of guarding their souls against the Beast, Sabbat priests uphold rites of spiritual unity among Cainites. After Cainites are created, childer form packs, often roaming as monsters to do what they will. To show their communal allegiance, they perform the rite of *Vaulderie*, the sharing of souls. The priest of the pack produces a chalice, wherein each vampire contributes a share of his blood. The chalice is then passed from one pack member to the next, so that all can feed from it. The results are like the Camarilla's blood bond, but in this case, the pack members are not enthralled by an elder, but allied to each other. Over many such feedings, it is said, the vampire slowly replaces her very identity — and her very soul — with the essence of the pack.

Bishops and Archbishops

What princes are to Camarilla cities, archbishops are to the Sabbat. In most of the Old World, they follow the medieval tradition of overseeing vast areas of untamed land as their domains. In less secure areas, a city without a powerful archbishop has a squabbling see of bishops (typically from two to five, depending on the city's size). Highly unstable areas are advised by a council of *prisci* as well, who all too often use their political influence within the sect to struggle for the reins of power. If one bishop (or archbishop) has power, it is because he has defeated all rivals in formal challenges.

The Old World yields slowly to the ambitions of the Camarilla because of a lack of clear political leadership. Only a few European cities have been corrupted by Sabbat Crusades, but a few revered Cainites watch over entire cities in the Old World, making them mockeries of the Camarilla's orderly Empire. In the New World,

particularly the United States, Camarilla neonates have made reports of Sabbat packs capturing small towns far removed from civilization. Cainites in North America have begun to incorporate primitive beliefs, adapting the practices of savages. The survival of the sect may depend on such innovations.

Particularly in the major cities it now occupies, the Sabbat has begun to take on the trappings of a religious order. From the remote cities of Scandinavia and Spain to the *tirsas* and *knezates* of Transylvania, the sect desecrates and desanctifies holy places, using them as temples for its atrocious rites. Each archbishop (or see of bishops) oversees several Sabbat priests who shepherd packs of ambitious Cainites, instilling them with proper loyalty, fervor and obedience. Those who forsake such obedience return to the wild, demonstrating why the true strength of the sect lies occulted within rustic and barbarous lands.

Cainite Clans

The *Tzimisce* are the eldritch masters of Eastern Europe, Un-Dead overlords who subjugate the peasants they exploit. Terrifying traditional *tirsas* and *knezates* through brutal nocturnal displays of supernatural power, they clutch ancient territories within their powerful claws, guarding them against the encroaching light of the modern world. Time has not changed them. Ancient traditions of the Dark Ages still thrive within their domains, and they have the might to destroy any who insist otherwise. As brooding monsters in the craggy towers of crumbling castles, they are so effective in their dominance that their reputations are even whispered of in the civilized lands. These *Fiends* serve as the source for many civilized mortal's conceits about the legendary nature of Victorian vampires.

Fervent cultists among the clan have taken the Sabbat's religious beliefs and grafted their own heresies onto them. Ingenious elders have perfected ancient rituals of transforming their own bodies into obscene variants of conventional physiology, fleshcrafting themselves into blasphemous creatures. They make a sham of Darwin's theories, demonstrating that even the most horrific offshoots of the evolutionary process can flourish. In the same way, they infest lands the Camarilla cannot protect, remaking them in their own image and poisoning the lands' very soil with their near-mythical folk sorceries.

In sharp contrast to the *Fiends*' brutality, the *Lasombra* are masters of shadowy intrigue, including the politics of the Sabbat. Religious leaders within the clan remember their breathing days as functionaries of mortal courts or the Church, before they succumbed to temptations of

power and evil. Political masters watch over descendents in Spain and Italy, desperately holding on to kingdoms younger Cainites have forsaken. The clan degenerated into evil when an elder of the clan led a pack of followers to slaughter and diablerize the clan's founder, demonstrating the virtue of destroying one's elders. Manipulating the very shadows around them through the power of blood, the *Keepers* scheme to employ the same treachery against their Ancient masters.

The *antitribu* clans are distortions of Camarilla ideals. Gangrel *antitribu* are the savages of Victorian horror, more beasts than men, all too often fearful in appearance as a result of their indulgence in their animalistic urges. Malkavian *antitribu* afflict their victims with madness, spreading insanity like a pestilence through natural and supernatural populations. Toreador *antitribu* are as beautiful as they are cruel, equally callous or torturous toward their human paramours. Nosferatu *antitribu* typically eschew such social intercourse, as bestial revelry, exploitation of the impoverished and an appreciation for the ugliness of the age are far more compelling.

Before revolutions sweep the sect, the Sabbat harbors truly medieval anachronisms. During the Victorian Age, Ventrue *antitribu* serve as an outcast clan, accepting warrior Brujah *antitribu* as the aristocracy of their sect — and struggling for decades to overcome their clan's stigma. The Tremere *antitribu* are relics of a dead age, still seeking for the powers undeath can offer by bargaining with magic. Yet, the Victorian Sabbat is strong enough to endure such changes, forging many clans as one while preserving freedom — at any price.

The Independents

Both the Camarilla and the Sabbat are embroiled in bloody rites and treacherous politics. It is no wonder, then, that some forsake both unions, keeping to their own kind above all else. By the Victorian era, several independent clans have emerged as politically significant in their own right.

The *Followers of Set* gather like nests of vipers, slithering into hidden places throughout the world. In the civilized lands, they have begun to exploit the birth of a new archaeological science: Egyptology. Egyptian myths and legends feature prominently in the beliefs of many Victorian students of the occult. After Sir Petrie's archaeological expeditions in the 1880s and excavations at Akhenaton, interest in Egyptology soars. The names of Egyptian gods become well-known in academic circles. Yet, at the same time, Egypt has become a battleground between England and France. Two empires contest for control of a nation they do not understand. Just as Victorian scholars have found new revelations into

magic and the occult by studying Egyptian lore, the *Serpents* believe they possess occult knowledge that predates the Camarilla, the First City and even the damnation of Caine. By their heretical beliefs, Set created what they consider the oldest and original clan in his image. Cults of Setites in the Victorian age prepare the world for a time when the Empire can be remade in Set's image. Mortals the clan exploits have lost all semblance of Victorian restraint, as they are often secretly addicted to the substances, services and degenerate activities Set's childer provide. Setite cults guard temples hidden in darkness where the old names may be spoken and the true ways preserved. As the nests of these snakes spawn, they strive to recover holy antiquities that have been stolen, to undermine the religions that defy their god, to retake Britain's Egyptian colonies and to reclaim the world for Set's glory.

The *Ravnos* are the unliving inheritors of nomadic traditions, watching over companies of mortal wanderers as they roam across Europe. These vampires move between cities and wilderness with equal freedom, never staying long enough to fully endure the scorn of princes, the schemes of Sabbat or the consequences of their actions. Furious that the world has no place for them, the *Deceivers* take revenge against those in power, giving princes and archbishops alike the "Treatment": schemes designed to unleash spite and misery in their wake.

The *Giovanni* are unified by an act of treachery. During the Italian Renaissance, their mortal ancestors became masters of necromantic arts. Their bold innovations attracted the attention of the Antediluvian progenitor of a forgotten clan, a death cult fascinated by the cryptic mysteries of thanatosis. The *Giovanni* united and conspired to diablerize the elders of the clan, earning a place of infamy among the Un-Dead. Thereafter, the *Necromancers* Embraced generations of their descendants and adopted new families into their deathless conspiracy. With characteristic ambition, the *Giovanni* and allied families have expanded their influence wherever the Camarilla's vigilance has fallen lax. With their command of occult arts, the *Giovanni* summon the very spirits of the dead to prey upon their enemies. With the mania of spiritualism so prevalent in this age, shades and spectres find the boundary between worlds easier to circumvent with each passing year — bringing power to the *Giovanni*.

The *Assamites* are an enigma to the Camarilla, for they are seldom seen save in legends... and nightmares. As a clan of Middle Eastern vampires, they uphold a culture far older than the Camarilla or Sabbat. Kindred presume they know all about these "swarthy assassins," vilifying them in racist epithets. Yet, these childer do not

know of the clan's secrets: their centuries of scholarship in Arabic blood magic, their mastery of hidden disciplines of sound and silence and their dominance over cultures of the Arabic Un-Dead — secret societies surprisingly similar to those of the Kindred. As part of the Treaty of Tyre, the *Saracens* submitted to a curse: Tremere warlocks enacted a ritual that would remove their ability to perform diablerie. Ignorant Kindred do not suspect that several elder Ventrue, as part of the Treaty, have formed a secret alliance with masters of the clan, ensuring their enforcers keep knives pointed at the throats of common enemies.

Coteries and Conspiracies

As one might expect, the eldest vampires remember a time before there was a Camarilla or a Sabbat. They refer to that time as the Long Night or the War of Princes, the time between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance. Some childer suspect that there may have been a time when their elders could conduct intrigues without the limits of modern sects and politics. They are quite correct. As generation holds its privileges, some elders even continue to communicate and even bargain with the agents of other sects. Such alliances have become increasingly unfashionable, to point where they have become hidden associations maintained across the ages. A coterie cannot survive such changes; instead, they are shamefully addressed as conspiracies.

Victorian conspirators have taken on the affectations of the age. Because their activities entail great risks, including possible ostracism from society itself, many act with the fervor of secret societies. As treachery can invite damnation, many hold bloody rituals that would invite envy from the Masonic Order — or the Hellfire Club. When separated, a conspiracy's actions may depend on messages delivered by conditioned intermediaries, encrypted and ciphered correspondences or, in some cases, telepathic transmissions and summonings. When gathered, the conspirators reinforce their alliance through ritual acts. Tremere (and Setites) often serve as the best high priests of such services. The participants may simply feed from the same chosen victim, share animal blood from a consecrated chalice, offer prayers to an otherwise forgotten god — or all bow to the same master.

Legions of Extraordinary Gentlemen

The Victorian hunter is an icon of the age. With the insight of Sherlock Holmes, the courage of Mina Murray and the resolve of Van Helsing, mortal hunters reclaim



the cities of mankind. Whether armed with shotguns, sword canes or singlesticks, clad in deerstalker caps or Inverness capes, they are singular models of determination. Many hunters take up sword and pistol to avenge loved ones who have fallen to vampiric predation. Those who make a career of such exploits maintain a reputation as relentless foes. Then again, they would have to do so — a life of vengeance runs the risk of damaging one's reputation, financial security and societal status.

The deadliest hunters become ardent students of the occult as they pursue truths about the dread *vampyr*. A few even wield supernatural weapons of their own, whether as spiritualists, psychics or warriors of God (some occultists refer to these powers as *Numina*). Particularly religious crusaders see vampires as the tools of the Adversary, the very embodiment of evil. For them, it is not merely lives that are at stake, but the souls of the vampires' victims.

With the emergence of new sciences and new discoveries, hunters have taken up innovative methods of pursuing their Un-Dead foes. One of the most distinctive archetypes of the age is that of the consulting detective. While few sleuths can attain the fame of their fictional counterparts — paragons such as Sherlock Holmes and Carnacki the Ghost Finder — exotic crime flourishes in the Gothic Victorian age. By profession, these specialists work with the local constabulary and private citizens — and, on occasion, the governments of nations. More fanciful tales concern vengeful secret societies: "hunting clubs" founded by the factotums of these same agencies. While such students of nascent criminology and the esoteric no doubt share knowledge, it is unknown how many such societies exist and, truthfully, how large they are.

Conversely, hunters often have no conception of how numerous or organized vampires are. In fact, fanatical beliefs often lead to fantastic misperceptions about their foes. Many is the time that a hunter has staked his prey through the heart, not realizing that the monster will thrive again once the stake is removed. This has led to the belief that the forces of darkness may reanimate a fallen vampire — a fortunate misunderstanding for those who are willing to go into hiding from relentless hunters.

With groundbreaking inventions in the fields of travel and communication, hunters grow stronger with each passing year. While Victorian technology is steadily advancing, it still has its limits. For instance, if a breach of the Masquerade occurs, the news takes time to spread. One can communicate only so much by telegraph. Although journalists work quickly, a scandal won't be documented until the next edition of the local newspaper (if at all). Only a few of the wealthy have access to

telephones, and crusading against anything as outlandish as vampires could result in enough scandal to lose such a privilege. This buys indiscreet Kindred some time, which princes expect them to use wisely.

If hunters arrive to dispatch the offending nightstalkers, they move at the speed of the fastest horse, carriage or train available. These limitations may hinder the hunted as well, for escaping from the scene of a crime is not as simple as alighting a departing train. Once a mortal hunter has found his prey, he pursues him with relentless and indefatigable fervor. Chasing a monster across the countryside can become an epic undertaking, as even Dracula could not shake his pursuers on his continental flight from London to Varna.

Myths and Monsters of the Victorian Age

Faith and science are forces to be reckoned within the Empire, but magic remains hidden by secret societies. Supernatural creatures must still hide from the light, but in Victorian cities illumined by flame, tolerance for the intrusion of the supernatural is waning. This era has more hunters than any since the time of the Inquisition, when holy warriors used their crusades against witchcraft to wage their war against the night. Yet, it also holds more monsters than they can hope to oppose and destroy....

Werewolves

Those who roam the cold wastes of the wilderness know that werewolves are real. If 20 or 30 vampires can gather in a city, packs of lycanthropes no doubt lair in their own dens as well. Childer consider the particulars of such bestial societies something of a mystery, as werewolves typically savage vampires who intrude on their territories. On the few occasions when vampires must deal with them, bloodshed results. There can be no reasoning with them, no entreaties for mercy or forgiveness for imagined slights. Even Gangrel change their course when finding the tracks of a Lupine, for when the moon is full, werewolves know of no distinctions between sect or clans. Any creature that encroaches on their dwindling territories must be destroyed.

The most secretive lycanthropes dwell in the very heart of civilization. A werewolf is half monster, yet he is half human as well. By living in the midst of humanity, the "gentleman werewolf" attempts to preserve his finer qualities. Bestial creatures might take umbrage at such complicity, but the cosmopolitan creature feels an obligation to watch over the herd of humanity. Of course, his monstrous urges cannot be denied. In the depths of his

heart, he aspires to run free in the primal wild and hunt prey as nature intended. If he cannot willingly take the form of a beast at least once a month, he may eventually go mad. It is an existence both arduous and painful, like walking on broken glass.

Sorcerers

The Gothic Victorian age holds untold numbers of secret societies. Some have been suborned by Kindred seeking power, privilege or blood. Yet with even greater subtlety, some magical societies resist the intrigues of vampires, gatherings of sorcerers that practice their craft in diverse ways. Victorian magic is subtle enough that its influence may remain unseen — as well as its practitioners. While visionaries such as Whyte, Regardie and Gardner define conventional magic, the practitioners of more esoteric arts break the boundaries of reality through the power of their will. Their mastery is great enough that their most extensive societies remain hidden from the rival conspiracies of vampires. For every Tremere who would bend a magical society to her own ends, all too often a mortal sorcerer is there with the power to resist her.

As the dawn of the 20th century approaches, a few imaginative mortals who push the frontiers of science discover powers akin to magic. After the publication of Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, the mad scientist becomes an archetype of Gothic fiction. The horrors she imaged are made real by sorcerers who reanimate her vision. Electricity, chemistry and physics become substitutes for the witch's bell, book and candle. Whether toiling privately in hidden laboratories or discovering new frontiers in explorers' societies, these scientists have an influence on the age as subtle and pervasive as the luminiferous ether.

One conspiracy of scientists acts not out of madness, but ruthless efficiency. Exploiting secret societies they have cultivated for several centuries, they have infiltrated the very highest levels of Victorian society. Few suspect their roles in Masonic lodges, functions in Rosicrucian societies, aspirations as would-be Illuminati or service as advisors to Queen Victoria herself. Their craft is so subtle that they do not even consider it magic. Their goal is a world dominated by the masters of science, the scions of a Victorian technocracy. They would remake the world in man's own image, purging it of the influence of the occult. Neither vampires nor these post-Industrial sorcerers suspect the extensive nature of one another's conspiracy. On the other hand, other sorcerers who have heard of their ambitious plans have already begun to consider them "black hats," particularly their

rhetoric of uniting the world through reason — and mastering reality itself.

Ghosts

Seances and spiritualism attract the adventurous and empower the dead. After the spiritualist movement of the late 19th century, belief in the spirit world makes it easier for the Restless Dead to cross from other worlds into the realm of the living. Creatures of great passion, they defy death itself to commune with flesh-and-blood creatures. The further a Kindred or Cainite fades into the shadow of mortal society, the more likely he is to encounter the wraiths, shades and spectres of the Underworld, the spiritual reflection of the mortal world. Giovanni Necromancers learn to exploit them; Malkavians may see them and fear them; Toreador are overwhelmed by their empathy. Behind the hidden societies of vampires, the empires of the dead, from hierarchies of souls to heretical cults, act with even greater subtlety. The drama of the dead presents vast epics few vampires see. Because of the powers ghosts wield, those who witness the Restless Dead do so at their own peril. And some do so because of the acts of the Un-Dead themselves....

Faeries

Victorian faeries seem frivolously immune to the tragic thoughts vampires entertain. They have far greater concerns. Faith may still be strong in the Victorian world, but magic is dying. It is rumored that most fey fled the world centuries ago, seeking mythical realms such as Arcadia, Avalon and Tir-na-Nog, before such places became too impossible for the modern world. The few fey that remain on Earth in the Gothic Victorian age are drawn to the glamorous places of a bygone age, sites where magic was once as powerful and plentiful as beauty and imagination. Only the most dedicated souls who seek the Fair Folk will find them. And vampires who do find them are all too often driven mad by the experience.

Astral Travel

Many powerful vampires have learned secret powers for accessing other spheres of existence, most notably a realm known as the Astral Plane. The concept has been known for centuries, but remarkably enough, the term is alleged to have been devised by human scholars of the occult. Theosophists and scholars of the Golden Dawn alike claim that a handful enlightened mortals have "ascended" to the astral spheres, becoming more than human. Some have merged with infinity itself, while others remain in touch with the human world to shepherd others to ascension. While this is a fanciful tale indeed, students of certain vampiric Disciplines have

claimed to have encountered other entities on their astral travels — some more powerful than vampires.

Around the World in Eighty Nights

Whether Kindred or Cainite, when a vampire speaks of Victorian culture, she often refers to events and scandals in Britain. London is the jewel in the crown of the Victorian Empire. All other civilized cities are measured against its standards, at least among the Damned. Of course, it's also a squalid, dangerous place populated by the only vampires savvy enough to survive the machinations of Mithras, the Methuselah prince, the tyranny of Valerius, his chamberlain, and the fury of Lady Anne, his childe and betrayer. Any Kindred seeking status should travel to London, but inevitably, the time comes to flee from its vicious politics and impossibly high ideals.

When that time arrives, countless other cities may well prove a sanguinary oasis to which one can flee and repair one's reputation. For each of these realms, a handful of cities exemplify their character. The Camarilla cities detailed below show the contrasts between the many lands of the Empire. Demonstrating the extremes of vampiric society, these select cities demonstrate the iniquities of the Gothic Victorian age.

European Cities

London is the standard to which all other Camarilla domains are held. The lengthy tenure of a Methuselah prince named Mithras has not only reinforced the idea of its regent's unquestioned authority, but also served as a precedent for princes everywhere. Unfortunately, his disappearance in 1880 left a political vacuum. His seneschal maneuvered to seize power, but he was betrayed by his own childe, Lady Anne, the current prince of London. Many powerful elders consider her actions presumptuous; thus, she must ruthlessly enforce her authority to keep up appearances while distracting visitors from the many subtle attempts to undermine her. In much the same way throughout the Camarilla, princes wield power openly and ruthlessly. As the Victorian age proceeds, their authority wanes.

Paris has been a haven for Toreador elders since the very founding of the Camarilla. The Degenerates compete fiercely to be worthy of acceptance in such a prestigious domain. Francois Villon has claimed the domain for centuries, securing status few would dare challenge. While the aristos of the Parisian Kindred have remained firmly entrenched, Paris itself has suffered. Many mortals still remember the hardships of the Franco-Prussian War. The city suffered only minor damage from

Prussian attacks, but the revolt of the Paris Commune destroyed much of the inner city in a great fire. Over 20,000 soldiers lost their lives defending the city. Rebuilding, both political and architectural, continues well into the 1890s. Parisian Kindred use their copious influence to rebuild the city in service to their own interests.

Vienna is not only home to an upper crust of Ventrue aristocracy, but the alleged resting place of an Antediluvian: Tremere himself. Throughout most of the era, Vienna's prince plays a dangerous game by acting as a diplomat between these two powerful alliances. Tremere fear this city, as a "summons to Vienna" means that one may be called upon to justify one's actions to the seven elders of the clan. By contrast, any Malkavian who is fascinated by the prospect of regaining one's sanity may learn from the small coterie of Lunatics who reside there. They are cautious not to disturb Doctor Freud's progress, but still eagerly await his latest revelations.

Venice has maintained a similar balance of power throughout the 19th century. Most of the city's few elders are Ventrue and Toreador, led by a charismatic "merchant prince," but the city is also home to the most powerful vampires of Clan Giovanni. It is rumored that aged and degenerate Necromancers, free from the worrisome trouble of breathing, have made their havens

beneath the murky waters of the city's submerged buildings. Bolstered by unseen forces, the supporters of Clan Giovanni completely ignore the authority of the city's so-called "prince." The domain is also continually troubled by disease and plague afflicting the local kine. Thus, only the few local Nosferatu remain untouched by this fluid struggle for power.

American Gothic

America, once the bastion of grand ideals, has long since lost its innocence. A scant two decades ago, a "civil" war claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers. Reconstruction in the American South has remade it in an image the wealthy of the North prefer. Corruption in business is rife across the East Coast — and even more prevalent in American politics. This is the time of Boss Tweed and Tammany Hall, when money can buy and sell political influence at bargain rates. Of course, if much of that political influence lies in the claws of vampires, so be it.

New York is not only one of the most prosperous cities on the East Coast, but also among the most progressive cities in the world. As it is also the most populous city in America, those who prey upon humankind are drawn to it. It hosts one of the largest societies of



THE EMPIRE AFTER NIGHTFALL

vampires in the world. The lethargic traditions of the Old World have been supplanted here by industry and ambition. Victorian Gotham and its surrounding boroughs are extensive enough that Kindred and Cainites are present in the same city. And beneath the streets, as workers toil to expand the underground infrastructure of this thriving metropolis, unseen masters help extend their efforts into a vast Nosferatu Kingdom, one utterly warped and hideously beautiful. They are expanding it recklessly — heedless of the consequences to come.

The American West isn't as subtle in its conflicts, for this is the age of the Wild West. Few Camarilla vampires are willing to make the long trek to see meager populations of mortal kine, and those who do risk their very existence. West of the Mississippi, the Sabbat roams largely unchallenged, marauding as savage beasts over an untamed land. In their wanderings, Cainites feed as freely from Native Americans as Europeans. After witnessing spiritual ceremonies that hold a certain synergy with their own beliefs, Sabbat vampires have begun to integrate shamanistic beliefs into their own religious practices.

San Francisco shows the contrasts of the West Coast, as it is an isolated haven for the few Camarilla vampires brave enough to explore the West. In 1846, the city of Yerba Buena was seized by the United States Navy as part of the Mexican-American War; the following year, its name changed to San Francisco. The Gold Rush of 1849 brought wild and lawless hordes of humanity and, as one would expect, Kindred and Cainites who would exploit them. A ruthless Camarilla prince aided by powerful Gangrel brought the order of the Victorian Traditions to this domain. His power extended only so far, however, as vast territories surrounding San Francisco were claimed by Sabbat, powerful autarkis and self-proclaimed anarchs. A railway line from the East, completed in 1869, has allowed more Kindred to make the lengthy journey to this island of civility. They will no doubt continue to do so, contributing to the city's status as a major metropolis by the burgeoning 1890s.

The Mysterious Orient

As Kipling says, "East is East, and West is West." Kindred are blissfully ignorant of much that happens in the courts of their Oriental counterparts, called Cathayans in the Occidental tongue. That doesn't mean Western vampires never encounter Eastern ones, however. Since the British Empire has seized several Chinese cities, Camarilla vampires have taken their conquest a sign that they should seize their corresponding domains. The Asian "vampires" — if such a description of these myste-

rious creatures is indeed accurate — aren't eager for another "shadow war" to protect their territories.

Instead, Eastern vampires are largely content to let the Kindred encounter the supernatural mysteries hidden within their lands. Oblivious to the dangers of tampering with dragon lines, confronting *hengeyokai* shapeshifters and interfering with subtle Asian sorcerers, the Kindred are rapidly learning that they are poorly equipped to oppose the threats of the "dragons of the East" or the supernatural agencies that strike in ways the Westerners cannot anticipate, oppose or even understand.

The Kindred's efforts are frustrated by historical movements as well. In China, the soldiers of the Boxer Rebellion plan to drive the British Empire from their homelands. Paranoid princes are convinced that they must be supported in some way by vengeful Cathayans, yet no proof emerges. Despite revolutionary attempts at resistance, the British have established a series of rapidly growing and highly profitable colonies here. For instance, the city of Singapore had a population of less than a few hundred people when it was "discovered" by British explorers in 1819. By 1880, it is home to over 200,000 mortals.

Japan has remained distant from the rest of the world for centuries, but the 1880s mark the start of the Meiji Restoration, an attempt to modernize the nation by learning and adapting the traditions of the West. A few Japanese cities now have Camarilla princes, but the few visitors they receive wonder how much power they actually wield. Each seems to tolerate the Asian vampires passing through his domain, even remaining content to let them come and go without formal introductions. But if they don't enforce the Second Tradition, are they really princes? Many European vampires suspect there may be some form of conspiracy between the Dragon Princes, the self-proclaimed Bushi Clan, and the somewhat autarkis "Kuei-jin" vampires who dwell nearby. The truth is more insidious than any European dares imagine.

The Indian Colonies

As one of the most prosperous and traditional of the British Colonies, India has become another (albeit smaller) jewel in the Camarilla's crown. Princes and elders watch over the largest European settlements, taking a great deal of pride and credit in the expansion of the Empire. Elaborate missives sent to Great Britain speak of attempts to explore further into the Indian subcontinent. Proud English Kindred sire progeny to aid them in these attempts — and most of their childer die.

Although few would admit it, powerful supernatural forces have repeatedly claimed the unlives of curious vampires who traffic with forces they do not understand. Rumors persist of unusual shapeshifters, a veritable kingdom of Indian ghosts, sorcerer-cultists who deal with strange frontiers of death and pleasure and, most remarkably, dangerous bloodlines of hitherto unknown Indian vampires. Unless the Camarilla can overcome these cryptic forces, their ambitions for India are doomed. Of course, stalwart supporters of the Camarilla would never dare admit their failure — they'd prefer to redouble their efforts instead.

The Dark Continent

European powers are quickly suborning the territories of Africa. By 1884, they will place designs on nearly every territory on the map. Within 40 years, very few places — such as Liberia, Ethiopia and a few portions of the Sudan — have escaped the auspice of “colonial protection.”

In Northern Africa, Egypt is one the most hotly contested areas of Camarilla influence. The Ventrue Prince of Alexandria, for instance, is well aware of the number of Setites and Assamites who would just as soon destroy him as ruin his claims of domain. His primogen claimed supremacy in the city after the British bombarded it in 1882, acting in response to the extensive slaughter of European residents there. By 1890, the whole of Egypt is under British rule, a fact the Camarilla exploits for all it is worth. Yet, in the shadows, autarkic vampiressilently convert and destroy the Kindred within their domains. Childer who dream by day of destroying the enemies of the sect need look no further. The campaign against Setites and Assamites is overt, even if the enemy's retribution is subtle.

Victorian Innovations

Gas Lighting: Gaslight was invented by William Murdock, a Scottish engineer. This innovation relied upon a practical method of distilling gas from coal. Initially, one of the most useful applications of his discovery was in the theater. Gas lighting was first successfully adapted for the stage in 1803 at London's Lyceum Theater. In 1816, the Chestnut Street Opera House in Philadelphia instilled a more complex gas lighting system. It supplied its own gas by means of a gas generator within the building. By the 1850s, several cities (including, of course, London) began the instillation of gas stations and city mains.

Its theatrical applications led to many of its first innovations and demonstrated several obvious advantages over other forms of lighting. For a start, the flame

produced was not only brighter than oil lamps or candles, but also easier to control. By varying control valves from a central point, a technically proficient thespian could gradually increase or decrease its light or even affect this change at varying speeds. For dramatic effect, gaslight made it easier to darken the lights in a theater or auditorium. The most elaborate systems employed a “gas table” to display these control mechanisms (which served as the forerunner of the modern switchboard).

Of course, the system was not without its disadvantages. The heat it produced was an inconvenience, and the vapors it created were often offensive. Both concerns paled in comparison to its obvious threat as a fire hazard — a complication that understandably terrifies the Kindred.

What Hath God Wrought?: As history tells us, these words comprise the first message sent by telegraph. Over the next 20 years, Morse code becomes the technological lingua franca of international communication. For less than two pounds, a resident of London can send carefully chosen words around the globe. By 1890, the time required to deliver a message by telegraph from London to Sydney, Australia is reduced to a scant three hours. By 1898, when Queen Victoria sends a message throughout her colonies for her Diamond Jubilee, she dispatches 10 words by telegraph, which within three hours travels to colonies from Jamaica to Cape Town, from Hong Kong to Montreal, signifying the triumph of the telegraph over the boundaries of geography.

Social Reform: Many of Karl Marx's works were first printed and translated after his death in 1883. Volume Two of *Das Kapital* was printed in 1885, while Volume One was first printed in English in 1886. At the same time, the Fabian Society called for social reform and an end to monarchy. In a far more brutal outburst of rebellion, the Dynamiters become the terror of London, leaving their nitroglycerin bombs on British railways and other public places. In 1884, the same year the Fabian Society is founded, the Dynamiters strike at Scotland Yard itself. As vampiric society echoes mortal innovation, some of these social reforms even find their way into the customs of the Un-Dead. The Sabbat, for example, harbors its own society of Fabians determined to bring down the malign plutocracy of the Camarilla.

Transit for the Masses: In 1884, the first tube of the London Underground opens, and in 1890, the first underground railway tunnel begins operation. As the age progresses, so does underground transit. In Victorian Gotham, for example, one may cross the island of Manhattan in less than 15 minutes. This allows the gentleman businessman to commute home quickly from his place of business, but it also enables the criminal element a

means of entering the same neighborhood with equal alacrity. And any who frequent these subterranean warrens at odd hours may be confronted with creatures who employ it for a very different means: hunting for mortal prey unobserved.

Civilized Transport

Although motorized vehicles do exist in the 1880s, they are little more than mechanical diversions for the wealthy. For Victorians, the primary mode of transport is by horse, either as a mount for riding or as a beast of burden to pull a wheeled wagon, carriage or similar conveyance.

Urbanites may be familiar with the ostentatious "growler," a four-wheeled carriage large enough to isolate its passengers from the world outside their conveyance. Some are large enough to easily be converted for a vampire's use, once its owner adds dark curtains, puts locks on the doors and, perhaps, adds a compartment beneath the coach for storing a body or two. Also known as a "Clarence," this type of carriage can hold four passengers, while a fifth can request to ride up front with the driver. Less reputable sorts may try to perch on the back axle, remaining hidden from the driver.

The hansom cab, sometimes referred to as the "gondola of London," is a smaller, two-wheeled cart. Though typically intended for two passengers, three can squeeze inside with a minimal amount of discomfort. The driver rides on a high seat at the rear of the carriage, balancing the passengers between himself and his horse. It's not secure enough for a Kindred's daytime travel, though, as it has half-doors on either side, with barely enough room for luggage on the floor.

In the wealthier districts of London, one needs only to stand on a curbside and wave diligently to attract a passing driver. Cab drivers, known as "jarveys," typically charge a mere shilling for a passenger or two to ride less than two miles, with an additional sixpence for each additional mile. For a modest fee, the driver can wait for his passengers; this typically costs about sixpence for each quarter hour.

For nightly excursions, the wealthy may travel in style in a "victoria," an open vehicle with a collapsible hood (for inclement weather). Up to five passengers may ride through the streets of London in this fashionable carriage for about a pound a day. For a slightly higher fee (or an efficacious application of the Gifts of Caine), the jarvey will remain oblivious to the conversations of a coterie inside.



Resources for the Genre

While it shouldn't be too difficult for any aspiring **Victorian Age: Vampire** player or Storyteller to rattle off a number of genre examples, we'd be remiss if we didn't give you a place to start.

"The Vampyre" by John Polidori is probably the seminal work for this setting. Before this story, vampires were bloodsucking monsters, but with Polidori's short story, the vampire-as-a-romantic-creature was born.

Dracula by Bram Stoker

The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole

The Mysteries of Udolpho and *The Italian* by Anne Radcliffe

The Monk by Gregory Lewis

Melmoth the Wanderer by Charles Maturin

The History of the Caliph Vathek by William Beckford

Carmilla by Sheridan LeFanu

"The Vampire of Kaldenstein" by Frederick Cowles

The Picture of Dorian Grey and *Lady Windermere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde

From Hell by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell features Jack the Ripper, secret conspiracies and Freemasons, and the movie has Heather Graham as the cleanest prostitute possessed of the straightest teeth London has ever seen. Add a vampire and this is a graphic-novel **Vampire** supplement.

The Unburied by Charles Palliser is great because of its underplaying of the supernatural and the convoluted murder-within-a-murder-within-a-murder plot that's set in an academic quest. The "subtle" supernatural (read the book! It moves very quickly) presence suggests very much of how Victorian Kindred would conduct themselves ("Vampires? What a quaint notion!"), while the plot is occlusive enough to give any elder an idea for hiding his schemes.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Silas Marner by George Eliot

It's set in America, but Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence* is a great representation of New World interpretation of Old World custom during the Victorian era.

The Alienist by Caleb Carr is American in setting but an excellent work of mood and setting nonetheless.

The Waterworks by E.L. Doctorow is, again, in an American setting, but well worth the read.



Chapter Two: The Clans

The Blood of Caine, as diluted as it is in these Gothic nights, still carries with it distinct characteristics that each sire passes on to his child upon the act of creating progeny. Each clan has its own theme, its own purpose and its own unique charm. As part of the effort of the revised-era series of Vampire books, we've tried to create archetypes without letting them lapse into stereotypes.



The world of **Victorian Age: Vampire** is a bit different, however. Rooted as it is in the Gothic literary tradition, this setting relies on certain tropes of the genre to communicate its themes. If your cackling monk dwelling in the old, crumbling abbey is something other than a fiend, you've misled your audience — and not in a good way. If he's cackling because he's been driven mad by the true evil lurking in that abbey, well, then, you're on the right track.

Morality in **Victorian Age: Vampire** is far more black-and-white than it is in **Vampire**'s modern setting. The sects and even the clans are more monolithic, more suited to being used as entities to illustrate a point than merely as large social groups encompassing other smaller social groups.

Don't view this as license to boil characters, clans and sects down to one-note caricatures, however. You'll see in this chapter that we play to some key archetypes, but that we try not to let them become the sole definition of the clan. The independent clans, in particular, are presented from the point of view of the Gothic tradition. While this may not strike you as exceptionally politically correct, that's not our intent. What we want to do is provide a cogent, genre-honoring view of the vampire tale. By all means, keep those stories twisting and turning, like a catacomb beneath a forgotten family's manse. Use the archetypes presented in this chapter as a sort of "common ground," or an understanding of "what everyone knows" about the clans. Thereafter, use them as you wish, but don't break the archetypes too greatly, or they'll cease to have value as archetypes.

It's probably strange to hear us saying things like this, after almost four years of insistence that each vampire is an individual. That remains true, however — you'll just need to develop those individual personalities so that they serve the genre rather than turning it on its ear.



Brujah

The Brujah have not yet fallen, though they teeter on the edge if the words of their wariest elders are to be believed. As a clan, the Brujah seem to suffer from dementia praecox, to use some of Dr. Freud's parlance, as some of them cling to a noble legacy of Classical origin, while others have allowed themselves to degrade over time and become a grim reflection of the Victorian era's greatest failings.

If one follows the history of the Brujah — as reliable as such a thing may be — one would find a wide spectrum of Kindred. From the philosopher-kings of antiquity to the rabble-rousers and skull-bashing hooligans of the East End, the Brujah seem united only in their disparity.

Such is not the case, however, as the Brujah are perhaps closest to the mortal world of all the race of Caine with regard to their emotions. In many of the undead, the spark of life gutters and fades, like a gaslight deprived of its fuel. In the Brujah, however, passion still flares in their deathless hearts, giving rise to the Brujah reputation as a "spirited" clan, to put it diplomatically, or as reckless berserks, to echo the disapproving members of vampiric society.

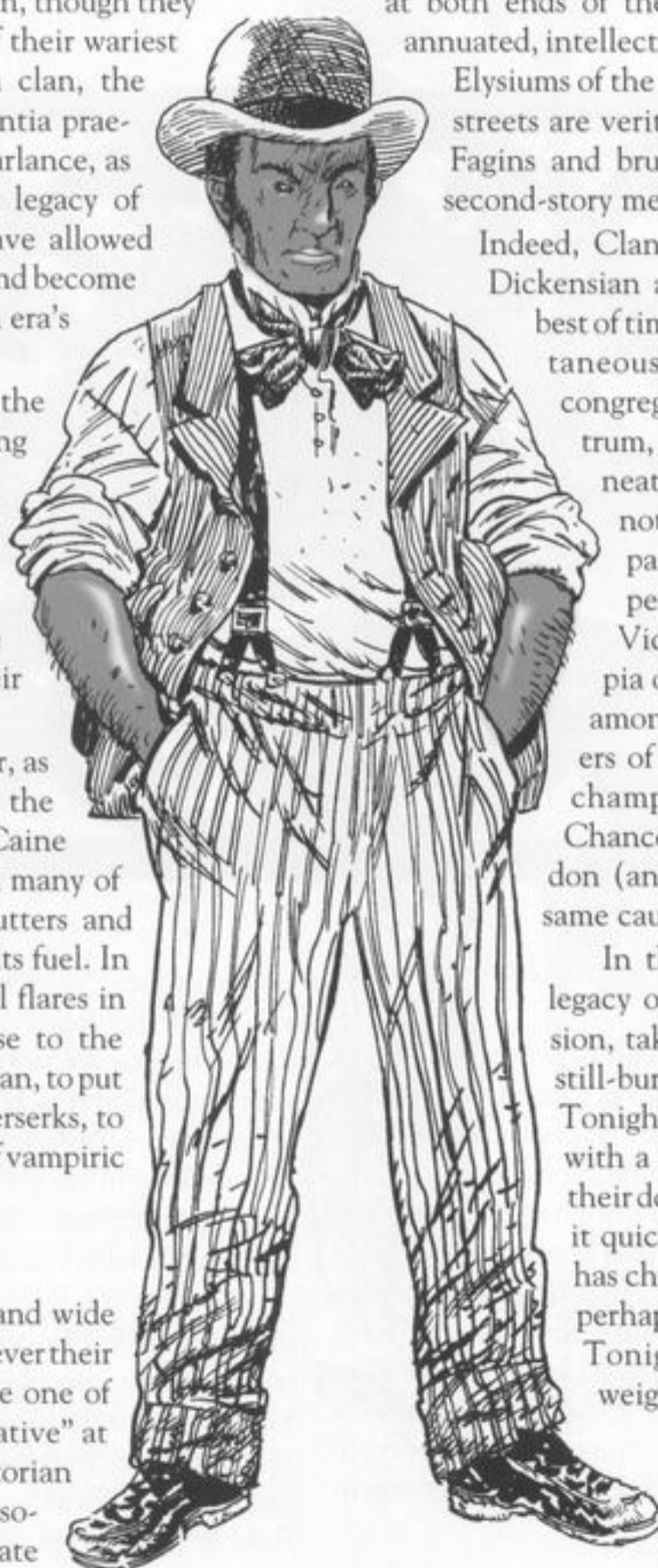
Overview

The Brujah have spread far and wide across Victoria's empire, and whatever their ethnic or cultural origin, they are one of the clans most suited to "going native" at any given location. Likewise, Victorian Brujah spread broadly across the social spectrum but tend to congregate

at both ends of the spectrum. Among the elite, annuated, intellectual Brujah haunt the salons and Elysiums of the Kindred. At the same time, the streets are veritably acrawl with Rabble, from Fagins and bruisers to pimps, smugglers and second-story men.

Indeed, Clan Brujah tends to embody the Dickensian and Victorian concepts of the best of times and the worst of times simultaneously. As the Brujah tend to congregate at the extremes of the spectrum, so do their endeavors dovetail neatly with the haves and the have-nots of mortal society. As their passions swing widely across the pendulum, the Brujah find the Victorian era a veritable cornucopia of civil interest. Brujah number among the Fenian bombers, supporters of Marx's philosophies, Darwin's champions, members of the Iron Chancellor's ranks, the Fabians of London (and the Sabbat agitators for the same cause) and even the Freemasons.

In the past, the Brujah claimed a legacy of wisdom to temper their passion, taking up causes that echoed the still-burning fires in their dead hearts. Tonight, however, the Brujah sicken with a malady of soul that may prove their downfall if they are unable to heal it quickly. It is almost as if the world has changed too much for the Brujah, perhaps even leaving them behind. Tonight, elders weary under the weight of centuries of fighting for causes that advanced achingly slowly, only to be eclipsed in a few short decades by the changes



wrought by the scions of the Victorian era. Young Brujah, without the experience of centuries to balance their ambitions, expect the ways of these tumultuous times to carry the same weight in the eyes of the other Kindred. That is, so accustomed are they to the quick and radical changes of the era, they don't see how their penchant for significant change immediately alienates them not only from their own elders (whose ideas of "progressive" may still include notions of despotism), but from the more conservative members of other clans. The Brujah have rapidly faded from idealistic agents of the new Kindred order to marginalized neonates and vituperative elders.

Domain

Domain is a curious idea as it concerns the Brujah. On the one hand, the clan as a whole is very territorial, with members laying claim to certain territories and protecting them jealously from the very thought of someone's lack of respect for their claim. On the other hand, Brujah are all too often so disorganized as to be unable to maintain a claim to domain. For this reason, few Brujah princes exist, and those who do rarely seem to have the same smoldering regard for cause that their "less accomplished" clanmates do.

Geographically, Brujah tend to form pockets of numerical strength, but this owes as much to the Brujah habit of Embracing larger broods than other clans as it does to any particular region being more suited to their tastes than any other. Regions of Brujah strength include Italy, parts of Great Britain (such as London and Wales) and even some of the barbarous lands of Eastern Europe (especially in the south, where they are assumed to have settled after being driven from Rome by the Ventrue in nights long past). Among the Sabbat, Brujah *antitribu* presence is notably strong in Spain, second only to Lasombra dominance, and in Black Hand enclaves again scattered about Italy.

A phenomenon given rise in the Victorian era has been a sort of "communal" claim to domain. In cities where broods of Brujah roost or in less urban areas in which Brujah gather or sire progeny, the concept of domain occasionally applies to territories claimed by factions or families of Rabble as opposed to any particular Kindred herself. These domains can be truly terrifying to outsiders caught unawares, as the claimant Kindred pursue trespassers through their domain as wolves worry their prey through a moonlit wood. This is especially true of mortals, who may find themselves harried by a coterie of bloodthirsty monsters through the smokestacks and flash houses of neighborhoods unfamiliar to them.

Whether these shared domains have arisen out of some modern stimulus (certain scholars note a rise in the habit since the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*) or as a reaction to the crowding of Kindred in cities in unprecedented numbers, none can say. The Brujah themselves don't seem to be forthcoming, and those looking for an empirical reason may find themselves treading on hostile turf.

Brujah of higher classes often look down on these "deplorable packs," though many indulge the habit themselves, albeit in a more genteel fashion. These broods are not the hungry mongrels found amid soot-stained streets, but rather like cliques, secret societies or even aristocratic families. In these cases, Brujah broods form in ancestral manses or attach themselves as guests for an extended time (through smooth talk or bullying, usually) to a patron's estate.

Such a cohabitation of Kindred is regarded as a curiosity at best by other undead — and as unseemly at worst. Again, speculation runs rampant as to the cause. Some suggest that while prevailing Victorian ethics regard privacy in the utmost, the ever-rebellious Brujah gather in clutches to rebel against the cultural norm. The Rabble themselves don't bother holding forth on the



issue — things are as they are, and there's no reason to pick apart the Kindred's tastes.

The wise individual takes note that broods aren't the only form of Brujah presence in the Victorian era. In many places, especially among the elders, a single Brujah is plenty, which is an estimation these solitary Brujah often share. These Rabble tend more toward the scholarly than the iconoclastic, making the most of their curse of undeath by studying some matter of personal import or championing a cause with the stoic grace of martyrs. These Kindred are often bitter, lonely types, ill-suited to receiving company but secretly thrilled by contact with anyone who shares their interests or can debate other topics of import. Indeed, these Brujah are somewhat similar to the hoary and introverted Tzimisce, becoming "lords on the mountain" in Eastern Europe or reclusive hermits in tamer locales.

Interests

The lot of Clan Brujah is as tumultuous in the Victorian era as it has been historically, as the clan seems forever embroiled in some schismatic issue or another. As is typical, then, much of the clan ignores that the issue is an issue, while other members hotly contest the minutiae of the matter at hand. While such behavior may seem a comedy of errors to outside observers, savvy Kindred know that it is not. Indeed, making light of the issue is a way to earn any Brujah's enmity, for who are others to second-guess the grave matters of the most passionate among the Damned? And few make for a more tenacious and deadly adversary than a Brujah who feels slighted.

The current matter of concern for the Rabble is the clan's continued participation in the sect known as the Camarilla. Centuries ago, when Kindred society needed to claw its way from the depths of the Inquisition and the Burning Times, the Camarilla served its purpose in mutual protection. Tonight, however, the grand council has collapsed under its own weight. Elders of other clans openly preach mistrust of the progressive Brujah, and Kindred of all clans have cast aside the Camarilla's great purpose, instead using it as a smokescreen to throw others off the trail of their own petty agendas.

Moderate factions espouse continued support of the Camarilla but on a formally objecting basis. These Brujah think that the Camarilla still has potential but that it needs to rein in the



excesses of its more abusive members. A radical element proposes secession, abandonment of the chanced Ivory Tower and informal participation in the so-called "independent clan" phenomenon. To these Brujah, the Camarilla fails not only in practice, but in concept as well; nothing is salvageable. Outside of these two main camps, more extreme options sometimes find voice but rarely with any real consideration or longevity. The Sabbat, obviously, is a satanic nightmare, and a few more marginal options aren't even worth the space spent on discussing them.

Aside from this overarching concern, few Brujah have any matters that unite them across boundaries either geographical or social. Most are content to pursue their own affairs or pet causes, and these often occupy a significant amount of the Brujah's free time. From social, political and military causes to enveloping themselves completely in the shroud of the Jihad, Brujah are very often types to find an issue that inspires or enrages them and then spend a considerable effort in dealing with it.

Crime and criminal aspects are often associated with the Brujah — and not necessarily unreasonably. As members of the undead, the Rabble are no strangers to illegal activity, and some find that their supernatural proclivities aid them immensely in other aspects of such unlawful activities. Brujah number among gang bosses, fences, smugglers, killers, thugs, pirates and all other avenues of felonious enterprise.

Brujah can also be eloquent firebrands, rousing Kindred and kine alike to their own issue. Their natural skill with the Discipline of Presence even allows them to supernaturally apply their force of charisma to a gathering. In fact, this is a common activity in which to find the Brujah engaged, and again, their broad span of interests gives them any number of selections to make when rising to the challenge of opposing something or championing something else. Whether extolling the virtue of czarist government in Russia or decrying the inhumanities of the Industrial Revolution, an able Brujah will have little trouble convincing others of the righteousness of his personal crusade.

These times you see before you? They are the stuff of change. The world is different now, and the ways of aristocrats and tyranny are at their end. Oh, it's not ready to happen yet — I'm not so foolish as to think myself the sole catalyst for progress in the world tonight. But I am one of the catalysts, and when the Kindred world has enough of us shaking at the ground floor of the Ivory Tower, it will have no choice but to change to meet our needs or tumble down at our feet.

— Piotr Sielanovitch, Brujah revolutionary



GANGREL

Don't feed here, Lick. This is my domain. In fact, everything's my domain, so long as I'm faster than you are.

Foolish Kindred dismiss the Gangrel, taking them at face value either as loyal lapdogs of the Camarilla or as raging barbarians too wild to be constrained by any society of the undead. The truth, of course, lies somewhere in the middle. The Gangrel are wise enough to realize that the Camarilla has its place but are not so devoted as to allow its scheming Kindred to take advantage of them (usually...).

Whatever their allegiance, all Kindred know that a city's outlying barrens and the environs just beyond belong to the Gangrel. Let the Ventrue scheme in their petty "courts" and the Toreador hide behind the mannered fops of the age — the Gangrel understand that to be a Kindred is to be Damned forever, and the trappings of one age or another are just so many sands passing through the hourglass. Whether possessed of a bestial air of majesty or the mien of a skulking monster, the Gangrel rarely bother to delude themselves with the rigid behavioral baggage so prevalent in this distinguished age.

In some sense, the Gangrel are the defenders of the

Camarilla, as their domains on the outlying boundaries of a city are the first would-be invaders breach. Additionally, the Animals possess tremendous fighting edges, should contact with an outsider turn violent. For this reason, wise princes treat the Gangrel well, knowing that their own domains might well face more threats were the Gangrel not there to put them down.

Overview

The sobriquet "adventurer" carries a great deal of derision with it during the Victorian era — adventurers are rarely seen as the dashing heroes of fiction or larger-than-life escapades. Rather, they are often understood to be con men, hustlers, predators upon the unwary and drifters. Such an archetype fits many Gangrel well, as they are prone to wanderlust and certainly aren't above taking a bit of vitae here and there to sustain them, leaving misery on the trail behind them. Still, accusing the Gangrel of such things as malice assumes more of them than is often actually there. Gangrel don't often seek to cause pain or thrill at the suffering of others. They simply do what they must, as vampires, to survive. While a few cruel Gangrel may thrill at the tragedy they create, most don't care because it never crosses their minds.

As they ever have been, the Gangrel are largely a feral clan, typically having more in common with animals (or other, less natural denizens of the wilds) than they do



with mortals. Something about the Gangrel Embrace brings members of the clan close to the Beast that lurks in all Kindred. Victorian Gangrel sometimes take roles among the titled echelons of their sects in order to offset this — many become “scourges” of their cities’ outlying regions in Camarilla domains or join the ranks of the Sabbat’s various apocalyptic knightly orders. A few also become autarkis, choosing to make their own ways in the night, any princes’ wishes be damned.

As it stands, the predominance of Gangrel belong to the Camarilla, though clan interest, which has never tended toward the political, has been on the wane for the past few decades. The Gangrel initially joined the sect, if the oral history of the Kindred can be lent credence, with the same purposes as any of the other clans in its membership: safety in numbers. Over the years, though, the Gangrel have seen the sect turn from a protective organization into a cliquish entity that rewards only those who have the luck to inherit its good graces. The only thing truly keeping most Gangrel in the Camarilla at all is apathy at this point, though they still think its original purpose is a valuable one and eagerly aid the sect when it needs them.

In the Victorian era, Gangrel are divided not only by geography, but also by the paths they choose to take with their unives. Especially in Eastern Europe, many Gangrel forsake the trappings of mortal society altogether, becoming nigh unto beasts themselves and claiming terrible domains in lands far from mortal dwellings. This course is a dangerous one, as those Eastern European hinterlands often teem with agents of other vampires still clutching to outdated notions of aristocracy, to say nothing of the Lupines that consider the wilds their own demesnes. Other Gangrel have sided with the forces urbanizing the Empire, reasoning that the true predator must follow the prey, and if the mortal world chooses to ensconce itself in communities of brick and glass, who are they to argue? These latter Gangrel frequently come to resemble animals found in the streets and alleys of

cities, from rats to mongrel dogs to jackdaws, felines and more esoteric urban creatures in certain far-flung settlements.

In the unives of many Gangrel, the urge to settle comes and goes, with certain members of the clan creating havens and staying there for a while before ultimately moving on to wander the reaches of the world. Rare is the Gangrel who remains in the same domain for the entirety of her unlife — though it does happen, and woe be to any who would underestimate her, as she has certainly learned many secrets and cunning lessons over her many years. Among those most likely to remain in one place are those

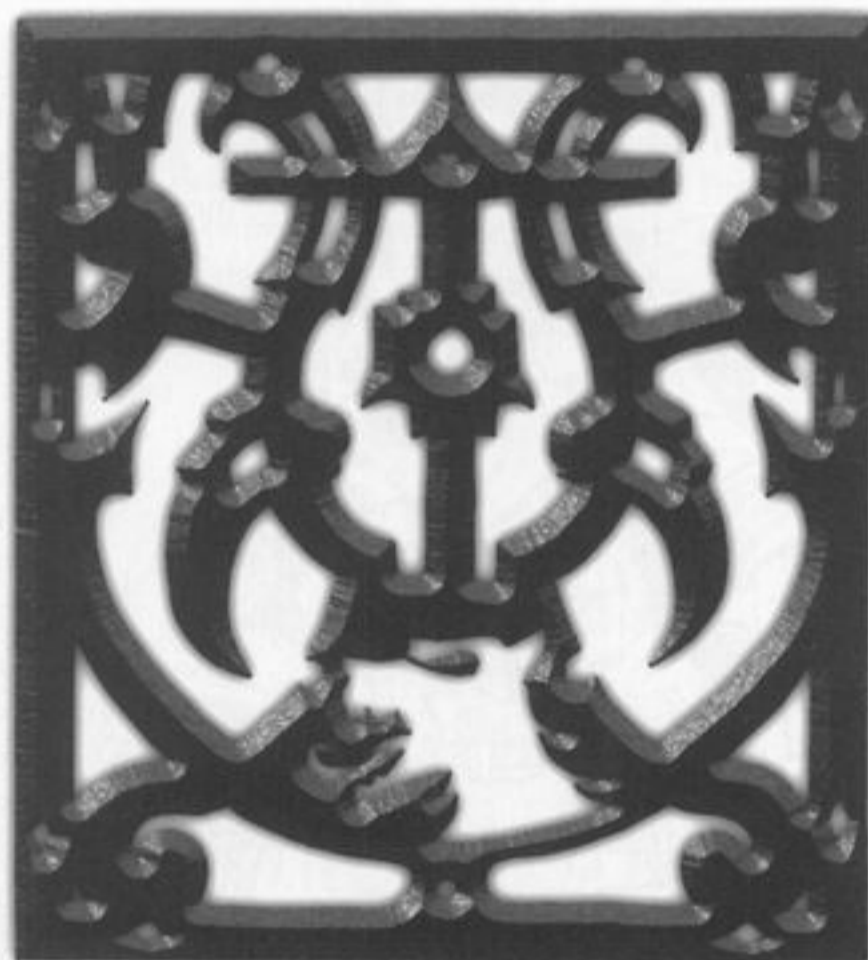
who acquire elder status or some other position of esteem among local Kindred. Although the Gangrel are loath to admit it, many do appreciate positions they have earned. This is as much out of practicality as anything else, though. After all, if the undead already recognize an Animal as the preeminent vampire of his ilk in a given domain, what’s to gain by going somewhere else and starting over?

Domain

The most common form of Gangrel domain is the hostile stretch of territory on the outskirts of town. As Gangrel

rarely care much for the political games of the other Kindred, they often find themselves relegated to the least desirable domains, though this arrangement suits them just fine. Let the other undead have their pomp and regalia in town. All a Gangrel needs is a swath of land populated by enough vessels to keep him vital.

In the Victorian era, what with its many Kindred being drawn to the cities and abandoning the less formal domains that sustained them in earlier nights, territory has become scarce. Gangrel domains occasionally overlap, and when they do, some primal relationship is sure to emerge. This sometimes takes the form of one Gangrel earning recognition as an “alpha,” preeminent among the city’s other Animals (and occasionally earning a place as the clan’s primogen, if they or the prince bother with the title). At other times, vicious rivalries ensue,



with Gangrel literally at each other's throats in areas where domain is scarce or the vessels within provide for only a subsistence unlife. Certain callous Kindred have even taken advantage of circumstances such as these, conspiring to keep the Gangrel feuding with each other rather than existing as a potential threat to their own plans.

Of all the Kindred, the Gangrel number among the most solitary, and pursuit of their own causes and upkeep of their own domains give many Gangrel purpose. In these Gothic nights, it is not uncommon to find a Gangrel has claimed an enormous domain and that he polices it with vigor. Especially in the barbarous lands outside the Empire, this may be responsible for dread stories of bloodthirsty monsters prowling the wood. Entire communities have been terrified by a single potent Cainite and shut their doors against the threat the moment the sun falls behind the horizon. Other Gangrel oppose the growth of cities during the Victorian era and lurk just outside their environs, harrying a prince's ability to protect his domain and causing other local Kindred significant grief. In the minds of these Gangrel, natural law never ceased to exist, and the issue of domain is truly one of hunting rights that belong to the most able predator.

The Gangrel Embrace also dictates certain domain behavior at times. While most Animals Embrace progeny and abandon them to survive on their own soon after, certain Gangrel have a more pronounced pack instinct. While not as inclined to build broods as the Brujah, some Gangrel do Embrace a childe and then haunt a domain with that childe. This behavior is especially common in the barbarous lands of Eastern Europe, where domains are still broad enough and vessels still properly terrified that such a thing can occur, but certain very urbanized Animals in the Empire have also taken to the practice. When Gangrel do undertake this sort of unlife, they often become very territorial, visiting upon any unwelcome guests a hostility usually reserved for the bitterest of enemies — which such Gangrel consider trespassers to be.

Individual havens in these domains take many forms, from pale echoes of the residences the Gangrel maintained during their mortal lives to little more than muddy holes, where exceptionally feral Animals can bed down for the day and avoid the sun. Caves and caverns remain popular in undeveloped domains; urban domains range from abandoned houses and secluded factories to sewers shared with Nosferatu and even artificially constructed dens built beneath docks or on the underside of bridges.



The presence of the Gangrel varies widely by region. As bestial forces of nature and monsters of legend, they prowl the "Land Beyond the Forest," Transylvania, and other territories of Eastern Europe. Many maintain domains in isolated regions of Italy, in Irish and Scottish mires and even among the Basque foothills of Spain in Catalonia and Aquitaine. Without a doubt, Gangrel thrive in Scandinavia, where their own history ties inextricably to the lore of the region. The Gangrel may even be numerically superior to any other clan in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and Finland, if counted, but given the Gangrel penchant for wanderlust and their common refusal to participate in organized Kindred activities, such a census would be impossible to take.

Interests

As a whole, the Gangrel are far too disparate to have common objectives. Where one Gangrel might prefer rolling plains and thick wood, another is equally as comfortable amid narrow alleys and tall townhomes.

More than anything else, most Gangrel prefer autonomy and go to whatever lengths they must to establish

the sovereignty of their hunting grounds. While they rarely do this to the exclusion of whatever sect has their allegiance, it has occurred in the past, and it is suspected that the anarchs and autarkis both have a greater number of Gangrel than vampires of any other clan.

Despite this inclination for autonomy, many Gangrel actually enjoy tying their fates to the success of the Camarilla. Although true respect comes their way only grudgingly, many Gangrel make names for themselves serving princes as hounds, scourges, sheriffs and other enforcers of the Ivory Tower's will. This is rarely out of any desire to see the sect's interests advanced — as mentioned before, Gangrel tend toward the apolitical and apathetic — but more out of a desire to earn some comfort for themselves without attracting the wrath of the established powers that be. For some Gangrel, this is pragmatism, as they know their own disorganization couldn't hope to stand up in the face of the Camarilla as an institution. For other Gangrel, support of the Camarilla is simply the path of least resistance and offers the most to gain.

It's the law of the wild, the survival of the fittest. But just to keep things interesting, I'll give you a head start.
— Endymion, Gangrel analla



MALKAVIAN

The nights of the Victorian era represent a halcyon period for the mad Kindred of Clan Malkavian. Although too fractious as a clan to present a unified face of strength against other Kindred, individual Malkavians have certainly come into their own across the Empire and even somewhat in the untamed wilds beyond. The Malkavians themselves rarely acknowledge the phenomenon, either thrilling to their own new-found influence or carrying on as inscrutably as they ever have with no seeming understanding of their prominence.

Keen observers of the era attribute the rise in Malkavian influence to the fact that their métier corresponds to the Zeitgeist of the Empire. The Malkavians are the nexus point of rationality (though not sanity) and mysticism. For every Lunatic Embraced under the enlightening glare of Freud's new science, so, too, does a marauding prophet lurk in the darkness with an occult mien of more superstitious times. In the Victorian era, Malkavians are as iconic as the imperious Ventrue or the anachronistic Tzimisce — they populate the crossroads of mysticism and scientific thought.

Such bold statements, though, give the Malkavians far more credit than

they deserve as a clan. The entirety of the bloodline rarely acts in congress, and the heightened prestige the Malkavians enjoy comes as a result of the ideals of the time only when compared with the achievements of the Malkavian in question. Indeed, Malkavian

esteem comes as an external commodity, the product of an era that has just begun to see insanity as a codifiable illness rather than a curse of divine powers. At the same time, such madness is "in vogue" among the popular entertainments of the time, what with Gothic fiction exploiting insanity and lurid tales of the street suggesting less-than-healthy criminals.

Overview

As ever, the Malkavians of the Victorian era remain fractious and motivated by their own unknowable stimuli. In spite of this, however, the Malkavians have risen to a position of heretofore unattainable prominence. Little of this comes as a result of the Malkavians themselves — most members of the clan don't subscribe to the same sets of cultural or social mores that other clans hold in regard and act largely in accordance to what their own fractured minds deem appropriate. Rather,



Kindred society watches the Malkavians with a newfound fascination during the Victorian period. Just as mortal society has culturally subscribed to the idea that insanity is more than mere aberration, so, too, have the Kindred, and it is with a morbid curiosity that many vampires now watch the Lunatics. Perhaps Kindred society simply misunderstood the Malkavians all along; perhaps the Lunatics represent a — what was Mr. Darwin's word? Evolutionary? — step in the direction of how the Race of Caine interacts with the world.

Then again, perhaps the Malkavians are simply twisted products of these turbulent times, and the modern "understanding" of them is little more than sympathy for the Devil's own. The Victorian period has given rise to more than a few horrific abominations. Phenomenon such as Jack the Ripper lead the Kindred to believe that any change can have significant consequences. Not all change is for the best, for example, and the Malkavians are just as likely to present problems as they are to yield insight.

The individual is the true measure of this mark — an uncommon opinion to bear during the Victorian era, but the Kindred have never been common.

Regardless of the truth of the matter (if such exists), other Kindred give the Malkavians a wide berth during the period, interested in seeing what effect the afflicted vampires might have upon the world. Whispers of more than a few nascent Malkavian politicians have circulated through the Empire, citing influential elders of the clan, capable archons and even princes. Indeed, Malkavians seem to have a greater stake in the world than they have at any point previously. They are luminaries of the Camarilla, leaders of the Sabbat, patrons of the arts, scholars of the arcane, finders of mysteries and keepers of lore perhaps best left unknown. Malkavians lead coterie with the blessings of the Ivory Tower, earning great status by supporting the sect. They revel wildly in the barbarous lands, jumping fires and enacting blasphemous rights. During the Victorian era, it would seem, the only limits to the Lunatics' potential are the depths of their own depravities.

Domain

A wide and varied lot, Malkavians remain typically difficult to classify when it comes to the matter of domain. While they tend to be less feral than the Gangrel and less wander-prone than the Ravnos, some Malkavians prefer keeping domains relatively distant from other Kindred. In certain cases, this comes as a result of simple competition, as the Lunatic is less likely to have to defend a domain far from the city's prestigious territories. In other cases, the Malkavian becomes enamored of or intrigued by some feature within the domain. The French Malkavian Henri d'Invilliers, for example, has claimed only the Phoenix Rookery as his domain, and he feeds exclusively on the impoverished folk who dwell there.

Given the epochal rise of Malkavian status during the Victorian era, progressive princes have granted many Lunatics their own territories by way of concessions, appeasement or even enticement to alliance, as with many of the rising political stars of the clan. Often, these are lackluster domains given a veneer of polish or inflated artificially in esteem by a prince's entourage, but the mere fact that recognized domain has come into Malkavian possession is a significant step in its own right.

Malkavian power waxes and wanes almost as randomly as the Lunatics' sanity. On any given night a Malkavian may have vast influence in a region, or she may be pathetically impotent. Even when a Malkavian may claim right to significant domain, whether or not she remembers it is another story. Indeed, tales of Malkavians who were once prominent in a given area and have simply been lost to the mists of time run rampant during the period and may have been the sources of inspiration for many a Gothic tale of madness.

Certain lands have traditionally been the domains of Malkavians for as long as any Kindred can remember. Malkavians always seem to come up when discussion turns to Rome, even though the Nosferatu lay a more reliable claim to that city, at least in so far as any Kindred can be said to have influence there. Perhaps this is a lingering effect of the Malkavians' considerable power during the era of the Roman Empire. Malkavians also

Powers of the Mind Made Manifest

Note that the Victorian era precedes the "grand prank" of the Malkavians that occurred in the late 20th century. For chronicles of **Victorian Age: Vampire**, Camarilla Malkavians possess the Disciplines of Auspex, Dominate and Obfuscate, while Malkavian members of the Sabbat practice Auspex, Dementation and Obfuscate.

enjoy significant power in the Benelux area, as well as in occasional isolated pockets of Italy.

Even in these areas of reputed strength, Malkavian prominence varies by the efforts of the individual Lunatics themselves. Much as they often forget the areas of their granted domains, they occasionally forget their influence as well. Malkavians, while numerous in London for example, wield a disproportionately small amount of actual political clout, given that they are too fractious and too concerned with their own agendas — whatever those may be — to truly present an organized front.

Some Malkavians possess ties to fallen aristocratic families, eking out squalid unives in dilapidated mansions or crumbling ancestral estates. Others steal away, hiding themselves in religious communities, filthy districts of town, sequestered suburban areas and other territories largely undesirable to most Kindred. As is the case with most of the Lunatics' decisions, the choice of their domains is as intensely personal as their madness.

Interests

As mentioned above, more than ever, Malkavians have plunged themselves into Kindred politics and, where they find an in, even mortal politics. Kindred thrilling to the fin de siècle at the close of the 19th century look to Malkavians as oracles of the end of the world, giving the Lunatics an odd degree of status and influence where before others considered them oddities and suffering wretches. The Malkavians themselves — at least those finding themselves embroiled in politics — have jumped into it wholeheartedly. Fortunately (in the opinions of their detractors), the clan remains too splintered to have any universal "Malkavian effect" that has swayed Camarilla policy one way or the other. While common, Malkavian influence remains a localized, isolated phenomenon. Individual Malkavians may wield unprecedented power among councils of primogen, speak with the prince's authority as seneschal, turn their keen insights to the purpose of sheriff or even claim domains as princes themselves.

Not every Malkavian partakes in the political pagentry of their fellows, however. The slow growth of organized "health care" has its fair share of Malkavian patrons as well, from alienists and patients of the various asylums to night staff at sanatoriums to private doctors on retainer to wealthy families. Flash houses and strongholds of the underworld equally appeal to Malkavians, and more than a few prominent criminal figures have the cursed blood of the insane in their veins.

Although Malkavians are often relegated to less distinguished social strata, the strange egalitarian incli-



nations exhibited by some Kindred of the era have allowed for the Lunatics to truly earn the esteem of their undead peers. Even if they eschew the high politics of princes and their entourages, some Malkavians cultivate power amid the halls of mortal politics. Whispers of mad generals, debased monks, fractured aristocrats and sadistic doctors may all have Malkavians behind them or at their core, assuming that they're not the products of the laudanum-addled minds of the era's poets. Still, Malkavian depravities can hardly be blamed for every aspect — or even most aspects — of the Victorian era. Although they are mad, most Malkavians understand the value of discretion. Their ranks include the most avid supporters of the Camarilla, from neonates to elders, and even their diseased minds know the importance of remaining hidden from the eyes of living men. For this reason, many of the Lunatics choose to uphold the Ivory Tower even if they don't believe in the sects' larger politics. These Malkavians may not possess any title in the Camarilla, though they will vociferously espouse the virtues of the sect, perhaps avoiding the mention of the



Ivory Tower by name if their personal tastes diverge from it.

The Victorian era constitutes a period of significant change, and some Malkavians tie themselves to the breakthroughs that occur almost nightly. The change from gaslight to electricity might have

been a Malkavian's rant only a score of years ago, while the advances in science and medicine that take place with alarming (to the staid Kindred, at least) speed tonight might have been sheerest delusion in last quarter's collegiate journals. While they are rarely at the forefront of such developments, the Lunatics thrill to them, for they represent the ultimate realization of the mind's potential. To wit, they are manifestations of the mind made real, and what Malkavian wouldn't want to bring forth the stuff of her fevered thoughts to visit upon the world, just to see what happens? From the most chaotic maniac to the overly intellectual scholar, the triumph of reason that characterizes the Victorian era, coupled with the boundless mysticism that colors it, is the ultimate in self-actualization for the Malkavians.

Only a little further - my home is just around the corner. I have laudanum; I have absinthe. I have opium. We can pass the time in splendid bliss until the razor needs to feed. Oh, don't mind what I say; I'm just carried away by your beauty. Your beauty and my thirst.

- Frances Gibson Copplewhite, The Butcher of Leicestershire



Nosferatu

While the expanses of the Queen's empire might include some of the most glorious sights ever to grace mortal eyes, they also harbor some of the most hideous things ever to skulk away from them. Beneath the streets, lurking below the docks, hidden in shadows and behind the soaring Gothic spires of churches scuttle the loathsome Nosferatu. This is an era of haves and have-nots, and the Sewer Rats certainly embody the plight of those latter. Resigned to their own filthy domains and looked down upon by practically every other Kindred, the fate of the Nosferatu is largely the same as it has been since time immemorial.

Nosferatu have never been Kindred to shy away from what destiny has dealt them, though, and the Victorian era finds them as hardy as ever they have been. They remain the unparalleled masters of hiding from eyes they would prefer not see them, and this ability allows them to harvest information as well, veiled as they are from less acute senses. When one wants information, one consults the Sewer Rats — and everyone knows it.

Less widely known, however, is the potential for unbored humanity that some Nosferatu possess. It would seem that the Curse of Caine that disfigures them

physically also has a tendency to foster a sympathy rarely found in others of the Kindred. Not that this is always the case — a trespasser pleading mercy in a territorial Sewer Rat's domain and hoping to scamper away unscathed may well find himself the worse for the wear, if not meeting Final Death itself.

Overview

The Nosferatu have plied their information-brokering trade for as long as any Kindred can remember, and the Victorian era certainly doesn't change this oeuvre. In fact, the technological progress of the times has given the Sewer Rats more and more opportunities to exchange their hoary tidbits of information. The telegraph makes communication between Nosferatu warrens extremely expedient, the railways allow Sewer Rat colleagues to visit each other with less worry during travels through the wilderness, and the rampant occultism of the time even allows those rare few Nosferatu sorcerers to exchange wisdom through more arcane means.

There's more to the Nosferatu than simply spies, however. Many of the icons of the era, such as sprawling slums and decrepit mansions, also play host to the attentions of the Nosferatu. What the Sewer Rats lack in beauty, they make up for in versatility, adapting to the



challenges and changes of the times with an almost un-Kindred-like speed. While many of the undead remain locked in the stasis of their Damned states, the Nosferatu react swiftly to changes in the world around them. While it may suit the Ventrue and the Toreador to caper about, thrilling to the long-lost legacies of their ancestors in nights gone by, the Sewer Rats know that to be a part of a world that moves inexorably forward, one must not allow oneself to become an anachronism.

Masters of the animal world second only to the Gangrel, Nosferatu typically exhibit command over the cities' creatures. Nosferatu rarely style themselves as the lords of domains in the wild. Rather, their bestial minions number among the vermin and other repugnant species of the communities of mortals. While a Gangrel might fashion himself as a lord of the wolves, a Nosferatu may proclaim herself the queen of flies or the mistress of rats; the difference is often lost on Kindred of more dignified means, but the distinction means a great deal to those who immerse themselves in the squalor of the cities.

While the Brujah have passions and causes, the Nosferatu tend to have interests, and the only thing that distinguishes the two is the degree of emotional investment the Kindred places in it. Nosferatu favor hobbies, areas of study, schools of thought; their purposes tend toward the practical and even the temporal or secular. To some degree, this reflects their nature—they seek information, after all, or perhaps an outward vehicle that would allow them to avoid introspection. Still, Nosferatu number among the wisest of the Kindred (at least, those who don't buy into the Victorian world's revilement of them) in many cases and among the most knowledgeable in others.

Domain

Often left to fend for scraps, with metaphorical regard to the issue of domain, most Nosferatu take a twisted delight in choosing the most horrific settings for domains and havens they can find. Naturally, their sobriquet belies some of their tastes in this concern, with many resigning themselves to havens beneath the streets, but by no means does every Sewer Rat make the muck of the sanitation system his kingdom. Some choose far-flung locales such as abandoned churches or the forgotten

homes of vanished families as their residences, the better to isolate themselves from the scorn of their Kindred peers. Others favor the filth and bustle of the cities, nesting in rookeries, amid red-light districts, beneath the docks of the shipping lanes and within those sections of town best left undisturbed by honest folk. Still others abstract the isolation of their twisted bodies by withdrawing from the world in other senses, joining the scholastic monks of active monasteries or playing leper-patron to rural nobles still attached to their titled lands.

More than any other clan, the Nosferatu adapt the nature of the solitary predator to the burgeoning world of cities. Whereas the Brujah may form broods descended from a single sire, entire warrens of Nosferatu have formed beneath the streets of cities, composed of whatever wretched Sewer Rats choose to abide there and don't rouse the ire of their fellows too much. Perhaps misery loves company, or perhaps Nosferatu mentality fosters an "us-versus-them" outlook. Whatever the case, the Sewer Rats are the Kindred most likely to be found cohabiting in a single domain or observing certain "overlaps" of territory that apply only to them.



Various lands seem to conjure connotations of Nosferatu prominence, but the relative dearth of Sewer Rat princes and other political luminaries implies that, even in seats of Nosferatu power, that power stems from something outside the traditional channels of Camarilla esteem. Rome, for example, is rumored to host a huge number of Sewer Rats, perhaps enough to qualify as a "kingdom," to use the Nosferatu's parlance, but the strength of faith that conspires to keep vampires in their place at such a holy city certainly suggests that the Nosferatu situation there is unique. Elsewhere, great and terrible Nosferatu make domains where they may lurk unchallenged as monsters in the night, while the mortals around them move quietly for fear of rousing the Beast that walks among them. While domains such as this are most frequent in the barbarous lands, regions of the Empire somewhat removed from the larger intrigues of the Camarilla also host such rustic horrors.

In civilized cities, one Nosferatu is almost always recognized as preeminent among his fellows. The disparity between Sewer Rats colors their relationships — the eldest among them typically commands the most respect and likely holds the title of primogen if the prince acknowledges Nosferatu in the position. Beneath her (to preserve the sense of loose hierarchy the Sewer Rats almost incongruously observe), a scattered few ancillae may vie for whatever cast-off influences remain, while the neonates settle for cackling and hissing at each other and other Kindred over the meager scraps even the ancillae can't be bothered with. Indeed, this may be the cause of the nesting phenomenon among Nosferatu: Why bother claiming one particular sewer for one's own when the lot of the downtrodden can unite together (at least to the eyes of others) and make their mutual claim greater than the sum of its parts?

Interests

Nosferatu take their influences and their interests where they can, which is often, resentfully, where other Kindred allow them. While it is not unheard of for a Nosferatu to establish herself as a patron of the arts, a fellow at a school (through proxies, of course) or an advisor to an aristocrat, such are exceptions rather than the rule. More often, Nosferatu find themselves resigned to the ranks of the underworld or the masses of the destitute. Nosferatu pimps and madams ply the harlots' houses; Fagins send their scuttling urchins to rob from fellow poor. Low-level crime bosses fence stolen goods on the street or use their powers of obfuscation to sneak into homes and museums to steal items themselves.

Rare is the Nosferatu who overcomes the blight inflicted on him by the Embrace. The Victorian world is



too caught up in the value of appearance to even consider that something seeming so fiendish as a Nosferatu might not be the hellish horror it appears to be. In light of this, the Sewer Rats tend to make a choice early on in their unlives and color their post-Embrace personalities with that choice thereafter.

Some Nosferatu take the Victorian mindset to heart, becoming embodiments of the blackest evils they so visibly represent. These Nosferatu are true horrors, inflicting pain and misery for the vicarious thrill it gives them and cackling whenever new fiendishness comes their way. These Sewer Rats are usually the bullies and terrors of their nests, victimizing even other Nosferatu when a lack of other targets presents itself. Thankfully, these Nosferatu rarely accumulate influence of any standing value or length and are soon undone by the weight of their own wickedness. Ultimately, they destroy themselves or force others to bring them down. For if they haven't fallen to the Beast soon after deciding to become such malicious creatures, well, few of their fellow Nosferatu have any qualms about convincing other Kindred that it's only a matter of time until they do and that it's in everyone's best interests to get rid of them now.

Other Nosferatu slide toward the other end of the spectrum. Among these Sewer Rats are those gentle

hermits who uphold nigh-impossible codes of morality to deny their bestial natures, the "noble savages" of barbaric lands or those who would simply prove the prevailing Victorian morality of smug self-satisfaction wrong. Some of these Nosferatu are described even by other Kindred as veritable saints. The truth of this remains debatable, of course (for what saint subsists on the blood of others?), but the wisdom and strength of will these Nosferatu demonstrate testifies to the frailty of Victorian judgment — at least with regard to character. These Sewer Rats likewise rarely forge any influence of great value, but this is more out of a lack of contact than an apostate's desire to ruin the world so that it mirrors his own ugly visage.

Most Nosferatu fall somewhere in between the extremes of the spectrum, occasionally succumbing to the wiles of the Beast, but generally recognizing the value of the Man within himself as well. Still, the world conspires against them because of their ugliness, and their interests tend to lie where the Nosferatu may reasonably accumulate them — among the lower echelons of the police, the festering underbelly of society, those who place themselves above or beside temporal concerns (such as with those who join monastic orders or throw themselves into the study of sciences) or even outside the social model altogether, going autarkis with the desire to lead their own unlives as they see fit.

The Diamond Jubilee? Don't be absurd. We don't see diamonds down here, you bastards. We see the muck that you don't want, the filth that you pour down your drains and the runoff that you leave behind because you can't be bothered to clean up after yourselves. You're wasteful, proud and foolish, and you have the gall to look down your noses at us? One night that will change... and until then, we'll get back by whatever individual means we can.

— Des Coates, Parisian expatriate from the domain of Francois Villon



Toreador

The Clan of the Rose has long associated itself with wealth, comfort and the outward trappings of affluence. Few find it surprising, then, that the Toreador thrive during the nights of the Victorian era. Whether attending an aristocratic soiree or scheming against their fellow Kindred, the Degenerates likely enjoyed the greatest comfort of any clan during the period. As shepherds of mortals — in their minds at least — the grandeur of the era comes largely thanks to them.

In truth, the Toreador have made their way much as they always have. While the term “shepherd” may have some ring of truth to it, the Toreador are simply the most adept at following mortal trends, though they rarely found them. While Toreador patronage may certainly lend credence to a fashion or cultural movement, particularly in the case of extremely influential Degenerates, these trends originate with the mortals themselves. As parasites, the Kindred merely follow what they see, and the Toreador are most capable at this. While others among the undead watch the shifting tides of the mortal world, whether they admit it or not, the Degenerates usually have the most input as to which mortal patterns the Kindred will follow.



In most cases, the Toreador draw attention to this fact only when necessary — as veterans of the Jyhad, subtlety works in their favor — and though they may preen and posture, this comes largely as a desire to have others see them as ineffectual. Those looking past the façade of Kindred affairs understand the true power the Toreador wield. The Degenerates can make or break a vampire's social fate by casting her behavior in an unfavorable light or by shifting the Kindred's acceptance of trends she follows; in a society as tied to the approval of others as that of the Victorian era, those who can manipulate popular opinion possess far more influence than the unwise suspect.

Overview

As liaisons between the world of the living and the world of the undead, the Toreador truck with individual mortals in greater frequency than any other clan. While other Kindred may associate with the kine here and there, traffic with mortals is the Toreador's stock in trade. They associate themselves with groups and individuals; they watch the course of mortal opinion and tie themselves to it in order that they may have “the will of the world in our favor,” according to one esteemed member of the clan.

The Toreador's close connections to the mortal world lead many Kindred to dismiss them as dilettantes and sybarites, though this is true only with regard to the most

effete Kindred of the clan. Indeed, the Toreador may be the most adept of Kindred at passing for mortal, so closely do they keep the whims of the living to their undead hearts, and when one wants to be taken for something other than a monster, passing for mortal is a capital way to do it. Though hiding one's true nature may prove distasteful to some Kindred, particularly among haughty undead and fervent Sabbat, the Toreador have become masters of enacting their wills through influence and gesture rather than blood and fire.

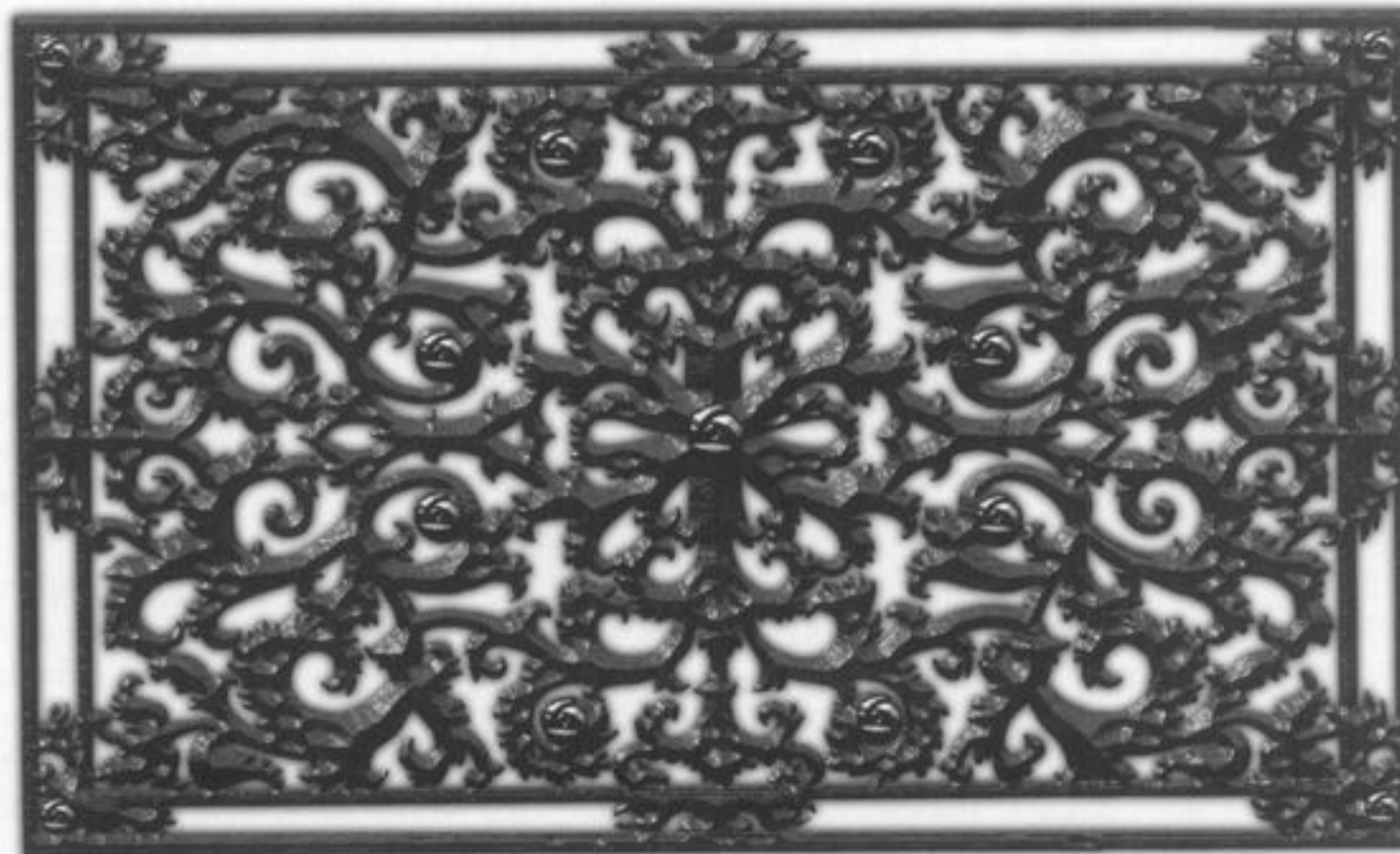
Other vampires tend to form narrow stereotypes with regard to the Toreador — they ignore them as dandy fops, navel-gazing fools or debased bourgeoisie. For their part, the Toreador simply nod and smile, knowing that an underestimated foe is a Kindred with the upper hand. Let Kindred vanity lead these other vampires astray — a look at the history of the Damned brings the truth to light and shows the strength of the Toreador both individually and as a clan. The Camarilla itself arose largely as a result of Toreador influence; the prince of one of the most important cities in the world, Paris, belongs to Clan Toreador. While the Ventrue may lead, their duties would become tremendously more difficult without the support of the Degenerates: Power belongs to those who can sway public opinion enough to support their own desires.

The Toreador practice of the Embrace varies between a weakness and a strength. Many of the Degenerates choose childer foolishly, Embracing mortals to whom they find themselves passionately attracted. These dalliances rarely result in Kindred who make much of themselves; passion is fleeting, and the turgid romances

so endemic to the Victorian era have given rise to many, many poorly Embraced Toreador. On the other hand, Toreador passion also populates their ranks with a diversity not often seen among other clans. A Toreador may fall (briefly) in love with someone he might not consider for Embrace and then bring that individual into the world of the Kindred in spite of himself. Thus, what might seem to be a passionate mistake instead broadens the horizons of both that Kindred and the Toreador as a whole. Certainly, the Toreador constitute one of the most cosmopolitan clans, once the savvy observer learns to see past the carefully cultivated stereotypes of art patrons and anachronistic aristocrats. This is not to say that every Toreador childer comes about as a result of ill-considered infatuation, but merely that it occurs enough to raise the eyebrows of certain observant Kindred. Some relationships between childer and sires flourish for decades or even centuries; these are the stuff of Toreador legend and Gothic veneration.

Domain

As one of the most powerful and prominent clans, the Toreador have little shame in claiming the most prestigious domains of a city for their own. They vie with one another and the Ventrue (and the scattered handful of other Kindred capable of "keeping up with" them) for prime territories; one can determine a Toreador's esteem by considering the size and importance of her domain. For example, a quiet elder with numerous estates both inside and outside a city as well as rights to a prince's favored hunting grounds likely wields more influence than a boisterous primogen whose own domain consists



of little more than the neighborhood in which he keeps his primary haven. A word from the primogen carries only the weight others afford it, while the more prominent (if subtler) elder speaks with the obvious benefit of successful experience.

Taken at more than face value, this concept betrays how closely status ties to the concept of domain for the Toreador. This often proves frustrating to neonates and challenged ancillae, whose elders have already snatched up what seems to be all of the key domains for themselves. At this point, however, the noteworthy Toreador aptitude for monitoring the mortal world comes into play — an elder may have lobbied for her private museum to be declared Elysium (and quite a coup that was, to be fair!), but the neonate is more likely to hear the “word on the street” about a new theater to which mortal patrons have been flocking in droves. If that neonate can petition the prince to acknowledge him as having domain there, the concomitant status it enjoys among the mortals of the city translates nicely into the accolades of the Damned, and that neonate is well on his way toward establishing himself.

Rare are the Toreador who share domains, especially along the lines of the Embrace. In the opinions of most sires, once a childe has learned the ways of the Damned, she is better off on her own — lingering in the sire’s domain only makes her a burden (and, ostensibly, competition for already limited resources), while striking out on her own and making a name for herself reflects positively on the esteem of the sire. Although only the bitterest or most callous sire casts childe out without allowing them to cotton to the customs of the Kindred, the Degenerates typically favor encouraging their childe to “fly on their own.”

Toreador strength lies scattered across the Empire, with several bastions of power eclipsing other cities near them in greatness. Paris, for example — to whom else could it belong other than the Toreador? Many other parts of France also count among the domains of the Toreador, though none outshine Paris itself. In Spain, where the influence of the vicious Lasombra wanes, the Toreador wax. Italy, too, hosts several strong Toreador territories, which themselves stand against the depredations of the Sabbat. Edinburgh plays a Toreador counterpoint to Ventrue London, and though England has historically surpassed Scotland’s importance in the global theater, few would argue the strength or importance of that Toreador fief.



Interests

Those outside the clan would call them selfish, greedy or even avaricious, but the Toreador know jealousy when they hear it. Indeed, the Toreador observe interests not unlike those of the Empire itself — betterment of their own positions is merely one of the perks of bringing culture and civilization to the rest of the world and the Kindred within it.

The Toreador play at politics virtually without peer among any Kindred other than the Ventrue. Many princes hail from this clan, as do the vast majority of harpies and other offices of predominantly social importance. The Degenerates are among the most numerous advocates of Elysium and often push for the expansion of sites protected by that distinction. Only the smallest city (or perhaps a city without a significant Toreador population) claims no Toreador primogen, and some cities host more than one.

Outside of politics, society remains the life's blood of Clan Toreador, and Degenerates can be found at the apex of every strata of society. From the nobles, ambassadors, aristocrats and advisors at the top of society's heap to the influential clergy, leaders of the burgeoning middle class and respected specialists of the center to the crime bosses, con men and rabble-rousers of society's dregs, Toreador move with ample grace to the forefront of their classes. In this, they play a dangerous game, for they must cultivate enough influence to compete against their fellows in matters of clan status and Kindred-wide Jyhad while simultaneously keeping their vampiric natures hidden from those whose company they keep.

Although by no means a defining characteristic of the clan, many Toreador — even a majority, perhaps — have some influence in the arts. In most cases, this influence comes as a result of the Degenerates' dabbling in social trends, but in many cases, the individual Torea-

dor practices some art of his own. More so than in any era past (as so many Toreador prior to the Victorian era were more artisans than artists), with the possible exception of the Renaissance, the Gothic period allows the lingering sparks of creativity to flicker in Toreador hearts. It is no coincidence that such Toreador participation in the firsthand creation of art (in whatever form, poetry, literature, graphic art or what have you) rises during the period that encourages it.

In no small part, Toreador interest mimics the social trends of mortals at any given time. Many among the Degenerates find fascination in the new directions of medicine and psychology, and more than a few occult charlatans have been debunked or propped up by Toreador with something to gain from their fall or success. Although many of the Degenerates find mortal politics to be either boring or distracting (as who has time for mortal politics when the Damned play at them so much more adeptly), few would argue that the politicians themselves wield significant influence and that bringing that influence to bear for one's own purposes has its value. Along the same lines, some Toreador work with social movements and institutions, such as the Fabians (and their Sabbat counterpart among the Toreador *antitribu*), the Church, Marxist cells forming in Germany and the supporters of evolutionary theory, rather than individuals key to those movements. Instead of bringing one of the movement's leaders under their sway, these Toreador become respected figures in those organizations (though rarely leaders themselves, as they have a propensity for becoming Kindred very visible to the wrong types of attention) and pull their strings, at least on local levels. Again, as the Toreador are perhaps of all Kindred the best at following mortal trends, so, too, do they recognize the importance of remaining out of the sight of the wrong people.

Splendor and opulence are nothing without the sophistication to appreciate them; comfort begets greater comfort. With enough comfort, one can offer her enemies some of it, giving them a gilded leash that blinds them with envy even as it binds them to her.

— Lady Besse Dancourt, Prince of Edinburgh

Tremere

Who would have guessed, over eight centuries ago, that the Witches would survive their tumultuous transition into the world of the Damned and stave off the hostilities of clans millennia their betters, only to rise to a position of prominence by the late 19th century and excel, unequalled, as practitioners of their on unique brand of undead power? The road for the Tremere has been long and hard, but by focusing themselves in a manner the other damnable Kindred have been unable to do since their Biblical (pah!) inception, the Tremere have cast any doubts as to their ability aside.

The Victorian era seems custom-tailored toward the purposes of the Tremere. With its enthusiasm for the occult — even to the extent of recognizing secret societies dedicated to such purposes — and the interest of the laity in sorcerous secrets, the Witches enjoy a breadth of motion previously unheard of across the Empire and beyond. While before, the Inquisition suppressed participation in the occult under pain of

excommunication or death, the secular modern culture restricts the degree to which it allows the Inquisition to operate, which, in turn, relaxes the grip placed on the Tremere and allows them ever more freedom. Even those individuals with spiritual interests don't necessarily tie them to Rome any longer, and hand in hand with this newfound spiritual mysticism goes even more latitude to the Tremere.

As a result, a sort of hubris has overcome the Witches.

One would think, to hear a few of their number talk, that they aren't vampires at all any longer, but have finally reached the chrysalis toward "immortality" they discovered and that originally dragged them into damnation. Indeed, Clan Tremere presents a very sociable face to the world during the Victorian era but not through any doing of their own. It is this last

that so many of them fail to realize — their current prominence rests not on the careful reinvention of self practiced by the Toreador or on the reliance on conservatism of the Ventrue. Rather, the exaltation the Tremere currently experience relies



on little more than coincidence. Is it any wonder, then, that at the close of the Victorian era, with all its occult sympathies, that the Tremere will find themselves marginalized once again? The true question, however, is what will the Witches have gleaned from the experience?

Overview

The *métier* of the Tremere has always been one of self-conceptualization, the understanding of which as a result of the birth of psychology aligns with the meteoric rise of the clan during the period. The Tremere have always perceived themselves as sorcerers first and Kindred second — a fact that may be largely to blame for the mistrust other Kindred place in them. Now, however, the sympathies of the world give them this latitude, and as their temporal power rises, few Tremere see the resentment their philosophy has engendered in others of the Race of Caine. Even those who do recognize it dismiss it, waving it off as the jealousy of lesser mystic creatures.

Hauteur, then, characterizes the Tremere in the Victorian era as much as their magic does. True, the practice of magic has made them valuable allies, finally cementing their status as one of the new hegemony of political clans (the other two being the Toreador and Ventrue, at least among the Camarilla). Those allies, though, will be quick to turn their knives to the Tremere's backs once sentiment for the occult wanes. Whether or not the Tremere understand this remains in doubt, as they revel in their newfound prominence with all the grace one might expect of insular, asocial, bookish types unknowingly cast into the light of popular favor.

This is not to say the Tremere are boorish. Rather, with their haughtiness comes wariness, and the Witches' pragmatic natures keep them from becoming unbear-

able. As such, many have taken to the politics of the night with renewed fervor, hoping to extend for as long as possible what they believe to be a temporary situation. Alliances of the clans, support of local princes, exchanging blood magic for boons — all of these have become the *modus operandi* of Clan Tremere.

Old habits prove remarkably resilient, however, and the more experienced members of the clan have demonstrated a marked resistance to embrace the glory the age affords them. To these annuated Kindred, this mortal dalliance with the occult shall pass, and by never indulging themselves in the excesses it permits them, they will never find themselves pining for splendors lost. While

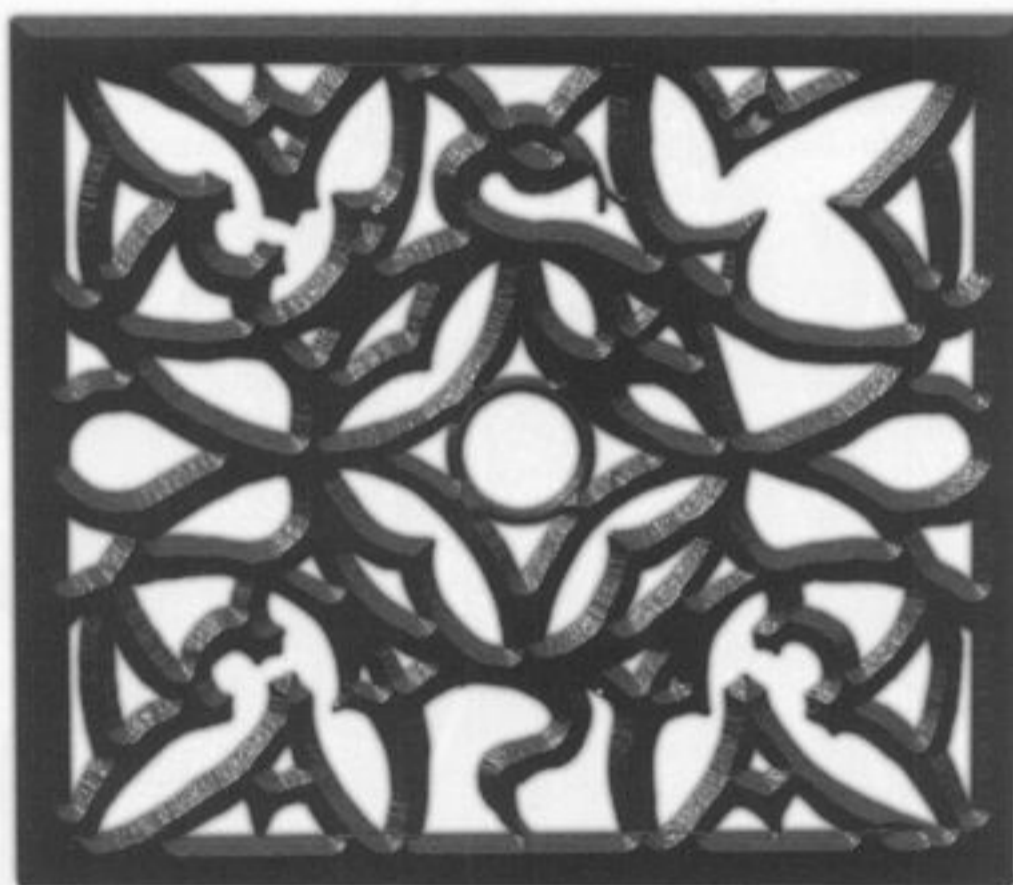
this hasn't developed into a full-formed schism within the clan (and within a 20-year period, how could it have, to creatures for whom a year passes in a moment?), it does cast the outlooks of elders and neonates into stark contrast.

The Tremere Embrace remains as rigorous as it has ever been, with sires choosing potential childer based upon what degree of utility they might bring the clan. In most

cases, this translates as skill in the art of sorcery or academic capacity, but in other cases, the clan needs a few silver-tongued diplomats and socialites to allow them to maximize the potential afforded to them by the cultural *Zeitgeist*. Thus, it is not uncommon these nights to find a Tremere Embraced from the ranks of old-guard nobility or a well-connected merchant family — or even for the Tremere to Embrace a smuggler skilled in turning up forgotten artifacts and sneaking them past dubious authorities.

Domain

Most Kindred would be surprised to learn that the Tremere have always had territories that would seem to outstrip their relatively few numbers. However, many of



these lie in remote fastnesses or on the borders of civilized lands and the hoary expanses of the Sabbat's barbarous wilds. As a bulwark against the dreaded Tzimisce, the Tremere erected a chantry in the Transylvanian Alps centuries ago, though its name remains known to only a few tonight and its fate eludes even most of them. Other witch-houses, by their very nature, had to be secluded and protected from the fires of the Inquisition and lie in similar mountain expanses or deep in the reaches of swamps, woods or even in the catacombs beneath cities. Even the headquarters of the clan itself, in Vienna, lies perilously close to Sabbat territory.

The Tremere of Durham have formed a potent political entity, as have those London Tremere allowed to gain status in the area during the previous torpor of that city's Prince Mithras. The Tremere also have numerous domains in the Germany and Austria, with somewhat less prevalence in the western portions of Eastern Europe unclaimed by the Sword of Caine and in Italy.

Truly, Tremere chantries lie in almost every major population center of the Empire and beyond, some with only one member, but all of them duly devoted (insofar as a vampire's allegiances ever are) to the clan's pyramidal structure. Interests have even followed the British colonizations of India and points further East, as well as into the more accessible regions of Africa.

For the most part, Tremere have never been Kindred who pursued individual domains, preferring to establish hunting grounds so that their members might hunt with greater ease and thereby return to their pursuit of the arcane arts. Exceptions occur, of course, but rare is the domain-claiming Tremere who won't extend some degree of hospitality to a clanmate truly in need. It bears mention, however, that bitter rivalries do develop between Tremere, and a sworn foe of a given Tremere should probably expect no succor, even if one can claim ties of clan or even sire. Usually, logistics dictate that the Tremere spend less time dealing with the nightly functions of their unives, and the good of the clan comes before the right of the individual Tremere. In practice, of course, this might vary.

Interests

As one might expect, the majority of most Tremere's unives revolve around study or service to one's elders. Even those unskilled in the thaumaturgical arts typically work with a Tremere who makes it her *raison d'être*, whether as gatherers



of ritual components, as liaisons (political and professional) to other Kindred or as agents and enforcers.

Tremere influence, growing as it has in the Victorian era, lies predominantly in the arena of the occult, though connections with such organizations as the Freemasons has introduced the Witches to other avenues of contact. As such, Tremere influences have a surprising breadth but a predictable depth. Because so many of the newly influential Tremere have made their contacts only recently through secret societies, the amount of favors they can call upon and the number of contacts they have made increases slowly. While a few noteworthy Kindred have developed nontraditional influences over the years, such as the cabal of Witches who garner power in the Church and those who have cultivated commercial success with the East India Company, the Witches still don't have the worldly power wielded by the Ventrue or the Toreador or even well-placed members of other clans.

The discussion of Tremere domain mentions "nightly functions" of Kindred unlife, which also bear more heavily upon the Tremere than many of them readily admit. While they see themselves as sorcerers first and vampires second, the truth of the matter is quite the opposite. Tremere must still feed upon living blood to survive; they still fear the sun, and fire scorches them as viciously as it does other Kindred. Many candidates for the Tremere hierarchy have difficulty reconciling these (un)natural facts with their artificial social structure, and *humanitas* wanes quickly for power-hungry Tremere during the Victorian era. In response, many Tremere find themselves working as functionaries of a prince's entourage,

both for the political power it yields and to prove that the frustratingly climbing number of "bad seed" Witches lost to the Beast shouldn't reflect poorly on the clan as a whole. Indeed, a sheriff, scourge or hound gifted with the abilities of blood magic is nothing at which to scoff.

The clan continues to exploit traditional avenues of Tremere influence, of course, as its members see little value in abandoning time-tested ways in favor of their newfound prominence. Of these, academia remains popular and takes several forms. Tremere tutors occasionally find work in the households of wealthy patrons (who may even allow them an "assistant"), schooling mortal children in letters and the humanities as a cover for their more esoteric study. Some Tremere cloister themselves among neglected monasteries, whose monks still toil on hand-made reproductions of books too delicate, rare or dangerous for mass consumption by presses. Others still establish themselves among local schools and universities, where the eccentricities of a gifted scholar are indulged for the sake of his sagacity.

Naturally, many Tremere are most at home when surrounded by the trappings of the occult, and the secret societies of the day allow them the opportunity to do just that and expand their base of power at the same time. From the formalized rituals of the Freemasons and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn to the arcane bookseller or corner shop fortuneteller, the public's hunger for mystical knowledge allows the Witches contact with kine that would have heretofore been verboten or heretical. An entrepreneurial few have even taken to the unlife of the charlatan, teaching a few quack rituals or hedge magic tricks to the idle rich and morbidly curious in exchange for favors or cash.

The mysteries that lie buried within the world are not new, apprentice. Why do you think they have been buried? Simply because the people of the era embrace them now rather than condemn them does not change their nature. It is a halcyon time for us: a time when we may use our sorceries at will without having to fear the fires of the witch-hunters. Well, without having to fear them too much. Men still hate what they don't understand.

—Edward Bainbridge, Tremere Primogen of London

VENTRUE

In many ways, the Ventrue are the Empire itself, both in reference to the Camarilla and to the expanse of territory claimed by Queen Victoria herself. Venerable, distinguished, powerful, influential, ubiquitous—flawed, conservative, imperialistic and built upon the toil of those whom their system fails to benefit.

The Victorian era represents a period of transition for the Ventrue. For the Nobles, that sobriquet signifies change as well. Gone are the nights of the absolute king in his castle, but time has not yet made an unequivocal master of the businessman. As such, their nickname means two things: It harkens to the time when royal families shaped the destinies of the world, but it also applies to the burden of leadership they have shouldered for the sake of all other Kindred.

The Ventrue's ranks have had to increasingly diversify, lest they "evolve" themselves out of the Kindred picture, to use the vernacular of the night's hot issues. To be sure, Ventrue still number among the aristocratic families and generals of the age (or rather, advisors to generals and other officers to whom curious hours would be a notable concern), but now, they also include the merchant, the academician, the colonial ambassador and the socialite. In the increasingly modern world, the masses have the true voice, with feudalism having fallen by the wayside and more democratic visions of leadership having raised their heads.



This particular notion causes bittersweet mirth among the most august elders of the clan, who remember the nights of the Roman republic and the height of democracy. These modern notions are but a pale echo of that, and the fall of a nobility that fails to consider the true origins of the Ventrue as a clan of leadership makes them shake their heads.

Overview

"Where the Empire goes, so go the Ventrue," or so says the opening line of a treatise delivered by a Malkavian orator at a recent convocation of the Inner Council. What Victoria's agents are to the kine, the Ventrue are to the Kindred, arbiters of disputes and enforcers of order. The Ventrue are far more than functionaries, however, as they have given themselves completely to the cause that is the Camarilla. Let the other clans mock—they don't understand the true price of nobility. Even under the feudal model, the lords owed their vassals certain responsibilities, and so, too, do the Ventrue take their role of leadership as seriously as they take the duties they owe their fellow Kindred. Rafael de Corazon may have been the Toreador who waxed poetic about the Camarilla and convinced other Kindred to flock to its banner, but the author of the idea itself was Hardestadt, none other than a Ventrue himself.

Not all Ventrue are as noble as their double-entendre of a sobriquet hopes, however. Many are connivers and schemers, heirs to a sire's legacy that they claim by right of lineage and generation.

THE CLANS



These embody the worst aspects of the clan, exhibiting only greed and an outdated sense of entitlement.

Other Ventrue champion the successes of the sect or the clan, standing strong against the Sabbat or rationally discussing the grievances of other feuding Kindred. Without order, the Kindred would turn in upon themselves and the whole of the Race of Caine would suffer — anarchy and cynicism brought about the Anarch Revolt and the Inquisition, after all, and the role of a clan of leadership is, well, to lead the Kindred away from their own self-destructive urges.

Most Ventrue fall somewhere in between these two poles of idealism, with most sadly tending toward the avarice and abuse of power of which they find themselves so often accused. Of this, though, what can be said? It is a decadent time, rife with pleasures and comforts, and what good does it do the Kindred as a whole for a Ventrue not to claim his due of benefits? Who was ever helped by someone else going without?

Ventrue make grand shows of their Embraces. This doesn't necessarily mean the act itself involves undue pomp and circumstance but, rather, that much ceremony goes into the observation of the event. Many Ventrue practice an almost Classical instruction period by which their fledglings learn of Kindred culture. They recite lineages, observe the Embrace dates of exalted ancestors and honor ancient customs of hospitality that surely inconvenience the host more than they aid the guest. Ventrue unlife constitutes a world of duality: sacrifice with benefits, gain at great cost, noblesse oblige in a den of opulence.

And they wouldn't have it any other way.

Domain

Wherever a Ventrue claims his domain, the wise Kindred considers what this means before he refutes it or laughs.

As the Nobles place such great emphasis on their duties as leaders, a Ventrue's domain is not merely the territory in which his is the final word. Rather, a Ventrue domain carries with it the weight of recognition. That is, if another Ventrue visits the domain and finds it sorely lacking, not only will the domain claimant become the object of ridicule among other Nobles, he will have failed in his cause. Certainly, some Ventrue undertake the cause with more sobriety than others, but Ventrue blood is proud blood, and rare is the Noble who welcomes the derision of his peers. For this reason, Ventrue eschew squalid domains and struggling territories unless nothing else is available — and even then, the Kindred likely takes every step possible to cultivate that domain into something worthy of his presence.

Features in Ventrue domains unsurprisingly tend toward the prominent or the prestigious. Governmental districts usually fall under these auspices, as do financial regions and wealthy neighborhoods. While cultural and artistic districts usually fulfill these criteria, Ventrue typically leave them to the Toreador, being much more interested in the bottom line of a domain's prosperity than the less tangible favor of patronage. Particularly dutiful Ventrue occasionally claim troubled domains, in that they might right the problems there (or influence them to be righted, at least), thereby fulfilling their duties as leaders and, coincidentally, earning the concurrent accolades. Recently, Ventrue have adapted the concept of domain to include sectors of the kine in addition to regions of a city. In London, one Ventrue claims the police as his domain, while in the city of Amsterdam, the docks fall under one Kindred's domain while the actual dockworkers come under the bailiwick of another.

Broods and lineages of Ventrue sometimes grow out of a single powerful sire's domain, but they survive only rarely without going their separate ways. In many of

these cases, the sire extends the benefits (and responsibilities...) of the domain to his childer. This situation can be comfortable, true, but again, it does nothing for the childer, since, until she does something for herself, she's merely riding the coattails of her progenitor. Sires sometimes bequeath portions of their domains to their childer, but this occurs only rarely, as it both perpetuates nepotism and shrinks the domain of the sires. More often, a sire might leave an undead form of a will, by which his childer might distribute portions of his domain among themselves after his passing (God forbid). Needless to say, these are often hotly contested affairs, with one party inevitably feeling that she's received the short end of the deal and using hook or crook to better her own position.

Areas of Ventrue dominance often overlap with regions of the Empire's strength. London springs immediately to mind, as do the regions of France not infested with the Toreador or the Sabbat. Parts of Spain include Ventrue domains, but far fewer than have Brujah, Toreador and Lasombra claimants. Central Europe has traditionally belonged to the Ventrue, since before the nights of the Holy Roman Empire and conceivably as far back as the outward push of the previous Roman Empire. Portions of Italy are Ventrue domain, as are the occasional Eastern European domain held against the rampaging Sabbat, the territorial Gangrel and Nosferatu of the region and the skulking Tremere. The remnants of a faction known as the Eastern Lords manage to retain claims of domain in isolated areas scattered throughout the western portions of Eastern Europe (and a few have even extended their influence into the traditionally Tzimisce territories even more eastward), though these domains tend to be small and, by Ventrue standards, at least, humble.

Interests

If it makes them money, the Ventrue are interested. Mercenary, but true. The Ventrue don't bother being modest — it takes resources to lead. Where the distinction between the Victorian era and other times occurs is in the nature of those interests, however. Whereas once the Ventrue could attach themselves to the nobility (or claim nobility themselves) and draw from aristocratic coffers, those nights have all but waned. Tonight, commercial business threatens to supplant the Ventrue's "old economy." Banking, investments, shipping, merchant trade and old-fashioned imperialism contribute to many Ventrue assets.

Naturally, politics also remain at the heart of Ventrue interests. Statistically speaking, the Ventrue likely have more princes among their number than



any other clan — and the argument might be made that they have more princes than all other clans combined. Their tough natures and diligent personalities also make many Ventrue fine candidates for the sheriff's duties and the scourge's responsibilities (though many Ventrue consider the title of hound beneath them). Indeed, much as the children of feudal-era noble families who didn't stand to inherit lands often joined the Church, many Ventrue without the opportunity to claim significant domain for themselves instead earn status and esteem by serving the Camarilla in other capacities. No small number of Ventrue number among the primogen, and many cities with Ventrue princes also have Ventrue primogen, a clever tactic which princes and Ventrue sympathizers use to sway the general consensus of that body in their favor. Even the informal position of harpy sees occasional influence at the hands of the Ventrue, who focus less on the social aspect of the position and instead turn the title into one of a moral or ethical leadership.

Some Ventrue model themselves after the knights of the feudal era, joining the Camarilla's body of agents instead of claiming a domain or haven in a single city. Like the archons, these Nobles carry a degree of influ-

ence, though this esteem originates with the strength of the Camarilla as opposed to any solitary achievement on the part of the Ventrue herself. In the end, these Kindred may actually become archons — or at least attach themselves to the body of Kindred who aid them. If nothing else, they can serve as the eyes and ears — and, if necessary, confessors or confidants — of archons and even justicars.

Young Ventrue frequently find themselves at a loss for purpose, particularly at the close of the Victorian era. The elders hold all the prime domains, the ancillae claim what the elders haven't or tie themselves to a powerful princely patron — what's a neonate to do? Many of these Kindred end up joining coteries, which their sires see as a necessary evil, allowing them to "calm down" out of their adolescence before finding their true calling as a member of the Clan of Kingship. Often, these young Ventrue serve as the voice of the times, bringing new opportunities to elder Kindred who can't as readily keep up with the hurried pace of modern unlife. Even this phenomenon sees its share of duty-bound young Nobles, with some wholly turning their acumen over to the elders in exchange for a share of the profit, while others pretend to be aiding their elders when really they plot against them and keep the gains for their own.

Ah, the Queen has reigned for almost eight decades! How
cute the mortals are, with their trifling conceptions of time.
— Klara Jurgensblut, Ventrue conspirator

LASOMBRA

To many, the Lasombra are nightmare given form, a black scourge upon the worlds of Cainites and kine alike. The clan possesses a twisted nobility, though it upholds a strange chivalry if that is indeed the case. True, the Lasombra cause pain and inflict terror, but it is a refined pain and a savory terror, not the coarse axe of a headsman or the hysterical butchery of a Whitechapel murderer. The Lasombra prefer to hurt their rivals by striking at the ones they hold dear.

Crafty in the extreme, the Lasombra are the metaphorical spiders inviting the fly to tea in the parlor. The best advice to consider when meeting a Lasombra is never to trust one, for these vampires never have anyone's interests but their own at heart. The only problem with that advice is following it — the Keepers speak with such sincerity that they don't even need to rely on their Cainite powers to bring a listener around to their point of view.

As leaders of the Sabbat, one could do little more foolish than give short shrift to the members of this clan. Brutally efficient, the Lasombra let their passions boil and their hostilities fester. While the Ventrue might suggest that the best revenge against an enemy is to outlive him, the Lasombra espouse that revenge is a dish best served cold.

Overview

The movements of the Lasombra reveal a queer composite of the overt and the subtle. For a Keeper, foiling a rival isn't enough — he must be destroyed. At the same time, if anyone actually sees the Lasombra destroy that rival, well, the Lasombra will have failed because no one will trust her or underestimate her in the future. Popular opin-

ion regarding the Lasombra can be confusing. Some consider them master manipulators, while others consider them overzealous tyrants. If asked, the Lasombra would probably prefer the latter, even though they are truly the former — but if everyone knows them to be manipulators, how good can they possibly be?

An initial look at the Lasombra leads one to believe that they have aristocratic origins. Whether this rings true or not depends upon the individual Lasombra, and many favor the advice of Machiavelli, believing that fear is a better motivator than love. In this, certain Cainites see the Lasombra as a grim reflection of the Ventrue — an opinion with striking resonance, given that the Lasombra do not cast reflections themselves.

In the Victorian era, the Lasombra still remain entrenched in the institutions that have served them so well over the past centuries, the aristocracy and the Church. Of course, they face the same problem as the Ventrue, in that the aristocracy not only shrinks nightly, it also wields progressively less power, as mortal trends move the world away from feudalism. The Church remains powerful, but its power is also on the wane, what with Christianity being largely a middle-class faith at this time and even a significant proportion of those individuals being largely secular or interested in an alternative spirituality. Now is a time of tests for the Lasombra. If they continue to indulge their wanton wickedness, they will call down a righteous wrath with the potential to



remove them from the world forever. At the same time, their old ways become increasingly outdated each night, and they must come up with a viable alternative if they are to remain relevant to Victoria's world and what comes after it.

Domain

Members of Clan Lasombra choose their domains carefully, as they favor territories that exhibit their refined tastes and flair for the ostentatious, but they also require that the wickednesses they indulge in while present not have them dug up during the day and staked for the sun by a righteous Inquisition. As such, they favor neighborhoods in decline or on the rise, churches where they can commit their evils while convincing the flock that it is God's will or havens so withdrawn from the rest of the world that they might literally leave a drained vessel on the parlor floor for a week and no one would bat an eye.

Indeed, haven is a greater concern for the Lasombra than domain, as few Keepers want to bother with all of the petty details (such as dealing with mortals) concomitant to maintaining a domain. In this matter, Lasombra favor grandiose mansions, well-kept estates, Classical structures in which they may juxtapose the beauty of the setting with the ugliness of their work on earth or houses of God, to remind the Creator that He put them here for a purpose.

Influence is a different matter, of course, and described below, but it is unwise to associate the Lasombra ambivalence toward domain with an inability to exert power in a given area. Lasombra strength runs as deep as any Ventrue's in his chosen domain, though those domains are fewer and further between, mostly owing to the fact that the Ventrue likely outnumber the Lasombra.

Lasombra rarely sire broods, and if an area serves as domain to many Lasombra residents, they probably come from different sires. Much of the Lasombra sense of accomplishment inspires fledglings to leave the nest as early as possible and make their own way in the world. True, prestigious childer do contribute positively to a sire's own reputation, but only in the case of a sire with a genuine reluctance to part with his progeny do consanguineous lines linger in one place.

Centers of Lasombra power include much of Spain, with Madrid and Toledo in particular shining as jewels in

the clan's symbolic crown. Italy also plays host to more than its fair share of Lasombra, and where the Sabbat holds sway, Lasombra may outnumber their fellow clans in that sect by as many as two to one, Tzimisce included. Minor Lasombra domains exist along the Eastern European border, but these exist more as anomalies than as true representations of Lasombra range. Of late, the Lasombra have turned their eyes toward England, reasoning that, having been able to lay low their own progenitor, they could easily do so with London's Methuselah prince. Still, they are not so foolish as to face Mithras in a frontal assault — rather, they slowly secrete their clanmates within the English fiefs in hopes of slowly building an presence there, so that one night the Methuselah might rise to find himself surrounded the hungry fangs of zealous Keepers.

Interests

What the Lasombra lack in true nobility, they make up for in commitment. Many Lasombra pledge fealty to elders of their clan or to scions of the Sabbat. Purpose drives the

majority of the clan, and if they have difficulty finding purpose for themselves, they rally to one whom they see as their superior. Lasombra culture makes much of this mentor relationship, and when a Lasombra leaves his sire's tutelage, he may

act as a "squire" to another Lasombra — some are even assigned to mentors by their own sires.

As few Lasombra prefer to keep their childer about them (perhaps out of mistrust?), they occasionally send their get to serve as emissaries to other Lasombra domains or Sabbat cities. Of course, no one is fooled by this — Victorian diplomacy is no stranger to the concept of spies — but the Lasombra go about it all with great shows of nobility and even concern for other Cainites. A Keeper's childer can serve as an advisor or a confidant, providing another Cainite with an outlook she may not have considered for herself. All the while, of course, the childer sends letters or telegrams back to his sire explaining the local interests in this company's ships or that Cainite's diamond mines.

Lasombra also find great purpose in the Sabbat, and their positions as leaders of that sect allow them to occasionally turn the entirety of the Sword of Caine to their own purposes. On an individual level, what Lasombra wouldn't want a legion of



fanatical soldiers ready to face the Final Death in order to do his bidding, so long as he makes his bidding seem like the greater good of the sect? Vendetta translates easily to "striking against powerful Camarilla elders," laying a rival low quickly becomes "rooting out traitors to the sect," and removing a prince whose interests in the same venture present an obstacle to one's own ambitions goes so much smoothly when described as "liberating a city from the domineering presence of the Ivory Tower." Many Lasombra rise to great heights in the Sabbat, acquiring titles such as bishop, archbishop and cardinal. Few aspire to the ranks of the prisci (whose power isn't so formal as the Lasombra prefer) or the priests (as the Keepers serve the cause so much more admirably as ducti of the packs), though many join the paladins and templars and attach themselves to the entourages of other powerful Cainites.

As with many Sabbat, the Lasombra have developed their own code of morality. The Path of Night owes much to the Judeo-Christian outlook, though it venerates many opposite principles. Some Keepers turn to this Path in hopes of running amok, but the true adherents to it know that it is just as difficult to uphold the Path's tenets as it is to follow God's Word. Indeed, the two are one in the same, for, according to the Path of Night's creators, God made vampires in order to commit evil upon the world, to commit wickedness in order to show mortals what lay in wait for them if their own souls inclined them toward evil. This issue remains a significant bone of contention among Lasombra. Less rigorous followers of the Path seem content to commit "evil" for its own sake, leaving random atrocity and senseless violence in their wake. In the opinion of staunch observers of the Path, these "black angels" are even worse for the world than the Camarilla because they have no purpose at all other than to gratify their own perverted urges toward mayhem. The true believers seem to have facts on their side—the less observant followers of the Path tend to fall to the Beast rather quickly, so recklessly do they throw themselves into their malevolent ways. Anyone can be destructive, argue the faithful; what's difficult is to do it and mean it. If all it takes is wildness to be a vampire, then the Inquisition was right, and vampires are a scourge that must be eliminated. And the Inquisition was not right.

YOU DO NOT KNOW THE DEPTHS TO WHICH A CAINITE CAN SINK BEFORE FINDING THE ESSENCE OF WHAT SHE TRULY IS. WE COME FROM NIGHT, TURNED AWAY BY THE VERY GOD WHO CREATED US. I ASK YOU, IF YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD HAD PLANNED FOR US TO DO SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE EVIL OF WHICH WE ARE CAPABLE, WHY WOULD HE HAVE CAST US OUT INSTEAD OF SIMPLY DESTROYING US? THAT'S NOT INTENDED TO BE A HAUNTING QUESTION. IT'S A CALL TO ACTION.

— PABLO ORTÍZ, PALADIN OF THE SABBAT



TZIMISCE

Of all the clans whose members prowl the nights of the Victorian era, none so perfectly embody the popular, Romantic myth of the vampire as the Tzimisce — at least on the surface. As Gothic literature becomes more and more widespread, so, too, does the legend of the Eastern European count, immortalized in Bram Stoker's 1897 treatment of the Kindred whose act of grand defiance shakes the undead world to its foundation, *Dracula*.

In truth, however, the Tzimisce are hardly the refined nobles doomed to a tragic unlife of unrequited desire, though they can be. Beneath the suave façade of the "gentleman vampire," Clan Tzimisce rots and festers. Blighted by alienation, isolated from the world by the barbarism of their native demesnes and reviled as monsters by those who witness their nightly affairs, the Tzimisce are an exercise in utmost cunning and utmost wickedness.

For the Tzimisce, these are nights of nadir, the last epoch during which the Fiend on the Mountain could cow the peasants living beneath his castle with impunity. In the nights to come, the Tzimisce withdraw ever more into themselves, pursuing blasphemous faiths and almost futilely warping their bodies in an attempt to shock an ever-more-jaded world. Tonight, however,

during the reign of Victoria and at the height of the British Empire, it is truly a time of revelry for the Fiends. They are, for the time, the lords of the night in lands where they do not yet have to hide — but the end of that time draws closer with each passing sunset.

Overview

When one thinks of the barbarous lands, places untouched by Victorian progress and largely unchanged since the feudal brutality of the Dark Ages, one cannot help but think of Eastern Europe, even in this enlightened time. The "lands beyond the forest" mean not just Transylvania, but all of the "uncivilized" world, where peasants still toil and lords still rule. The Tzimisce fit very well into this idiom, for they are the ruling lords, the domineering masters who make such backbreaking (and blood-draining) demands of their subjects.

Many Tzimisce hail from aristocratic backgrounds — note the avoidance of the word "noble." While it is not outside the capacity of the Tzimisce to be noble, few seem to exhibit even the desire, existing instead to do whatever their will dictates, for they are children of the very earth where they were born. Not all Tzimisce come from royal families, however, and the Fiends have almost as much of a tendency to Embrace out of pas-



sion as do the Toreador. Those passions differ greatly, however, as the Tzimisce may choose a loyal manservant or an exceptionally ugly child, while the Toreador chooses a mortal paramour or an individual with an artistic gift.

For all their attachment to aristocracy, however, few Fiends really care about governance. What they truly want is little more than what they want at any given moment (though only a fool underestimates the Tzimisce's ability to put centuries-long schemes in place or to bear a grudge for even longer than that). As such, many Fiends in positions of authority delegate their governmental responsibilities to viziers or local leaders... many of whom they subject to blood oaths or even more mystical rites of fealty.

The Fiends also practice their flesh-warping powers of Vicissitude with aplomb, using it to "beautify" themselves or others, to punish those who have earned their displeasure, to test the limits of mortal, animal or vampiric endurance or to conduct experiments that defy the understanding of anyone but themselves. Visitors to a Tzimisce's domain might shudder to think that the hairless albino peering in their window is not the same as the identical hairless albino who greeted them at the train station — and that neither is the same as the hairless albino who welcomes them to the Fiend's sanctum. But the Tzimisce do so well at causing shudders.

Domain

The idea of domain lies very close to the hearts of the Tzimisce, even if those hearts no longer beat. Part of this principle stems from the fact that the Fiends must rest in their native soil by day. Removing a Tzimisce from the ability to spend her slumber in the earthen humors to which she was born makes her irritable to say the least, and the condition of her demeanor is probably the least troublesome aspect anyone who encounters her will have to deal with. The most significant factor of the Tzimisce attachment to domain, however, is the fact that the Fiends have populated their lands since even before the Ventrue attached themselves to Rome or the Brujah to fabled Carthage. Quite simply, the lands the Tzimisce call home are theirs, and many Fiends go so far as to claim that they are a part of the land itself, as indigenous a portion of that part of the world as the trees that grow there or the wolves that prowl the countryside.

Tzimisce laying claim to a domain spare little effort in making the land a reflection of their presence. In some cases, this manifests outwardly, with the sorcerous members of the clan literally reshaping rock to bear their visages or calling upon streams to reroute themselves according to the Fiends' will. Such sorceries have long



been on the wane, however, and most Tzimisce rely on artificial methods to mark the domain as their own. Given that most Tzimisce domains lie in the barbarous lands, progressive Western governmental philosophies have yet to have any impact on those regions: Some Tzimisce are still literally the feudal masters of their lands. As such, the Fiends maintain cadres of guards, cultivate networks of agents and even turn local peasantries against one another for the purposes of keeping in their lord's good graces... or, more accurately, to avoid his poor graces. Many Tzimisce go beyond even this, having a close, personal entourage composed of hellish creations the likes of which nature never intended. Rabid beasts, fleshcrafted monstrosities, twisted ghouls known as *szlachta* and the attendant members of noble or revenant families heed the beck and call of the Fiends, serving to report to them or bring their will to places where they cannot physically be. Wicked broods of Tzimisce even develop in this manner, with the master Fiend of the domain (or a favored childe) spawning some sort of blighted love for one of the residents of the area and bringing her into the night.

Childer in these situations don't take long to rankle under their sires' watchful eyes. The Fiends' blood calls out to the land, and many childer petition their sires for the right to go and claim their own domains — a right many sires grant, having grown sick of the very sight of their get before long and wondering why they bothered to Embrace them in the first place. Broods that have lingered too long in one domain or in one Fiend's household almost invariably become dens of vipers, each childe scheming against the rest (and whatever other horrid monstrosity has earned the head Fiend's dotage for the night) in a desperate attempt to leave without inviting retribution from a resentful sire.

Tzimisce domains lie almost exclusively in the swath of land that constitutes Eastern Europe, just past the domains of the eastern Ventrue and Tremere. Transylvania, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, certain eastern expanses of Germany, Austria-Hungary and even parts of traditionally Turkic lands belong to the Tzimisce. An appreciable amount of Tzimisce have also sought their fortunes in the New World, where domain tends to be fleeting, but for a while, at least, the Fiends are masters of the domain there.

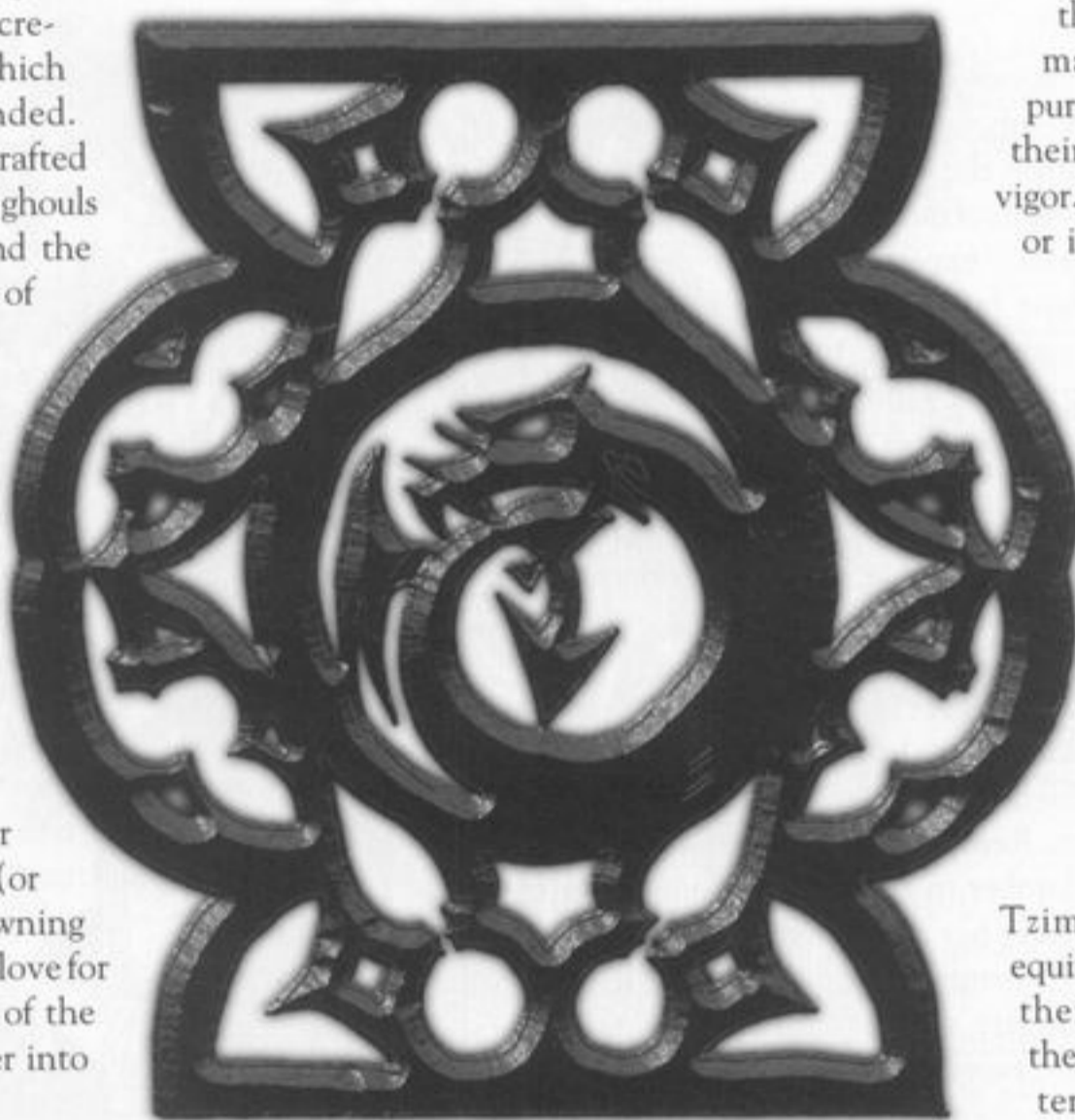
Interests

As mentioned in the discussion of domain, most Tzimisce pursue the acquisition of their own territories with vigor. If this cannot be done or if their sires refuse it, they may rebel out of frustration, scheming against the Cainites who made them vampires to begin with. Such truculence seems common in any domain where more than one Tzimisce shares a haven with others.

To that end, Tzimisce are often the equivalents of princes in their domains, though they often use the Sabbat term bishop (or archbishop) to describe what they do, if they bother

with something other than the term *voivode*. It is not uncommon for a *voivode* or bishop to have several Cainites dwelling in the domain she claims as her own, even extending into the lands beyond the city or the village proper. Unless they have active dealings with the Sabbat, however, Tzimisce politics usually end at the local level.

Not every Tzimisce needs to achieve lordship over a dwindling fief to achieve the clan's esteem, however. Many Tzimisce leap wholeheartedly into the Sabbat cause and, indeed, torment those Tzimisce who pay only lip service to the sect. Others become attendants to the



local master of the domain, serving as woodsmen, as enforcers, as diplomats to other Cainites or domains or as guardians of the domain's borders. A Tzimisce is equally as likely — more so, in fact — to have more concerns in the city than in the lord's castle. The Fiends who cling to eldritch thrones are simply more recognizable than the Tzimisce who slink through the streets at night — and this serves them well.

For those who do participate in Sabbat activities, the Tzimisce have partaken of a wide variety of the sect's offerings, from developing several of the ritae practiced in the sect to serving as spiritual leaders known as pack priests. Bishops, archbishops, prisci, cardinals and even less universal titles observed by the sect have all counted the Fiends among their number, and the only limits to a Tzimisce's potential in the sect are her ambition.

Many Tzimisce believe that something exists beyond the vampiric condition, much as they believe the Cainite condition surpasses the mortal state. These Fiends pursue (or at least study) a philosophy known as Transcendence or Metamorphosis, and many conduct bizarre rituals and experiments to learn exactly what lies beyond and how to achieve it. In the case of a Tzimisce hosting visitors from Western lands, the guests might perceive this as a form of the occultism so prevalent in their own lands. Were they to learn the truth, it would likely horrify them, as these are no parlor tricks or table-thumping séances — these are the desires of alien minds seeking to put all that is human and compassionate behind them and to embrace the unknowable horror that lies beyond. The Path of Metamorphosis (see *Vampire: The Masquerade*, pp. 292-293) works as a model for the moral code upheld by these Cainites.

YOU HAVE COME TO MY DOMAIN — THE LAND WHERE I AM THE LAW FOR CAINITES AS WELL AS KINE. THE MOON DOES NOT RISE WITHOUT MY BLESSING. THE FOG DOES NOT CREEP AND THE BEASTS DO NOT ROUSE. I AM NOT THE MASTER OF THIS LAND. I AM THIS LAND.

— FRANTISEK PATRESCU, ROMANIAN VOIVODE

The Independent Clans

Do the Ventrue really enjoy the company of the Nosferatu? Do the Lasombra have any true affinity for the Tzimisce? None of your precious "allies" can stand you farther than they can throw you. Camarilla. Sabbat. All either of you has accomplished as a sect is acquire new enemies on the other side. I can make enemies of my own, thank you. I've no need of yours.

—Vanessa Reese Davenport, Follower of Set

For centuries, the Camarilla and the Sabbat have warred over the fate of the Kindred and the direction of undead society. Countless quantities of blood — Kindred and kine — have soaked into the ground; thousands of mortal and undead lives have been snuffed out like candles. All for the greater glory of one organization or another that has hardly existed for any significant time at all, as the Kindred measure such things.

The clans of both factions would have the Damned believe that the existence, even the very survival, of the children of Caine is inextricably intertwined in the war of the sects.

The independent clans scoff at such notions.

Unwilling to bend knee to either the Ivory Tower or the Sword of Caine, these four clans remember the nights before the rise of the Camarilla, before the so-called organization of the anarchs. They refuse to labor under the Camarilla's Traditions or to bathe themselves in the blood shed by the Sabbat. What they lack in political clout they more than make up for in strength of will, for these clans stand alone in the face of the mighty sects, and yet, they do not yield.

The sects, of course, claim they would not have them anyway. The Assamites are kin-killers, cannibals. The Followers of Set are corrupters, liars, pagan worshipers of a dark god. The Giovanni are incestuous speakers with the dead, tainted by unclean practices. The Ravnos are just vagrant thieves. None are to be trusted.

The independent clans shrug their shoulders almost in unison. Uninterested in sect affiliations to begin with, they allow the Camarilla and the Sabbat their petty conceits.

Neutrality has no real meaning in the machinations of the Kindred, however, and the independent clans, for all their claims to the contrary, can no more escape the Jyhad than they can ignore the rising sun. The sects are simply too big — and offer too much to their allies, no matter how temporary — to avoid completely. The Assamites kill Kindred of one sect in exchange for payment in blood and boons from the other. The Followers of Set readily aid the Camarilla against the Sabbat (or, less frequently, vice versa); the rewards offered are great indeed in the eyes of so mercenary a clan, but their greatest incentive is simply the knowledge that the war weakens the rivals of their fearsome god. The Giovanni, though forced to submit to a pact of neutrality, spy and smuggle for any warriors in the Jyhad who can meet their price. Even the Ravnos, shunned by all, occasionally serve as eyes and ears for wealthy princes and archbishops.

Independent does not, after all, mean uninvolved.

The independent clans succeed admirably in presenting a cohesive front, a mask of cooperation and kinship that far outstrips most clans of the Camarilla or the Sabbat. No clan of Kindred is truly a unified entity — the selfish, overly ambitious and deceptive nature of the Damned makes any



such unity impractical at best — but the face the independents show the world is not wholly false. With so many potential enemies aligned against them and with few allies of their own upon whom they might call, the independent clans must indeed stand more tightly together than their counterparts in the great sects. This hardly makes them single-minded entities, marching in lockstep, though. Anyone who believes that Assamite does not scheme against Assamite, that Giovanni does not compete with Giovanni, is deluded. They are, however, capable of drawing together in the face of adversity in ways that few other clans can match.

Through the nights of Queen Victoria's reign, the independent clans are viewed with a creeping suspicion that has, if anything, grown stronger in recent years. With the expansion of the British Empire in particular, mortal attitudes toward "outsiders" and "savages" have shifted, and the Kindred, as always, follow suit. The refusal of the independent clans to conform, to join their confederates, to be "civilized," has driven a cultural wedge into the already gaping divide between them and the Camarilla. Ultimately, these clans could hardly care less what the Camarilla thinks of them, but their elders are wise enough to know that they cannot afford to alienate the Ivory Tower (or, in less refined lands, the Sabbat) unnecessarily. Thus, in these nights, indepen-

dent cooperation with the sects has actually increased by a small but important margin, despite the suspicion with which they are viewed.

It is also worth noting that the independent clans have, on average, a greater proportion of their elders still awake and active in Kindred affairs than do most of the sect-aligned clans. The Assamites are led by the "Old Man of the Mountain," a frighteningly powerful Cainite of great age. Some Followers of Set attend religious rites led by childer and grandchilder of Set himself. The Giovanni, if rumor is to be believed, still take their orders directly from Augustus Giovanni himself. Even the Ravnos still see several of their most ancient brethren active in the conflicts that rage across the Indian subcontinent. Further, three of these clans (Ravnos being the lone exception) claim a much closer relationship with their Antediluvian founder than is the norm.

It may, of course, be sheer coincidence, that it is the independent clans that have such close ties with their eldest — or it may be something more. It may be that, in nights to come, the independents' distance from the vampiric sects will prove not a weakness, but a curtain of deception behind which they hide their greatest strength. In the great game of the Jyhad, it may prove to be those undistracted by petty sect squabbles who make the final move.

ASSAMITE

To the Kindred of the Victorian era, the Assamites are figures of scorn, condescension — and trembling, blood-sweating terror. They are inscrutable Saracens, unprincipled savages with aspirations to honor, uncivilized barbarians from the blazing lands of the East. The “enlightened” vampires of Europe view the Assamites in much the same way the colonial British view the wilder natives of their colonies in India and Africa. “They have been conquered once already,” the Kindred say. “We can surely do so again, so they pose us no real threat. All the same, you might not want to go wandering alone just now....” The Kindred use the Assamites where they can, avoid them where they cannot and, in essence, despair of ever properly civilizing the Eastern barbarians.

The Assamites, who laugh behind their sleeves even as they take blood and coin from one enemy in payment for slaughtering another, wouldn't have it any other way.

Overview

To all appearances, the Assamites are a clan of Arabian assassins, willing to work for

any who can pay their price in coin, boon and, primarily, the blood of those who would hire them. They come, they kill, and they vanish into the night, leaving nothing behind but the ashes of their prey. They seem to have no purpose, no existence beyond moving from target to target.

The Assamites think of themselves as leopards, but to the rest of the Kindred world they are no less serpents than the Setites; useful when striking in the right direction but all too likely to turn their fangs upon those who handle them. They slay out of

some religious obligation, adhering to a bloodthirsty faith that no non-Assamite Kindred can understand. Nor do the nervous vampires of Europe and the New World entirely understand why the Assamites take payment in blood, for the curse leveled upon that clan by the Tremere at the Treaty of Tyre prevents them from consuming Kindred vitae as they once did.

Yet despite their fearsome reputation and their refusal to firmly support one sect over the other, Assamites are frequently found in cities held by the Camarilla and the Sabbat. Whether hunting a particular target, awaiting a



new contract or serving as a paid bodyguard or advisor to another Kindred, an Assamite moving through the ranks of the Kindred is not necessarily cause for panic — though many vampires who encounter one of the Eastern assassins choose to panic anyway, just in case.

Strangely, in some select circles in Camarilla cities, the Assamites are tolerated and, indeed, almost welcomed as they have never been before. A strange fascination for them grows within the British and Western European clans, particularly among the younger Kindred. The Assamites are the alien, the exotic — even, in the eyes of those who have truly adopted the attitudes of the kine, the “noble savages” of the Kindred world. In some territories of the British Empire, the acquisition of an Assamite bodyguard or advisor has become more than a matter of sound tactics. It is a status symbol, a sign that the vampire in question is determined to understand and, of course, “civilize” the barbarian, no matter how frightening he may be.

The Assamites merely raise an eyebrow and continue as they have always done. If anything, this phenomenon simply allows them greater opportunity to pursue their own agendas, and more than one Assamite has feigned interest in a European’s “education” in order to become proximate to a gullible target.

For their own part, no matter how often they might appear in the territories of the Camarilla or the Sabbat, the Assamites forsake both sects equally and would be quite content to see both thrown down and destroyed. The Saracens may work with other, inferior clans in the fulfillment of a contract or the execution of duty, but they rarely develop lasting attachments or relations outside their own ranks. They chafe under a Tremere blood curse, and it galls many Assamites that they can no longer war openly against the other clans. They yearn for the nights of yore, when they could feast at will upon the vitae of the Kindred; diablerie and the strengthening of one’s blood seem to be a religious requirement for the Assamites (one that Kindred philosophers are quick to point out is actually at odds with the Islamic faith many of the assassins have adopted).

In their efforts to throw off their shackles, the Assamites have managed to hide their greatest strength from the Camarilla and the Sabbat alike. The Assamites boast a startling number of blood sorcerers, hidden behind ranks of soldiers and assassins. In these nights when science and mysticism clash and intertwine as never before, these sorcerers travel into the world beyond the Middle East, seeking ways both mystical and mundane to shatter the Tremere ritual.

It is not an easy task. They must hide from the eyes of the Western Kindred, and as a result, these sorcerers

invariably pass themselves off as either “normal” Assamites or else as members of another bloodline entirely. Should the Camarilla (and especially the Tremere) learn of these Assamite sorcerers, they would surely interfere with their research. Nor can the sorcerers count on support from their own brethren; many of the Assamite warriors have bought into their own deception, dismissing out of hand any of their own clan who are not also Kindred of the sword.

The Blood Curse

Assamites of the Victorian era, as mentioned above, still labor under the Tremere blood curse. As such, Assamite characters suffer from the clan weakness described in the “In Nights Past” sidebar on page 91 of the *Vampire: The Masquerade* core rulebook, rather than the blood addiction normally assigned to the clan.

No clan is so limited in its affairs as the Assamites would appear, of course. Although the assassins are the public face of the Assamites and their sorcerers spearhead the clan’s single greatest effort, the Assamites are individuals with their own interests and ambitions. Particularly in the Holy Land, but throughout the rest of the world as well, Assamites insinuate themselves into mortal affairs, pulling strings and ruining lives. They are, at their core, no less parasites than any of the other vampires, but few are willing to acknowledge the point, for their own superiority is a conceit that they are unwilling to abandon.

Domain

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Assamites have little “real” power throughout most of the European continent. They frequent Camarilla and Sabbat cities, yes, but always as guests or contracted agents; few Western Kindred, no matter how determined they may be to civilize the “heathen” Assamite, are prepared to allow them any true authority.

Exceptions to the rule have occurred, of course. At least one small town within the English countryside is home to an Assamite who, if rumor is to be believed, charges a toll in blood to all Kindred who pass through his domain. Further, several of the smaller towns in Eastern Europe and Russia are said to be dominated by Assamites who have settled in to the region and “gone native,” as it were. These Assamites find themselves constantly besieged by the szlachta and other hideous creations of their Tzimisce neighbors; such “pocket enclaves” seem unlikely to last very long in the face of such determined opposition.

The Ottoman Empire is a far more important exception to the rule than these tiny domains. Although Istanbul and most of the major cities of the empire boast Camarilla princes, little doubt lingers in anyone's mind that it is the Assamite clan that holds the largest degree of influence within that empire. Between its connections with the Royal Family and its contacts within the mercantile and religious portions of Ottoman society, precious little of the empire falls outside the conceivable Assamite sphere of influence.

The vast majority of Arabia and the Holy Land is Assamite domain as well. This is, after all, the clan's homeland, and no other clan holds as much sway in the region. Dominant is not, however, the same as unchallenged. The Followers of Set, striking from their home in Egypt, make frequent attempts to steal influence, territory and important mortal contacts from the Assamites of Arabia. Toreador, Ventrue, Nosferatu and a handful of Lasombra all call the Middle East home, and none have any compunctions about chipping away at the Assamite power base for their own ends. The Tremere circle the Holy Land like slaving vultures, desperate to obtain access to the arcane secrets hidden within. Only the fact that some ancient power assists the Assamites in repelling any and all Tremere seeking to enter Jerusalem and its surroundings has kept the conflict from escalating into war. Even mysterious cults of rival diablerists and cells of reputed demon-worshipping vampires are rumored to strive against the Assamites for regional influence. Were the Assamites not struggling on so many fronts to maintain their position, they might well have expanded their political power well beyond the borders of Arabia by now.

The clan holds tightly to a small but vital interest in Africa as well. Particularly in Egypt and the surrounding lands, the Assamites war against the Followers of Set. Unlike the conflict in the Holy Land, which is largely covert, the battle between these two clans here is nothing less than bloody. Though Antara the Shepherd has little in the way of influence with Prince Bey's court in Cairo, the Assamite is widely acknowledged as one of the most powerful Kindred of the region, and he wages his war against Izzat al-Khunzir's Setites with fanatical zeal. It would seem an unfair fight, with victory easily going to the Assamites — except that the Setites are expert at

hiding their tendrils of influence throughout society, and they possess a repertoire of ancient lore and mystic power that often leaves the Assamites stymied.

India has seen a growth in Assamite presence over the course of the past several centuries; specifically, ever since the Dutch and the British began colonizing the region. Already engaged in battling the Cathayans from the East, the native Kindred were forced to fight a war on two fronts when the European vampires arrived with their countrymen. Although many of the Indian Kindred refuse to depend on outsiders to free them from the European incursion, others have proven more pragmatic. A large number of Assamites has been hired —

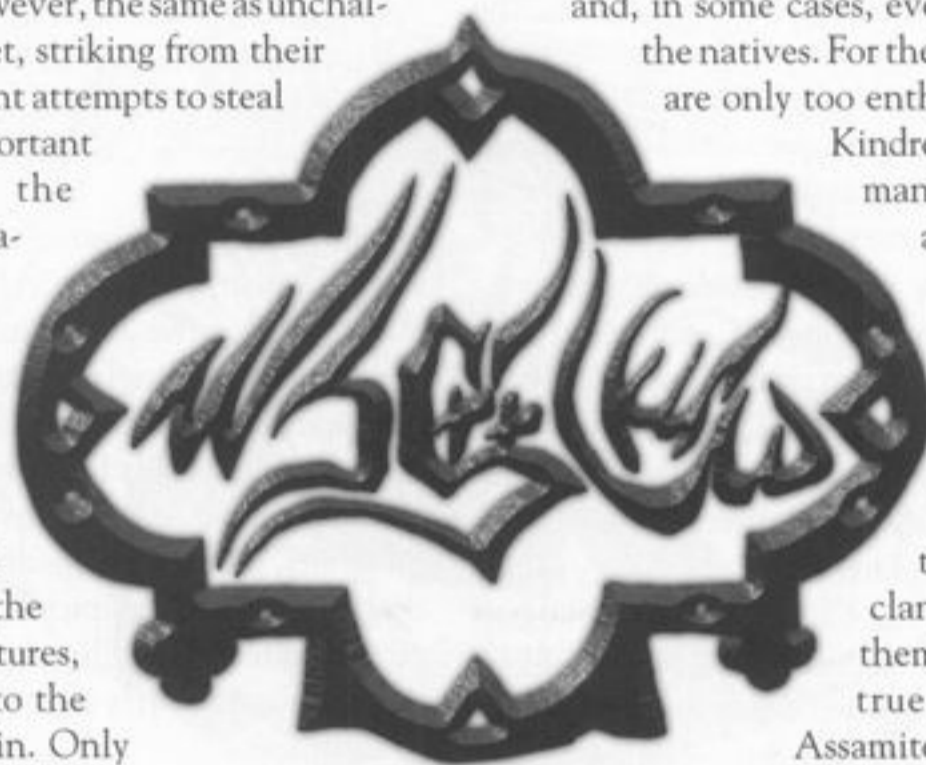
and, in some cases, even granted domains — by the natives. For their own part, the Assamites are only too enthusiastic to aid the Indian

Kindred against their foes, and many have adopted the cause as their own, fighting above and beyond the stipulations of their contracts. A number of the European Kindred, particularly among the Ventrue, are convinced that the Assamites, as a clan, have set about to drive them from India. This is untrue, of course, but those Assamites who do fight for India's independence feel no desire to correct their

enemy's false assumptions.

Not all the native Kindred of India are pleased to see the Assamites setting down roots, however. As of this time, the conflict between the Assamites and some of these nationalist Indian Kindred (particularly Ravnos and a Setite bloodline) has remained at the level of occasional brush war skirmishes. As the British control over India grows firmer, however, many of the local vampires have taken to lashing out at all foreigners in their frustration; the Assamites in India may find that they have quickly worn out their welcome.

Finally, though they have yet to parlay their presence into any true measure of influence, a small but growing number of Assamites has established a foothold in the New World. Some, either moved by the plight of the native peoples or (more likely) simply anxious for any excuse to kill European vampires, arrived not long after the subjugation of the natives in Central and South America, where they prey upon Camarilla and Sabbat alike. Others find themselves fulfilling contract after contract in the American West. Young and relatively



inexperienced princes are the norm there; with the Sabbat lurking to the south, Lupines stalking the wilds and power-hungry elders just waiting back East to come and take any real authority their childer might acquire, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the Kindred in the "Wild West" call upon outside assistance from time to time. Granted, they cannot offer the boons or potent blood their elders can, but many Assamites elect to work for them anyway in exchange for future favors. Tonight's fledgling may well be tomorrow's prince, after all, and if nothing else, it is yet another opportunity to come closer to the One.

Interests

To hear the other clans tell it, the Assamites have no clan-wide interests or activities beyond killing. Even if this were true, and it most certainly is not, the effort that goes into assassinating a vampire requires more preparation than many Kindred realize.

As such, a large number of the less martially oriented members of the clan — scientists, for the most part — spend their time searching for new ways to affect the Kindred form. These Assamite scholars (of which there are more than most vampires realize) search for new and improved weaponry and tactics; though rarely able to develop anything particularly innovative on their own, they are experts at building upon the advancements of humanity. One nigh-comical rumor suggests that the Assamites have already learned how to modify bolt-action rifles to fire thin stakes, though none of the Kindred who spread this rumor have seen such a weapon for themselves. Others travel constantly in search of new techniques. Assamites have returned from distant lands with new methods of killing, weapons borrowed from ancient cultures, mystic rituals and exotic poisons that function even on a vampire's necrotic organs.

Regardless of the reasons for their travels — study, assassination or anything else — many Assamites make a practice of interfering with Tremere projects and objectives whenever their paths cross. This interference rarely takes the form of uncontracted assassinations (though this does happen at times). Rather, the Assamite will reroute couriers, delay shipments, interfere with experiments and, in essence, do whatever he can to subtly and secretly upset the smooth functioning of the Witches. Such opportunities are infrequent and rarely result in anything worse than a minor bit of annoyance and frustration for the Tremere involved. Still, it is a favored pastime among the more nomadic Assamites, and some even engage in competitions to see who can come up with the most amusing disruption.



Truly, though, if the Assamites have thrown their resources behind any one endeavor, it is their constant struggle to shed the blood curse imposed by the loathsome Tremere warlocks. For every Assamite engaged in the slaughter (or protection) of some lesser vampire, another either labors in the alchemical laboratories at the clan's hidden lairs or else travels the globe in search of the most ancient of secrets and the most modern of scientific breakthroughs. Some assassins, though not many, have even traded their services for thaumaturgical or occult knowledge, rather than their standard price in blood. While they have not, as yet, applied the knowledge gained to any fields outside their quest for a cure, the Assamites have acquired a greater library of information on the melding of magic and science than any other clan (though the Tremere run a close second). Even they might be surprised at what they might accomplish if they cataloged their collected studies.

To better realize their objectives, the Assamites have, for the first time, Embraced non-Arabs in significant number. The clan has chosen its progeny from other nationalities before but only for truly exceptional individuals. Now, as they require the scientific and mystical knowledge of the entire world, they cannot afford to be so xenophobic. The overwhelming majority of their childer are still Arabic, but the "foreigners" now make up a notable minority.

These new Assamites bring an added benefit as well: They can travel in places where traditional Assamites cannot go. The clan has turned an interested eye toward England, where occult societies now flower in the underbelly of London's bored elite. Most of these are nothing but the meaningless entertainments and the tea-parlor séances of those with far too much money and time on their hands, but just enough of these societies possess real power and have uncovered real secrets that the Assamites cannot afford to ignore them. It is particularly galling to the clan — not to mention threatening to its objectives — that the Tremere and the Followers of Set have already staked so thorough a claim on these burgeoning organizations, and the Saracens rush to insert their own eyes and ears before it is too late to reap the benefits. The entire situation is a powder keg if there ever was one. Should either the Tremere or the Setites of these organizations discover the Assamites in their midst, London (and other European cities with similar factions) might well erupt into a mystical Kindred war that would strain the Masquerade to the point of shattering.

Even when the goal is for the good of all, however, the Kindred seem incapable of cooperating with one another. The Assamites, though better at working together than most, have proven no exception. At the edge

of the Orient, where Eastern Europe meets Asia, the Ottoman Empire engages in the brutal repression of the Arabic people in its conquered territories. Thousands live in squalid conditions, but those who are left to slowly starve are only mildly better off than the thousands more who have been imprisoned or executed by Ottoman Turks.

Assamites find themselves on both sides of the issue. Although they have, to date, successfully hidden such things from the eyes of the Western Kindred, open conflict has erupted between factions of the clan. The Assamites have much invested in the Ottoman Empire, and many of the clan's most powerful vampires use all their might to prop up the empire's waning authority, for their own influence is inextricably tied to Turkey's well being. They advise both the mortal rulers and the Kindred princes of the Empire, lend might (in secret, of course) to their armies and stand beside the Turkish Ventrue and Brujah who claim the conquered lands as their own domains.

Although one might expect them to have learned by now, it constantly shocks the Ottomans and their Kindred that the Arabs still possess the strength to resist. Small but frequent uprisings of the peasantry threaten mortal soldiers and their commanders, but this is nothing compared to the force that threatens the invading Kindred. Many of these conquering vampires — Ventrue, Brujah and Assamite alike — have met Final Death in recent years. An Assamite called Najjar (said to be a childe of Antara the Shepherd) leads a small but fanatical band of Kindred drawn from among the oppressed Arabs and has taken the lives of several of his clanmates. Both sides have appealed to the clan elders, but because Assamites of great influence dwell on both sides of the struggle and because the clan itself is unwilling to declare one side or the other "morally wrong," they have refused to interfere, except to insist that the Assamites on both sides cease killing one another. They have not been obeyed.

In Egypt, the Assamite presence has both personal and practical repercussions for the clan. Antara and his supporters battle the Followers of Set due to personal grudges and ancient feuds. The rest of the clan supports the Shepherd, however, primarily because of Egypt's value to the clan's historians, archeologists and sorcerers. Even should the secrets of the ancients prove unable to lift the Tremere curse, the Assamites are determined to acquire them if only to keep them out of the hands of the Setites. To that end, the Assamites play a political game in Egypt the equal of any Camarilla prince. Minor government functionaries, shopkeepers, religious leaders, British archeologists and petty smugglers make up a

web of spies and informants with which the Assamites conduct their constant searches. They share an unspoken arrangement with Prince Bey of Cairo and other Egyptian elders: The Assamites do not interfere in local Camarilla affairs, and the Camarilla does not stick its nose into the Assamite vendetta against the Setites.

Although Cairo is largely dominated by Camarilla Kindred where it isn't under Assamite or Setite sway, a group of Muslim Lasombra have dwelt within Cairo for a thousand years. Antara still maintains an ancient alliance with Fatimah, the faction's current leader. The group provides assistance in the Assamites' war against the Setites, and in exchange, Antara's formidable influence with the prince and Cairo's elders protects the Lasombra from any attempt to drive them out.

Beyond the Middle East and northeast Africa, the Assamites' greatest interest lies in India. As elsewhere, their presence in that conflict-torn land serves multiple purposes, both individual and clan-wide. Many Assamites, drawn by the opportunity to war against Camarilla Kindred as in the days of old, travel to India for no other purpose than to slake their blades with the vitae of as many vampires as they can. Others have gone native, wholly adopting the cause of Indian independence as their own. One, Imran bin Qadir, even went so far as to join the Thuggee, before the British ostensibly destroyed the cult. Other Assamites still use the rumors of their widespread affiliation with the Thuggee as psychological weapons against the European Kindred, despite the fact that no such affiliation actually exists.

Other Assamites on the Indian subcontinent fight not for the sake of fighting, but because the fee they were offered was too tempting to ignore. Rather than simple blood, some Assamites have been paid in territory, acquiring their own domains in India's poverty-stricken villages and in the outermost neighborhoods of its cities. Several such regions in India now boast so many Assamite "princes" that neither the Camarilla nor the native Kindred can claim authority in those areas. This grants the Assamites bases of power and operation from which to pursue their other agendas in India, but it also grants

those natives who are opposed to their presence (such as Sundervere, the "Devil Brahmin," who would see India purged of all foreigners) a target at which to strike.

Still other Assamites travel India not in pursuit of blood, but of magic. The Brahmins of the subcontinent, Kindred and kine alike, claim knowledge and powers unknown to the Assamites sorcerers... and, more importantly, unknown to the Tremere warlocks. Several sorcerers have already begun studying the basics of Sadhana, an Indian form of blood magic, in the hopes of thwarting the Tremere (see *Blood Sacrifice: The Thaumaturgy Companion*).

Although the clan has not, as a whole, expressed much interest in the New World, a number of individual Assamites do not share that disinterest. As mentioned above, a number of the Saracens are engaged in operations in the American West, propping up the nascent princes against various threats. Some of these Assamites — generally youthful in their own right, as most of the clan elders have better things to do than accept bottom-of-the-barrel payment from Kindred who claim domain over ramshackle towns and five square miles of dust — have made "the land of opportunity" their own. Radeyah bint Hamzah, who traveled to America partially because few of her conservative brethren would take her seriously as both woman and assassin, has formed about her a network of Assamites that stretches throughout the American West and southward into Mexico. She maintains only sporadic contact with the clan proper, accepting and dispensing contracts on a local basis under her own authority. So long as she does not prove a disappointment, the Old Man and the Assamite elders allow her to operate autonomously, as it removes the burden of handling the "petty concerns" of the American West from their own shoulders. Bint Hamzah's network has, on occasion, allocated some of their contracts to Assamite *antitribu* from south of the border. When the target is a Camarilla vampire, the Sabbat assassins champ at the bit to take the job, the Assamites themselves acquire their pay with little risk, and the client never need know who, precisely, carried out the assassination.

REALLY, IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO? SURELY, WERE YOUR POSITIONS REVERSED, PRINCE WARBURTON WOULD OFFER ME AT LEAST TWICE THAT FOR YOUR HEAD.... YES, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. A PLEASURE DOING BUSINESS WITH YOU, EFFENDI.

— IMAD AL DIN ABD HAQIM, ASSAMITE FIELD AGENT

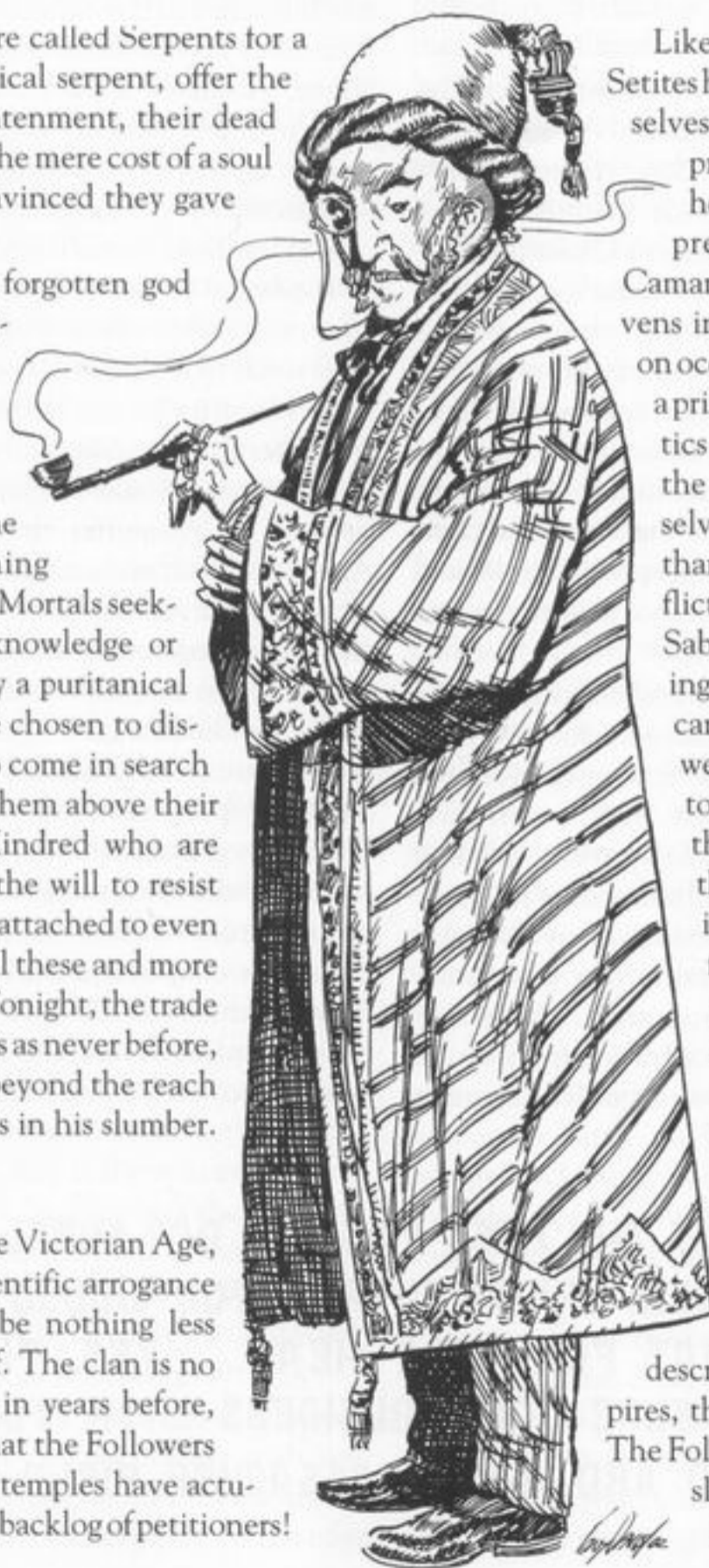
Followers of SET

The Followers of Set are called Serpents for a reason. They, like the Biblical serpent, offer the Kindred knowledge, enlightenment, their dead heart's desire — and all for the mere cost of a soul that many Kindred are convinced they gave up years ago.

These worshipers of a forgotten god are perhaps the most distrusted of the clans, yet in the Victorian nights, as all the world seems to hunger for the tiniest scraps of ancient lore, the Setites find the other vampires approaching them more often than ever. Mortals seeking a taste of forbidden knowledge or pleasures rendered taboo by a puritanical society; neonates who have chosen to disbelieve the wrong tale, who come in search of secrets that will elevate them above their domineering sires; elder Kindred who are convinced that they have the will to resist the lures that are inevitably attached to even the smallest Setite favor. All these and more are the Serpents' clientele. Tonight, the trade in secrets and in souls thrives as never before, and in the shadowy places beyond the reach of science, a dark god smiles in his slumber.

Overview

The Setites consider the Victorian Age, with all its social mores, scientific arrogance and occult fascination to be nothing less than a gift from Set himself. The clan is no more trusted tonight than in years before, but so many seek services that the Followers of Set provide, some Setite temples have actually found themselves with a backlog of petitioners!



Like the other independent clans, the Setites have little interest in placing themselves under the yoke of either of the two primary sects. Unlike the others, however, the Serpents show a clear preference for dealing with the Camarilla. Some Setites make their havens in Camarilla cities, and some few, on occasion, even hold positions among a prince's retinue! The backbiting politics and underhanded maneuvers of the Camarilla Kindred lend themselves far more to Setite "persuasions" than do the more openly violent conflicts of the Sabbat. Furthermore, the Sabbat shows little interest in obeying the laws of prestation; the Setites can do little to wrap their victims in webs of favor if the vampires refuse to acknowledge their debt. Finally, the Sabbat's hostile attitude toward the Antediluvians does not sit well in the bellies of a clan that is founded upon not only serving, but worshiping one of those ancients.

Although the Setite reputation is not quite as pervasive as that of the Assamites, a vast portion of the Kindred has still pigeonholed the Serpents as devious, dishonest and altogether untrustworthy. Of course, this description applies to almost all vampires, the Setites are quick to point out. The Followers of Set are wounded by such slanderous accusations. Dishonest? Untrustworthy? When was the last

time a Follower of Set went back on an agreement? Obviously, every barrel has its bad apples, but by and large, when one of the clan makes a promise, then, by Set, he delivers. When was the last time a Setite refused to work with someone who couldn't properly pay back a boon or a favor? Why, the Serpents bend over backward to ensure that all who deal with them come away happy! Yes, it is true that the Setites offer Kindred and kine alike the chance to taste forbidden pleasures — drugs, sex, exotic vitae — and to acquire wealth and power through means that are rather less than legal. But is that not, after all, exactly what these people wanted? The Followers of Set offer those who come to them exactly what they ask for. How, then, does this make them evil?

Most Kindred don't lend much credence to such arguments, yet they still return to the Setites again and again, convinced that they, unlike all the others before them, are clever enough to avoid being trapped in the clan's web of favors and prestation. Occasionally, one of them is even right.

Many among the Kindred still assume that Setites prance around garbed in ceremonial robes and bedecked with snake-themed jewelry and holy regalia. Some of the clan react to this stereotype by "dressing down," as it were. The vast majority of Followers attempt to blend in with their surroundings, and one is more likely to see a Setite garbed in a frock coat and top hat (where such is appropriate) than in a gold headdress or coiled in a nest of serpents. The Setites are expert at inserting themselves unseen into another clan's territory and slowly working to undermine it from within (assuming that's their goal, of course). As often as not, Setite interference is never even suspected, simply because the Serpents erect no snake-themed temples and refuse to wander about displaying their clan affiliation for all and sundry.

Some few Serpents choose to go the other way, however, playing up their image rather than attempting to downplay it. These are primarily Setites who either dwell in Egypt itself or else are deliberately attempting to attract the gullible to various mystic cults in England and Western Europe. Even they do not wander down the bank of the Thames or past the Eiffel Tower in such garments, however.

In either case, many Kindred are startled to discover how polite and genuine the Setites seem. Obviously, this is only a tendency, not a steadfast rule — Followers of Set are as individual as any given Kindred. Still, vampires who expect a slimy con artist or snake-oil salesman are surprised to be met with a truly affable reception. Even more shockingly, this amiability is absolutely authentic; Setites have been known to perform emergency favors

for their "friends" without ever asking a boon in return. Those who claim that this is all part of the act to draw victims in closer, or that the Followers are concerned merely with the effort they've already put into a potential victim, are simply cynical, or so say the Setites, anyway.

The Setites, as much as they might claim otherwise, are not immune to their own wiles. In these nights, the true worship of Set has become diluted within the clan. For every truly devout Follower, another uses his power over other Kindred to acquire exactly the same sorts of material pleasures he uses to tempt others — wealth, power, blood. Nor do the fangs of the Serpents strike only at those outside their own ranks. The web of favors and debts and enmities that binds the clan together is at least as convoluted as that which binds them to the Kindred as a whole.

Domain

Only a few regions in the world have domains where the Setites hold substantial power as a clan. Although they can be found in nearly every Camarilla city and in several Sabbat-dominated regions, as well, the Kindred think of them as having little in the way of political strength.

This attitude is one the Setites take great pains to encourage, for it hides the true strength of the clan. Unlike other Kindred factions, the Setites maintain their power in small portions, preferring a small property in the domain of some other clan than an entire nation or a city of their own.

For example, the Setites hold substantial sway in the occult underground that thrives in Victoria's London. Given the depths of Setite lore, it is a simple matter for one of the Serpents to pass on to his cultists just enough "hidden knowledge" (real or imaginary, it hardly matters) to keep them coming back for more. Other Englishmen prove ever willing to sacrifice their "virtue" (a laughable concept to most Setites) for the simplest of pleasures. In a culture so stifled by taboo and excessive propriety as Victorian England, ladies and gentlemen of the upper class practically beg to be set free from the demands of society.

The same holds true for nearly every major city of Western Europe (save for Spain and other regions that are heavily dominated by the Sabbat). A temple here, an enclave there — somehow the Kindred of the world seem unable to comprehend that the Setite ability to acquire just a bit of power everywhere adds up to a far greater sum than if they were to wield power openly in any single region.

Oddly enough, little Setite presence exists in Paris in these last nights of the 19th century. This is not to say

that there are no Serpents in the City of Lights, merely that their numbers are surprisingly small. The attitude among the Followers of Set regarding Paris seems to be accurately summed up in the words of Adrian King, a Setite who wields substantial power in various occult organizations throughout the British Empire and Western Europe. "There is precious little," he has commented, "that we might accomplish in Paris that the Parisians have not already achieved."

Setite strength grows nightly in America. In New England and all along the East Coast, the nation stratifies itself into the very social classes it pretends to disdain. Many industrial families suddenly have more money than they know what to do with, which is a problem the Followers of Set are only too happy to help solve. Mere blocks away, the poor and disenfranchised — Chinamen and Indians who dare wear skin of the wrong tone, blacks who were under the mistaken impression that slavery had been outlawed and "true-blooded Americans" who have been put out of work by the vagaries of economics and the influx of foreign workers — seek escape from the pain of daily life. Alcohol and opium are common, the streets slowly but surely grow more violent by the night, and hatred and despair flow as easily as blood. It calls to the Setites like a siren's song, and they flock to America in droves, seeing their chance to intertwine themselves in the formation of an industrial superpower.

For all their efforts to remain hidden, however, some nations of the world, far from the main strength of either sect, do indeed harbor overt bastions of Setite power.

Despite the presence of the Camarilla and the greatest efforts of the Assamites, Egypt — the Setites' homeland — is still rife with worshipers of the Dark God. In Cairo, Izzat al-Khunzir leads Setite efforts to drive all other clans from the Nile region. His clanmate, an ancient named Kahina, is perhaps one of the world's foremost experts in Egyptian mysticism and Akhu blood magic. She and her allies possess secrets from Egypt's past that would tear the Kindred world apart were they ever to be revealed. Kahina's magics, and the Setite proclivity for misdirection and hidden allies, are instrumental in the clan's local war against the Assamites — a war that the Setites know full well they will lose should it ever come to anything as banal as a straightforward fight.

Beyond Cairo itself, however, the Setite dominance of the Egyptian night is largely uncontested. In small cities and ancient tombs, the Serpents labor for the glory of Set, cataloging and examining entire libraries of ancient lore. The mystic societies of London, to say nothing of the Tremere and other sorcerous Kindred, would sacrifice anything, commit any vile deed, for but

a few moments with these Setite treasures. The Setites offer them just such opportunities (restricted, of course, to the least harmful of the ancient writings), and all at the most reasonable of costs....

In India, a mysterious Setite bloodline called the Daitya boasts an entirely different relationship with its fellow Kindred than is the norm. The vampires of India define themselves not merely by clan, but by caste. As part of the Brahmin caste of rulers and religious leaders, the Daitya hold substantial power over India's Kindred. It is a position of which the Followers of Set would dearly love to take advantage, but Sundervere and the other powerful Daitya have so far proven unwilling to subjugate their own religious beliefs in favor of some Egyptian god venerated by their cousins. Thus, while the Setites have a sizable presence on the subcontinent, it is questionable as to whether the main body of the clan has any real authority in the region.

Nor is India the only part of the world where Setite relations benefit the clan less than might be expected. In South America, a bloodline called the Tlacique once ruled as gods over Aztec and Mayan temples, wielding power over their mortal servitors unhindered by any Masquerade. Circumstantial and anecdotal evidence suggests a link between this bloodline — now extinct, slaughtered by the Sabbat in the years after the arrival of the Europeans in the New World — and the Followers of Set. It is a tenuous connection at best, but the Setites use it to stake a claim to the region, and several of their number now make their homes among the poverty-stricken and, thus, easily tempted natives.

Interests

If the Setites have a goal that binds most of the clan, it is the veneration and eventual awakening of Set himself. This involves far more than the "corruption" of other vampires and the chanting of mystic rituals in hidden temples.

Like the Assamites — with whom the Setites have more in common than either clan will ever acknowledge — the Followers of Set include several Kindred who spend much of their time traveling the globe, searching for the magics of ages and cultures long gone. Some of these archeologist-mystics truly have the goals of the clan at heart, while others seek only to increase their own power and prestige, but almost all are nigh-fanatical in their pursuit of secrets. From Egypt and northern Africa to Indian ruins to the libraries of English collectors who know not what they possess, these Setites rarely announce their clan allegiance, fully aware that many vampires refuse to deal with the "Serpents." Some have even worked alongside Assamite knowledge-seekers

(again, without revealing their pedigree) or cooperated in research with the Tremere.

One faction of these wanderers, led by a Setite scholar named Amelia Mapleridge, has set about studying serpent symbolism throughout the world's mythologies and religions. The snake in the Garden of Eden, the Midgard Serpent of Norse myth, the snake Loa Damballah-wedo of Haitian Voudoun, the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl and countless others form the basis of an enormous scholarly investigation. Mapleridge's goals are not nearly so mundane as the advancement of knowledge. She believes that by solidly connecting Set to other religions of the world, she can greatly increase the power of Setite sorcery, itself a religious pursuit. She has had little success to date, but her research has only just begun.

Despite these nomadic searchers, the clan's mystic focus remains, of course, on its homeland of Egypt, where the greatest Setite sorcerers, such as Kahina, can still be found. Many Kindred believe that the Followers of Set know all there is to know of Egyptian lore, that every secret of the pharaohs is stored somewhere within the Serpents' great libraries. It is a flattering conceit and one the Setites encourage. The truth is that even the most ancient of their number mourn the magics lost in the centuries since the time of Set and devote themselves body and soul to their recovery.

Setite interest in Egypt is hardly limited to the acquisition of magic, however. The clan was birthed in the cradle of civilization. It is their home, their refuge, and they want it back. They see their war with the Assamites, and even Izzat al-Khunzir's struggle with the Camarilla, as self-defense. Not all the local Setites are as fanatic as al-Khunzir himself. Some would prefer to work with Prince Bey, to whisper to him and guide him as they do so many other Camarilla princes. This would grant them an ally against the Assamites, a far less easily manipulated foe. Further, these Setites maintain, it would put a buffer between them and their foes, making the clan less of a target for those who covet Egypt. This difference of opinion has not yet caused any real schism amongst the Setites of Cairo — the sheer number of their enemies makes any such infighting a self-defeating proposition — but it does somewhat hamper their ability to function efficiently.

The Setites of other Egyptian cities, who lack al-Khunzir's xenophobic fanaticism, tend to take a more moderate approach. Most of them acknowledge that the British (and therefore the Camarilla) are unlikely to be purged from Egypt any time soon. Better, then, to make themselves useful, even indispensable, to the newcomers, thus ensuring that they hold the true reins





of power and, not coincidentally, obtain a useful ally against the Sabbat, whose Noddist faction has its own fascination with Egypt and the Holy Land.

The Followers of Set send frequent emissaries to powerful Daitya such as Sundervere, hoping to parlay that bloodline's established influence over the Indian subcontinent into a base of power for their own efforts. Initial contact between the two branches of the clan proves less than conducive to Setite objectives. The fundamentalist worshipers of Set proved as ineffective at converting the natives to their own way of thinking as most of the European Christian missionaries. More recent attempts have been somewhat more promising. Rather than attempt to sway the Daitya to their own beliefs, the Setites now approach them as they would any other useful tool, by offering them aid in their own objectives and attempting to convince them that they have much in common.

As such, the Setites in India find themselves in a position they normally strive mightily to avoid: open warfare. In order to prove their sincerity to their cousins, some of the Serpents have joined with the native Kindred in attempting to drive the British out of India. To date, their efforts have been subtle, and they have remained hidden. Should the Camarilla ever learn that Setites number among their enemies in the British colonies, the clan may have a substantial amount of explaining to do. The Serpents are worried, too, by the attitudes of the Daitya. Unlike their parent clan, which eschews direct confrontation where at all possible, the Daitya consider themselves demons, charged with a sacred duty

to cause death, destruction and misery on a wide scale. If they draw too much Kindred scrutiny, outsiders might eventually learn that they are relatives of the Followers of Set, and that would expose the Setites to questions they prefer not to answer.

Those who operate in less conflict-prone regions have an easier time of it than their brethren in Egypt and India. In England, the Setites thrive as never before. Like fungi, they take root in the dark places of the city, away from the light — and, not coincidentally, away from the attentions of the other Kindred. The Masons, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn — every occult society draws the attention of the Serpents, and several are little more than blood cults for ambitious Followers. Some, as already mentioned, come in search of the occasional kernel of true mystic knowledge, but most use these cults only as a way of chipping away at the so-called moral fiber of Victorian society. These Setites engage in a three-way cold war with the Assamites and the Tremere, each of whom also has substantial interest in these organizations, and the Serpents devote almost as much effort to thwarting the growth of their rivals as they do to establishing their own influence.

While London is a popular haven for Setites, however, it is hardly the only one. Throughout Western Europe and the British Isles, the Setites have a particular taste for cities that have only now reached the foundation of their industrial maturity. A growth of industry almost invariably results in new wealth for some and abominable working conditions and impoverishment for others — both conditions the Followers are only too anxious to exploit. In such cities, Setites rarely bother to

approach the Kindred directly. By sinking their talons into an obscenely large portion of the local kine, they can sway the Kindred by influencing their source of blood. Several such cities, despite an apparently strong prince, are actually guided by the Followers of Set, who can threaten labor strikes, riots and other such impediments to the smooth operation of the city — and thus to the prince's own political and economic resources.

In the last nights of the 1800s, the Setites still hold much influence in the islands of the Caribbean, although much of that territory has since been taken by the clan's hated *antitribu* brethren, the Serpents of the Light. Here, the Setites revel in their mystic natures, bound only by a flimsy shadow of the Masquerade. More Setite sorcerers dwell here than in any other single territory besides Egypt. No other single clan claims as great a presence here, nor as strong an influence. That said, the Setites of the Caribbean struggle to maintain that power. Not only do their Sabbat cousins grow stronger nightly, but the Followers in and around Haiti have also found themselves under attack by a small but powerful sect of Voudoun-practicing Kindred who seem all but immune to the clan's normal techniques of temptation and subversion.

Perhaps the greatest prize for the Setites in the Victorian Age, however, is the New World, the self-proclaimed "land of opportunity." Opportunity indeed, for the swiftly growing number of Serpents who make this land their home.

The United States, particularly in the East, has all the benefits of a rapidly developing European city and then some. It, too, has the hurried rise in industrialism, the rapidly growing gulf between the haves and the have-nots. It is, furthermore, a nation still unsure of its identity, looking for a direction in the world. It carries far less of a traditional mindset, and while this means that Americans do not have as strict a social order to rebel against, it also means they do not have the same fear of societal disapproval restraining them from experimenting with the delights the Setites can offer. The nation suffers a

strong undercurrent of racial hatred and tension, and a manipulative Serpent can easily channel that simmering resentment into a useful tool, either undermining her enemies or creating a driven, violence-prone agent.

Even better, where the Followers of Set are concerned, is the American government. It is hardly more than a century old, truly an administration in its infancy in Kindred terms. While many Camarilla (and, to a lesser extent, Sabbat) vampires already have established connections and influence, their authority is not yet so pervasive as it is within European governments. The Setites, who have always been willing to start small and work patiently, build, taking advantage of the minor functionaries the other Kindred have so far overlooked. Further, those officials the Setites do manage to suborn are often far more loyal to their masters than the catspaws of other vampires, for the Serpents can often offer them far more than "mere" money and vitae.

The American West offers nearly as much opportunity, despite its relative lack of important domains. The nascent princes of the region face numerous threats, so many that they could not possibly take the time or effort to root out the Setites in their domains even if they wanted to. Most don't want to, for they need all the allies they can get. The Assamites, as mentioned above, sometimes hire themselves out to these desperate Kindred, but the Setites help them for free (or rather, for a simple favor down the road). Even those vampires who would normally never deal with the Followers of Set find they cannot afford to turn them down under the circumstances. It is a dangerous environment — the Camarilla requires help in the Wild West for a reason! — but those Setites who survive to earn the gratitude of the locals have the unique opportunity to insinuate themselves into Camarilla territory from the beginning, molding and guiding the developing power structure as they see fit. This applies not only to the Kindred social order, but to the swiftly growing cities of the kine as well. Some of the more observant (and paranoid) Kindred have begun to wonder, in fact, who really holds the balance of power in the American West.

Oh, no, please. Allow me
— Adrian King, Setite Freemason

Giovanni

They are greedy, not merely for material wealth or influence, but for true status, true power — so much so that they murdered an entire clan and took its place. They are isolated, inbred, incestuous, determined to share that power with none outside the family. They command the spirits of the dead, wield a source of knowledge, a well of secrets, the likes of which no other clan can possibly hope to match.

These are their good points.

None are so universally reviled as the Giovanni clan. No other branch of Caine's tree is so loathed on a visceral, instinctive level. For all that they scoff at mortal mores, still the Kindred have absorbed more of the kine's attitudes than they admit. Incest, necrophilia, patricide — the Giovanni are guilty of all these and more, and the Kindred recoil from them like dinner guests from a plate of maggots.

And maggot-like, the Giovanni feast on the flesh of Kindred and mortal society, burrowing inward toward the weakened, sickly places. The Necromancers are a neutral clan not because they fear the wrath of the Camarilla or the Sabbat, but because they know, like the scavengers to which they are so often compared, that regardless of who wins, they will always have the losers to feed from.



Overview

If most of the Kindred of the Victorian Age had their way, they would happily go from now until Gehenna without ever setting eyes on the Giovanni, and if the Giovanni didn't need the other Kindred to advance their own agendas, that feeling would certainly prove entirely mutual.

Unlike the other independent clans, the Giovanni neutrality is not entirely by their own choice, but mandated by outsiders. The Camarilla, in essence, gave the Giovanni a choice — neutrality or extinction. That their "enforced" neutrality serves the Giovanni's purposes anyway does not change the fact that some younger members of the clan resent the Camarilla for imposing it.

By and large, however, the clan simply seeks to go about its business. Drawing upon their roots as a mortal mercantile family, having watched carefully through the years in which they were but a part of a now-extinct bloodline, the Giovanni have learned in a relatively short time what some of the older clans have still failed to grasp: power comes from the kine. Already thoroughly entrenched in the Italian economy before they ever became vampires, the Giovanni spread their fiscal

influence throughout Europe and, in recent years, to the New World as well. The elders of the clan appear to have some greater goal in mind, some purpose to which their domination of the financial markets is only a means. For most of the clan, however, the wealth and power their position grants them is more than sufficient reward in its own right.

Tonight, even without their necromantic abilities, the Giovanni are potentially one of the most powerful of clans (though whether they could have attained that status without their Necromancy is dubious at best). Only the Brujah, the Toreador, the Ventrue and the Lasombra can claim, as a clan, a greater sphere of influence in the mortal world, and at the rate the Giovanni are expanding, they may surpass at least some of those clans within the next several decades. This power they wield encourages other Kindred to seek them out, to request alliances or even boons, despite the disgust with which the Giovanni are viewed. Many vampires feel that any clan capable of making loans in the hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling, that may one night soon be capable of toppling nations through fiscal manipulation, is worth having as a collaborator regardless of its moral declivities.

Others, however, will have nothing to do with the Giovanni, regardless of circumstances. One might imagine that creatures who survive by feasting on the blood of innocents would have grown beyond the grasp of social and sexual taboo, but one would be wrong. The Kindred are greatly disturbed by the Giovanni tendency toward incest. The clan acknowledges that new blood must be brought into the family at times (and it has, indeed, absorbed entire sub-families across the world), but the prevailing attitude is still that those of pure Giovanni blood — that is, those with two Giovanni parents — are superior to those who are “tainted” with lesser parentage. To outsiders, it is unnatural. To the Giovanni, it’s the most logical thing in the world. They are, after all, a magically potent clan, and is not magic carried in the blood? Furthermore, breeding within the family is a tradition that can be found throughout the histories of most of the world’s royal families; as the Giovanni are clearly the highest of the clans, should they do any less?

But then, what is one to expect from a clan that also appreciates the value of intercourse with the dead?

Ultimately, it is neither incest nor influence that defines the clan. It is not moral revulsion, but a creeping dread, a fear of contagion and unknown things, that keeps so many vampires away from the Giovanni. Rather than shaking mankind’s fear of death by virtue of their own undead state, the Kindred fear it more than ever. They have eternity to lose, rather than a few short

decades, and most are fully convinced that an afterlife of torment awaits them beyond the veil. The Giovanni, however, do not fear death. They study it, they court it, and they treat with creatures from beyond the grave.

These wraiths are perhaps the Giovanni’s primary tool, without which they might never have risen above the status of a minor, ineffectual bloodline. The ability to question the dead associates of rivals to ascertain plans and abilities, to send nigh-undetectable spies to observe everything from company meetings to criminal gatherings to Elysium courts — surely even the most slow-witted of vampires could find thousands of uses for such abilities. And the Giovanni elders are far from slow-witted.

Some Kindred believe, particularly in these nights of scientific discovery and occult fascination, that the Giovanni are playing with forces they cannot possibly control, that there will be — must be — a price to be paid down the road. The Giovanni concur wholeheartedly. They’re simply determined to ensure that it is someone else who pays it.

Domain

There can be no doubt in anyone’s mind (despite contrary propaganda in which the Camarilla occasionally indulges) that the Giovanni hold almost the entirety of Italy at least somewhat under their sway. That they are the dominant clan in Venice, none will argue. This city is their home — and, if rumor is to be believed, the haven of Augustus Giovanni, the clan founder, himself.

No single leader, no “prince,” claims Venice, the boasts of the Camarilla to the contrary. Rather, the job of ensuring the smooth functioning of the city falls to a select group of ancillae and relatively young elders, as Augustus and the eldest Giovanni have far too much to do worrying about clan activities worldwide. Although no concerted effort to keep all other vampires out of the city (particularly the Nosferatu, the removal of whom would require far more effort than the Giovanni are willing to devote to such an endeavor) has been undertaken, the clan makes no secret of the fact that an outside vampire attempting to seize undue influence or power within Venice will meet with a very swift death — possibly followed by an eternity of servitude.

Most of Italy’s other major cities are claimed by the Camarilla (though notable exceptions, such as Archbishop Giangaleazzo’s domain in Milan, exist). They have princes, they have primogen, and they “graciously permit” the Giovanni to operate in their territories.

The Giovanni smirk and allow the Camarilla fools their illusions. There are few cities in Italy where the Giovanni do not wield supreme power, in terms of Kindred policy and politics. They have too many con-

tacts within Italy's local governments, banking establishments and merchant families, too much influence over the nation's fiscal lifeblood, to be ignored. Their spies, living, undead and just plain dead, keep them apprised of everything that occurs in these so-called "Camarilla territories," and they permit nothing to move forward that is not suitably in line with their objectives.

Only two exceptions exist, two holes in their web of authority that drapes Italy like a shroud. One is Rome, or, more specifically, the sovereign nation of the Vatican. As the spiritual center of the one of the world's largest and strongest religions, the Vatican is a bastion of True Faith. It, too, is home to the Society of Leopold, an order of vampire hunters that traces its roots back to the Spanish Inquisition. The Giovanni arguably hold more power in Rome than any other clan — their influence over the nation's financial markets permits them some degree of sway in the city government — but that power is still quite minimal. For all intents and purposes, Rome is free of Giovanni (and all Kindred) manipulation.

The second exception, and one that angers the Giovanni far more, is the island of Malta. Currently a British colony, the island's long-standing ties to Italy include it in the domain to which the Giovanni believe they are entitled. The island is, however, the stronghold of Don Antonio Cardona, a powerful elder Ventrue. He and his brood have successfully warded off the questing tendrils of the Giovanni for years. Some mysterious barrier, possibly the work of Cardona's Tremere allies, possibly of some more mysterious origin, wards Malta from the eyes of the Necromancers' wraiths as well. The Giovanni simmer with anger, and some of the ancillae of Venice have made the acquisition of Malta a personal project, but to date, the island remains firmly in Cardona's (and, thus, Ventrue) hands.

Giovanni influence extends far beyond Italy, however, even if their visible presence diminishes substantially beyond their native borders. Greece boasts a growing Giovanni population. At this time, the Necromancers in that region seem more concerned with avoiding attention than actually accomplishing anything. Their only

contact with the local Camarilla has been entirely cordial. Some claim they were actually invited by Athens' Malkavian prince, though what purpose he might have had for issuing such an invitation (assuming, as a Malkavian, he can be said to have had any purpose at all) is unclear.

The Giovanni move slowly into Germany and Austria-Hungary as well, particularly in light of the new Triple Alliance between those two nations and Italy. Their efforts in Austria have gone largely unrewarded to date. For rather obvious reasons, the Giovanni are leery of attracting the attention of the Tremere in the Witches' own territory, but the lack of comparable sorcerous

opposition in Germany has emboldened the Giovanni somewhat. It can hardly be said that the Necromancers have any overwhelming authority here, for the Camarilla's hold is both ancient and firm, but they have managed to insinuate themselves into various aspects of the mercantile community. What influence they have is used to cement the alliance between Germany and Italy, as a strengthened relationship can only be good for Italy's financial state, and that makes it good for the Giovanni.

The Necromancers are also fascinated by the growing banking industry in Switzerland. By making several arrangements with Prince Giess of Bern — it is relatively difficult for an outside clan to move agents into a nation as small as Switzerland without attracting notice — the Giovanni have obtained permission to "dabble" in several of these nascent organizations. Giess, whose expertise lies in the field of Kindred boons and prestation, has not yet fully realized the power the Giovanni can wield with their influence over international banking. If and when she does, she will no doubt attempt to expel the Giovanni from Swiss banking or else demand a share of their influence, but by that time, they may already be too heavily involved with the banks for her to easily remove.

The East Coast of the United States is currently experiencing the largest influx of immigrants since its founding. The Italian population of major cities such as New York grows ever larger, and the Giovanni, who



certainly recognize an opportunity when they see it, come with the immigrants. The Necromancers possess only a relatively small amount of power in the United States as of yet, but the Giovanni are patient. The industry of this fledgling country grows in leaps and bounds, and some already theorize that the world is witnessing the maturation of an eventual global power. The Giovanni, only too happy to provide loans to Kindred and kine alike to fuel that expansion, fully intend to be there to take advantage when the nation reaches its potential.

Wise Kindred avoid falling into this particular trap, but many vampires still believe that all Giovanni are, in fact, named Giovanni or, at least, that they share a common ancestry. They do not realize that the clan has absorbed entire families into its body through marriages and other, less wholesome, arrangements, thus expanding not only its abilities, but also its territory.

The Dunsirn, a family of Scottish bankers (who also happened to be cannibals even before they became vampires), hold substantial influence throughout Scotland and even in the financial centers of England and Ireland. The Pisanob, too, grant the Giovanni new territories — in this case, tracts of the South American jungle and numerous impoverished villages. While these hardly add to the Giovanni's fiscal might, the Pisanob have access to ancient magics, and the spirits of the region are powerful indeed.

Interests

The Giovanni are experts at putting on a unified face when dealing with other clans, and there are, in fact, specific objectives to which every member of the clan is expected to devote some amount of effort. The truth, however, is that Clan Giovanni is a nest of intrigue and personal ambition, with various factions and individual Kindred pursuing their own goals, striving with one another for the elders' favor. So long as these political maneuvers do not threaten the clan as a whole, Augustus permits and even encourages this competition.

Perhaps the two most obvious clan-wide endeavors are the searches for more political and more necromantic power. Already well ensconced in the banking and fiscal sectors of many nations, the Giovanni potentially have more money at their fingertips than any other clan except the Ventrue, but it's not enough. The Ventrue have allies, and they have had thousands of years in which to establish their presence. The Giovanni have neither. If the clan is to



survive into the 20th century and beyond, it must wield more power than any other clan — for if conflict ever erupts, it will be far more than one clan that stands against the Necromancers.

The Giovanni face something of a dilemma in trying to expand their power. Most of the industrialized nations of the world already have a substantial Kindred presence in their business arenas. The Camarilla sank its fangs into mortal affairs from the first nights of its existence. The Sabbat, though far less concerned with the kine, still knows a powerful tool when it sees one. Both sects, and all their member clans, are jealous of their authority and are unlikely to share with an outsider. The Giovanni already held much of Italy's financial might before becoming Kindred, and they have parlayed that influence — through favors granted, hostile buyouts and loans called in — into a certain amount of power in those nations that deal with Italian merchants and businesses. Their ghostly spies grant them a further edge, knowledge of their rival's plans, strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, growth of Giovanni mercantile interests showed signs of slowing in recent decades.

No longer. With the emergence of the United States as a growing industrial power in the years prior to its civil war, the Giovanni developed a new approach. The Camarilla is mighty indeed in its traditional domains, but it is not quick to recognize new opportunity. When the Giovanni seek to establish influence over a growing region, such as the US or developing communities

Tearing the Shroud

Although even most Giovanni are ignorant of such things, Augustus and the elders of the clan have a specific purpose in mind for the clan's growing power, both financial and mystical. These elders seek nothing less than the destruction of the barrier that separate this world from the next and divide life from death. With the Shroud torn down, they believe, Giovanni mastery of the spirits of the dead will grant them uncontested dominion over this world.

Augustus and his brood know that they still lack the power to attempt this act of ultimate destruction. Their control over the dead is not yet absolute; their financial might not yet sufficient to topple civilization as it stands. Some of the Giovanni elders are not as patient as their founder, however, and more than one faction of the clan constantly seeks ways to expedite the process. Should they succeed, Gehenna itself — still a distant threat to the Kindred of the Victorian Age — may well come early.

throughout Europe, they face not the gathered strength of an ancient sect, but individual Kindred attempting to seize new ground. The Necromancers have the resources to grant enormous assets to a nascent business or even to prop up a shaky government, and all they ask is a small percentage of ownership. As the 19th century draws to a close, as younger nations rise to stand beside or even supplant the powers of old, the Giovanni once more see their star on the rise.

Giovanni efforts toward increasing their necromantic faculties are less visible. Unlike many other occult-oriented clans, the Giovanni do not scour the globe for ancient secrets. They developed their own powers, invented their own style of Necromancy, and by God, they'll improve on it in the same way. Experimentation, not research, is the Giovanni approach, and it is, by and large, a successful one. The clan frequently develops new powers, new rituals and new methods for contacting and controlling the dead. Its body of lore is still not nearly so large as the Thaumaturgy of the Tremere or even the sorcery of the Setites, but it grows at a far faster rate.

While they do not specifically seek out new forms of Necromancy, however, the Giovanni are willing enough to adopt them when they are discovered by accident. The Pisanob, a South American branch of the Giovanni that was Embraced into the clan in the 16th century, was assimilated in order to obtain their own powers over the dead. They are one of the few sub-families adopted for that purpose. Most others, such as the Scottish Dunsirn, were taken in because of their financial acumen and connections.

In fact, a small but vital group of Giovanni, led by Isabel Giovanni and consisting mostly of younger, business-savvy ancillae and neonates, has been tasked by Augustus himself with the duty of seeking out new families who might prove both useful to the Giovanni and depraved or power-hungry enough to function as part of the clan. They have found few viable candidates in the years since the Dunsirn became part of the fold, but the vampires have their eyes on several families that seem to have potential, including some in the United States.

Particularly in the United States, but also in Eastern Europe where Camarilla domain gives way to the ancient territories of the Tzimisce lords, one faction of the clan accumulates wealth and favors by offering its services to both sides of the Camarilla/Sabbat conflict. Its wraiths spy on the activities of one sect, revealing information that the Giovanni then sell to the other. Of course, as neither the Camarilla nor the Sabbat has the means of determining the veracity of such information, the

Giovanni have also been known to sell false intelligence, a lucrative if dangerous endeavor. Especially in the western US, where the Kindred lack the resources of their East Coast and European brethren, the Giovanni are pleased to supply capital and even equipment and weaponry during sieges and other brief but violent periods of open conflict, in exchange for future consideration. This sort of activity technically violates the clan's agreement to remain removed from Kindred affairs, but as their neutrality is maintained (they work for both sides, after all), and as they already hold enough boons and favors to make unlife troublesome for those with whom they have dealt, no one is likely to penalize them for the breach any time soon.

The Necromancers hardly limit their intelligence-gathering capabilities to the Kindred. Their wraiths bring them vital intelligence on the activities of mortal concerns as well. Governments, businesses and militaries all have secrets they wish to keep. That means that there are those willing to pay for those secrets. The Giovanni gladly sell or trade such information to rival governments and businesses, dragging their "customers" deeper and deeper into their debt, and thus, the clan's influence over the kine grows ever stronger.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the clan's mystical expertise, the Giovanni are no more immune to the occult fascinations of the Victorian era than anyone else. Several small factions have appeared within the clan, determined to stretch the boundaries of what is believed possible with Necromancy. One favorite theory among the clan's younger members states that vampires are, in fact, nothing more than the spirits of the dead once again inhabiting their own bodies. If this is true, these Giovanni maintain, then it should be possible, with the proper study and training, to use Necromancy on Kindred, not just on wraiths! They point to the clan's faculty with Dominate, a Discipline that can control other vampires, as supportive evidence. Most elders of the clan scoff at the theory, but they allow their younger brethren to pursue their research, and even support them on an occasional basis, just on the off chance that there may be some truth to it.

Weird Science

Readers familiar with the history and rules of the **Vampire** game and the **World of Darkness** know that, officially, both these theories are so much hogwash. On the other hand, who cares about "officially"?

Your chronicle is your own, and your plots are limited only by your ideas, not by our rules. Let either or both of these theories have some basis in fact, if you like. It'll certainly give your players something to think about.

Another equally controversial theory, with an equally fanatic group of followers within the clan, maintains that as the Underworld does not follow established laws of physics, there is no reason to assume that time itself has any meaning there. These Necromancers have so far failed in their attempts to contact spirits of those who have yet to die, and thus gain a unique insight into the years to come, but this hasn't stopped them from trying.

In their efforts toward increased influence throughout kine society, the Giovanni have never been shy about breaking mortal laws, but it is only in recent years that the clan has begun to consider criminal activity as a viable arena unto itself, rather than simply a means to some other end. In Sicily, what began over a century ago as a simple extortion racket has become a criminal organization with agents throughout all levels of business and government. Amadeo Schieri is credited with being the first of the Giovanni to establish any real degree of influence within one of these Mafia Families (though there were certainly others of the clan with Mafia contacts before him), and he is currently in charge of Giovanni efforts toward strengthening those ties. It is not an easy task; most of the Mafia Families are resistant to working with outsiders, even from among the Sicilian population, and the organization is proving remarkably resistant to manipulation by Kindred. Still, Schieri and his associates have seen first hand the potential power and profit inherent in such an organization. If the Giovanni are unable to build their influence any further in the Mafia, the clan may soon run similar large-scale smuggling and extortion operations on their own.

*You seem determined to die rather than cooperate with us.
I assure you, that is not an either/or proposition.
— Graziella Latane, Giovanni matron*

RAVNOS

Even a society that (nominally) accepts such hideous creatures as the Nosferatu and madmen such as the Malkavians must have its outcasts, its pariahs. If the Ravnos did not exist already, the Kindred might well have to create them. Sneak thieves and vagrants, liars and cheats, itinerant wanderers and slippery con artists, this clan of nomads serves as the dumping ground for Kindred prejudice. Like the Gypsies with whom they are so often connected — in the minds of their hosts, if not always in reality — the Ravnos find that they are welcome nowhere, often for no better reason than because they are welcomed nowhere.

And like those Gypsies, there are just enough Ravnos who play to type, who reinforce those prejudices by displaying the worst of Kindred behavior, that those who do not will never be able to shed the stigma of their Embrace into the "wrong" clan.

Yet the Ravnos are not so easily dismissed as most Kindred would believe — a lesson their oppressors throughout Europe, and the Camarilla invaders in India, are starting to learn all too well.

Overview

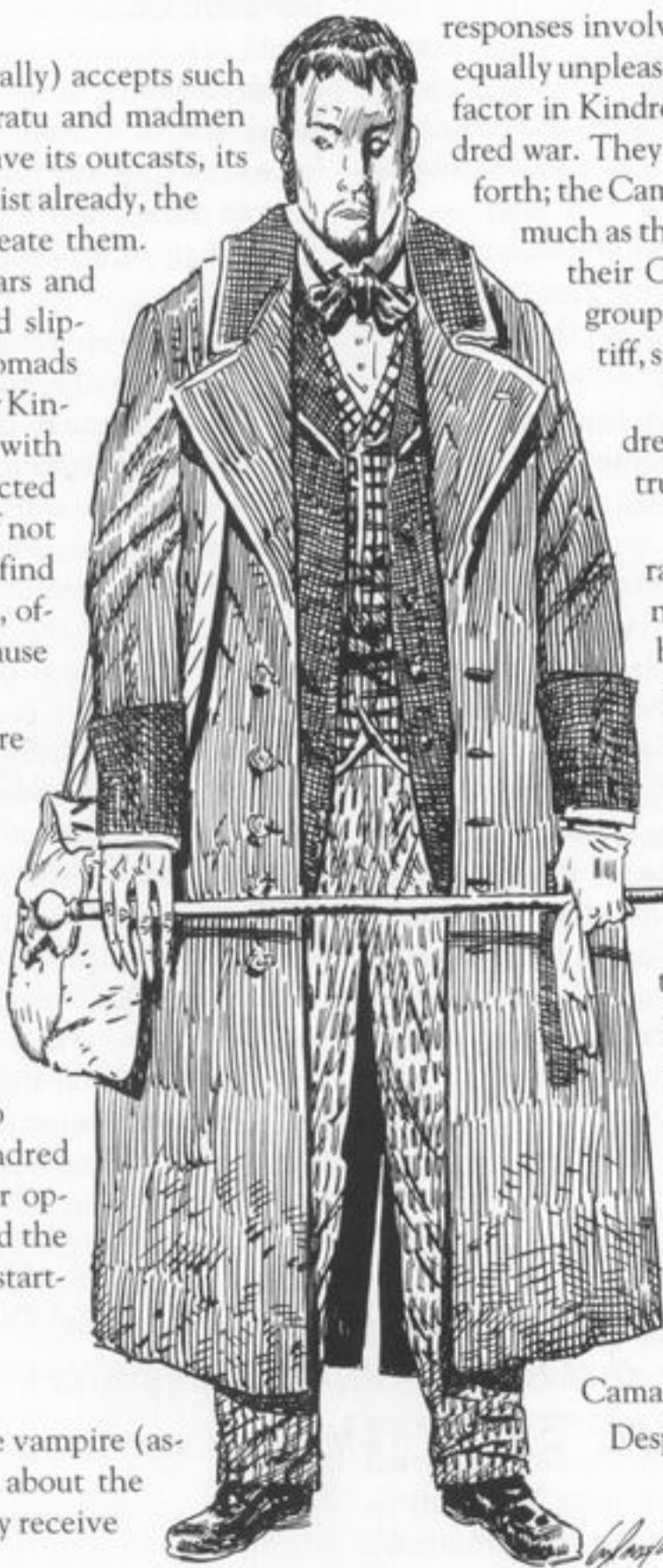
Were one to ask an average vampire (assuming there is such a thing) about the Ravnos, one would undoubtedly receive

responses involving Gypsies, lies, theft and other equally unpleasant epithets. The Ravnos are not a factor in Kindred politics and only rarely in Kindred war. They are scoffed at, stepped on, driven forth; the Camarilla especially treats the Ravnos much as the Western nations of Europe treat their Gypsy "cousins." Surely, no single group of Kindred, save perhaps the Caitiff, suffers less respect than the Ravnos.

This is, of course, because the Kindred have no idea what it is they're truly dealing with.

It would not be entirely inaccurate to claim that there are, in fact, not one, but two separate Ravnos bloodlines. The first presents the face of the clan known to most of the Kindred: itinerants and wanderers, nomads who leave all sorts of trouble in their wake and who are hardly worth the effort required to drive off. The other half of the clan, one that has remained almost hidden for centuries, is, in fact, the larger branch. The Indian Ravnos, who make up almost the entirety of the Kindred Vaisya (merchant) caste, as well as a large portion of the Kshatriya (warrior) caste, operate as a far more cohesive unit — and it seems that most of their efforts are aimed at driving the Camarilla out of their native lands.

Despite the prevalent stereotype, relatively few Ravnos find acceptance amongst the Gypsy families



(though those who do are often fanatical about protecting their "hosts" from poaching by other vampires). Many of the newest Embraces are not even of Gypsy stock. The Gypsy connection comes instead from shared attitudes and ideas. The Ravnos are renowned as tricksters, deceivers and thieves, all of which are applied equally, justified or not, to most Gypsies. The Ravnos are also largely nomadic. While some find themselves unable to find acceptance and, thus, remain vagrants through no desire of their own, the majority of this branch of the clan prefers an unlife of wandering.

The Ravnos do not, of course, view themselves as thieves or liars. More accurately, they don't view such titles with the same negative connotations as most Western minds do, be they Kindred or kine. The Ravnos have, to the last, an insurmountable need to flout the rules and conventions by which others live, to force others to see the world in a different light (even if that "different light" is something as mundane as "Damn it, my favorite necklace is missing!"). Most believe — though it is, for many, an unconscious belief, instilled in them through the power of the very blood that Embraced them — that constant change is the proper state of the world and that only through continual alteration of their environment and the laws of man and God can they make amends for their own unchanging, unnatural condition.

Some among the Deceivers take that belief a step further still, maintaining that the only way to restore the world to its natural state is to eliminate the static, unchanging Kindred entirely. Few Ravnos truly believe this doctrine of murder and genocide, but those who do make unlife that much more difficult for their less homicidal brethren.

This is not to say, of course, that the Ravnos are above profiting from their larcenous ways. Most are largely unaware that their urges come from any source beyond their own greed, and they remain, first and foremost, concerned with their own advancement, not with some metaphysical belief in the condition of the world around them.

Particularly in the Victorian era, a time of stringent social taboos and structured life (and unlife), the Ravnos take great delight in stirring things up. A single well chosen lie, clever theft or creative illusion can utterly destroy the reputation of the most high-minded socialite or tradition-bound Kindred. Nor are Camarilla princes likely to take punitive actions, save against the worst of offenders, for they know too well the Ravnos tradition of retaliation. The wise prince prefers to bite his lip and bear the short-term aggravation of a single Ravnos passing through, rather than risk the far greater chaos of an

entire coterie of the Deceivers launching a deliberate assault on his domain's stability.

Whereas the "Gypsy" Ravnos rarely act in concert — except for those aforementioned invasions of a hostile prince's city — the Indian branch of the clan has far more unity of purpose. Most of the native Ravnos are strongly opposed to the Camarilla presence in India, and they battle alongside many other Indian clans (including the Daitya Setites and a number of native Ventrue) to drive them out. Here, their illusions and skills at theft and deception are weapons of war, not mere tools of self-advancement or humiliation. Through tactics as subtle as disseminating misinformation through the careful use of Chimerstry and well-planned lies to direct assaults by warriors and demons that are only partially illusory, the Ravnos have become a substantial threat to the British invaders. The Camarilla Kindred, far more accustomed to the continental branch of the clan, never anticipated such powerful resistance from so "ineffective" a clan and have so far proven fatally slow in reacting to the Ravnos' methods.

Considering their disdain for the stagnant Kindred society, it is little surprise that the Western Ravnos have precious little use for either sect. The Camarilla is the worst offender when it comes to stagnating Kindred (and mortal) development, to say nothing of the ponderous number of laws Camarilla Kindred are forced to obey upon pain of ostracism, blood bond or Final Death, laws the Ravnos could never tolerate. On the other side of the war, the Sabbat's fascination with violence, though appearing to bring about the sorts of changes of which the Ravnos might well approve, in fact, succeeds only in perpetuating a vicious and bloody cycle. Of course, the Camarilla wants the Ravnos about as much as the Ravnos want them, and as the Sabbat accepts only those who are just as bloody minded, everyone is largely content with the clan's lack of political ties.

The Indian Ravnos, on the other hand, are far more willing to cooperate with outsiders, as the Indian caste system throws numerous Kindred of multiple clans together as brothers in faith. They are, however, no more likely than their brethren to join either of the primary sects, simply because these sects are already counted as the enemy.

It is worth noting that the two branches of the Ravnos clan rarely interact and that they tend not to get along well when they do. The nomadic Ravnos find they have little in common with the Indians — and even that their Indian cousins have become an integral part of the status quo on the subcontinent, a portion of the "establishment" that the Ravnos so vehemently loathe. The Indian Ravnos, on the other hand, find their itinerant

clanmates lacking in purpose and discipline, not to mention traitors to their faith and homeland. This mutual dislike rarely displays itself as open conflict. Rather, both sides are likely to either coldly ignore one another or to prank and harass each other until one gives up and leaves (or, rarely, until the contest becomes deadly). For all that, Ravnos from either side of the clan will bury their mutual antagonism and work together in the face of an outside threat. Whatever else they may be, they are still Ravnos.

Domain

Most Camarilla Kindred would find the notion of Ravnos domain to be an alien concept. The Deceivers are nomads, wanderers, vagabonds. Call them what you will, they do not even possess stable havens, let alone sufficient power in any one region to claim any sort of clan dominion. Some of those Kindred, particularly in Egypt and Eastern Europe, are slowly realizing how wrong that assessment is.

The Indian Ravnos are more likely than their cousins to claim particular territory as a unit. Many clans have members native to India, but the Ravnos (who originally hail from that region, according to cultural origin theories) represent one of the largest, if not the largest, Indian clans. The Ravnos have members throughout the castes, but they are found primarily amongst the Kshatriya and the Vaisya and, as such, occupy something of a middle ground in Indian Kindred society. While the Brahmin priestly caste is higher than most of the Ravnos, the Indian Deceivers still hold substantial power on the subcontinent. Many towns not yet occupied by British Kindred have Ravnos coterie dwelling in them, and even the largest of India's cities boast Ravnos amongst their "rebellious" natives (though most of these "resistance movements" consist of Daitya Setites, Brujah, Ventrue, Nosferatu and occasional hired or sympathetic Assamites more than they do Ravnos).

The greatest strength of the Indian Ravnos is in the wilds of the subcontinent, in tiny villages the British have yet to discover. While they leave true religious practice largely to the Brahmin, the Ravnos have no compunctions about using the faithful kine as weapons in their war. Many of the British Kindred believe that the Assamites have infiltrated numerous Indian cults such as the Thuggee, to use them as soldiers against outside Kindred and kine alike. While no single clan has any true control over the Thuggee (which has gone underground since the British supposedly exterminated it in the 1840s), it would be closer to the truth to say that the Ravnos, rather than the Assamites or anyone else, has the greatest involvement with that cult. Not that a cult of ritual

stranglers is much good against Kindred, of course, but it works well against the ghouls and other servants of those Kindred. Many of the Ravnos have contacts within the Indian royalty, and one particular vampire, called Surarihan, is said to hold several of the Indian rajas in blood thrall. This power is far more limited than once it was, however, as the Indians themselves no longer govern their own land.

The domains of the Western Ravnos are far less easily defined, but this doesn't mean they aren't to be found. In Eastern Europe, particularly in the wilds of Transylvania, some coterie of Ravnos still maintain agreements they and their grandsires have held with the Tzimisce since the Long Night. These Ravnos serve as the traveling eyes and ears of various vampire lords, gathering intelligence and performing the occasional assassination. Although they hold little direct authority on their own, a word to their masters can alter the course of governments.

In Western Europe and across the British Isles, the Gypsies travel in their colorful wagons, and some Ravnos do indeed move with them. Others wander the countries alone or in small Ravnos coterie. Some Ravnos have even made their havens with some of the traveling circuses that have become popular within the past decades. These hardly qualify as "domains" in their own right, but they provide a means of traveling through the territory of others and, in the case of the circuses or Gypsy caravans, a mobile herd upon which the Ravnos may allow others to feed, for a price.

The Ravnos presence in the Americas is growing, though at present, more Sabbat Ravnos stalk the New World than do members of the main clan. Those Ravnos traveling the United States either make their way in small groups or traveling shows or else wander out west where the princes have little choice but to tolerate their presence. Several small towns along the frontier are even dominated by the Ravnos, usurped from Camarilla Kindred who simply did not have sufficient resources to hold power. Until the sect grows far stronger in this part of the nation, these enterprising Ravnos fear little in the way of reprisals. A large number of Ravnos grew wealthy by involving themselves in slavery until the end of the Civil War. These Deceivers now use their contacts to smuggle victims to those Kindred who either require a specific source of blood or else seek ghouls of a particular ethnicity or nationality. Some Ravnos still dwell among the Indian tribes, and a small bloodline of Indian (that is, Native American) Ravnos now flourishes on the Western frontier.

Interests

Taken as a whole, the Ravnos are easily the least focused of the independent clans. Although the Assamites, the Followers of Set and the Giovanni are made up of individuals first and foremost, and far less unified than public perception would have it, the truth remains that they have goals and objectives that occupy at least large portions of the clans. The Ravnos, as a clan, lack such a unity of purpose, but this doesn't mean that there aren't interests that occupy the attention of many of the clan's members.

The Indian Ravnos come much closer to such unity than their nomadic brethren. The vast majority of the subcontinent's Deceivers are actively engaged in the battle against European and, specifically, Camarilla encroachment. Throughout India, as members of both the warrior and mercantile castes, the Ravnos stand on the front lines of that conflict. They serve as soldiers, spies, saboteurs, couriers and equipment smugglers — whatever the effort requires of them. The Ravnos, fully aware that they cannot challenge the might of the Ivory Tower directly, are not averse to using terror tactics. In Bombay, the Ravnos Rukhmini Kumari practices frequent assassination, not of Kindred, but of those whom the Kindred would use. In her eyes, mere contact with the city's European prince or his primogen is a capital offense for Bombay's kine, and the Camarilla Kindred of the city dread to be seen openly dealing with any mortals, for fear their allies and contacts will be slain. The Daitya Sundervere prefers the company of his fellow Setites, but he has a coterie of Ravnos agents at his disposal, and the illusory terrors they have created at his command have sent several Kindred deep into Röttschreck, even driving one Malkavian archon to suicide.

Ravnos activities in India are not limited to battle with the Camarilla, of course. On the east side of the nation, they wage as violent a conflict with the Cathayans of the Orient. Unlike the struggle against the British Kindred, this seems to be less a concern for other Indian vampires. That is, the conflict appears to be one of Ravnos versus Cathayan, rather than all Indian Kindred versus Cathayans. The source of this conflict is buried in ancient history, unknown to any but the most ancient of Ravnos, and they hardly speak freely of it. Were the Ravnos not already one of the largest clans of India, the rigors of a war on two fronts would likely have destroyed this branch of the clan by now.

Even with two enemies, the Indian Ravnos do not spend every waking moment at war. As a part of the



Indian caste system — albeit a strange and twisted version of it — they have duties to society as a whole and to their Kindred brethren in particular. Those Ravnos of the Kshatriya caste are bound to serve the Brahmin; many fill the same niche that sheriffs, scourges and archons fill in Camarilla society (a prospect that most Western Ravnos would view with unmitigated horror). The duties of the Vaisya Ravnos are somewhat less well defined but tend to involve interaction with mortal society on behalf of other Kindred — particularly in terms of kine governments and businesses. The Ravnos in India wield power over mortal institutions that would make many Ventrue insanely envious.

The Camarilla has allies in India, however. Traitors in the eyes of their clanmates, a small but significant number of Indian Ravnos choose to cooperate with the invaders. Like many collaborators in the Indian government, they see not the destruction of their native culture, but the riches and political gain the British place before them on a silver platter. If their homeland is doomed to fall, these Ravnos maintain, should we not at least place ourselves highly in the new order?

These collaborators often have less time than they would like to enjoy their newfound wealth and power, as the other Indian Kindred tend to slay them out of patriotism or territoriality. Still, their presence makes matters somewhat easier for the Camarilla and substantially more difficult for the Indian resistance.

The Ravnos of the rest of the world are both less respected and far less focused than their Indian counterparts. Most seek little more than the freedom to travel where they will and the means to acquire whatever wealth and creature comforts they desire. Others do indeed find a purpose in unlife, however, and the normally capricious Ravnos then prove capable of pursuing a specific goal with unrelenting zeal.

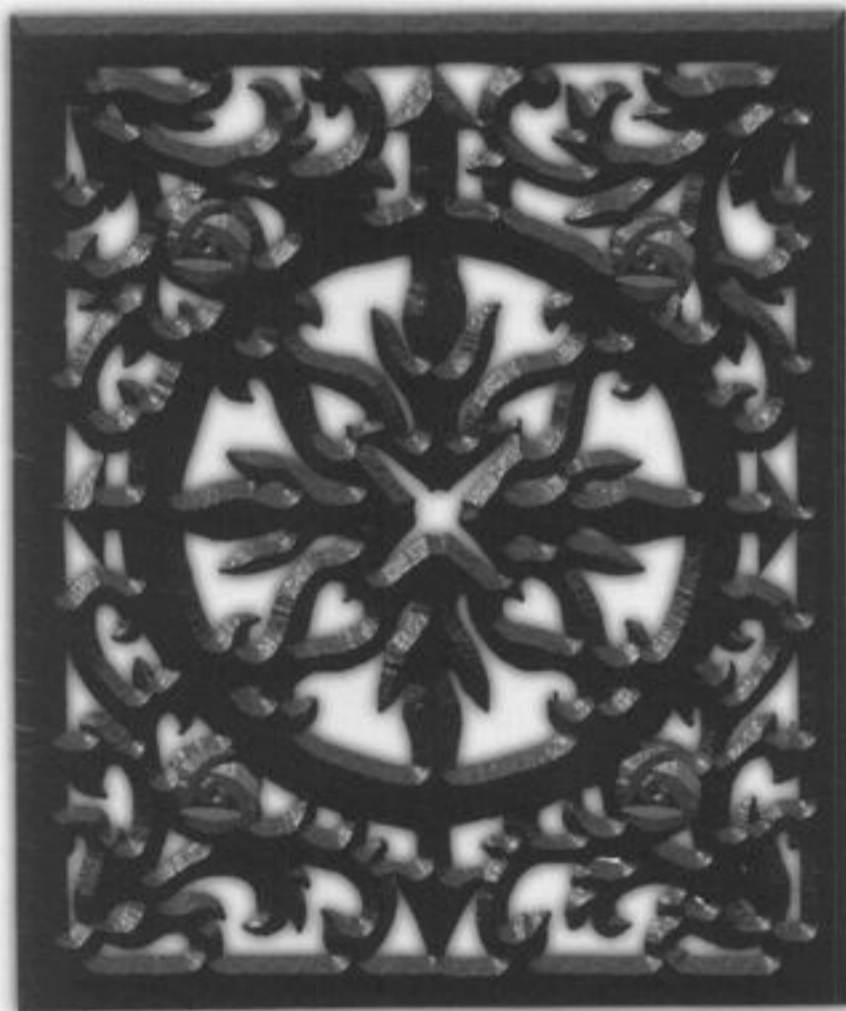
Some Ravnos follow the Path of Paradox, a Path of Enlightenment transplanted from their Indian home-

land. That the current form practiced by many Ravnos is horribly corrupted from what it once was is unknown to most of its practitioners, many of whom would hardly care even if they knew. Some of these extremist Ravnos use their religious beliefs as an excuse for slaying, even diablerizing, other Kindred. These ravening Deceivers, who often travel in packs, can be far more dangerous than even an Assamite, for while they share the Arabian Kindred's thirst for the blood of their brethren, they lack the code of honor that restrains the assassins. While some of these Ravnos have long since joined with like-minded Kindred in the Sabbat, several independent

coterie still wander throughout the cities of Western Europe, the British Isles and even the United States. Most princes will not take preemptive measures against Ravnos in their domains, for fear of retaliation. By the time they realize that these particular Ravnos are far deadlier than the norm, the killers have already struck at several of the native Kindred and moved on.

In England, where Gypsies have never been particularly welcome, the Victorian fascination with the occult has resulted in unexpected opportunities. Gypsies have a reputation as mystics, and this reputation is

now attracting members of high society who would, in the past, have turned up their noses at the mere mention of "the unclean vagrants." Unlike several other clans involved in the occult movement, most Ravnos have no interest at all in unearthing ancient secrets of magic. They have a great deal of interest, on the other hand, in the money and the power offered by rich and foolish kine willing to pay almost anything for "spiritual enlightenment." Many cults and secret societies have sprung up around ambitious Ravnos; the illusions made possible by even a minor faculty with Chimerstry are enough to "prove" their occult powers to the ignorant. Particularly adept at such frauds is Tobar Pompa, who has founded, fleeced and then abandoned no fewer than four such cults in the span of 15 years. Not only has he made



multiple fortunes (all of which he has since squandered), but the influence granted him by his wealthy and powerful cultists has enabled him to seize power from many established Camarilla Kindred. Pompa, who travels constantly throughout the British Isles and Western Europe, is hailed as a hero by many Ravnos, who constantly seek to emulate his exploits.

The Ravnos of Eastern Europe, where Gypsies are far more common if not necessarily more welcome, are even less influential than those in the West and often devote the greater part of their efforts toward simple survival. Many have contacts in and influence over various small Romanian and Transylvanian towns, but the majority of the power in the region is held either by powerful Ventrue princes or by terrifying Tzimisce lords. Here, the Ravnos are granted far less leeway than they have elsewhere. The Tzimisce *voivodes* especially have no patience with the Ravnos and precious little fear of retaliation. Deceivers who make themselves too aggravating are simply captured and fleshcrafted into hideous monstrosities. Those who arrive to retaliate are often added as additional raw material.

The Ravnos who do claim power in this region do so, as mentioned above, by serving those selfsame lords. As agents of Tzimisce (or, less frequently, Ventrue) masters, their contacts within the villages and the Gypsy families prove invaluable. These Ravnos have an information network that, locally, is on par with anything the Nosferatu might manage. Nothing happens in Romania and Transylvania that does not eventually reach the ears of a Deceiver. In exchange for this information and for their ability to blend in where their masters cannot, these Ravnos are permitted to dwell in the shadows of Tzimisce castles that have stood unchanged since the dark ages. Of course, precisely because they serve as their lords' only eyes and ears in portions of the region, the Ravnos have complete control over what their masters learn. This ability to alter and shape their masters' view of the world grants these Ravnos far more power in

Eastern Europe than most "servants" would normally wield.

The Ravnos find, as do so many others, that the United States provides them their greatest opportunity. Even on the East Coast, the Camarilla's strength is not so firmly entrenched as it is in Europe; in the West, the Camarilla might as well not exist at all in any but the largest cities. Some particularly flamboyant Ravnos have fallen in love with the image of the American outlaw, robbing trains, stagecoaches and any establishment they can find that still has people present after dark. The so-called Starlight Kid was well on his way to joining the ranks of famous outlaws such as Jesse James and Billy the Kid until he tried to rob the wrong train and was torn asunder by a Lupine traveling to Kansas.

Even in the Wild West, most Ravnos are far less overt in their activities. Masters of illusion find themselves particularly adept at cards and other popular forms of gambling, however, and several saloons in various mining towns and nascent cities are, in fact, owned by entrepreneurial Ravnos. Furthermore, several Indian reservations have become havens to small Ravnos coterries, who find in the natives a spirit somewhat akin to their own. This doesn't mean they don't mistreat the Indians as much as they do any other kine; rather that, as with those who travel among the Gypsies, they consider these "their" mortals.

Despite their general disdain for all things Camarilla, some Ravnos across the United States have taken to assisting local princes, offering advice, curtailing their normally disruptive activities and even occasionally offering their services as spies against Sabbat or other rival interests. These Ravnos have come to realize that they are unlikely to prevent the Ivory Tower from taking root in America. However, if they can become allies with the American Camarilla now, in its time of instability and weakness, they will be able to collect on all sorts of boons and favors — and claims of leniency — further down the road.

YOU STEAL THE BLOOD OF THE LIVING* AND YOU CALL
US THIEVES. YOU HIDE FROM THE EYES OF MEN BEHIND YOUR
PRECIOUS MASQUERADE* AND YOU CALL US DECEIVERS. IF WE
ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU* IT IS ONLY BECAUSE WE HAVE THE
WILL TO ACCEPT* RATHER THAN DENY* WHAT WE ARE.

— CHAVI GRACZKO* RAVNOS ANATHEMA



Chapter Three: Characters

This is your chance. All the classic elements of the Victorian vampire legend are yours to play with. Will you use this opportunity to quench your thirst and play the ultimate Gothic creature of decadence and passion? Or will you rearrange the elements of vampire folklore into some bizarre monster to rival the Dracula archetype?

It's intimidating to create a character from another era. Your new character will be more familiar with Victorian unlife than you are, and that can seem difficult to portray. What's more, you may think you have no concepts befitting a Victorian vampire. Rest assured that you do. Use your familiarity with the Vampire character creation process, your fascination with vampire mythology or your interest in Victorian themes as a foundation. Remember that a good character is engaging, intricate and mysterious in any era and that a good Vampire character is one that intrigues and entertains you and your troupe above all.



This chapter builds on the information in the *Vampire: The Masquerade* core book, giving you the tools you need to craft not just a new character, but a Victorian. The process of creating a character is the same. Only the setting is different.

Getting Started

Those players with a great deal of experience inventing the vampires of the modern World of Darkness (as opposed to the Victorian era) should reexamine their method when creating Victorian vampires. Even the most wildly creative bunch of players could be thrown off by a historical chronicle. The monster may be the same, but the context has changed. By going carefully through the process, you may find yourself making unusual choices during steps you typically breeze through.

Likewise, even if your troupe is in the habit of making characters without the direct supervision of the Storyteller, you might wish to create your new coterie or conspiracy as a group in the presence of the Storyteller. Any chronicle carries the risk that assumptions are being made about the tone of the setting, the direction of the storyline or the goals of the characters. Unless the troupe addresses these assumptions before the chronicle begins, a gulf can form between the various characters and their motives. A change of century and continent increases the chance that your assumptions will be substantially different from those of your fellow players and amplifies the effects of those assumptions on your game.

The Victorian age is removed one step further from the stage of most World of Darkness chronicles, and it is the Storyteller's vision of this new stage that you will have to act on. Without a common view of this imaginary world to tap into, your troupe won't be able to communicate clearly, and the chronicle could drift apart before it begins. Without a clear, shared view of the dark Victorian world you'll be playing in, the delicate collective imagination of your troupe may become confused and break down. Be sure you and the other players are all on the same stage, the stage designed by the Storyteller.

At the same time, don't let just one single vision of Queen Victoria's *Kindred* strangle your creativity, especially if it's your own vision. The character sheet is not a history quiz. Find a balance between the historical era and the horror genre that you want to explore. Work with the troupe to find a place for your character in the coterie and the chronicle. You are the writer and the actor for your character and the audience to every other player in your game, but this isn't really theatre. No one should be stuck playing a character they're not interested in exploring every session for the sake of the story.

New players should not be intimidated by the historical setting of *Victorian Age: Vampire*. This classic milieu for vampire stories is an excellent opportunity to bring new blood to the gaming table. The vampire, and its curse of inevitable duality, is an intuitive part of the Victorian Zeitgeist. Modern authors and audiences continue to associate vampires with gaslights, fog, great cloaks and horse-drawn carriages. This mental connection between Victorians and vampires can guide new players smoothly through the character-creation process and into the chronicle. It even allows players to sacrifice a bit of the subtlety emphasized so heavily in the modern setting — a *Kindred* in a frock coat, theater gloves and top hat is going to attract attention stalking the streets of Chicago in 2002, but he'll be right at home in London circa 1890.

New ideas create a more thrilling game world, whether they come from new players or new directions you take as a troupe. No matter how it's done, it's important to reconsider the processes you go through when you begin your **Vampire** chronicle, even if your processes don't actually end up changing. Thus, your **Victorian Age: Vampire** chronicle may avoid becoming just a repeat of your modern-day chronicle with capes and sword canes.

Step One: Character Concept

There is no idea factory. There is no catalog you can skim through in search of the perfect character to play. There is no reliable formula for a great **Vampire** character. The next best thing is to combine your imagination with the game mechanics and lore surrounding the vampire myth. That's the fuel. Somewhere in these next five steps, something should strike a spark.

Concept

By not incorporating the Victorian mystique into your character, you are ignoring the wonderful potential of this game. Putting your Tremere in a cape (or a different cape, as the case may be) does not take advantage of the setting. The vampires as a monster was revived from superstition by Victorian authors because it was an excellent metaphor for the times. Since then, a great wealth of stories, novels and films have been produced that you can mine for ideas or inspiration.

Approach the character concept from any direction: as a historical character, as an examination of the vampire legend or as a **Vampire** character. Remember that your character acts as your voice in the game world. If there is some facet of Victorian society you'd like to examine, be it early neurology or horse racing, include it in your character concept.

Creating a concept for a historical character can be tricky, since you are not playing a strictly historical game. Consult with the Storyteller to find out just how much historical fact she is willing to manage for the chronicle. Think twice before you root your character too closely in real history. You want to create your own stories, not repeat history.

Rather than making your character a vampiric Jack the Ripper, consider a vampire who is just as fascinated by this strange turn in human crime as the mortals are. Perhaps your character is a Nosferatu or a Tremere who follows that infamous case closely, eavesdropping on the police, terrified of finding some arcane monster behind the first serial killer in history. This character concept is more subtle, more in tune with the themes of **Vampire** in general and suggests a unique story. Your character is still focused on the legendary murders, but his story will be yours for the telling, invisible to history and wonderfully

impossible to disprove. The Victorian age is the setting, remember, and not the story.

One method of drawing a character from vampire legend is to start with the familiar and, then, redefine it. Consider the Dracula-Renfield relationship, long since a staple of vampire stories (and more than a few **Vampire** stories). Imagine if that dynamic was reversed and Renfield was the monster. Suppose your character is a brilliant Malkavian with retainers throughout the metropolitan sanitarium. He dwells deep inside the asylum in a cell with no windows, coming and going as he pleases. As part of his elaborate masquerade, this Malkavian even has a ghoul who fills the Dracula role to throw hunters off his scent.

If you're unsure how to approach your Victorian concept, it's possible to create a perfectly modern **Vampire** character (staying away from Abilities such as Computer and Drive) as a framework you can "color in" later with Victorian age details. This will give you a strong handle on your character before you approach the chronicle — but possibly at the expense of immersion. Your character will likely begin play without any strong ties to the setting or the chronicle and some Traits, especially Backgrounds, may be at the mercy of the Storyteller. But at least you'll be playing.

Clan

The clans of **Victorian Age: Vampire** are subtly different from those presented in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Before you just select a clan from memory, skim through Chapter Two again, consider the clans in their Victorian context, and make your choice. As usual, the Storyteller may determine which clans, if any, you should choose from.

Nature and Demeanor (Archetypes)

Personality Archetypes are explained in **Vampire: The Masquerade** and operate the same in this milieu. Remember that Nature and Demeanor are just meant to serve as an intersection for you to begin exploring your character. They are not fixed or absolute descriptors of your character, so don't be shy.

The duality of character symbolized by the Archetypes is especially appropriate in **Victorian Age: Vampire**. Victorians are a strictly private people, bordering on xenophobic. Presentation is so important that most people behave at least somewhat contrary to their personalities. Protocol of the era is so rigid that Victorians have a historical reputation for being boring, sexless prudes, when, really, the opposite is true. It's as if all Victorian society has one face for the public and one face for itself.

This era has a profound impact on the Masquerade. Privacy is so closely guarded that vampires often find it easy to infiltrate mortal society using protocol as cover.

Besides, plenty of monsters lurk behind closed doors of the era to distract from superstitions of vampires.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Perform this step as explained in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Players should place seven dots in their character's primary group of Attributes. The secondary group of Attributes receives five dots, and the tertiary group receives three dots.

Step Three: Select Abilities

This step is likewise detailed in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Prioritize the three groups of Abilities into primary, secondary and tertiary roles. The primary group receives thirteen dots, the secondary group receives nine dots, and the tertiary receives five dots. No single Ability can be rated above three dots at this stage. Freebie points may be spent to raise Abilities later on.

Most of the Abilities that modern Kindred find useful were also found useful in Victoria's nights. Things seemed different, but as many elders will attest, Western civilization has not changed so much. Only a few Abilities have been altered for use in **Victorian Age: Vampire**. They are dealt with on page 119.

Step Four: Select Advantages

Your character has become a distinct Victorian individual. Now, he will become a distinct vampire. The process for selecting Advantages is the same as explained in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Some of the Advantages carry slightly different connotations, however. For more on this, see page 122.

Disciplines

Characters begin play with three dots of Disciplines. Extra dots can be purchased with freebie points. Your selection of starting Disciplines is determined by your clan, but dots in other Disciplines can be purchased with freebie points during Step Five.

Backgrounds

Beginning **Vampire** characters receive five dots for their Backgrounds. Freebie points may be spent to purchase more dots. Backgrounds quantify certain facets of your character concept with game mechanics, so you may spend your five dots on any Backgrounds you like. It's a good idea to select Backgrounds that reflect the way you want your character to be received by the other characters in the world.

Backgrounds are a measure of your character's external connections to the world, and it's the external world that is

so different from **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Inwardly, vampires are inherently static and unchanging. Their ageless undead bodies often lead to rigid personalities and repeating routines. In this world of scientific and social growth, however, a vampire must adapt or perish. Thus, the way you select Backgrounds for your **Vampire** character must change. The old ways won't fly anymore.

Virtues

Virtues are selected in the manner described in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. That gives you seven dots to spend over three Virtues. In previous centuries, many Kindred followed different moral Roads or Paths through unlife in hopes of finding some greater purpose to their existence. That practice is reversed in this era. By far, most **Victorian Age: Vampire** characters begin with the Conscience and Self-Control Virtues on the Path of Humanity. For more on this, see page 124

Step Five: Last Touches

During this step, you determine your character's Humanity and Willpower scores and starting blood pool. Now, you may also spend your 15 freebie points to make finer adjustments to your character. After this, you may choose to experiment with Merits and Flaws to further detail your character's quirks.

Humanity

A character's Humanity rating is equal to his Conscience + Self-Control Traits, determined *before* adjustments from freebie points. For younger vampires (11th or 12th Generation), Humanity scores tend to be higher. Lower Generation vampires, especially elders who are not well adapted to life among the changing cities of the era, may have uncommonly low Humanity scores resulting from many years of unlife spent well away from mortal eyes and mores.

Willpower

The Courage Virtue is the basis for a beginning character's Willpower score. Thus, beginning Willpower ratings range from 1 to 5. You are encouraged to raise this Trait with freebies, however, as strength of will is especially important for vampires, no matter the era.

Blood Pool

Note that **Victorian Age: Vampire** characters begin at 12th Generation and, therefore, have a larger blood pool than normal **Vampire** characters. The one die roll of character creation remains unchanged, however. Roll a single die to determine the number of blood points at your character's disposal when the story begins.

Freebie Points

Freebie points function just as they do in **Vampire: The Masquerade**. They continue to be invaluable to the character-creation process. The cost, in freebie points, of dots in various Traits is listed below. Recall that freebie points may be used to purchase dots in Disciplines other than those offered by your clan (though Storytellers may wish to restrict this expenditure). Consider how you spend these points very carefully, however. The points you've been given for every previous step of character creation are spent just as they would be for any other Kindred. How can you spend your freebie points to make your monster an individual worth telling stories about?

Freebie Points

Trait	Cost
Attribute	5 per dot
Ability	2 per dot
Discipline	7 per dot
Background	1 per dot
Virtue	2 per dot
Humanity	2 per dot
Willpower	1 per dot

Personality Archetypes: Nature and Demeanor

Mortals invariably change the way they see themselves, and the Kindred follow suit. Behavior results from this self-image, either as an outward display of feeling or as a reactive disguise to keep feelings hidden. The oldest Kindred say this is the way mortals have always been. Personality Archetypes might therefore seem to be limited and static throughout human civilization, but this is not the case.

People find themselves swept up in the cultural movements around them, impress their perceptions of the outside world onto themselves and struggle to fit into societies that constantly redefine themselves. The Archetypes presented in **Vampire: The Masquerade** are also suitable for **Victorian Age: Vampire** but are, by design, somewhat unspecific. Just as Archetypes should develop over time to better reflect a character's unique personality, so too can they be reinvented to better reflect the personality of an era. These new or altered Archetypes are intended to start characters off with a bit of Victorian style, but they are not definitive. Your character shouldn't just be a forward-looking Ventrue with an air of bravura. He should

be the unique result of choices you make during the course of storytelling with your troupe.

Consider the ways that your troupe can use Archetypes to drive your coterie and form a cohesive vision of the Victorian world. As you design your characters, think about some ways your characters could be connected by their Archetypes. Just as mortals gather for reasons other than family and age, vampires do not gather solely by clan or generation. Try to imagine character connections that are specific to the Victorian setting, or try to color mundane connections with Victorian details. Connections founded on Archetypes feel organic and lend themselves easily to intuitive relationships with other characters.

Imagine the relationship between a prostitute (Survivor) and the professor (Perfectionist) who employs her to clear his head of distractions. How might their relationship change if they were Embraced? Consider the classic pairing of an impetuous nobleman (Thrill-Seeker) and his wise butler (Traditionalist) filtered through the vampire myth and developing for centuries. What of a Caregiver Kindred physician who Embraces a Penitent patient dying of consumption so that she may have eternity to atone for her sins?

More practically, consider the social structures already in place in Victorian culture to bring like-minded persons together. Gentleman's clubs, though sometimes based simply on proximity, are often based on common interests and exploits. Rebels may find comrades in the hellfire clubs, whereas Bon Vivants may encounter their counterparts at a burlesque soiree. Universities, museums and even pauper lodging houses offer an array of compelling connections that could bind a coterie together. Such organizations offer easy storytelling hooks for the recovery of Willpower and a multitude of story possibilities over the life of a chronicle.

Suppose a wealthy Ventrue founded a gentleman's club for the purpose of feeding, selecting new progeny and harvesting new retainers. A body of gentlemen with similar Natures collect for casual conversation and fine cigars. The Ventrue discovers the time he spends there quite diverting (and gains back Willpower). What if your coterie was made up of upstanding British gentlemen Embraced by this Ventrue? What would happen when the club began to use its own members for personal gain (blood, money or Willpower)? What if the Ventrue were suddenly removed from the equation? You'd have an excellent microcosm of vampiric society to examine.

Artiste

The Artiste is interested in art for art's sake. The ability to create is what elevates humans above the

animals. The Masters knew this and rejoiced not just in the glory of human form, but in the gift of expression given only to humans. The Artiste thrives on the reception and digestion of her art—and usually the acceptance of it as well. Poets, playwrights, painters, composers and other such romantic demonstrative sorts are Artiste Archetypes. They can typically be found in Parisian and Budapest coffee or absinthe houses, university quads and dilapidated brothels or hostels serving as communes.

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever you manage to “reach” an audience through something you’ve created. If the audience is unreceptive or unmoved, you regain nothing.

Coward

The Coward fears himself above all. Whatever it is at the heart of the Coward cannot be revealed, or he will be vulnerable to attack or rejection. This utter separation from the outside world is terrifying, thus the Coward reveals morsels of his thoughts and feelings in hopes of love and approval. The Coward longs to be validated and accepted. Persons who seek out anonymous positions in the clergy or in military and industrial sectors are often of the Coward Archetype.

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever you reveal something about yourself without being hurt or utterly revealed.

Explorer

How can we claim to understand the world when so much of it remains undocumented? The Explorer seeks to better herself through a fuller understanding of her environs. She often quickly grows bored and has little use for large collections of *things*. The Explorer is not necessarily interested in a physical journey across the globe. She may satisfy her taste for exposure with a trip across the pond to America, or she may simply want to sample foreign food (or *vitae...*) and music. Dilettantes, soldiers, merchants, artists, scientists and pioneers embody the Explorer Archetype.

— Regain Willpower whenever you sample something or some place new. If you go too long, say a week, without testing yourself or finding something that thrills you, lose one Willpower point to boredom.

Fatalist

The Fatalist believes in an inescapable force of destiny. The Positive Fatalist believes that life must be lived, even though the outcome is fixed. There is no point in shying away from your existence, since what happens, happens. The Negative Fatalist feels the crushing weight of the universe on him and knows that there is no escape. All of the modern technology, the social reform and the artistic

crusades are pointless. The Fatalist finds a boundless freedom or an unavoidable prison in his outlook. Fatalists are often the survivors of great hardships, whether internalized or physically experienced.

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever someone else experiences your personal interpretation of Fate in your presence. At the Storyteller’s discretion, you may also regain a point of Willpower whenever you gain new insight into the infinite simplicity of the universe through some personal hardship.

Futurist

The Futurist revels in the magnificent unknown. Humanity is at the threshold of a wondrous and exciting new age. That which is coming must be embraced. A Futurist might delight in the amazing developments of technology and human endeavor, or he might set out to discover new theories, principles and practices, often in a manner similar to Celebrants. Futurism developed from the concept of manifest destiny and is sister to the science-fiction genre, also born in this era. Scientists, patrons, writers, teachers or any other forward-looking sort are often of the Futurist Archetype.

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever you first come upon some progressive device or concept. Reading about such things isn’t enough. You have to meet people and touch things. At the Storyteller’s discretion, you may regain two Willpower points whenever you actually contribute to the creation of some futuristic development.

Outsider

The Outsider is something of a passive rebel, defining himself by the things he does not participate in. He does not strive to bring down those social structures he disagrees with. Instead, the Outsider examines those structures for some way to reflect and understand himself. Servants, artists, criminals and vagrants are the most common Outsider Archetypes.

— Regain a point of Willpower whenever you discover something about yourself through the decisions someone else makes, especially when those decisions are different than those you made.

Questor

The Questor seeks to find the one great answer that will make sense of the world. With so much suffering and confusion all around her, the Questor wants simply to understand. The Questor attempts to boil down all quandaries and dilemmas to their root conflicts and simplify all relationships into something digestible, manageable and surmountable. The Questor seldom feels at rest and may quietly believe that happiness can come



only with an utter understanding of the world. Clergymen, scientists, contemplatives and spiritualists fulfill the Questor Archetype.

—Regain a point of Willpower whenever you reach some concise life lesson that could become a rule of thumb. This rule is inevitably disproved, but it's just answers you seek, after all, not necessarily the truth.

Adjusted Abilities

The impact of the Victorian setting on the game mechanics of **Vampire** are slight but illustrative. Notice that the vast majority of those Abilities you are already familiar with are still available. This says something about how you should approach the game setting and the game mechanics. The Victorian worldview is modern enough that Traits such as Security, Firearms and Medicine do not need any mechanical adjustments. Don't worry about fiddling with the rules in search of some proper Victorian simulation. If the Traits stand in the way of your visualization of foggy London alleys, then you are putting too much weight those Traits. Years of playing in the modern nights might have you assuming things about the Security Skill that are just not relevant to this game. Rest assured, the **Vampire** machine operates just as well by hissing gaslight as it does by strobing fluorescent light.

First, realize that a Ventrue who plays the violin like a master in 1780 is still masterful in 1880. Similarly, a Brujah who can finesse medieval locks will still be able to pick Victorian locks. Characters are not necessarily required to spend experience points to keep their Abilities current. Instead, the simplest interpretation suggests that the focus of the Abilities broadens with time and technology. So, your Brujah jewel thief with five dots in Security is presumed to keep up with trends in bank protections and padlocks. Some Storytellers may wish to adjust this a bit, which isn't out of line, but for those who want to place the story first, assume that no such Trait obsolescence exists.

Context is the key to making use of Abilities. The expression "Firearms 4" isn't really meaningful unless it is placed in the context of the Storyteller system and reflected by some consequence in the ongoing story of the chronicle. In the era of single-action revolvers and early bolt-action rifles, four dots in Firearms suggests some possible experience assembling your own cartridges from slugs, gunpowder and brass shells. In the era of caseless hollowpoint rounds, a character with four dots has probably never used a firing cap or paper wad. These details might seem to be implicit in the definition of the Firearms Skill, but they're not. Details such as these are only important if they come up in the course of your story. The Abilities are not precise statements of capability or background, and their definitions should

not determine the outcome of your chronicle. If a player is forced to make choices for her character because factual data has been strictly assigned to the abstract dots on her character sheet, then the flow of the story has been hijacked by trivia. The dots just represent dice, after all. Their ability to describe is limited by random chance. All Abilities do is express your character's capabilities relative to the other characters in the story. They are vague descriptors that find meaning only through the drama of your story.

What you should start thinking about is how you're going to manifest these Abilities in the game world to take advantage of the era. How is a 1950s Chicago police detective with an Investigation score of 3 different from a 19th century Scotland Yard constable with the same rating? Aside from the two characters having very different manners and personal attire, their professional methods will be different. New specialties are a must. Specialties reward story-based details with game-specific effects without bogging down the drama with intricacies. They are the secret to painting distinctive historical characters with dots.

You are encouraged to select specialties before your character reaches the four-dot threshold in a given Ability. This is especially important as a shorthand to you on your character sheet. Historical jargon and burgeoning scientific notions (such as phrenology) serve as a reminder of your character concept and reinforce the setting at a glance. You might find some forgotten spark jotted down on your character sheet useful during play.

A variety of strange practices that may seem odd to the modern reader are common during the Victorian age. Incorporating them into your character helps maintain the unique feel of the era. Phrenology, the study of cranial bumps, is thought to reveal insight into a person's nature and is considered a modern Science or Medicine in 1890. Handwriting analysis is an Investigation technique thought by some to be capable of identifying a subject's sex, gender and even nationality. Cranial measurements are kept as criminal records (since skulls were thought to be unchanging in adulthood) and naturally reveal the subject's intellectual capacity. Soft sciences, such as psychology and anthropology, are just being explored for the first time. They're taken seriously by academics, then scientists. Encyclopedias, novels and history books can supply you with many more ideas to enrich your storytelling.

On the other hand, it might be fun to portray some common modern practice as the *nouveau* technique it was back in the old nights. Photography, even as an aging form of record-keeping, is a new form of Expression. The first machine guns are just being developed; the study of germs and sterilization of medical instruments are new and not widely accepted. "Evolution" is a new theory of Science. Marxism is a new kind of Politics.

Adjusted Talents

Talents are intuitive pursuits, honed through practice and experience. Although they can be learned from others, they are just as often self-taught endeavors. Only the specific, fashionable forms of Talents are different in this era. In proper English society, Talents such as Empathy and Subterfuge are more refined but operate in fundamentally the same way. Pugilists are just gentleman Brawlers. Lewis Carroll, Walt Whitman, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling and Emily Dickinson are some writers of the day (or already dead): Forms of Expression are undergoing major or minor revolutions across the globe as writers and painters from America, Europe and Asia begin to interact with ease and frequency.

Storytellers and players with a flair for the grandiose should consider the rich and diverse tradition of Victorian lore available that can be used to spice the use of Talents in their games. Otherwise, all Talents behave in accordance with the rules in **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

Adjusted Skills

Aside from the lack of automobiles, most of the Skills detailed in **Vampire: The Masquerade** are well-suited to the Victorian era. The Drive Skill is simply unavailable to characters in this game. Other skills, meanwhile, see much more use. Etiquette is especially important for characters of social consequence. It is far less suspicious (or expensive) to practice the Melee skill in this era. A great many people earn their livelihood through use of the Crafts Skill, since the average worker is still cheaper to employ than many factory machines. Horses are everywhere in a Victorian city and require daily upkeep and trained operators to avoid mishaps.

Short-form theatrics, flirtatious dances and Gilbert and Sullivan operettas are some popular forms of Performance. Wax impressions of keys and (sometimes liberal) use of dynamite are some contemporary applications of the Security Skill. Fencing is still popular, though trials by dueling are officially done with. Dog and horse breeding is popular among the aristocracy now and could make characters skilled in Animal Ken quite wealthy.

Skills are more likely to be learned through apprenticeship or hands-on training. Lifelong careers are far more common, then, because experience is the most reliable means of developing skilled laborers. Skills are common across the social hierarchy, just like Talents.

Ride

Donovan watched his attacker tumble from the carriage roof and contort on the cobblestones, then returned his attention to the horses. The buggy's lantern whipped crazily

on a hook near his head, and by its light, he saw the reins vanish beneath pounding hooves. Mud splattered onto his shoes. Cracking his knuckles, as he often had in life before beginning a chore, he leapt onto the nearer horse and wrapped his hands around its neck.

Clenching his legs against the carriage harness, he unhooked the horse from the buggy and pulled her by her blinders. Together they pulled aside as the carriage rattled past. "Now, girl," Donovan whispered into the horse's ear as he turned her around, "let's see what that was all about." With a yawp, they galloped back down the lane.

This Skill denotes at least a common understanding of horsemanship, from casual riding ability to knowledge of bridles, saddles and stables. Characters with dots in Ride may be able to estimate a horse's worth or wellness. With practice, riders can coerce tricks from a trained horse or even fight from horseback. This Skill is also used to drive horse-drawn buggies and cabriolets. Note that anyone can actually ride on the back of a horse without this Ability, but no control over the horse can be assumed.

- Novice: Anything but routine travel and care strikes you as work.
- Practiced: You can manage a gallop, a difficult turn or a small jump.
- Competent: You ride in hunts and foul weather, perform splendid jumps and avoid saddle sores.
- Expert: You are as comfortable in the saddle as in the salon.
- Master: Dashing stunts and horseback swordplay are your *raison d'être*.

Possessed by: Huntsmen, Coachmen, Messengers, Soldiers, Rural Elite

Specialties: Jumps, Races, Mounted Combat, Urban, Presentation

Adjusted Knowledges

No standard of education is widely available to supply dots in Knowledges, so no common familiarity with concepts such as Science or Academics can be assumed. The organizational methods of colleges and universities currently implemented will last another century or more, but public school does not exist and would not be considered a useful venture by much of the upper class. Some poor or downtrodden souls may find education through charity, but that is unlikely. Most Victorian citizens are effectively illiterate and will die that way, around the age of 45.

New political philosophies continually surface in this era, and it is common to summarize some intellectuals or bohemians by their political orientation. Spiritualist

fads and Old World superstition mean that Occult knowledge is far more common during this era but is seldom delved into very deeply. English concepts of Law are practiced in whole or in part throughout the British Empire. Alienists and archaeologists, who often operate at the intersection of Science and Occult lore, capture the imaginations of contemporary writers. Medical technology has not come so far from the American Civil War, really. Hypodermic needles and the stethoscope are relatively new. Science is just starting to consider the ramifications of evolutionary theory, and the periodic table is only in the works.

The Computer Knowledge is not available to **Victorian Age: Vampire** characters. Instead, the Enigmas Ability is defined below. Most characters will not have Knowledges as their primary Abilities during this era. Those who do are most likely in the business of knowing things or are affiliated with a university. Otherwise, all but the following Knowledges are unchanged.

Academics

Malcolm watched Edgar carefully, waiting for his reaction. On the mount before them was a broken stone slab etched with Greek letters. Malcolm had a brass stand fitted for it and lit with his only electric light bulb. "What do you think?" Malcolm asked.

Edgar very carefully struck a match off his thumb and hovered it near the stone's face. It was worn smooth by wind such that the soft Greek letters were almost invisible. "It's a poem by Sappho. Or half of one, I'd say." Edgar shook out the match and looked back at Malcolm. His smile showed off his fangs. Blood pulsed beneath his flesh. "The real shard," Edgar continued, "as discovered by Dr. Einhauer in 1878, went down with him aboard the Merriweather off the coast of Corsica. Sorry, old boy."

The "humanities" this Knowledge covers are considered serious pursuits in the 19th century. Without a dot in Academics, characters are illiterate. Education on academic topics comes from a variety of sources, from boarding schools and universities to private tutors and secret libraries. In addition to its obvious applications, Academics can be used socially in gentleman's clubs, parlors and salons and at university to impress audiences or win grants from the wealthy elite. The oldest Kindred possess dots in Academics because they were present for the events in question. This Knowledge may be necessary to outmaneuver them in the Jihad.

- Student: You are literate. You may be able to recite important passages from the classics you read in boarding school. Perhaps you read the *Daily Telegraph*.
- College: You understand important passages from the classics, read books for leisure and subscribe to *The Times*.

- Masters: You understand artistic trends, both historical and modern, and keep up with the new social sciences. You could be published.
- Doctorate: You may teach or lecture and are sometimes invited to university and museum social functions for intellectuals and poseurs.
- Scholar: You are recognized throughout the Empire as one of civilization's great minds.

Possessed by: Professors, Bohemians, Patrons, Elders, the Elite

Specialties: Egyptology, the American Revolution, Comparative Mythology, the Pre-Raphaelites, Royal Geographic Expeditions

Enigmas

"What is it?" Edgar whispered, glancing over his shoulder again at the laboratory door. Malcolm didn't answer. He just kept holding the cardboard rectangle up to the starry skylight. Light shone through little holes on the card, making tiny white dots on Malcolm's face. "Malcolm?"

"It's a punch card, Ed, my boy." Malcolm turned it over and looked at it again. "I'd say this Andru fellow isn't as old-fashioned as we thought." With a gleaming grin, Malcolm handed the punch card to Edgar and slapped his spectacles back on. "That's quite an advanced algorithm he's working with."

Edgar nodded a bit, then handed it back and adjusted his bowler. "What's an algorithm?"

Useful to both scientists and academics, this Knowledge represents a knack for answering riddles and puzzling out posers. The secrets of science and history must often be sorted out before their respective fields can rationally approach them. Dots in this Trait indicate a character is capable of getting her head around complex concepts outside of any specific field. It is a measure of logical prowess used to make sense of forgotten languages, experimental formulas and unfamiliar algorithms, whether intentionally disguised or heretofore unknown. Aptitude with Enigmas requires a flexible mind and great patience.

- Student: You are good at the puzzles in newspapers.
- College: You can tackle large, complex puzzles with time.
- Masters: You recognize, solve and explain riddles with ease.
- Doctorate: You identify and answer riddles that may have gone unnoticed for centuries.

- Scholar: You can find codes in gibberish and patterns in chaos.

Possessed by: Mystics, Doomsayers, Spies, Paranoids, Gamblers

Specialties: Old English Riddle-Poems, Codebreaking, Punch Cards, Algorithms, Hieroglyphs

Adjusted Backgrounds

Rapidly expanding lines of communication broaden the power base of many elder Kindred, while overwhelming less-capable princes and archbishops. The speed at which civilization operates is quickly becoming incredible. Information travels faster and farther than ever before by telegraph and railway. Secrets, once revealed, can travel by train from your allies in Paris to your nemesis in Prague in less than four nights. Of course, trains run on schedules. It is not only possible for a neonate to be sent after some rail-bound ghoul retainer with a message that will ruin his mentor's influence if it reaches Prague, it could be a fascinating story.

Kindred society is still largely separated by the dangers of daylight travel. Many vampire social circles remain small and isolated. Elders who enjoy respect and recognition in Budapest may find that they have traveled outside the bailiwick of their status when they reach London. Allies and contacts may be limited to certain regions of the continent. As spheres of power expand, the number of persons who must be kept track of grows larger and larger. Princes who fail to prepare for the increased social complexities of Victorian protocol may find themselves in the sunlight, as rivals can now hear rumors of weakness and arrive in just a few short nights.

Kindred who enjoy fame are more likely to find admirers of theirs in distant cities. For the first time, it is possible for fame to travel by phonographs and photographs. The spread of fame through technology is especially imperfect, however. Photographs of popular singers aren't printed on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. Famous folk are illustrated by hand for the cover of *Vanity Fair*. Beautifully elaborate art nouveau posters bearing exaggerated or stylized likenesses of dancers and singers generate interest in upcoming performances. Sarah Bernhardt, for example, is depicted in a variety of fantastic outfits and poses for French posters by Alfonse Mucha. These romanticized representations leave quite a bit of room for mistaken identities, which offer many possibilities for interesting stories.

Special consideration should be given to the role of retainers in the Victorian age. Kindred who attempt to

carry on as sociable mortals will be expected to have at least one valet. In fact, the relationship between retainers, resources, influence and humanity is delicate and essential to maintaining the Masquerade to high-profile vampires. An influential figure who does not appear well (because of a low Humanity rating) might be directed to a physician, who could become eager for such important clientele and concerned when her daytime appointment is missed. A highly visible sort with a great deal of wealth but no servants seems odd. Anyone of meaningful social standing who cannot manage the occasional country house weekend might fall from favor in mortal society. Retainers can make daytime excuses for their employers, manage social calendars and appointments and support the illusion of a normal, successful British aristocrat.

To the benefit of the Kindred, it is easier than ever to maintain multiple havens across Europe. It is generally much safer for a vampire to travel great distances. Those with substantial resources might even own a private, windowless railcar for travel by day. Those Kindred with more realistic ideas of international travel (and less pride) might have themselves sent as cargo aboard a steamship. Trustworthy retainers are not just invaluable for journeys such as this, they are necessary.

Generation

Edgar looked at Malcolm through his snifter of brandy. Between their deep, whiskey-brown leather chairs stood an ornate Chinese table. On that rested a wide crystal dish of murky,

spent brandy. "Andru is too old, Ed, my boy. He will complicate any plan you or I could come up with," Malcolm sniffed his unlit cigar. "His blood is thick and strong. Electric."

Edgar sipped his brandy with a hiss. His fangs flashed as he swished his tongue around, spit his sip into the crystal bowl and then ran a finger beneath his mustache. "Which is why we should take action, sir. If we had his blood, who would we have left to fear?"

The purity of Kindred blood has not yet begun to falter. In this last great age of vampiric power, when Kindred can still maintain private circles of undead society in their palatial estates, powerful sires are more common. The fears of weaker generations are merest rumor. The chance that diablerie might be detected is slimmer. The vampires of these nights are potent and confident. The worst times are still a generation off, after all. In the Victorian age, characters without dots in this Background begin play as 12th Generation Kindred.

- 11th Generation: 12 blood pool, can spend 1 blood point per turn
- 10th Generation: 13 blood pool, can spend 1 blood point per turn
- 9th Generation: 14 blood pool, can spend 2 blood points per turn
- 8th Generation: 15 blood pool, can spend 3 blood points per turn
- 7th Generation: 20 blood pool, can spend 4 blood points per turn

Generation Chart

Generation	Max. Trait Rating	Blood Pool Max.	Blood Points/Turn
Third	10	???	???
Fourth	9	50	10
Fifth	8	40	8
Sixth	7	30	6
Seventh	6	20	4
Eighth	5	15	3
Ninth	5	14	2
Tenth	5	13	1
Eleventh	5	12	1
Twelfth	5	11	1
Thirteenth +	5	10	1

Max. Trait Rating: This indicates the highest permanent Trait rating (excluding Humanity/Path scores and Willpower ratings) a vampire of the given generation can have. This is especially important with regard to Disciplines and Attributes.

Blood Pool Max.: The maximum number of blood points a vampire may keep in her system. Remember that elder vampires concentrate their blood — while the volume of blood in their bodies is no greater than any other vampire's, each pint of blood is worth more than one point.

Blood Points/Turn: This indicates how many blood points a vampire can spend in a single turn.

Resources

Mycroft inspected the silk lining of his greatcoat before swooping it onto his back. With a flourish, he tucked his silver falcon-headed cane beneath his arm and headed through the house, past the clocks and armor, bookshelves and landscape paintings, to the foyer. He was through the foyer in a flash, leaning just long enough to snatch up and put on his hat. From the townhouse door to the iron fence he looked up and down the cabriolet waiting for him. One step up the folding stairs and he vanished into the buggy's shadowy cage. "To the club, milord?" asked the driver from outside.

Mycroft pulled on his Italian leather gloves and checked his pocket watch. "But first through Piccadilly, driver. I will sup on the way."

This Background is virtually identical to that presented in *Vampire: The Masquerade*. Only the specific notions of wealth are different from that book. The gap between the wealthy and the poor is tremendous and all but insurmountable. Victorian London's society, for example, is structured in such a manner that the wealthy may go days without having to see any lower-class citizens other than the ones they employ.

Mass production is just beginning, but plenty of important-seeming "consumables" exist for the proletariat to waste their wages on and maintain their economic position. It is not enough to spend money in Victorian society, one must be seen spending it. Of course, charity is also considered proper for the upper class, though very specific (and biased) rules determine where such money should rightfully go.

Liquid assets may be inconsistent, even with a high Resources rating. English lords may have a bad year, but much of their wealth is usually tied up in things such as real estate and art that cannot be easily spent. Likewise, though it is becoming more common for members of the upper class to earn their fortunes through business ventures, allowances from rich parents are not uncommon. Thus, purely social concerns can have a serious impact on an Englishman's ability to spend but may not much change his standard of living. The counterpoint to this is the state of the poor, who are unlikely to escape their tenements or labor jobs even if they come into a lavish windfall. Unless they are accepted into the social circles of the bourgeois, actual cash may not affect their standard of living.

- **Small savings:** You have several weeks paid for in a local lodging house. What ever you own probably travels with you, possibly including heirlooms and the like. If your assets were liquidated, you would have about 15 pounds. Allowance of 7 pounds per month.

- **Middle class:** A flat in a terraced building. If your assets were liquidated, you would have at least 300 pounds. Allowance of 40 pounds per month.
- **Bourgeois:** A townhouse or a detached country home. If your assets were liquidated, you would have at least 7,000 pounds. Allowance of 450 pounds per month.
- **Well-off:** A member of the upper class. You have a lavish townhouse or a sprawling country estate. If your assets were liquidated, you would have at least 200,000 pounds. Allowance of 4,000 pounds per month.
- **Tremendously affluent:** An esteemed landowner with generations of accumulated wealth. You may have multiple townhouses and estates throughout England and the continent. You will be expected to demonstrate your wealth. If your assets were liquidated, you would have at least 1,000,000 pounds. Allowance of 12,000 pounds per month.

Humanity

Vampires are social creatures. They need mortals for emotional and physical sustenance. Without Humanity, there is no vampire. There is only the Beast.

The Industrial Revolution has changed everything. The Kindred were originally drawn by the droves into the mortals' swelling cities, where hunting was easy and the prey was everywhere — except that those Kindred who say they came to the cities for the food are liars. Since time out of mind, vampires have kept a measured distance from the flock that fed them, but now, they mingle together in secret not because it is necessary for the monsters' survival, but because vampires like to surround themselves with mortals.

Make no mistake, the castle-on-the-hill routine worked exceptionally. Any tunnel-stalking Nosferatu will tell you that. Vampires could have continued making forays into civilized lands to eat, while spending their days asleep and far away. No, they chose to come and dwell with mortals because vampires are social creatures.

A Powerful Lie

Desperate to lose themselves or eke the most out of their vampiric curse, a great many Sabbat attempt to follow the Paths leading away from Humanity. They

behave like monstrous kings, doing as they please to mortals and Camarilla Kindred alike. When Final Death comes, at least it's loud. And it always comes — because alien moralities are a hard thing for a human mind to subscribe to, and no matter how much they may despise it, vampires are as much human as Beast.

The lesson Sabbat elders teach their grunts, that a vampire can deny his Humanity, is a lie that makes hungry neonates feel powerful — powerful enough to rush headlong down unclear and arcane Paths at the command of their masters. Once these neonates build up a good momentum of supernatural fury and arrogance, they are pointed in the direction of the Camarilla and let loose.

This routine was effective during the Dark Ages, when there were scarcely any mortals willing to challenge the might of a vampire. As the vampires came to dwell closer and closer to their prey, however, the routine became more costly. Not only were dramatic displays of vampirism opposed by the Camarilla now, they were opposed by mortals with confidence born from science, religion and fire.

Many of the Sabbat neonates who follow alternate moralities do so because elder Cainites have rallied them to the cause. Elders drive them toward goals they're not yet strong enough to reach or even understand. When the young Sabbat head out and try to fly on their master's orders, they end up being burned by the sun. This practice has become such a standard among Sabbat elders that very few members of their sect manage to become ancillae, and so, they have no one else to set an example for the revolutionary rabble recruited for flashy suicide tactics.

Sabbat neonates attempt to act out their anarchical fantasies in two major ways, and both often lead to the same fate. The first option is to rally against the Camarilla, to lay siege to its social fortress of rules and etiquette in a frenzy of animalistic barbarism. The second option is to avoid the struggle of the sects all together and delve deep into forbidden occult rites in search of some ancient vampire secret that will subjugate frail mortals for all eternity. Both options typically result in the destruction of Sabbat neonates.

Toward the end of the 19th century, a severe generation gap has grown between Sabbat elders and neonates. Elders, entrenched in their havens and secure on their Paths, sanction the Embrace of new followers to replace those who fell against the Camarilla. Being cunning and patient, these elders continued on with the same strategy for decades, eliminating neonates and trying again. Thus, during the Victorian age, the Sabbat is dominated numerically by untried neonates struggling to master the first stages of alternate moralities and ruin the Camarilla.

In the shadows behind them lurk the elders, growing stronger and very comfortable with the dwindling number of would-be rivals. They have power and security.

Meanwhile, the Camarilla thrives.

Seduced by Humanity

In the Victorian age, humanity turns science on itself and discovers the disciplines of psychology and anthropology. The arts, which have always been at least marginally focused on the nature of humanity, enjoy an influx of societal interest in the form of wealthy patrons and vast metropolitan galleries. Important discoveries are made in the field of medicine, revealing new secrets about the human body... and its blood. All of civilization, fascinated with its own successes, examines itself. Scientists, poets, painters, musicians, doctors and politicians all ask what it means to be human. The vampires in their midst become likewise interested.

Mortals civilization advances faster than most vampires have ever seen before. Humanity's awareness of mysticism, science, history and the occult have never been more balanced, even if it isn't particularly thorough. Even the Kindred marvel at what the mortals are capable of. It is an age of astonishment, a time for reveling in the wonders of the world, and even the undead have been swept up by it.

During this revelation of humankind and mortal history, vampire society quietly looks at itself and the history it has witnessed through damnation. Members of the Camarilla become more and more involved in mortal endeavors and arrogantly loosen their grip on the mortals around them. This proximity to mortal society stirs echoes of human feelings in a great many vampires who once walked dangerously close to the Beast. The decisions so many vampires make during this era reaffirm the Path of Humanity and guide the direction of the Camarilla into the next century.

While the Camarilla grows strong by attaching itself to the infrastructure of mortal civilization, the Sabbat begins to fall apart. Those elders who had entrenched themselves in once-strategic positions now find themselves far away from the action. Those ancillae who sought power down other Paths to use against mortals and Camarilla find themselves distracted by the burgeoning power of those mortals.

The Path of the Future

The secret proliferation of vampire society within mortal society certainly affects the Kindred more than the mortals. Mortals, impacted by the presence of vampires, most often have their worldview altered for a few

short years (or minutes). Vampires, impacted by the presence of mortals, can potentially dwell on their experiences for centuries. This is the reason why so many vampires, even elders, are on the Path of Humanity during the Final Nights. For all that vampires may claim to detest or pity humans, they are nothing but a shadowy reflection of them.

The Sabbat will be deeply impacted by this era as well. Sometime between the Victorian age and the Final Nights, Sabbat Cainites come to understand the self-annihilating route they have chosen and see through the propaganda. Those Cainites who truly understand alien codes of morality aren't willing to sacrifice themselves on stale Sabbat suicide raids for faceless elders. Instead, they will gather the lore they can and hide it away from their weaker kin. No longer will foolish childer grope blindly toward power. From the turn of the century on, promising monsters would be invited to walk the Paths. The rest could burn for the Sabbat.

Camarilla vampires Embraced during the Victorian age naturally continue to observe the Path of Humanity and seldom learn of any alternatives. Even Caitiff commonly face their Humanity during this era. By overwhelming majority, the Sabbat and the most experienced of the independent clans truck with alternate moralities in the Victorian age.

Merits and Flaws

Above all, remember that these Traits are optional. It is often simpler and more effective to detail a character through the basic statistics and involved storytelling. The more Merits and Flaws you use to explain your character, the less any one of them is worth as a descriptor. Economize.

All of the Merits and Flaws presented in **Vampire: The Masquerade** are suitable for **Victorian Age: Vampire** as well. You may need to alter some century-specific details, as you did with your Abilities, in order for everything to fit together. Disease Carriers in this game will not transmit HIV, for example. You have an enormous selection of other, horrible diseases to choose from in this era, such as malaria.

Physical Flaws, especially those that might persist from a character's mortal life, deserve some increased attention in this era. It would be common to find Disfigured or Lame mortals in the Victorian age, and not all vampires Embrace uncommon blokes. Addiction affects eminent and invisible Victorians alike, from slums to gentleman's clubs, and won't be diagnosed as a problem until the maturation of psychology in the 1900s. General medicine is poor, and the consequences of inadequate care persist even in an undead body.

Many troupes will be tempted to model the peculiarities of Victorian social structure with new Social Merits and Flaws. This isn't necessary. You aren't playing vampiric time travelers, you're playing contemporaries. Merits and Flaws mark characters as exceptional, and if all the characters in your chronicle are operating under the same social rules, where's the exception? Effective Social Traits describe the core dramatic interactions going at the human level and shouldn't deal in things as superficial as fads and manners. Neither should Social Merits and Flaws deal with strictly internal facets of your character. That's better done with your imagination and illustrated with your roleplaying performance. Unless the Merit or Flaw has a potentially serious, unlife-altering consequence that can surface in the chronicle, it is not significant enough to warrant modeling with a game statistic.

The following Merits and Flaws can be selected only if they are first approved by your Storyteller. Rather than present them in their subcategories, they are presented here as a single collection.

13th Generation (2-pt. Physical Flaw)

You were recently sired by a 12th-generation vampire. Few of your kind exist. You are considered to be part of an unofficial social step forming at the bottom of vampire society. You still bear the distinctions and predilections of your clan, but are largely overlooked by elders, ancillae and many 12th-generation neonates. You have to shout twice as loud to be heard and work twice as hard to be noticed. Neither entitles you to respect or responsibility, yet. It's a strange era for you: Most of your generation has not yet arrived. When they do, perhaps things will be different. As a 13th-generation vampire, you have a maximum blood pool of 10 and may spend a single blood point per turn.

Archaic (2-pt. Mental Flaw)

You are uncomfortable with the trends of the night. Machines are noisy, coal is dirty, and gaslights make you understandably nervous. All of these things signal an increase in mortal power and just plain confuse you. Your unlife may become a genuine hell if this is the way things are headed. The difficulties of any Mental or Social actions you undertake are increased by two if they involve machinery or technology invented in the last 50 years.

Dangerous Bias (3-pt. Mental Flaw)

You are blinded by popular cultural illusions. You see individuals based solely on their economic position, social status and racial or ethnic background. To you, a valet or a foreigner is a kind of person distinctly different from an Englishman. The difficulties of all Perception, Empathy, Leadership, Streetwise and Investigation rolls

are raised by two if they regard persons of a social or economic group other than your own. On any roll involving two of the prior Traits, the difficulty increases by three instead. Your behavior, if properly roleplayed, might very well make Manipulation and Charisma actions more difficult among these groups as well.

Frail Stomach (2-pt. Physical Flaw)

You are physically unable to stomach blood that you consider filthy or poor. The overwhelming stink of kerosene and coal in a factory worker's blood might turn you away — or perhaps the sticky caramel-sweet blood of the aristocracy. This Flaw cannot be combined with Prey Exclusion and is more than just a matter of distaste. To keep down any blood from a source deemed unfit by you requires a Stamina + Self-Control roll (difficulty 8). You may stomach a number of blood points equal to the successes. Anything else is regurgitated.

Harbinger of Gehenna (5-pt. Supernatural Flaw)

This Flaw encompasses both the 14th Generation and Thin Blood Flaws from **Vampire: The Masquerade**. You are more than merely weak in the eyes of Victorian vampires, you are a symbol of ruin. Your presence is offensive, at least, and, most likely, frightening for your fellow Kindred. You might find solace in the presence of neonates or fools, but many vampires would rather burn you than consider what you represent. Quite simply, anyone who knows the secrets of your weak blood probably despises you for it. Tread carefully.

Hypersensitive Palate (2-pt. Physical Merit)

You have an almost supernatural ability to analyze the blood you drink. Any sip of blood you are able to sample allows a single Perception roll (difficulty 7 + [the age of the blood in hours]) to detect familiar tastes or distinctions. If any successes are scored, the Storyteller may require a second roll to correctly identify the flavors tasted (water from the Thames, French merlot, Lingenwald factory soot, a particular family's blood).

Mechanical Aptitude (2-pt. Mental Merit)

You have an uncommon understanding of the astounding machines being developed in this wondrous age. Whenever your player makes a roll to assess, operate or design a mechanical device developed during the last 50 years, he enjoys two extra dice in his pool. This Merit is especially rare among elders and could become a serious advantage into the next century.

Medium (2- or 4-pt. Supernatural Merit)

You have, either naturally or through training, an affinity for receiving ghosts and spirits around you. With the two-point Merit, you are able to hear, smell or otherwise vaguely sense spirits in your vicinity. You may communicate with them using whatever means you have for mundane communication but can exert no more power over them than you could any other discomfiting stranger. With the four-point Merit, you are able to actually see or feel those spirits about you. You may be able to deduce their identity or history from your findings. What's more, you project a strange authority in the spirit world, affording you an extra success on any Social rolls to intimidate, soothe or otherwise persuade a neutral spirit. Spirits with their own motives may not be particularly respectful of your power, however. Either way, you stand out in the spirit world and may attract some unwanted attention with this Trait.

Prophetic (3-pt. Supernatural Merit)

You see the future and detect pivotal moments in time. You may have some ritual or routine to perform when you try to glimpse future nights, but most often, your ability is sporadic and involuntary. You might be harassed by distant sounds echoing backward through time, or you might receive terrifically vivid mental images of a single future moment. The Storyteller may require a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty based on your proximity to a person or place that will be instrumental to history) to make sense of your prophetic signal. Prophecies may be important or insignificant and may relate to the future of the world or your future alone.





Chapter Four: Chasing Sunset (Geography)

*The sun never sets on the British
Empire.*

British aphorism

If I have thus completed the last of my studies into both the physical peculiarities and the familial and social schisms of the "Indred," I determined that I might complete said studies by examining their actions and activities, both here and abroad. I take precious little risk in finishing what I have begun; my investigations have attracted their attentions once already, and they can hardly kill me again. Perhaps, my work completed, I might finally move on.



Now, it should not be supposed by the casual reader (as though any perusal of these pages might be casual!) that this is an effort I undertake lightly. The task is unutterably difficult, even herculean, in its scope, the various advantages of my condition notwithstanding. Nevertheless, it is something that my love of science, uncompromised even by all the "unnatural" sights I have seen, demands of me.

As it was the land of both my birth and my last breaths, it would seem to me auspicious, to say nothing of convenient, to begin at home.

Great Britain

What can be said of this jewel of nations that has not already been uttered by lips or flowed from pens more eloquent than mine? Great Britain and Her Noblest Majesty Queen Victoria hold proudly our place at the very height of all the civilizations of mankind.

Yet, here, amidst man's greatest triumph, lurks the darkest shadow the Devil has ever cast upon God's creation. In every corner of our world, in every darkened room, or so it might seem to eyes as burned by the study of evil as mine, they wait. Science may, nay *must*, understand them, but I think it unlikely it can ever *explain* these creatures who call themselves the Kindred, that less educated men call vampires.

Fortunately, in this, my home and first area of study, I have already made a prolonged investigation.

Where Exactly Are We?

It is common practice, throughout much of the world, to treat the names England, Britain, Great Britain and the United Kingdom as though they were interchangeable. In truth, for those who would maintain a proper grasp on the language, these all refer to distinctly different entities.

England refers only to one specific country; that is, the nation occupying the greatest part of the largest of the British Isles, from which Queen Victoria rules and this greatest of empires was born. The nation is also known informally as Britain.

The island on which England rests also includes the nations of Wales and Scotland; this triumvirate of countries is properly titled Great Britain.

Finally, by adding Ireland, you have the United Kingdom. The British Empire, of course, refers to all those territories and colonies throughout the world that have been graced by English civilization.

Incidentally, the astute reader may have noticed that this sidebar is not, in fact, written by our chapter's chronicler and journal-keeper, nor are any other sidebars throughout this chapter. As such, they present information untainted by his perspective and should not be assumed to contain the same bias or misinformation.

They have, in fact, bias and misinformation of their very own.



London, England

It is cold, here, a cold that used to inspire me to quicken my pace to warm the blood. It rains frequently, icy droplets that shiver the skin, and the fog is a constant companion. The gray clouds of the firmament often appear as though they are borne aloft not by the currents of wind, but by the blacker columns of smoke that rise from the smokestacks of numerous factories throughout London's East End. Summers are miserably humid — I never have understood what possible motivation the Classical Greeks and Romans could conceivably have for their abominable steam baths — but short and not particularly hot. Winter is our most frequent guest — and our most impolite as well, often refusing to leave when his welcome is long since worn. Although obscured in the daylight by the sounds of thousands of workers and the rumbling of many great factory machines, the forlorn horns of London's trains can be heard throughout the night by those wandering souls who happen to be about.

The Thames flows through London like an artery, pumping away the filth and factory runoff that is the inevitable bad blood of technological progress. It no longer provides meals for London's ichthyophagous poor, for those fish that might survive the awful substances in the water are none that men might safely stomach! A pity, but a small price to be paid for man's advancement.

London is a city of constant growth, her population having doubled and more than doubled in the past five decades, so that we now boast very near six million souls. So swiftly has the city grown, and in such myriad directions, that it is practically two separate cities, each with its own sort of populace — and its own sort of Kindred.

West End

The proper, genteel end of town, London's West End is the home of those Londoners with status, breeding, intelligence and poise. The truly affluent dwell in opulent stone manors and sprawling estates, which paradoxically conspire to be both grandiose and yet cramped together, each upon the next. Others of more modest means house themselves in smaller abodes or within suites of apartments that are still far and away superior to the best dwellings to be found in the East End. Gentlemen with canes and top hats wander the streets, escorting their ladies as they go about their entertainments; or else they travel about in luxurious carriages that rattle noisily through the cobbled lanes. Folk of means spend their evenings in salons and parlors with acquaintances, or perhaps, they attend an evening's performance at the theatre — some even deign to dare the scandalmongers

by frequenting this new and vulgar form of entertainment called "cinema."

Saint James and Trafalgar Squares draw the curious and those with coin to spend. Westminster Abbey, the home of Parliament, is the seat of our political process, and Scotland Yard rises from the shadows, promising security to all and sundry. From Buckingham Palace, our darling Queen addresses her people, brightening us all with her presence.

Now that I think upon it, I find it rather odd that no Kindred, at least to my knowledge, has attempted to place the Queen Herself under his odious thumb. Perhaps, some things are beyond the pale, even for those creatures.

The Queen's Protector

Our distinguished narrator has unfortunately leapt to a false conclusion. It is not that no vampire has attempted to suborn Her Majesty through means both mundane and mystical. Rather, the Queen's Protector, a guardian angel of which even she is not fully aware, has thwarted all such attempts.

Dr. William Gull, the Queen's physician (and, for a time, a favorite but innocent suspect in the Whitechapel slayings), faked his death from stroke in 1890. Although an old man, and physically weak, Gull still possesses a keen mind, a startling amount of knowledge about the Kindred and an inexplicable resistance to their mental suasion. He has taken it upon himself, and his able-bodied assistants, to watch the Queen for any signs of occult influence. For her own part, Queen Victoria was puzzled by Gull's efforts to convince the world he had died, but humored his tales of "enemies from his youth."

The good doctor now feels a true death looming over his shoulder and desperately seeks a qualified successor for his self-appointed role as her Majesty's Protector. Should he pass away before a suitable candidate is located, the crown might indeed become a valuable prize for ambitious Kindred.

Most Kindred who make their havens in London's West End — very nearly all, as best I am able to determine — are like the mortals around them. They are the wealthiest of their kind, as concerned with matters of decorum and propriety as any upstanding gentleman. Most, if not all, are part of a secret society of Kindred called the Camarilla, which sect maintains a peerless influence over undead society in nearly all of Great Britain.

It is a matter of some interest, then, that their "prince" is somewhat less refined. Mithras, one of their patrician Ventrue clan, predates the very existence of England and has never truly abandoned many of his uncivilized, pagan ways. A figure of great power, he maintains his authority among the London vampires through main strength.

For all that Mithras' might seems to go unchallenged, however, he does not stand completely uncontested. The skirmishes waged for the principedom of this greatest of cities are subtle and quiet, like the maneuverings of barristers and politicians rather than of soldiers. They are no less deadly, despite.

For centuries, one of Mithras' most trusted vassals was another Ventrue called Valerius. His duty, laid upon his shoulders by his master, was to watch over London during the prince's sporadic absences. This last, I am given to understand through conversations overheard, was longer than most; Mithras departed in the final years of the 18th century and has returned but a decade gone. As is so often the case with those who would take power on a temporary basis, the taste agreed with the younger vampire. While still loyal to Mithras, Valerius maintains his suitability for the position — he knows better than his master the workings of the modern man — and subtly works to enhance his own influence in London.

I have heard mention of a third Ventrue, one Lady Anne, who holds great sway in London and even claims no small amount of influence over Parliament itself! Regrettably, she plays her cards quite close to the vest, as the Americans are fond of saying, and I was unable to determine by any means which of the various factions of the London Kindred, if any, she supports.

While London's three preeminent vampires all hail from the Ventrue, it appears to me that much authority among the city's Kindred is held by the artisan Clan Toreador — a situation, I am given to understand, that is not altogether common. As well as I may determine, the Toreador, who surpass the Ventrue in the extent and the degree of their influence with living men, have adapted to our current era with surpassing ease. The Toreador and their high-society social circles have taken to both directing and slavishly following the fashions of the day. I have become aware of contests among these Toreador as to who might attend their fetes — their "Elysiums" — bearing the most extreme examples of these styles. While I've little concern for the comfort of vampires, I find it particularly despicable that some have begun forcing their mortal servitors, called ghouls, into wearing the same. While beings with no need to breathe and no circulation can tolerate such things, many of these unfortunate women have been driven to uncon-

Improper Topics and Impure Thoughts

As the reader may know, it is a distinctly Victorian tendency to dismiss certain taboo topics out of hand, as though they cease to exist entirely by the proper lady's and gentleman's refusal to speak of them. Certain matters of religion, political thought and social theory — to say nothing of those details of affection and reproduction! — are never spoken of in polite company, and often never spoken of at all.

This odd notion is found among the Kindred no less than the kine, and many of England's vampires have their own ideas of which topics are and are not acceptable. As a result, many childer of Kindred with Victorian sensibilities find themselves dangerously undereducated in Kindred affairs.

Many "civilized" Camarilla Kindred, for instance, find even thinking about the Sabbat to be a simply ghastly experience; what call is there to upset the sophisticated tone of Elysium with such things? From there, it is but the shortest of steps to a refusal to speak of the Sabbat at all. This, in turn, leads to a small but growing number of neonates who are utterly unaware of the opposing sect's existence.

Some few Kindred take their taboos further still. Although thankfully uncommon, it is not entirely unheard of for certain vampires to refuse to discuss even so basic a process as feeding, as it involves the base transfer of bodily fluids. The unfortunate childer of such deluded vampires can enter the night with precious little knowledge of their true natures; clan, Disciplines and even the basics of feedings (such as the fact that they need not kill) are foreign.

These near-Caitiff are threats not only to themselves and any unfortunate enough to cross their paths, but to the Masquerade itself. It is not, unfortunately, a problem that presents any easy solutions; a vampire so bound by "propriety" that she would undereducate her childe is not likely to be persuaded to change her beliefs.

sciousness, and sometimes even death, by corsets that constrict the lungs and burst the blood vessels and by other equally vile accoutrements. It is an unnecessarily cruel pastime and one that reflects poorly on both the Toreador and the Kindred as a species.

How much of our country's recent history might have been influenced by these devious creatures who treat mankind's God-given destiny as their own to steer? Did the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 pass because Londoners felt it right that women keep their own earnings and property — or because it gave Lady Lancaster's agents, mostly of the fairer sex, an advantage? When the Third Reform Act and the Redistribution Act gave agricultural workers the vote in 1885, how did Valerius, who knows far better than his master how to manipulate the political system, benefit from the increased electorate?

How can we ever know?

Perhaps the most popular fad among the gentry and affluent of London is a fascination with the occult. From the Freemasons to the street-corner mediums, it seems as though every man and woman on the Thames is suddenly entitled to either speak with the dead or to understand the greatest secrets of the Creator (who, in the minds of these pseudo-occultists, often bears precious little resemblance to the God spoken of in the Holy Bible). Secret societies crop up like mushrooms sprouting in a forest; many are harmless pastimes, whereas others could prove a deadly peril for those involved and possibly any unfortunate enough to come near them.

Most of these groups offer little more than parlor games, séances performed by enthusiastic but ignorant dabblers with black candles and Ouija boards — though I will attest, firsthand, that the strength of the participants' belief can, on rare occasions, prove sufficient to empower these slapdash rituals with real magic! These events are held in the sitting rooms of ladies of quality, or perhaps the back chambers at a gentleman's club, and tend not to bring the unsuspecting fellows to the Kindred's attention (save for certain unscrupulous vampires who offer far greater secrets to such seekers in exchange for committing acts of loathsome sorts; one particular clan, the Followers of Set, seems especially adept at this sort of debasement, though I'm quite certain they are not the only ones to practice it).

Other such organizations have become truly mammoth endeavors, "secret" only in that they do not reveal their "mystic knowledge" to outsiders. The Freemasons, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and a dozen others like them permeate the urban London landscape. Several espouse the teachings and magics of John Dee, a 16th-century astrologer, occultist and — some say —

wizard. In my wanderings throughout London's dark places, I encountered several men (mortal and vampire both) around whom these cults and secret orders have sprung up who claimed that they actually were the ancient magus, either immortal or returned from death. A thorough investigation of their claims, however, undertaken with an unbiased eye like my own rather than the blinded gaze of those who wish to believe, proves all such claims to be patently false. The Setites engage in many of these organizations, selling secrets in return for souls in Faustian fashion; whereas the Tremere, Kindred warlocks of disturbing ability and even more disturbing predilections, frequent such organizations not to impart secret knowledge, but to obtain it. (The Tremere also appear to be engaged in a sporadic conflict with Mithras, further distracting his attention from those who would seek to take his place.)

Curiously, I have also observed a marked increase in the number of Kindred with Near or Middle Eastern manner and appearance. I suppose some might say this is to be expected, for much of this newfound fascination with the occult comes from our colonies in Egypt and the Holy Land. I have not, as of this time, been able to determine to what branch of the Kindred tree they might belong. They act unlike Setites; I would dub them Assamites, yet all Kindred know that the Assamites are all bloodthirsty warriors, and these new arrivals are all men of learning and study.

It is a mystery to which I would devote more time, had I not so much more territory to cover before I might call my task complete.

East End

It is hard for one to imagine two places more different from one another than the separate halves of our fair city. As one proceeds east, as the last echoes of the chimes of Big Ben fade away and are heard no more, it is as though the very world changes. Here, cobbled streets often give way to lanes paved only in dirt. Brick-walled factories and foundries churn out thick smoke and ashen-faced workers garbed in worn coats and disintegrating shoes. Another hard day's labor completed, they trudge home through the frigid rains to insect-ridden beds, some of which are paid for night to night. Workhouses run well beyond capacity, and though unpleasant and menial in the extreme, I should think the prostitutes and petty criminals prefer such honest labors to their previous livelihoods. Textile factories abound, many run entirely by immigrant Jews. The roads are tightly packed with London's indigent masses, so that, at times, it becomes physically impossible to force one's way against the current, and travel by horse-drawn carriage becomes no

more feasible here than it might be on the side of a craggy mountain peak. Cockney speech is common here — and thick, so that a proper gentleman often has little prayer of understanding even a single word spoken to him by the natives.

It is my firm belief, as it is of every right-thinking Englishman, that these conditions, while deplorable, are an unfortunate aspect of life, to be accepted as one accepts the city's constant rains. Many of those dwelling in the squalor of the East End are obviously lazy, unwilling to put themselves out and do the work necessary to raise their standing in the world. Others are unfortunate; but the dockworkers, the foundry workers, the chimneysweeps and all the rest must know that it is through their labor that London, and by extension England, may grow and continue to serve as a beacon of man's achievement. We would not be where we stand without them, and surely, this comforts them even in the midst of their hunger.

The East End is overcrowded, impoverished, poorly patrolled by the bobbies, rather ostentatiously ignored by those who are better off — can there be any doubt that such a place would attract the Kindred like flies to a dead and bloated horse? Although I have hardly taken an accurate census, and I can't for the life of me imagine anyone else attempting so futile an endeavor, it would not remotely surprise me to learn that the ratio of Kindred to mortals in London's East End is nearly twice what one might expect to find in other civilized regions.

Although a part of London — and, thus, nominally within Mithras' demesne — the prince lacks any true authority over the Kindred in the East End, as he rarely comes here personally, and most native vampires are of the sort who care little for political repercussions. One particular Kindred, a loathsome Nosferatu who calls himself Prince Fagin (presumably after Dickens' unsavory character from *Oliver Twist*), claims dominion over the East End. He lairs, if I am not mistaken, somewhere near Billingsgate, by the London Bridge. To my understanding, Mithras has refused to acknowledge Fagin's existence in any manner, and the Nosferatu has interpreted this as tacit acceptance of his claims. This false prince runs his territory in brutal, bloody fashion and permits his "subjects" whatever liberties they choose to take with the unfortunate mortals, for he knows full well that only the most extreme transgressions will ever reach the ears of either Kindred or mortal authorities.

Transgressions the likes of those committed in Whitechapel in the autumn and winter of 1888. Although I am as curious as any in London as to the identity of "Saucy Jack," I must confess that I have turned up no evidence beyond that acquired by Scotland Yard, per-

haps even less. I know only that I spoke once, very briefly, to an entity that I believe may have been the tormented spirit of Mary Jane Kelly, the last confirmed victim of the Ripper and the one most awfully mutilated. I say "believe," for, even in death, her soul bore the scars of her body's injuries, and I can never be certain if she was who I took her to be. I can say only that she refused, with but a violent shake of her head, to answer any questions put to her and fled deep into the realms of the spirit, where I chose not to follow; whether she was unwilling to speak of her killer or truly unable — or perhaps, even in death, too frightened — I imagine I will never know.

Fagin's brood of Nosferatu are far from the only Kindred in power in this wretched sea of humanity. Brujah and the occasional Malkavian also form sizable portions of the undead population. I learned early in my researches that many clans, particularly the Ventrue and the Toreador, hold the Brujah in little regard; those who dwell near the docks do their already precarious reputations little good. One in particular, called Cappie, along with his wife and fellow Brujah, called only Mags, are truly loathsome specimens. He, a former bobby until he was drummed off the force for beating a suspect to death with the man's own cane; she, a factory worker easily the match of any three average men. They and a raucous handful of their fellows take great delight in patrolling the East End and administering a beating, often quite fatal, to any highborn visitors to their territory, be they Kindred or mortal. More than once, they have left the East End entirely, seeking farther afield for their entertainment. As Mags also answers directly to Fagin and often does him favors as his best "basher," I think it unlikely that he will call them to task for their violence.

So horrible are the nightly depredations of Fagin and the other Kindred of the East End, I have heard it theorized more than once that Fagin's true loyalties might lie not with the Camarilla, but with the Sabbat, a rival sect of vampires far more openly violent. If so, Fagin would surely represent that sect's only powerful presence in London, so firmly does the Camarilla maintain its grip. Then again, I know that there was a Sabbat pack, come over from Ireland, that laired for many a night in one little-used wing of the Tower of London. That awful place (one might almost say unholy), a prison for the worst of those who offend against the Queen's peace and the laws of man and God, proved terrifyingly capable of defending itself with no aid from the Kindred at all. One night, the entire pack simply vanished within its darkened halls and never more were seen. I will not follow up, nor in any way investigate this particular mystery. Even Fagin's most depraved minions will not approach the Tower any more; passing near it, I hear the screams of all



who suffer still and all who have suffered before. And too, I hear the screams of things that never wore human skin, screams that pierce the veil between worlds. No, some things I dare not, even though the pursuit of science be my creed.

I should also mention, I think, one rumor of particular interest regarding the Kindred of the East End. I have seen no evidence of this myself and would readily have dismissed it as paranoid whispers did I not keep hearing the same tale from multiple sources.

If talk is to be believed, then, an asylum exists somewhere in the labyrinthine squalor of the East End. Not unusual in itself, for this would hardly be the first home for the insane in London (we have Bedlam to the south, after all). But the taletellers would have it that the doctors who run this madhouse know of the Kindred, that they take every opportunity to hunt down younger vampires, to subdue them and to study them in depth. Horror stories of Kindred vivisected alive or deconstructed psychologically, flit from mouth to ear.

I cannot say if this is true or not, and I think it unlikely. A part of me, however, rejoices in the thought that, at least in some small part, the Kindred may finally find themselves on the receiving end of such violence.

On a Train Toward Wales

I cannot help but be amazed anew each time I venture forth into the English countryside. London can hardly lay claim to being the only substantial city in England, but so much of the countryside is open, green, as I imagine it must have been in the age of chivalry. The towns are small, the very picture of "pastoral," and the manor houses of wealthy families sit high upon grassy hillsides. For all that I am a staunch proponent of human progress, there were times while in London proper when I would have been grateful for a glimpse of a green tree or blooming flower.

The Kindred soul, if such a thing exists, does not long for the same natural beauty as we, and precious little out here is of use to them. Yet, I did find one particular spot of interest, one evening when the train stopped in a small hamlet to allow some travelers to disembark. The populace, to the last man and woman, seemed ever so slightly off, as though the spark of animation to be found within all mankind had somehow subtly weakened. The passengers on the train seemed oblivious to any peculiarity, but I was as certain of it as I am of my own thoughts. As I am hardly obligated to pay for my transport, I chose to investigate further and catch the train that I knew would be passing through three days hence.

There was, some several hours travel through the dales, a manor house of the sort I previously mentioned — large, constructed of sturdy stone, with overhanging eaves, and surrounded by a lush garden, as might be found in the works of Emily Brontë. The inhabitants, as I swiftly discovered when the sun had fully set, were not so benign.

An entire household, a sick extended family of Malkavians, dwelt in that manor! The town below, the *entire town*, was their herd; two-legged cattle kept as food! I had said that this was a land out of the age of chivalry, and surely, the vampire lords of the Dark Ages must have held to similar arrangements.

I chose to depart on foot and await the train some miles further down the track, although it meant several days of solitude. The situation disturbed me greatly, as I've no doubt it would disturb most rational minds, not only for its essence, but by its implication. Throughout the countryside can be found many such small villages and many such manors, each many days distant from its neighbors. It is not uncommon for those who live in such fashion to spend years interacting only with the same three-dozen souls, save for the occasional traveler or the brief glimpse of a train.

How many? How many more manors, how many more towns, rot under the touch of these rural Kindred?

Cardiff, Wales

Having bodily hurled myself aboard the next passing train — a feat made rather easier by the lack of any real “body” involved — I swiftly put that sad little village behind me and began once more looking ahead.

Little in the immediate environment alerts the casual traveler that he has passed from England to Wales. The border is artificially marked, of course, but nature ignores such distinctions. The weather remains damp and mild of temperature, the scenery pastoral. It is only as one moves beyond the border into the heartland of this nation that things look different. The Cambrian Mountains in the center of Wales stand as God's sentries over the surrounding lands, though it was the less dramatic Brecon Beacons through which we passed on our journey toward the capital.

Upon reaching that city, I discovered quickly an unexpected advantage to my current state. Had I a physical form, were I forced — as are living men — to obtain my information through direct conversation with the natives, I would have left Cardiff ignorant. The people here, as a rule, distrust Englishmen and all things English. The rebellious Welsh have yet to accept the

notion that we have only their own best interests at heart.

Cardiff has developed into an important port, sitting as it does at the mouths of the Taff and Ely Rivers on Bristol Channel. Much of the coal and mineral wealth mined throughout southern Wales is brought through Cardiff on the Glamorganshire Canal and, from there, shipped to England or other lands. While not nearly a match for London's East End, it has begun to look very much the proper, technologically advanced city. Refineries belch the thick, black smoke that is the unfortunate companion of progress, and the docks are visited by a constant stream of vessels. In short, Cardiff is both crowded and financially vital, two factors that are assured to draw the attention of the Kindred.

The Prince of Cardiff is a Ventrue by the name of Ows ap Gwian, an exceedingly pompous Welshman whose family have dwelt on these lands since Roman times. To all outward appearances, ap Gwian maintains his domain (he holds Elysium in a private dwelling that lies in the shadow of Cardiff Castle) in the approved Camarilla fashion; that is, he keeps his primogen well in line and otherwise allows them to go about their business. Cardiff's vampire population is surprisingly small and, thus, relatively easy to manage — or so it appears upon first examination.

The effort of several days and nights of deeper investigation, however, painted for me an entirely different picture.

The prince is little more than a figurehead, though he himself is utterly oblivious to this fact. Every web of favors, every chain of command, seems ultimately to lead back to one Ewfame Cyrawn. One of the Brujah, Cyrawn makes a pest of herself just enough to remain a thorn in ap Gwian's side without ever provoking a true conflict.

I spent several days observing Cyrawn, and I have discovered that something rather disturbing is afoot. Far more Kindred dwell in Cardiff than it seems at first glance. Between Cyrawn's own childer and their get, there must be near a score of Brujah in the city, utterly unaccounted for by the prince. How she manages to keep this excess population a secret, I surely do not know; were she to be discovered, all her fellow Camarilla Kindred would seek her destruction. Cyrawn uses many of these Brujah in the coal mines outside of town. They work at night, when no mortals are about, and they work swiftly, for they've no fear of bad air and muscles that never tire. Others work the docks or along the canal, hiding shipments, altering manifests and in all manners ensuring that the coal and mineral shipments that leave Cardiff are nominally smaller than those that arrive. The stolen goods, combined with the riches the Brujah have mined

themselves, are then sold to private concerns at an enormous profit to Cyrawn.

This Brujah is building her resources for some fell purpose, of this I am unshakably certain. I fear that I am unable to learn her precise motives — if there exists on God's earth a language more antagonistic to the ears and minds of good Englishmen than Welsh, I've yet to encounter it. I am pretty well convinced that she does not serve the Sabbat, and by all accounts, this would be too subtle a maneuver for them in any case. As to what she plans, or whom (if anyone) she *does* serve, I cannot say. I know only that the most influential vampire in Cardiff — and possibly in all of Wales — is rapidly becoming the wealthiest as well.

The only other Kindred I found of particular note was the "nun." Sister Grace (not, I am quite certain, her born name) makes her haven in the very Church of Saint John the Baptist! I am not as religious a fellow as some, but I am a God-fearing Christian, and the thought of this creature defiling a holy place is not a pleasant one to me. She is Gangrel, a bestial creature like most of her clan, and yet, she insists on parading about in full nun's habit. Other Kindred fear to draw near her, and I have even heard the ludicrous claim that it is her "aura of holiness" that holds other vampires at bay. Clearly, a laughable concept at best, though I have seen with my own eyes that *some* force about her indeed disturbs other Kindred. Whatever it may be, it is normally sufficient to keep her out of the politics of her fellows, yet I have seen her lurking about the edges of Elysium, unseen by other Kindred eyes, so I must assume that she, as with all her undead ilk, is plotting something.

The remainder of the country, or what portions of it I observed in my travels, seems to resemble Cardiff itself in terms of Kindred population. That is, the nation seems particularly populated with Ventrue, Brujah and Toreador of the Camarilla sect.

Edinburgh, Scotland

Even passing back through England, the journey to Edinburgh is not terribly long by train, but still, I found myself losing track of the hours. The reader will almost certainly have noticed that I am not dating my entries as I travel from city to city in my investigation of vampiric affairs. I can only apologize profusely for this failing on my part. As a scientist, I lament the lack of precision inherent in such a slapdash approach as I am taking here. Ever since my demise, however, I have found that my sense of time has... atrophied, for lack of any better expression. So, I can only beg the reader's forgiveness and indulgence in this regard.

Scotland is far more sharply delineated from England than is Wales. Beyond the Cheviot Hills, the land opens like a blooming flower into the Lower Uplands of gently rolling hills and occasional majestic mountains. Few towns of any great size are to be found in this region, and as peaceful as a stay in one of the quaint little villages might have proven, my schedule simply would not allow for it. Knowledge waits for no man. Thus, it was with some regret but firm resolve that I allowed the train to carry me north into the Central Lowlands that occupy the middle of Scotland, separating the Uplands in the south from the Highlands in the north — and, not incidentally, the home of most of Scotland's major cities.

It is colder here than in London. One would imagine that such trifling concerns as "hot" or "cold" have long since ceased to bother me, but there you have it. Perhaps it is a psychological phenomenon. Edinburgh is located on the southern coast of the Firth of Forth. While not quite the center of commerce and shipping that Cardiff has become, it is still the hub around which many mercantile endeavors revolve. Of particular interest to a man of my education is Edinburgh's printing industry, which has been a small but essential mainstay of the city's economy since the 16th century.

The hills that abut the city are stunning in their beauty, but few Kindred take advantage of these surroundings. To hear them speak of it, inhuman creatures stalk the wild, beast-men and projected legends of the "good folk," that frighten even they. One does, on occasion, hear romantic (to say nothing of far-fetched) tales of Scottish Gangrel who have been roaming the Highlands since Celtic times, but I saw nothing of them. If they do exist — and I rather strongly doubt that they do — they never approached the Lowlands while I was present. This is not to say that no Gangrel are active in Scotland — short of the Ventrue and the clans I discuss below, they seem among the most numerous — but all those I encountered were relatively civilized, and many even took part in the Kindred politics of the region, an activity that many Gangrel elsewhere eschew.

Edinburgh's greatest virtue, I think, is its many cultural and historical locations. Edinburgh Castle overlooks the city from rocky cliffs above; the Holyrood Palace, the Chapel of Saint Margaret and the Church of Saint Giles can all be found in Edinburgh's Old Town. The city is known widely across the British Isles for its many museums.

If the reader has, to this point, been paying attention to my studies, he will no doubt not require me to tell him that the Toreador clan claims dominance in the city. Between the multiple museums and historical curiosities, an unheard of proportion of Old Town has been

declared Elysium by Lady Besse Dancort, Edinburgh's "prince" (a term that apparently, and quite puzzlingly, has no gender-specific implication in Kindred parlance). Despite infrequent attempts by outside powers (such as London's Mithras) to introduce their own pawns into Scotland's capital, Lady Besse and her Toreador appear to have the city very well in hand, though I cannot help but think that this is partially because many of Edinburgh's eldest non-Toreador Kindred have long since relocated to London or other, more swiftly growing cities. Edinburgh's importance in the scheme of Kindred Britain appears to be on the wane.

Perhaps, for clarity's sake, what I should actually say is that Edinburgh's importance to the Camarilla sect appears to be on the wane. Worried rumors among the Toreador fetes in Old Town, whispered across crowded balls like the gossip of old women, suggest that they fear the Sabbat has taken an interest in Edinburgh (and Glasgow as well, they say). I myself saw no trace of any such thing, but my stay — limited in duration as circumstances required — was hardly lengthy enough for me to rule out such a possibility.

Oddly, the reigning power in Edinburgh behind the Toreador appears to be a true vampiric "family" — that is, I can find no hint of their clan affiliation. These "Dunsirn" Kindred keep largely to themselves, rarely challenging the Toreador in any way. I find this particularly unusual, as their influence seems to extend across most of Scotland. I've little doubt that they could effectively take Edinburgh from Lady Besse if they so chose. Perhaps they fear the repercussions of angering the Camarilla, of which sect I do not believe they are a part. I would desperately like to learn more of these Dunsirn, but several of their largest havens appear to be warded by some barrier that denies me entry. I had thought that my state beyond death rendered me immune to anything the Kindred might inflict upon me. If this is not the case, and my experience here does cast reasonable doubt, I shall have to be more cautious than I have been thus far. Only one thing do I know for certain about the Dunsirn — their reputation precedes them. Polite society shuns them, and all manner of grisly behavior has been attributed to them in the few nights I was able to gather information.

On a Train Toward the North Channel

On the journey toward the west coast of Scotland, where I intended to board a ship to cross the channel to the Emerald Isle, I found myself growing nervous for the first time since I felt the vampire lay hold of me from

behind on Waterloo Bridge Road. The sky was gray and seemed low to earth, as if some great weight pressed down upon the rolling clouds; still, there was sufficient light to see. I have run across other spirits in my travels — I believe I even mentioned one previously — but never have I seen them in such numbers! The Scottish countryside is absolutely fit to burst with the Restless Dead! I cannot hazard a guess as to why this might be. As violent as this country's past is, it is no more so than many places with far fewer ghosts. Furthermore, a great many of them looked at me with strange, empty eyes, as though they were somehow dead beyond death. More than one drew near as the train swept by, and in a voice that carried even over the perpetual rumble of the train, whispered "Dunsirn...."

I think that I shall never visit in Scotland again.

Belfast, Ireland

The island is beautiful to approach from the sea, mountainous, without the intimidation of some of the larger Scottish ranges (and, not unimportantly, easy enough to dock at, though I understand the west coast is far rockier). I know well that the interior of the island is flatter, the entire mass being shaped not unlike a basin; but still, from this angle, one could easily imagine that the mountains stretch forth to the very edges of creation.

We docked at Belfast after sailing through Belfast Lough, an inlet of the Irish Sea. It is warmer here than on the British mainland — but just barely enough to be noticed. As with so many of Great Britain's largest cities, Belfast is an important port for purposes of trade and transport. A project to improve the quality of the harbor was undertaken toward the latter days of the last century, allowing not merely increased trade, but a burgeoning industry in shipbuilding. Linen and textile factories operate beyond the docks and—

As I pen this entry, gazing out over the cluttered streets where the poor of Belfast labor away, my eyes rising until I can spot the larger and most assuredly cleaner dwellings well away from the docks, I cannot help but comment that England's influence is most assuredly being felt across the breadth of the British Isles. For, is it not clear that, though the cultures that existed before were very different and though the ancient historical sites are all of differing styles, still do cities such as Edinburgh and Belfast slowly but surely grow to resemble smaller reflections of great London herself, the pinnacle of civilized development? I might imagine, I think, no greater sign of the rightness of our cause.

Despite numerous attempts at returning Ireland to partial home rule through legislative means — the 1893

attempt by Prime Minister William Gladstone, which was firmly voted down by Parliament, being only the most recent — the Emerald Isle is still quite firmly under English dominion (as, I must add, is quite proper). Many of the Irishmen, hot-tempered a race as they are, are patently unsuited to govern themselves, yet they utterly refuse to accept our guiding hand. Although less active than in decades past, the Fenian movement — so named for Finn MacCool, some Irish folk hero or other — is still responsible for numerous murders of English dignitaries and bombings on both English and Irish soil. Nor are the Fenians the only separatist movement in Ireland. Combined, then, with the frequent unrest between Catholics and Protestants, which struggle has been going on since the earliest days of Reformation, they often cause the Emerald Isle to run red with blood.

As is so often the case, the Kindred of Ireland are only too happy to mimic humanity's follies.

Strangely, neither Belfast, nor the city of Dublin far to the south, has a prince. Two Kindred of Belfast, one by the name of Caitlin O'Shae (whom I believe, but cannot prove, to be Ventrue) and a Nosferatu calling himself only Milesius, claim the fief jointly over a swiftly crumbling society of Kindred. (It is assuredly a bizarre pairing, but it is no stranger than the primogen council of Brujah and Toreador who claim the fief of Connachta from Dublin.) What possible relationship or arrangement keeps this odd couple working together, I've no notion, but it is safe to say that they are swiftly losing sway in their demesne. Mithras has attempted, more than once, to establish some influence over northern Ireland. Belfast and the fief of Ulster are engaged deeply in a long-standing feud with Dublin (though few Kindred pass between them, for fear of a particular clan of werewolves that seem to be native to the region).

It is, perhaps, ironic that the greatest threat to the stability of Belfast's Kindred is much the same that threatens the city's mortal population. I refer, of course, to the religious and political strife that sweeps the entire Irish state like a plague. The Fenians and other such radical organizations are being bandied about and manipulated by so many mortal and Kindred factions, I am nothing short of astounded they can retain any cohesiveness at all. O'Shae and Milesius encourage these factions to strike at targets in London that will cripple Mithras' ability to extend his reach. The primogen of Dublin pull what strings they have, like mad puppeteers, to arrange for the bombings of the havens of Belfast Kindred. So

caught up are the Camarilla Kindred of Ireland in their own petty squabbles, they fail to see the true enemy slipping in through the flue.

I ask you, wise reader, what possible reason could a Spanish aristocrat have for providing financial backing and shipments of arms to an Irish separatist organization? It seems an unlikely arrangement, all claims of sympathy for the oppressed Catholic Irish notwithstanding.

It makes more sense, perhaps, once one knows that the aristocrat — a gentleman with the unlikely name of Rafael Miguel Molinero Ruiz — claims the dubious honor of membership in both the Sabbat and the unnatural Lasombra clan. His connections with the Fenians and others have enabled him to insert numerous agitators into the local Kindred population, and he himself has recently arrived for "an extended visit with a dear old friend." If Milesius and O'Shae continue on their present course, they are likely to find their city, if not eventually their entire isle, pulled from under them.

Aid may be arriving in the shape of the Tremere warlocks. Mere days before I departed the island, I heard tell that a small brood of the magicians planned to purchase a sizable estate near Belfast's west side. With insufficient time to investigate their motivations fully, I cannot say if they are here to aid the city's beleaguered Kindred or to supplant them — or possibly for any dozen other reasons, not the least of which might be to study the region's indigenous werewolf population (so mentioned above), who are said to be powerful mystics in their own right.

I have even heard rumors of other creatures, fae spirits utterly unlike any I have yet encountered, drawn forth from the pages of children's stories. I would scoff even to think of it, yet I clearly observed, with my own eyes, that the fortunes of Kindred who left offerings for the "wee folk" near both haven and Elysium were unmistakably more favorable than those who did not. One tale, possibly little more than legend, claims that a Ventrue particularly known for scoffing at such fables found himself inexplicably moved from the darkened depths of his haven into a room with a western exposure in the middle of a bright afternoon. If such oddities do exist, it is possible that the Tremere, ever curious, have come to investigate them.

If so, I wish them the best of luck seeking their rainbow and their pot of gold, but I've other travels to undertake.

Europe

The world's oldest continent, in many respects, Europe is home to most of those nations with which England shares the world stage. It is the region of the world with which I am most familiar — excepting the British Isles, of course — but as I still know less of it than I should, in mortal and Kindred terms alike, I shall still be required to make of the many nations an individual study.

Lisbon, Portugal

I arrived in Lisbon aboard the *Santa Therese*, a cargo ship converted to passenger transport. I believe one of the Kindred may have been aboard; that is, the passengers in one particular suite of rooms fell mildly ill, appearing unusually pale of countenance and suffering from both apathy and weakness of the body, yet with none of the other apparent symptoms of either sea sickness or disease. A thinning of the blood could easily have caused such a state, but as I was unable to locate the creature and personally confirm its presence, I may only theorize as to the cause.

The West and South of Portugal consist largely of an open coastal plain, so heavily and intensely cultivated that a man might think the entire nation could feed from its bounty. Rivers cross the plain to the nation's interior, which rapidly becomes as mountainous as any lands I have yet traveled. Lisbon itself sits at the very mouth of the Tajo River, which will provide my means of transport through Portugal, past its central mountain range called Serra de Estrela, and on into Spain. I am given to understand, via the excited babble of the other passengers, that it can grow quite hot on the coastal plains during the summer months — a pity, almost, that I have not arrived at that time, for I think the heat would disturb me in my current state far less than the cold — whereas the mountainous interior of the nation is only a bit warmer on average than the British Isles.

I hope that I will prove capable of learning what I need to know of the native Kindred. I speak only a smattering of Spanish, and while Portuguese is remarkably similar to its sister language, I fear my ability to understand the swift dialogue of the natives will be poor at best.

For a short while upon my arrival, I was very nearly overcome by the city itself. It is a beautiful place, unlike anything I had previously encountered in my travels, and rich in culture. Much of Lisbon is built directly upon the sides of a low range of hills; it is terraced, descending the shallow slopes in layers of roofs and canopies. The streets

of the old city are both crooked and quite narrow. I imagine these byways provide an excellent hunting ground for the city's Kindred when some unfortunate soul chooses to go walking alone in the Lisbon night. Newer portions of the city, however, built after the great earthquake of 1755, boast wider avenues lined with trees and a much more logical design. I had more than once to remind myself, forcefully, that the loss of such beauty in cities such as London is an unfortunate but absolutely necessary byproduct of man's advancement. Should I forget that, it would be an insult to all that London stands for.

Lisbon, like most of the Iberian Peninsula, is a devoutly Catholic place. It is, in fact, the seat of an archbishopric and full nearly to the point of ludicrousness with churches and cathedrals of sundry sort. The Sé is particularly impressive: A large, Romanesque cathedral (and, I am given to understand, former Islamic mosque) that has stood in one form or another for over a millennium, it has been rebuilt and restored on multiple occasions, having been damaged in several of the quakes that have struck Lisbon between then and now.

I should not have been surprised to learn that the Kindred use it for their own purposes, and indeed, I was not. During the last restoration, several small chambers were added to the cathedral, chambers with hidden doors that are accessible only from outside the Sé itself. Apparently, the Lasombra of Spain are a particularly religious lot — though I find the very notion of vampires defiling man's faith in the Almighty by their own practice to be infuriating in the extreme — and the Camarilla Kindred of Lisbon felt that they would be unlikely to target an Elysium located within so ancient and respected a holy place.

Nor is this rather unusual court the only repercussion of the Camarilla/Sabbat struggle in Portugal. While the political struggles that have gripped Portugal's mortal population since the reign of Queen Maria II have lessened under Pedro V and the current king, Louis, the Kindred warfare continues unabated. From what conversation I was able, with no small amount of struggle, to interpret, it seems that Portugal is split evenly between Camarilla and Sabbat territory, while Spain leans heavily toward the Camarilla's foe. As a result, Lisbon is a favorite target for Sabbat aggression, and this has placed its Kindred leaders in a precarious position. Indeed, while Lisbon most assuredly does have a prince — I have heard numerous conversations regarding “*el príncipe*,” — I think that even the Kindred themselves are ignorant of his identity. The single meeting of the primogen I was able to observe was led by a young woman, barely more than a girl, whom the others addressed as “*La Voz del*

Príncipe" — the Voice of the Prince. For other Kindred, elder Kindred, to pay heed to the words of a mortal, she must indeed speak for someone of great power.

The Voice

Given the Machiavellian and twisted thought patterns of the Kindred, it would, of course, be far too obvious for "the Voice" to actually be the prince in disguise, attempting to make herself less of a target, would it not?

Nothing is too obvious. This young woman is the Prince of Lisbon — in a manner of speaking. More accurately, this young woman is the prince only in as much as the prince currently inhabits this particular form. The true Prince of Lisbon, one Eugênio Vicente de Olisipo of the Toreador clan, was killed by a Sabbat pack several years ago. As with our tenacious narrator, Eugênio has unfinished business and refuses, as of yet, to move on. Lacking his own body and uncertain that the Kindred would follow a spirit, the prince "went into hiding" from the Sabbat and arranged to deliver his orders through "proxies."

For the nonce, the other Kindred of Lisbon abide by this arrangement, but several among the primogen have begun to covet the principedom. If Eugênio is too frightened to emerge and deal with his affairs personally, surely, other, more effective leadership is called for?

How long the phantom prince can maintain both his power and his secret is questionable — and as he struggles, the Sabbat continue to lurk about the threshold of Lisbon, scenting for any sign of weakness within....

I do not anticipate my next stop to be a pleasant one. I move from here into territory that is unquestionably dominated by the Sabbat. Were I not already beyond their ability to harm — I think — I would hesitate to go at all.

On the Tajo River, Spain

I experienced, I must confess, no small temptation to alter the course of my journey and turn south toward Gibraltar. As a colony of the Crown, it is home to several of my countrymen, and already, I was feeling the need to hear English voices. My greater purpose won out over my own selfish concerns, of course, and I proceeded, via a small barge, to travel upriver.

The Spanish countryside is open and pristine, full of grasses, farmed fields and vineyards. The greatest portion of the nation is a large plateau, almost bereft of trees. This *Meseta Central* is further divided into northern and southern regions by ranges of irregular mountains. Had I arrived during the summer, and did I still possess the requisite flesh, I am sure I would have been quite uncomfortable, for it can reach stifling temperatures, in excess of 100 degrees at times. As it is, had I arrived but a few weeks later, I might have found some of the streams near the heartland frozen solid. It rains infrequently here, a climatic feature that will require some adjustment on my part. I am accustomed to thinking of rain as a companion nearly as constant as the ground beneath my feet.

Considering both my knowledge of history and my observations of various communities and villages through which we passed on the way toward Madrid, I must observe that Spain is a nation whose best days are behind it. It is a wondrous place, elegant and graceful, but it is the grace and elegance of an aged noblewoman who knows her youth and her authority slowly but steadily draw further from her grasp by the tides of time. Spain is tired. Within the past century alone, it has been torn apart by multiple civil wars, as liberals and conservatives, democrats and monarchists vie for power. They have been subjugated beneath, and subsequently freed from, the rule of France's Napoleon (with our own noble assistance, I might hastily add). Most of Spain's colonies across the globe have been lost: Mexico has been independent for decades, and the current revolution on the island of Cuba, backed by the Americans, seems far more likely to succeed than did the previous. Spain has as often been enemy to England as ally, yet I cannot help but mourn the slow dissolution of so great and noble an empire.

Those who would dare suggest the British Empire is headed down the same path, based solely upon the achievement of American Independence, clearly have no notion of what they speak and are worth neither the time nor effort required to hear them out.

Madrid, Spain

The Tajo River brought me relatively near Madrid, but it does not flow directly to the Spanish capital. The remainder of the journey was undertaken on foot, on both well-used roads and tiny paths formed by the constant footfalls of Spanish farmers and their mule-drawn carts. The climate grows milder as one approaches Madrid itself. Perhaps this is due to the wind and weather patterns in the Sierra de Guadarrama and Sierra de Gredos mountain ranges.



CHAPTER FOUR

The line of demarcation between Madrid and the surrounding farmlands is astonishingly sharp, and one can step from agriculture to urban life in a matter of yards. The heart of the old city is still surrounded by a defensive wall, and only within the past several decades has Madrid grown far beyond it; the *Barrio de Salamanca* to the east, the first such expansion, is an exclusive region, inhabited only by the city's wealthy elite.

Enormous plazas are scattered throughout the city, many surrounded by ancient buildings of great historical value. The Royal Palace (built after the Alcázar Palace was destroyed by fire in the 1730s) stands on the site of a former Roman fortification and overlooks the west side of the city. The *Calle Mayor*, Madrid's main street, takes the traveler from the palace to the *Plaza Mayor*, a large plaza with a market that is still one of Madrid's economic mainstays.

I was quite startled upon my arrival. I would have expected, judging by many of the horror stories I have overheard, that a city under the sway of the dread Sabbath would look uglier and far less prosperous. Perhaps that is so elsewhere, but the Lasombra have laid claim to Spain for years uncounted, and they treat their homeland with respect. The Sabbath may go unchallenged here — and I found no trace of more than the most minute Camarilla presence to contest its authority — but it does so with a greater subtlety than I would previously have credited it.

I see something in the eyes of the people, however, something of which even they, I think, are unaware. Somewhere in their mind, buried deep away from conscious thought, they know that here, in Madrid, they are prey.

A public park on the east side of the city proves a popular gathering spot for the citizens of Madrid — so long as they have left by nightfall. Through careful observation, I have learned that a powerful Gangrel makes her haven here. Her fellow Kindred call her Rosa; if she has any other name, I have never heard it spoken. She appears to be quite old — like many elder Gangrel, she has a startling number of inhuman features, making her very nearly the equal of any Nosferatu for sheer hideousness. I took her, at first, to be the Sabbath Prince of Madrid (I did not know at the time that the Sabbath prefer the term “archbishop” to “prince”; what arrogance!). I learned later, from a chance remark spoken by several other vampires in a separate portion of town, that she, in fact, holds the title of knight or templar (I cannot say which, as terms were bandied about), anointed in the service of one Archbishop Monçada.

According to the vampires of the city, Monçada himself dwells in a catacomb beneath Madrid, connected to multiple churches and with a central chamber

directly beneath one of the city's ancient cathedrals. I myself was unable to confirm this, as I was rebuffed each time I attempted entry into this supposed warren. It was not entirely like my experience in Scotland; if I must draw a parallel, inaccurate as it may be, I would be forced to explain that it felt much like the reaction I observed in those Kindred who encountered Sister Grace in Cardiff. I still scoff at the notion that any vampire could draw power from their corrupt mockery of faith in God, but I am forced to conclude that some truly devout Kindred are indeed drawing such power from somewhere. Speculation as to the source would be both melodramatic and unscientific, so I shall explain only that I was forced to leave Madrid with mere second-hand information on this Monçada.

On a Ship, in the Mediterranean Sea

Although it took me more than a short way off course, I determined that I would employ river travel to the east coast and then board a ship to travel up the coast to France, rather than traveling overland. It was my hope that I might disembark for a short time in Barcelona, which seems to me a most remarkable city in terms of Kindred affairs. Comments overheard in both Lisbon and Madrid lead me to believe that the Kindred population of Barcelona is made up of both Camarilla and Sabbat vampires — and yet, these creatures get along with each other, if not well, then at least with far less antagonism than is common across these sect divisions.

Unfortunately, the ship, which had put into the port at Valencia for purposes of making only minor repairs, was delayed in leaving when said work required several days longer than anticipated. This being a cargo ship as well as a passenger vessel, the captain determined to make up for lost time, and so, an intended stop at Barcelona was canceled. As I mentioned previously, I am not prepared to travel across the sea bed, no matter that such might be safe for me now, and so, I could only watch the coast slip by — and Barcelona with it.

We will put in to port shortly, and I will immediately set about trying to find a train to Paris.

Paris, France

The journey by train was both long and, dare I say it, relatively uninteresting. Although we passed through multiple cities, including Bourges and Orleans, I learned little of the Kindred during my travels. I was, I must admit, anxious to reach Paris, and I chose not to take the time to investigate these other regions. I was able to learn

that the Camarilla claims dominion in nearly all of France's major cities. The Sabbat, despite its stronghold of Spain to the southwest, has succeeded in introducing only a moderate number of its own vampires into positions of power. Ventrue and Toreador dominate the princedoms, save for a select few cities, and all the clans of the Camarilla can be found in great numbers throughout.

It is cold here. Although not so chilly as it was back home, still it is more than moderately uncomfortable, and the train passed through more than one snow flurry, come early in the season. Again, I found myself damning the vampire who murdered me, for his timing if naught else. Summers here are hot, albeit less so than those in Spain and Portugal, and I would have preferred to feel such warmth radiating through me. It rains less frequently here than in England, though the snows I saw prove that precipitation is common enough.

Paris possesses an unshakable belief in and fascination with its own perceived superiority; France is a republic that has not yet shed the attitudes of monarchy. Paris is, by far, the preeminent city in France — as goes Paris, so goes the nation, be it politics, style or what have you — but to hear the people of Paris speak, the rest of the globe must surely follow, else the foreigners clearly prove their inferiority. A man such as I might think the Parisians were unaware that Napoleon did, in fact, fail to conquer the world. This attitude is, if anything, even more pronounced among many of the city's Kindred than it is among the mortals. The so-called City of Lights itself is designed, it seems to me, to so impress the new arrival with its elegant majesty that he will fail, upon closer inspection, to observe the cracks in the city's façade and the rot that lurks beneath. Magnificent cobbled boulevards are lined by scores of gas lamps, illuminating the night so brightly that much of the citizenry feels no need to acknowledge the change from day to night and back again. Save for parks and zoos at the edges of town, specifically set aside for just such a purpose, the city lacks in greenery, presenting an appearance much like London in that regard — yet, without London's air of technological progress.

I can think of fewer cities more enamored of their own magnificence. The catalogue of landmarks in Paris is nothing shy of ponderous: the Cathedral of Notre Dame, located on the Île de la Cité, an island in the midst of the Seine River, draws countless thousands to its arched halls and pealing bells. I felt, interestingly enough, an utter lack of the sensation I had experienced when attempting to enter Monçada's abode in Madrid. If this "faith" nonsense has any truth to it, Notre Dame has lost any such aura it might once have boasted. The Louvre,

Paris' former royal palace, plays host to mortal and Kindred aficionados of art and history alike, and the Invalides, built for the soldiers of Louis XI, now serves as tomb to France's little dictator.

Despite the true historical and cultural significance of these sites and many more, Paris is not content to let them stand on their own merits. The Arc de Triomphe, the Place de l'Opéra, the Place de l'Étoile, the Eiffel Tower — none of these recent additions have any historical meaning to the Parisians, yet they show them off proudly, not unlike baubles purchased for them by a rich suitor they have no intention of marrying.

Perhaps, though, they've reason for trying to blind the eye with radiant, if artificial, beauty. Such artifice hides the darker side to Paris. I have said before that it is an unfortunate but necessary thing that London has its East Side to match its West. Paris, too, has its filthy aspect, but it does not have the grace to hold it separate. In all but the most wealthy of Paris' divisions, the dark alleys and the starving poor stand out like blemishes on the skin of the city. They've the same degree of poverty, filth, disease and crime as anyone else, perhaps more, but they refuse to acknowledge it in any way — unless they are choosing to indulge in such vices, as a way of staving off the "*ennui*" that so many of them find fashionable.

Again, it is so much worse among the Kindred. The vampires of Paris, despite being as urbane and fashionable as one could want, often resort to vile — or, at least, outside the pale — means of entertainment. The prince, Francois Villon of the Toreador clan (and really, could he have been anything else?), is a brilliant leader and a ruthless opponent. He has crushed, in his tenure, coup attempts from within his own ranks, incursions by the dread Sabbat and even, I am given to understand, an attempt by an assembly of mortal witches to purge Paris of all Kindred (a goal to which, I must say, I find myself not entirely opposed). He has particular interest in the fashion community and has often derived much amusement from creating trends that involve apparel of the most uncomfortable sort; he enjoys pushing the limits of what desperate men and women will do to fit in with their "stylish" brethren.

Recently, Villon has tried something new, something that would cause even the jaded Kindred to sit up and take notice were they to learn of it. The prince has a new paramour, which is not in itself unusual — but this vampire, I have learned by eavesdropping on their most private moments (a loathsome activity to which I would never stoop, were it not for so vital a purpose), is Tzimisce! I have seen her shaping her flesh like wet clay, to suit her lover's fancy — and his as well, though they always take pains to return him to his normal appearance

before he departs the boudoir. So far as I can tell, the prince has not in any way betrayed his sect, refusing to allow his personal enjoyments to cross with his duties, never speaking to her in any way of his plans; yet, I think his fellow Kindred would not be comforted by this fact were they to learn of this disturbing illicit affair. Their reaction would be stronger still were they to learn of the Sabbat enclave — which currently consists of only a handful of vampires but gives every sign of growing — that has taken haven in Paris' south side. Villon rarely speaks his lover's name, but I believe I once overheard him call her "Sasha."

Although Paris has a sizable population of Nosferatu — I have found, though one might certainly have expected otherwise, that they are, in fact, the most populous of Paris' clans, short of the Toreador themselves — these hideous creatures largely eschew Paris' nighttime politics. Whether this desire is their own or due to Villon's refusal to deal with them, I cannot say, but they, along with a smattering of Brujah and the mad Malkavians, clearly own the night in the poor and downtrodden portions of town, regardless of any contrary claims the prince might make. There appears, as well, to be a growing population of the loathsome Followers of Set, no doubt drawn to Paris by the scent of the Kindred locals' debauchery.

I was startled to find as I investigated the labyrinthine sewer system beneath the Paris streets that the Nosferatu are not the only faction of Kindred dwelling within! Not terribly far from Notre Dame, I found an entire wing of the sewers that had been drastically altered. Rooms have been added well above the level of the waters, and carpets and tapestries have been installed in those chambers where the moisture is unlikely to rot them away. Two or three of the larger chambers even boast wood-paneled dancing floors and crystal chandeliers! Who, I wondered, could possibly demand such opulence in the heart of such filth?

The Toreador, of course. A small coterie of that clan, having violated even the nebulous moral boundaries of the city's mainstream Kindred, were banished from the city some two decades gone by decree of Prince Villon. Rather than depart, the rogue vampires retreated down here, where they continue their "art."

Had I a stomach, I would have vomited all its contents upon discovery of their endeavors. These Toreador form their art from the living flesh of human men and women kidnaped from the streets above. Kept alive by regular draughts of Kindred blood, which grants them inhuman endurance, they are sliced and deformed as living sculpture, some literally sewn or bolted into poses their vampiric tormentors find aesthetically pleasing to



the eye. One unfortunate couple, still garbed in the tatters of their wedding dress, were quite literally sewn one to the other in a mockery of the act of love. I shudder to think of the horrors these creatures might inflict were they ever to learn the Tzimisce's gift of flesh-sculpting, and I give thanks that they remain unaware of Villon's own indiscretions.

Had I any means of making my presence known to Villon, I would inform him of the ungodly creatures that lurk beneath his feet, that he might stamp them out and grant a merciful death to their suffering victims. Yet, I cannot, not without endangering the remainder of my studies. Although it tears at the heart and the soul, I must leave these poor people to their fate, and pray to God above that some other savior may come and free them.

A thought occurs to me. Rot beneath a veneer of beauty and elegance, boredom that leads to depraved entertainments of the vilest sort — Paris is tailor-made for the Kindred, I realize, because they share so very many of the same qualities.

Bern, Switzerland

I have decided to make a quick eastward jaunt and travel briefly through Bern, rather than heading due north as I had originally planned from Paris. It will allow

me to avoid having to come back quite so far in future travels.

It is fortunate that the trip from Paris to Bern passes through the western portion of Switzerland, one of the few regions of the country that is not dominated by the Swiss Alps. The mountains are impossible to cross in many areas, but my route takes me well between the Bernese Alps in the South and the Jura Mountains in the Northwest. This relative flatland encompasses the center of the nation as well, stretching from Lake Geneva in the Southwest to the Lake of Constance in the Northeast. The so-called Swiss plateau is still more than moderately hilly and is home to numerous streams and river valleys, including the Rhine and its various tributaries.

The *bise*, a cold wind from the north, seems to dominate the winter months here, and the region is quite chilly. Still, better here than in the north and the higher mountain elevations, where the temperature drops further still, transforming mere cold to a bone-chilling freeze. It snows here frequently, but not so much on the plateau as in the mountains.

Bern itself sits on a high promontory in a sharp bend of the Aare River, which surrounds the city on three sides. The city boasts a large cathedral, several museums

and the University of Bern. The strangest feature of the city, however, would almost certainly have to be the Bärengraben, or "Bear Pit." This open pit is home to several bears which are kept by the people of Bern as mascots and living symbols. (I hardly need even tell the astute reader that it also sometimes plays haven to one of the city's Gangrel, a horribly shaggy fellow named Crispin Schaffner.)

Switzerland has only recently adopted a new constitution after the various invasions (launched by our dear French friend Napoleon) and multiple civil conflicts of the past century. While its system of government is unusual — it grants unprecedented power to individual cantons and communes — the new constitution has reinforced, rather than revoked, Swiss determination to be neutral in all worldwide political affairs. Bern's Kindred prince, one Purissima Giess, has taken advantage of her country's political attitudes and has made her reputation and built her influence as a mediator of other Kindred affairs. She has succeeded in settling conflicts between Camarilla elders or even those involving several independent clans (such as the Giovanni in nearby Italy). Of course, those who avail themselves of her services then owe her a substantial boon afterward, but as she inevitably (and wisely) asks less than they stood to lose had their conflicts continued unabated, a startling number of regional Kindred choose to make use of her talents. I have heard, however, that Prince Giess herself answers to an elder vampire, called Guillaume, who holds some amount of sway over the entire nation. I have unfortunately been unable to learn more of this mysterious "over-prince."

I cannot help but wonder what Giess would do with a hostile party refusing to recognize her neutrality. She has never yet, to my knowledge, dealt with the Sabbat in any numbers; surrounded as Switzerland is by Camarilla-dominated regions (save, again, for northern Italy), the enemy sect has little opportunity to assault Switzerland in any force. Ventrue and Brujah occupy most of the nation, with a sizable number of Toreador, Tremere and semi-feral Gangrel as well. It will be interesting to see how long Prince Giess can maintain her balancing act, especially should the Sabbat succeed in planting more agents in Bern than the lone pack it has hiding there now.

It is also worth noting that while Bern — indeed, all of Switzerland — is largely dominated by the Camarilla, a sizable contingent of Giovanni operates throughout the nation. Giovanni interests appear limited to Switzerland's growing banking industry, and their paths rarely cross with Prince Giess or the other local Kindred, save where fiscal matters are concerned. To date, what

interaction has taken place has been relatively free of conflict.

Brussels, Belgium

Belgium has often been the prize of larger nations and has, at various times throughout its traumatic life, been in the possession of France, Holland and Spain — all multiple times, and all within the past two centuries!

Brussels, its capital, is a surprisingly attractive city, for all the warfare that has surrounded it. It shares the temperate climate of its neighbors, lacking extremes of either temperature or precipitation. The stained-glass windows of the Church of Saints Michael and Gudule are absolutely stunning, an astounding work of both art and architecture that has survived from the 13th century. The equally impressive Royal Palace served as home to the monarchy — when such a thing existed here — and the University of Brussels is both impressive to observe and a source of erudition and enlightenment for all. Had I allowed myself, I might have gotten lost for days in the Royal Library, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts or any one of several academies of medicine, science and higher learning. Even the port near the Vilvoorde is less disreputable than many similar areas in other cities I have observed.

I had not, in point of fact, intended to stop here — but as Brussels is the hub of a great many railways and as my journey north perforce passed through it, I chose to delay my departure long enough to look around. I am now grateful that I did so, for in addition to a short yet impressive tour of this fine city, I have discovered something unheard of among the Kindred here as well.

Although it seems impossible to believe — or even to conceive of such a thing! — the Kindred of Brussels seem remarkably free of the strife of other vampires. The competition, the treachery, the subtle maneuverings, all these things that I had taken to be as integral a part of Kindred nature as the need for blood itself, are in all ways absent from this city. The prince, the Mademoiselle Camille Duchesne, is of the Ventrue. Her primogen consists of but two other vampires, the Brujah Guy de Burgundy and the Malkavian Ludmilla Van der Holst. Never, if whisper and rumor are to be believed, have they come into quarrel over any major issue, nor is conflict common among the Kindred over whom they claim eminence. Even Sabbat are welcome in Brussels, so long as they do not violate the peace — and those who come here do not. Not merely is their rivalry-free collaboration unprecedented in my experience with the Kindred, but they carry it beyond even the borders of their own city, cooperating with other demesnes in Belgium and even with most cities of Holland! How such a thing is

possible, I cannot begin to guess, but it raised my opinion of the Kindred as a species: If such as these can work together in fellowship, perhaps others can learn to do the same.

I would stay to learn more — but this was, as I say, intended as a brief stop.

What Price Peace?

Our esteemed narrator might be less inclined to support the peaceful interaction among the Kindred of Brussels if he but knew the true cause behind it.

The Malkavian Ludmilla Van der Holst — not, by any stretch, her true name — is substantially older than she pretends. In point of fact, she has dwelt in this region since well before the first Gallic-Roman settlement was erected here in the seventh century. The Malkavian determined from the beginning that she would not permit Kindred outsiders to ruin her home — and she possesses sufficient mastery of her vampiric gifts and sufficient potency of blood to make her wishes so.

That Ludmilla Van der Holst has such enormous power is terrifying — or, rather, it would be terrifying if anyone else knew of it. As of this point, she has used her might only to keep Kindred machinations in her neighborhood quiet — and even permits Camille Duchesne to remain in power. Should she ever choose to become more active in the Brussels night, Van der Holst would be a nigh-unstoppable force, and none can predict with any surety that she will not soon do just that. She is, after all, Malkavian....

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

I have always held a soft spot in my heart for Holland. The Dutch come from such a minor, backwater country, and yet, they make so sincere an effort toward keeping an even footing with empires, casting their tiny colonies throughout the world and eagerly adopting all manners of technological advancement. It is almost flattering, like watching a child sincerely imitating the behavior of a parent. One cannot help but admire their tenacity.

The Netherlands have been conquered and passed back and forth like a football; as Belgium was a part of Holland until 60-some-odd years ago and as I have already mentioned that country's tumultuous history, I see no need to repeat myself here. Suffice it to say that the Netherlands have suffered the very same hostile treatment as Belgium — and, like their former brothers, have

come through it all with a grace and stoicism that are almost British.

Amsterdam itself is a fascinating city, one that I might happily explore for days even had I no interest at all in the local vampires. While no longer the capital of the nation, it is still very much Holland's heart and soul. The city is actually divided into scores of tiny islands, separated by rivers and canals and joined by a veritable spiderweb of bridges. The Kindred of Amsterdam have taken this unusual layout and adapted to it: Any given "isle" is the domain of a single vampire, and none may legally "poach" on his territory. (Not that such an invasion of demesne would be required. The unclaimed isles still greatly outnumber the local Kindred.) Not only does this make for less competition among the locals, it makes it far easier to determine if an outsider — such as a Sabbat vampire — has moved into town, as Prince Castelein keeps very close track of which areas are claimed by Kindred and which are supposed to be vampire free.

Johannes Castelein, Prince of Amsterdam, is an elder Ventrue who has apparently turned down more than one opportunity to rise in prominence in the Camarilla sect. (Castelein was apparently considered, some decades back, for the position of "justicar," a title I have not previously run across. He refused nomination, much to the utter surprise of his fellows.) The prince is assisted by his childe, Arjan Voorhies, an unrelated Ventrue called Jan Pieterzoon and a foppish Toreador named Vincent who, I suggest, would look far more at home on the streets of Paris than he does here.

I also noted a strange creature, dwelling near the west end of the city. I think she must be a Nosferatu, for she is truly the most hideous of the Kindred I have yet come across; indeed, she is worse even than others of her lineage, for her appearance is that of a rotting corpse. I would have followed her longer and learned more, save that I observed through the actions of another local spirit that she could see our kind. I chose to exercise discretion and left her to her own devices.

The Kindred of Amsterdam, and indeed, all of Holland, seem to consider the vampires of Belgium (and Luxembourg as well, though I had no opportunity to visit there) as comrades and allies. Should an outside agency threaten the well-being of all (such as the "wight," whatever that may be, that they say stalked the region for several months 12 years back), they seem better able than most to work together. I stated earlier, when traveling through Belgium, that I thought highly of those Kindred who could put aside their differences. Upon further reflection, however, I must alter my previous statement. It suddenly occurs to me how much more damage the Kindred could do to the world of mortals if

their constant maneuvering for power did not hold them in check; I think I prefer to have them battling one another after all.

Copenhagen, Denmark

First, by train, and then, by ship, I passed through the numerous towns and islands that form the nation of Denmark, to find myself finally in Copenhagen, on Sjælland Island. The city itself actually exists on two islands, this being only the greater part; the smaller, also called Christianshavn, is on Amager Island and is connected to its larger portion by bridges. It is, to be sure, a rather strange and inefficient design for a capital city.

The port, which accounts for a substantial portion of the city's economic value, gives way to a main square called, unpronounceably, the Rådhuspladsen, full of all manner of shops and sellers of wares. North of the square stands the wealthy section of Copenhagen, including the royal palace; further north still stands the *Frihavn*, or "free port," constructed but a few years ago to further develop the city's trade routes. The city is rather attractively surrounded, in part, by gardens and modern boulevards, all of which were constructed to take the place of ancient defensive fortifications torn down in 1863. Richer in culture than one might expect, Copenhagen is home to numerous cultural establishments, including, to name but a few, Prinsens Palace (home to the national Museum of Northern Antiquities), Charlottenborg Palace (seat of the Academy of Arts), the Thorvaldsen Museum, the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters and a large number of centers of learning, including three universities. Such a rich city is Copenhagen, it is truly a pity we were required by circumstance to bombard it during the Napoleonic Wars. I am grateful that most of its cultural treasures remained undamaged.

The Prince of Copenhagen, another Ventrue, is named Arminta Jorgensdatter, and she has made use of Copenhagen's cultural wealth in a manner both shameful and altogether Kindred-like. All foreign vampires who would avail themselves of the city's bounty must swear a boon to the prince, be they Toreador come for the culture, Tremere for the Royal Library, Gangrel seeking past heritage or any other. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Jorgensdatter finds her practices less than efficient, as most such petitioners simply choose to go elsewhere rather than accede to her demands.

The native Kindred other than the prince and her Ventrue consist primarily of a small number of Scandinavian Gangrel, the Toreador who seem ubiquitous to all such "civilized" cities and, strangely, a Tremere chantry-house located on Amager Island. I have heard theories

that these warlocks study and practice magics based on the ancient Viking runic writings.

Finding no particular enlightenment here — the local Kindred seem as self-absorbed as any I have yet come across — I will seek passage across the Øresund to Sweden.

Stockholm, Sweden

I am given to understand that Sweden is actually quite comfortable during the summer months, proving not entirely unlike London in terms of temperature (though with far less rain than my esteemed homeland). As it is, the winters here are frigid and icy in the extreme even in this most southerly portion of the nation. I am grateful, at the least, that I need not travel farther north; it snows in the mountainous northerly regions far more often than it does here.

Sweden, along with its neighbors Norway and Finland, seems to remain largely under the sway of the Camarilla primarily because the Sabbat, I imagine, sees little value in trying to infest the region. Not that I blame it terribly; Scandinavia, rich in history as it may be, is of precious little value to modern, forward-thinking men.

During my time in Stockholm, I was puzzled to observe that the city seemed largely lacking in Kindred. That is, Stockholm has its vampires but far fewer than might be suggested by the mortal population — and those who do dwell here seem subdued, unwilling to spend a great deal of time on the streets. At first, I took this simply to be a peculiarity of these particular Kindred. I was later to learn that such is not the case.

Situated on Lake Mälaren, Stockholm has the same strange geography as so many of these northern cities. That is, rather than being constructed on a single spot, it is spread out across nearly a score of islands, in addition to the adjacent mainland. The city boasts a lacework of waterways that though smaller and less intricate than Amsterdam's nevertheless provides both a means of transportation and an identifying feature around which the citizenry can rally their civic pride. However, it also separates many of the city's political and religious structures from one another. The Royal Palace stands on the island of Städsolmen; the Riddarholm Church — wherein many of the nation's deceased monarchs are laid to rest and which is home to more than a handful of ancient spirits — is on the isle of Riddarholmen; and the Parliament House is on yet a third island called Helgeandsholmen. Although less rife with such establishments than Copenhagen, Stockholm also boasts its share of universities, museums and galleries, many cel-

celebrating the Scandinavian and Viking roots of the kingdom.

Sweden is home to an enormous population of the feral Gangrel vampires, and they also make up a substantial portion of Stockholm's Kindred, yet none of them hold any true position of political power within the city. One particular Gangrel, called Siv — who looks remarkably human, despite her claims of great age — seems to serve as a liaison, an emissary if you will, between her clan and the court of Prince Wiklund. This relationship, normally as peaceful as one might expect of Kindred relations, has soured recently. A series of attacks by vampire rogues called "anarchs" has rocked Scandinavia, and many place the blame squarely on the native Gangrel. Siv's warnings of "ancient powers stirring" and the inevitable "rising of the Choosers of the Slain" make sense neither to myself nor to any local Kindred whom I have heard to discuss it.

Olav Wiklund himself, whose clan I have never heard spoken, seems to be a prince of great personal power but little extensive authority. Most of his ties to human politics are exclusively through Sweden's Royal Family. As the monarchy loses power to Parliament and as Sweden's presence on the world stage grows ever smaller, Wiklund's influence fades away like mist. Were I required to hazard a guess as to the eventual fate of Sweden's Kindred, I would have to say that I expect they will either be subsumed into Norway's significantly more aggressive community, or else, they will become so insular and unimportant that they will be utterly forgotten by their sect.

Mere hours before I departed, I was privileged to overhear a conversation that finally shed a bit of illumination on the strange behavior (and low numbers) of the local Kindred. The vampires hesitate to speak of it, perhaps out of a superstitious fear of attracting attention, but it appears that Sweden — and in fact all of Scandinavia — is home to a clan of werewolves far more vicious than even the other such creatures about which the vampires of other lands whisper. These horrific beasts travel in packs, shredding those Kindred who dare venture beyond the borders of the city, and even make sporadic forays into Stockholm itself to seek out the vampires against whom they appear to hold some sort of grudge. It is for this reason that the Kindred population is so small here and why those here appear consistently nervous. I feel precious little sympathy for the Kindred, but I do hope that these lycanthropes do not prove a greater scourge on the people of the region than the vampires themselves. Say what one will about the vampires, at least they often leave those upon whom they prey alive. The same surely cannot be said for these ravaging beasts.

Christiania, Norway

Norway is, in a sense, a country within a country. Although technically under the rule of Sweden's monarch Oscar II, by signature of the 1814 Treaty of Kiel — a treaty which, it must be mentioned, the Norwegians did not accept of their own accord — this nation has its own flag, its own military, its own ruling political body called the Storting and its own national pride. In short, Norway considers itself utterly independent in all but name, a status that was confirmed in 1884 when it managed, through much political maneuvering, to force King Oscar to abandon a constitutional revision that would have granted the Royal Family the ability to dissolve the Storting.

Those who think of all Scandinavia as a frozen wasteland (as, indeed, I myself did until traveling here) are often surprised to find that most of the country's lowlands, including its capital of Christiania, have relatively mild weather. I am given to understand this has something to do with oceanic winds and currents. This is not to say that winter here is a pleasant experience, as the temperature remains below freezing a great deal of the time during this season, but it is not so hideously frigid as all that. Summers are far warmer here than they are back home. I am told, however, that as one travels north, the climate becomes far more hostile and cold.

In addition to its mainland territory, Norway claims a substantial number of tiny islands that litter the waters around its coastlines, in both the North and Norwegian Seas. It is interesting to note that, if one includes the lengths of the fjords in one's calculations, Norway has, proportionately, the largest coastline-to-total area ratio of any major nation in the world. No wonder, then, that the sea has played so great a part in both this nation's history (such as the well-known Viking raiders of the Dark and Middle Ages) and in its economy (in terms of trade and fishing, of course).

The people of Christiania itself (called Oslo until King Christian IV rebuilt it after a great fire in 1624) are a hardy lot, descending as they do from Viking stock. It sits at the head of the Oslofjorden, on the Aker River, and serves as one of Norway's primary sea ports. Like its cousin city of Stockholm, it has a number of cultural museums — many of which are dedicated to Norwegian art and history — and is home to a large university as well. Also like other Scandinavian cities, it lacks many of the signs of the technological improvement and triumph of science that mark London and other cities closer to proper civilization.

It is interesting to me, from a cultural perspective, to observe that, while Norway may technically be a terri-

tory of the Swedish monarchy, the reverse is closer to the truth in Kindred terms. That is, the vampires of Christiania, for example, are far more powerful, as a unit, than those of Stockholm, and I would not be terribly surprised if the Kindred of the latter were to eventually end up subservient to the former.

Norway does not lack the presence of the Lupines that torment the Kindred of Sweden, but the Norwegian vampires seem somehow better able to deal with them, at least in Christiania itself. It would not be entirely inaccurate to say that Christiania boasts two Kindred princes, similar in some respects the unusual partnership that claims domain in Belfast. Unlike those Irish Kindred, however, who seem to split their duties in a rather haphazard fashion, Christiania's guardians have a very strict delineation of responsibilities.

Agnethe Sannrste actually holds and is addressed by the title of prince. One of the Ventrue, I believe, she is responsible for the day-to-day — I should, I suppose, more accurately say night-to-night — administration of the Christianian domain. That is, it is she who convenes meetings of the primogen, she who adjudicates such matters as feeding grounds and territorial disputes, she who coordinates with the city's Ventrue, Toreador and Nosferatu inhabitants.

Her "partner," as it were, is one Ravik Arvidsen. For the life of me (if the reader will pardon me the use of that particular expression), I could not say whether this creature is of the Nosferatu or the Gangrel clan. His flesh is the texture of smoked meat, his eyes are feral — his deformities seem less bestial than simply twisted, leading me to suspect he is of Nosferatu descent, and yet, his skills and his prowess with Kindred abilities seem more in line with the Gangrel. Whichever he may be, he moves with a sizable pack of Gangrel, and his duty seems to be the protection of Christiania from outside threats, both the native werewolves and the attacks of the anarch rogues that grow more and more frequent across all Scandinavia. (Other princes, in my experience, have their own enforcers and protectors, called archons or sheriffs; Arvidsen is most assuredly not one of these. Where martial matters are involved, his authority outstrips even that of Sannrste.)

Both of these Kindred have contacts and allies in other Norwegian and Swedish towns, and I believe that Sannrste might have some past connection with Prince Wiklund of Stockholm. (I base this assessment on several occasions in which Sannrste referenced Wiklund by first name and spoke very familiarly about the Swede's past activities. I cannot speak to what the connection itself might actually be.)

In the midst of the primarily Aryan native Kindred, one stands out like a fish at a racetrack. She calls herself "Ganglot" — not her real name, certainly, and a jest probably unappreciated by the natives, for Ganglot is the name of the female servant of the Norse death-goddess Hel. This lady of indeterminate origin is darker hued than the natives. This is unsurprising, really, as I imagine that few Scandinavian Kindred hail from the Followers of Set. The princes know of her presence, and she is apparently tolerated, if not welcomed. The motives behind her presence in Scandinavia I was unable to discover, but I understand she is immersed in studies of Norse mythology — focusing particularly on Jormungandr, the great Midgard Serpent. Perhaps she seeks parallels to her clan's own serpentine traditions, though I could not guess what purpose such studies might serve.

Helsinki, Finland

Yet another nation-turned-province, the so-called Grand Duchy of Finland was ceded to Russia by the Swedes in the first decade of this century. Because the culture of Finland is, depending on region, either very similar to the rest of Scandinavia or to Russia, I will spend little time dwelling on it.

The region, as with its neighbors, is moderately cold in the south, progressing toward arctic temperatures as one travels northward. In all Scandinavia, the summer nights are short, the winter nights long; this is even more so the case here, for even the south of Finland is farther north than Stockholm or Christiania. The streets of the city are unusually spacious, with a rather fascinating combination of medieval and modern architecture. Some of the most fascinating of these structures, and those I would have spent far more time exploring had I not rushed my passage through the city, include the Tuomiokirkko, an ancient Lutheran Cathedral, and the University of Helsinki, which was moved from the city of Turku in 1828.

The Kindred situation in Helsinki is absolutely unique in my experience. Many vampires use humans as their servants and proxies. These damned souls, ghouls, of course, feed from their masters' blood and gain unholy strength. Most Kindred treat these beings as slaves and playthings or, at best, as amusing pets. Never before have I seen ghouls treated with any decency by their masters, but here, in Helsinki, they are equals! Prince Tuomo-Markus Sampsa presides over a primogen-like council that consists of three Kindred and three ghouls! Sampsa's own ghoul, Eeva (I was never able to learn of a family name) speaks with the prince's voice.



Why, I wondered, this amazing change in Kindred practice? The answer was not terribly difficult to determine. The Kindred of Helsinki — indeed, of all Finland, and much of Scandinavia — spend a great deal of time in slumber. During summer, months can pass without the setting of the sun. During this time, the Kindred depend utterly upon their mortal servants. Although I have learned that Kindred blood often engenders an unholy loyalty in those who partake of it, I can certainly understand the wisdom these vampires have shown in ensuring the contentment of their servants.

Saint Petersburg, Russia

It proved fortunate that I chose to travel via train, rather than by ship, to Saint Petersburg. Although we are now approaching the last days of winter, a substantial portion of the city's harbor is bedecked with floes of ice! I was startled to find, as the train pushed south and east from Helsinki, that the weather was growing colder, not warmer. Saint Petersburg itself is constructed on both

sides of the Neva River and on several river islands as well. When I first reached Scandinavia, I expressed my amazement at such a strange design. Now, I find it almost natural, though still, in my mind, far less logical than the standard arrangement.

Like Amsterdam, Saint Petersburg is divided into segments by its many waterways, with hundreds of bridges connecting each to each. The city's primary district — the hub or center of town, if you will — sits upon the south bank of the Neva. It is nearly an island in and of itself, for it is also bordered on the east and south by a second river, the Fontanka. Mariinsky Palace, built for Nicholas I's daughter Maria, may be found here, as may the recently completed Cathedral of Saint Isaac. Far to the east is a strange establishment; Catherine the Great founded the Smolny Institute as a boarding house for upper-class girls and young women (many of whom, I am distraught to report, now serve as a sizable herd for an unnamed Nosferatu who holds the headmistress in its thrall). Some distance upriver is the Winter Palace, a seasonal home of Russia's royals. Farther upriver still is

CHASING SUNSET (GEOGRAPHY)

Peter and Paul Fortress, which houses political prisoners in its labyrinthine dungeons, yet also plays home to Peter and Paul Cathedral, burial place of the czars. Even an educated reader of this log, fully aware of the strange creatures of this world, would not believe me were I to speak of some of the spirits I encountered in that place.

For all its hostility of climate, for all that this place is terribly foreign to me, the city itself is a marvel of alien beauty intermixed with Western influence. In the years since 1885, the new port has allowed an influx of trade and commerce, and foreign-owned businesses are flourishing. Yet, no man could ever mistake this for a Western city, as the influence of the Far East can also be seen in the architecture of this place. Its high cathedrals and palaces, many of which boast rounded or onion-like domes that gleam in the setting sun, are utterly spectacular. Saint Petersburg is a juxtaposition of conflicting civilizations that is mirrored by the natives themselves. Russia seems unsure of its place in the world, and the disparity between noble and commoner, rich and poor, is far more striking here even than at the very line of demarcation between London's East and West Ends. Alexander III has recently begun promoting a return to, for lack of a better term, "Russian-ness." I cannot say what impact this may have on the nation's trade with other countries, but it cannot likely bode well for foreign men of business in Saint Petersburg.

That discrepancy between the nobles and commoners exists as well between the "upper" and "lower" Kindred of the city. While the vampires tended to ignore Russia until the time of Peter the Great, they have certainly made up for lost time in the century and a half since, closing their talons around every aspect of Russian life as thoroughly as they have done everywhere else. Some have connections even within Czar Alexander's own family. Prince Evgeniya Bezuevaia, a proper Russian dowager who has apparently lurked about the fringes of the Royal Family for generations, runs her domain as though she were truly a noble of the ancient kind, hosting balls, expressing herself with the so-called "royal we" and, in general, lording it over all and sundry. Although she herself is Ventrue (or so I believe), her "court" consists largely of Toreador, many of whom are drawn by fascination with Russian culture. The Toreador primogen is not even a native Russian, as his name, Pierre Montreaux, clearly suggests.

Like many princes whose grasp on their demesne is not remotely as secure as they imagine, Prince Bezuevaia utterly refuses to acknowledge the growing threat to her power from the people — or in this instance, the vampires — below. The Brujah clan makes up nearly half of all Kindred in Saint Petersburg, and many of them are

discontent with the tenures of both Prince Bezuevaia and Czar Alexander III. Guided, among others, by the Brujah Antonin Zilkha and Svetlana Petrova, the "lower-class" Kindred slowly but surely build their own influence, not among the nobility, but among the disenfranchised and the commoners. If it came to conflict as early as tomorrow night, I could not be certain which vampire, Prince Bezuevaia or Zilkha, might be able to muster more aid from the mortals.

Other creatures lurk in the Russian nights, threats to Bezuevaia's demesne that go far beyond the unruly Kindred. A hundred thousand workers died of hunger and cold during the first year of Saint Petersburg's construction, and many of them lurk still, pursuing unfinished concerns much as I myself do. Lupines stalk the frozen Russian tundra and the thick forests, less actively hostile than those of Scandinavia but still a danger to the local Kindred. At the fringes of Saint Petersburg, I have observed vampires unlike any I have previously seen, those who seem unlike any Kindred I have studied. These vampires, all invariably Oriental of feature, seem content simply to observe the activities of the city around them, and I truly believe that the native Kindred remain utterly unaware of the other creatures' presence.

Strangest of all, I think, are fae creatures that sound to me similar to those in Ireland. I have never beheld such a thing, but I have heard many tales from Kindred and mortal alike, individuals who failed to leave offerings or spoke ill of these nebulous spirits. In numerous instances, these poor souls have vanished utterly — or, more frequently, lost loved ones to mysterious disappearances from secure houses and locked bedchambers.

Warsaw, Poland

By the turn of the last century, Poland had ceased to exist as an independent enemy, and while its own revolutionaries and the alleged support of Napoleon liberated portions of the country for a time, the Congress of Vienna held after Napoleon's defeat redistributed the territory to Russia, Prussia and Austria. The Poles revolted again but were crushed by the Russians in 1831. Further demonstrations and insurrections arose in 1846, in 1848, in 1861 and, most notably, in 1863, leading to an intensive effort on the part of the Russians to squelch all trace of Polish culture. National treasures were seized, Russian became the primary language of education, the Roman Catholic Church was suppressed.... In a matter of years, little differentiated Russian Poland from Russia. Those portions of the nation that had been ceded to Prussia suffered a similar, though less severe, degree of "Germanification," but those Poles who were now citizens of Austria were treated somewhat more benignly.

I mention all of this to the reader as an explanation of my reasoning in terms of travel. I had originally thought to bypass Poland, to travel through it without halt, for I felt there might be little difference now between its own situation and those of the countries to which it now belongs. It occurred to me, however, that when dealing with a race of deathless beings such as the Kindred, it is entirely possible that their own attitudes and circumstances have not changed to match those of the mortals around them. Hence, I decided to stay and examine Warsaw for a brief while, rather than simply switching trains and continuing on.

Warsaw itself is the capital of the "Kingdom of Poland" (an amusing title, considering that it was a "kingdom" under Russian rule), though even that distinction has been all but forgotten since the Russians fully absorbed the region after the insurrection of 1863. The city lies in the center of what was Poland, bisected by the Wisla River. Multiple bridges, including several modern iron ones, span the river, connecting the historical and mercantile sectors on the west bank with the residential areas on the east. The city, particularly on the west, is home to multiple castles and cathedrals that date back to medieval times.

The Kindred of Poland seem to me to be at least as conflicted as the mortals around them and exist in a state of continuous struggle that is, in my experience, far more vicious than in any other Kindred city that does not lie directly between Camarilla and Sabbat territory. The Kindred of the city are divided into no fewer than four separate factions.

The current prince, Henryk Rzegotka, has claimed the domain of Warsaw for two centuries — a brief span indeed, as compared to some — yet the Ventrue is bound and determined to maintain his hold on the city, despite active opposition from Russian Kindred. Damerad Yanick, a Russian noble and elder Toreador, came with the Russians and seeks to stake his claim as Prince of Warsaw. The thought that the local Kindred would not capitulate to Russian rule when the mortals did enrages him to no end, and his every effort is directed at overthrowing Prince Rzegotka. This constant conflict allows Warsaw's other two factions, both substantially smaller, to thrive and advance their own agendas.

Lairing in one of the city's ancient castles, the free will of its caretakers thoroughly crushed, a number of Sabbat seek to exacerbate the constant struggle, gleefully attacking the havens or agents of one faction in the name of the other. Their leader, a twisted Tzimisce that appears human in only the most generous sense of the word, is called Natashen'ka. She claims an ancestral link to Warsaw, and she fights for it as though liberating a

conquered land. I wonder, in fact, if this is not a personal vendetta of hers (and her fellows), rather than an endeavor condoned by the Sabbat.

Finally, hidden deep within the isolated Jewish quarter of the city (a rather filthy ghetto that, like many Russian territories, is subject to anti-Semitic pogroms) lairs the Brujah Yitzhak ben Avraham. An ancient Brujah, Yitzhak is newly come from Krakow, where he already has a sizable (albeit well hidden) band of followers. The specifics of Yitzhak's goals are unknown to me, though his focus seems to be on protecting the Jewish people from the ravages of those around them. Yitzhak's faction largely stays away from the other three, and rumor among the Kindred states that he holds out for an offer from one or the other of the warring parties. His participation in the conflict could tip the balance.

As a side note, in Warsaw and every other community through which I passed, I heard mention of a figure hated and feared throughout the Polish territories. This Hedeon Yaroslavich, an ancient — and, I hear, truly deviant — Tzimisce dwells in a castle in eastern Poland. None seem to know his ultimate objectives, but he is apparently hostile to all Kindred, be they Sabbat or Camarilla, and even powerful vampires fear to pass through his demesne.

Berlin, Germany

The train from Warsaw to Berlin takes a straight route, which made the trip pass faster than it otherwise might. I had a brief moment of discomfort when a heavyset gentleman attempted to occupy the seat I had chosen — it was, unluckily, a crowded car — but something about my presence discomforted him sufficiently that he moved on before I was forced to take active steps.

The newly united state of Germany frightens me, I must admit. The Germanic states have always been fiercely independent, despite the various economic connections among them. For King William I and Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck to have united them all within the span of eight years is an astounding prospect. That Prussia could have used its wars with Denmark, Austria and France to convince the states to unite — even though it was Prussia that instigated each of those conflicts — speaks extremely well for Bismarck's oratory and diplomatic skills and less well for the perception of other state leaders. The web of alliances, economics and military treaties the chancellor put in place is incredibly convoluted and far-reaching, a work of ingenuity and Machiavellian thinking that surpasses many of the Kindred.

For that matter, I have reason to suspect that Bismarck himself, now retired from government service after a dismissal by Emperor William II, is aware of the Kindred. Some vampires spread stories that he was nothing but a pawn of the Ventrue Gustav Breidenstein, but I think this to be false. To the best of my knowledge, Bismarck was his own man, although there can be no denying that German unification was a boon to Breidenstein's own ambitions.

Berlin itself sits on a relatively dry expanse of land surrounding the Spree River in northwest Germany, and the city's heart is located on the west bank. The temperature is wide-ranging, yet rarely reaches dangerous extremes of either heat or cold, which makes for a nice change after some of the frigid climes I have so far experienced.

The Mitte, or city center, is home to most of Berlin's governmental buildings, universities, printing houses and financial institutions (and represents, of course, the majority of the Kindred interest in Berlin). In fact, since its opening in 1810, the University of Berlin has become the greatest center of learning in all of Germany. The Tiergarten, a royal park, lies west of the Mitte. Most of the city's nobility live in outlying areas of the city; the majority of those tenements constructed near the Mitte are home to the workers of the nearby industrial plants. German production and advancement is very nearly the equal, I must admit, of London's own.

A city with as much economic and industrial might as Berlin, with potential for further growth, would seem as the Promised Land for many Kindred, but yet, the city remains relatively free of open conflict. This is due not to any excessive goodwill among the vampires, but rather the iron-fisted tenure of the prince, Gustav Breidenstein. Along with his childe Wilhelm Waldburg, the Ventrue prince conspires to keep any not of his clan, and any vampires he does not know personally, out of power in Berlin.

This does not, as the reader might suppose, sit well with the other local Kindred. Brujah, Toreador, Malkavians, Nosferatu — they all dwell within the city and seek in their own way to acquire some of the power that the prince and his Ventrue hold out of their reach. An unlikely conspiracy of other vampires, including a Toreador called Antoinette and an Austrian Tremere named Maxwell Ldescu, seek to open Berlin to Kindred of the other clans. Although they keep their activities clandestine, for fear of attracting the hostile attentions of Breidenstein, their efforts grow stronger by the night. Ldescu even provides covert assistance to the Sabbat Ventrue Konrad Fleischer and his pack, channeling him information on where best to strike against the prince's interests. Ldescu plays a dangerous game: He must allow the Sabbat to grow strong enough to require all of Prince Breidenstein's attentions without allowing it to

become so entrenched that it cannot be rooted out after it has served its purpose.

Not all Germans — nor all German Kindred — are pleased with the unification of the states. Several individuals and organizations loyal to one particular state or another have taken up slogans (and, in some very few cases, arms) against the Prussia-dominated country. Most such efforts are so small as to go unnoticed, but one, in Berlin itself, stands out to those who study the undead participants. Sophia Lustig is the Malkavian organizer of an anti-Prussian (and, not incidentally, anti-Breidenstein) league of mortals and Kindred alike, and if rumor is to be believed, it boasts at least one werewolf as well! Precisely what Lustig and her ilk hope to accomplish is a mystery to me, for her allies are primarily young Kindred with little real power. But then, if Breidenstein continues in his draconian policies, he might eventually push more powerful vampires into Lustig's camp.

The rest of this journey is, perforce, going to be rather crooked. Austria is certainly the closest nation I intend to cover — but that would require backtracking later over ground already covered. I shall instead travel toward Italy and later come through Austria from the west.

Both Sides Against the Middle

Konrad Fleischer is not nearly as stupid as the Tremere Ldescu — or our distinguished narrator — assumes. In point of fact, the Ventrue *antitribu* knows full well that Ldescu is using his pack to the Tremere's own ends, that he wants the Sabbat to bear the brunt of the prince's attentions so that the other downtrodden vampires can rise up and take their rightful places of power.

Fleischer could hardly care less, so long as he has the information he needs. The Sabbat moves far more subtly than any of the locals imagine: The intelligence Fleischer gains from Ldescu is passed through multiple channels to the Malkavian Sophia Lustig and her own agitators. Lustig is not Sabbat and does not know that her information comes from the Sabbat, but she is helpful all the same. By allowing Lustig and her own organization to move against Prince Breidenstein, Fleischer destabilizes the local Camarilla Kindred without putting his own pack at risk. Because the attacks follow the intelligence granted by Ldescu, the Tremere simply assumes they are being carried out by Fleischer's pack and disdains further investigation. Breidenstein's grip on his demesne weakens bit by bit, the other Kindred squabble with one another to lick up the crumbs of power, and all the while, the Sabbat in Berlin slowly but steadily grow strong....

Venice, Italy

I struggle to set pen to paper after my brief — but dear God, not brief enough! — sojourn in Venice. This Godforsaken city was very nearly the end of my investigations, if not the end of me.

Situated at the northern extremity of the Adriatic Sea, in the lagoons between the Po and Piave Rivers, Venice is constructed like Amsterdam, only even more so. The city is formed of well over a hundred islands, separated one from another by a network of canals far larger and more complex than any I have yet encountered. Hundreds upon hundreds of bridges link the islands, and the vast majority of travel occurs by flat-bottomed gondola. The largest of the city's waterways, the Grand Canal, bisects Venice into two nearly equal halves. The Venetian climate is relatively moderate: hot in summer, cold in winter, but rarely to the extreme, and the rain comes frequently but only rarely causes severe problems.

The Kingdom of Italy has been a united state for only several decades. Italy, France and Prussia all claimed Venice at various times both during and after the Napoleonic Wars. Italy finally acquired it for good and all after Prussia's war with Austria. It was able, as well, to acquire Rome from the retreating French in 1870. Venice and Lombardy briefly formed their own independent kingdom after winning free of Austria in 1848, but they were reconquered scarcely a year later. Under King Humbert, Italy entered into the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1882 — an arrangement that worries much of Europe, for these three states together could prove an unstoppable juggernaut in the event of war. In the years since, Italy has embarked upon a colonial endeavor, partially as a means of alleviating serious economic problems on the mainland, and has established colonies in Northeast Africa. The desire for war and conquest grow nightly throughout Italy, fed, I am certain, by the insatiable greed of the country's vampires, and can only and inevitably lead to disaster in years to come.

I had a few hours after disembarking from the train to explore Venice before — well, before. The city itself is beautiful, belying the corruption that lies at its very heart. Architecture dating back to Renaissance and even Byzantine times still occupies a substantial portion of a city that seems only vaguely interested in joining the rest of the world in the 19th century. The center of Venice, Saint Mark's Square, is home to both Saint Mark's Cathedral, an incredible work of construction built and rebuilt multiple times between the 9th and 11th centuries, and the Doges' Palace, which has also been rebuilt on numerous occasions. The Bridge of Sighs connects

the palace to the prisons and was the route of the condemned being led to and from judgment. I had expected to find a large population of wraiths present at such an emotionally charged place as this, and I became rather discomfited when I did not.

After taking a moment to appreciate the great granite columns near the palace (one with a graven image of Saint Theodore of Studium riding a crocodile, the other bearing the winged lion of Saint Mark), I wandered toward the Grand Canal and traveled northward, examining the many shops and businesses that line the waterway's length. North, near the lagoon, I took a moment to observe the Church of San Giovanni, an edifice of arching domes and towering columns, and also to observe the great sculpture of the Venetian general Bartolomeo Colleoni. I intended at that point to move on to the University of Venice and perhaps the *Libreria Vecchia*, or Old Library, when I met Crocifisso.

Fortune was with me. I speak no Italian, but this, the first fellow spirit I found in Venice, spoke passable English. I thought it rude to ask how he'd died or even how long he'd been deceased, so, instead, I asked him about the region's vampires.

"You are new?" he asked me. Assuming he meant new to the area, I agreed. He told me the following, which I have transcribed as well as memory permits.

"Italy, she is not like these other European countries. Spain is mostly owned by Sabbat, yes? Germany, Austria, Russia, these are mostly held by Camarilla. But Italy, Italy holds no such allegiance.

"Milan, you see, is the jewel of the Archbishop Giangaleazzo, one of the Lasombra. He has peace with his Camarilla neighbors, though, something the Sabbat does not appreciate. Rome has Nosferatu beneath the streets and Toreador above, but she has no prince, no. Many Kindred do not go to Rome because of the hunters and because of the faith of the mortals there.

"Malta..." He frowned, as though disturbed by a passing thought. "Malta is not so much Italian anymore, for your own countrymen hold it. Here, the Ventrue are strong, yes. The prince, Antonio Cardona, he is strong, and from his domain, the Ventrue seek to move through Italy."

Crocifisso looked and sounded as though he might continue for hours, but by this time, it had become very clear to me that he was deliberately avoiding telling me of Venice itself, and I told him as much.

"You would know Venice, Englishman?" His eyes, his voice, had suddenly gone very cold. "Then listen well.

"In Venice, the Nosferatu, they lurk in the sewers and in the canals, hoping that the eyes of those above them do not see. The Ventrue come with the traveling merchants, and they think to set up havens, but they do not stay long, no. Venice, Englishman, belongs to the Giovanni."

I was, I told him, only passing familiar with the Giovanni.

He laughed at me.

"The Giovanni are uncontested in Venice. Other Kindred dwell here at their sufferance, or they dwell here not at all. No overt conflict disturbs the Venetian night, for the Giovanni do not permit it. They are a family, Englishman, as well as a clan. For centuries, they have laired here, in their ancestral home, rotting in their familial estates, in the universities, in the banks and moneylenders.' Where other Kindred merely dabble in mortal finance, the Giovanni pull the purse strings of an entire nation. They know the secrets that lie beyond death, Englishman, for they have built their entire empire on the backs of the dead!"

That, dear reader, is when I observed, with mounting horror, the setting of the western sun.

It was as though a vast storm was birthed from the skies above the city, a storm that only the dead might see. Darkness swirled above the northern end of Venice, where, I believe, the Giovanni estates may be found — but this was not a darkness of clouds, no, but of dozens, if not hundreds, of swirling figures, spirits of the dead ripped from their own activities and enslaved by the cruel and hellish magics of these Italian necromancers. Crocifisso vanished into the air from before me, a marionette hauled backward by a fierce tugging upon his strings... and I felt the pull as well, weak at first but growing ever stronger.

I turned tail and fled, then, and I feel no shame to admit it now. How I escaped, I do not know. Perhaps the Giovanni, yet unaware of my presence, could not stop me. Perhaps, for their own reasons, they permitted me to depart. I cannot know, and I feel no urge to return to Venice and assuage my curiosity.

In retrospect, however, I learned one other thing from Venice. The pull I felt upon my soul when the Giovanni awoke felt much like the force that prevented my entry to many of the Dunsirn holdings in Scotland. They share no common name, nor any common lineage, but I think I know now the clan from which the Dunsirn hail.

Vienna, Austria

Austria-Hungary, or the Austrian Empire, or the Hapsburg Empire... its names alone suggest a state of constant flux and confusion as to what is, and is not, a

part of the nation. Although the so-called "Dual Monarchy" of Austria-Hungary is technically a single government, the two regions are very nearly independent in all but name, and as each has a very different history and culture and Kindred population, I choose to address them individually.

Vienna itself, the capital and largest city of Austria-Hungary, is located on both banks of the Danube River in northeast Austria. It lies just east of the foothills of the Alps, by the thick Vienna Woods. Rain and snow are frequent, but the winter chill (which is, God be thanked, finally giving way to spring as I travel) is less severe here than in points north.

Its location straddling the Danube, a primary route of trade and communication between the Alps and the Carpathian Mountains, makes Vienna a hub of regional travel and transport. Riverboats arrive and depart at a regular, rapid basis, and the railways now link the city to many of Europe's most important regions.

The *Innere Stadt*, or Inner City, is the oldest part of Vienna and was surrounded by fortified walls until 1857, when they were torn down and a great boulevard called the Ringstrasse, lined with countless monuments and open parks, was built in their place. The *Innere Stadt* contains the *Rathaus* (town hall), the University, the Parliament Buildings, the State Opera House and, perhaps most impressively, the Hofburg imperial palace. A second layer of fortification has been torn down only recently, and the expanded area provides plenty of room for the city's rapidly growing population to build their homes. The Schönbrunn, the summer Imperial palace that lies well away from the *Innere Stadt*, is home to the world's oldest zoo.

Vienna is known throughout the civilized world as a city of culture and art, particularly in terms of music. Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven, Schubert — these only begin the list of native musical geniuses. The Toreador thus flock here like moths to a great flame, and those who claim the city as domain allow them to do so as a show of good will (or so they say).

The Kindred warlocks of Clan Tremere claim Vienna as their seat of power. Their great chantry, disguised to mortal observers as an ancestral estate of nobility, looms along the southern Ringstrasse. From here, Etrius and his Council of Seven direct the worldwide activities of the entire clan, or so conventional wisdom suggests. Myself, I am not so certain. The Tremere clan is among the most secretive of Kindred. Were their entire "main chantry" to be nothing but a blind and their true headquarters located elsewhere in the city, I would not be the least bit surprised.

Vienna's prince is responsible for maintaining the city itself; Etrius, perhaps understandably, does not bother himself with such mundane concerns. In fact, one of the

prince's primary duties appears to be to serve as liaison between petitioners of other clans and the Council of Seven. No non-Tremere Kindred, however important, sees Etrius without first convincing the prince that the matter is of great import.

While few Kindred of any real authority in Vienna hail from any clan other than the Tremere, that is not to say that the warlocks are directly responsible for all that occurs here. I have uncovered evidence of a small secret society of Kindred, consisting of at least a dozen members. Based in Vienna (though they do not limit their activities exclusively to that place), they call themselves, roughly translated, the Gentlemen's Society for the Rational Investigation of Super-Natural Matters. These Kindred, who include among their number the Malkavians Dr. Reiner Stoschka and Frau Florentina Lengauer and the Tremere Dr. Manfred Machner, have become fascinated with the recent advances in science, particularly the "soft sciences" such as the nascent study of psychology. Convinced that all aspects of Kindred physiology such as clan traits, blood-borne ailments, affinities for certain Disciplines and the like are all, in fact, psychological in nature, the society has gathered a small number of vampires (mostly young and of relatively weak blood) and begun experimenting on them. Some have been taken off the streets before learning

even the basics of Kindred existence. Others have been around for several years and have learned the long and short of it. In any case, the powers of the Tremere and Malkavians involved in the experiments combine with developing techniques of psychology to completely transform the subjects' minds! Dr. Stoschka (who appears to have founded the society and takes the lead in its activities) has convinced a small but growing number of his subjects that they belong, in fact, to a new bloodline of Kindred and, more frighteningly, that belief does indeed seem to be altering not only their behavior, but certain physical traits as well! The experiment is still in its infancy, but if Dr. Stoschka can continue his success — if he can prove that much of the Kindred "inheritance" is in fact psychological — he may have opened up a brand new avenue of Kindred development.

Vienna is, perhaps unsurprisingly, almost completely free of Sabbat presence, and little (overt) political maneuvering occurs among the Camarilla Kindred (as precious little authority is not already in Tremere hands). While the prince must deal with few Kindred threats to his demesne, Vienna has its own hazards. The Vienna Woods outside the city crawl with looming threats, and though the creatures have tasted Tremere magic and fear to enter the city proper, they have no compunctions about shredding those Kindred who venture too far



CHASING SUNSET (GEOGRAPHY)

outside the city. Further, I am given to understand that an order of mortal witches that, I hear tell, has ancient links to the Tremere themselves maintains a sizable presence across Austria, though it has but little influence in Vienna itself. Finally, there are the hideous creations of the Tremere themselves, stone-skinned walking gargoyles and other, even more awful creatures. Most remain firmly under the control of their undead masters, but every so often, one will escape. Some of these feral things lurk in the wilds outside Vienna, wishing only to be left alone, but others seek revenge for years of mistreatment. Even the mightiest Kindred is rarely willing to walk alone outside Vienna proper.

Playing God

Dr. Stoschka and his society are meddling with far more than they realize. Whether or not Kindred traits such as clan weaknesses and favored Disciplines are physiological or psychological, it is dangerous to muck about with a vampire's mind. The Malkavians and the Tremere involved have, through use of mental powers and more mundane techniques, driven their subjects quite mad. Yes, these vampires now believe themselves to be unrelated to their previous clans, but they no longer think the way "normal" Kindred do.

They are confused, they are in pain, constantly driven by the chaos in their minds, and they are changing, developing in ways the society could never have imagined, possibly becoming a bloodline in truth as well as in belief. In fact, the oldest of the good doctor's subjects, a young Kindred formerly of Clan Toreador, has discovered that she can temporarily dull the pain and confusion in her head by sharing it with others. All she has to do to make them feel her pain is to let them hear her pain.

All she has to do is sing....

Through Budapest, Hungary; then, by Carriage, Through the Hungarian and Romanian Countryside

Both Hungary and Romania were part of greater empires for substantial portions of their existence. Hungary, which even now is technically under the suzerainty of Austria, was part of the Hapsburg Empire. Romania

was part of the Ottoman Empire (as the administrative capital of Moldavia and Wallachia) until the end of the Russo-Turkish War in 1878. Despite the fact that these two nations belong to two very different empires, however, and also the unfortunate fact that the Hungarian Magyar peoples do not get along well with their Romanian neighbors, the two nations still share, through much of their lands, a common culture that can be traced back to the Dark Ages and even earlier.

The climate here is varied of temperature, capable of extreme cold during the winters. The rains are heavy during the colder months, less so in the summers; this makes for a fertile but occasionally unpredictable growing season. The entire Hungarian and Romanian region is rich in mineral wealth and has been mined by the natives for nearly a millennium.

Budapest itself, the capital and largest city of Hungary, is a fascinating amalgamation of old and new. Sitting on the banks of the Danube, Budapest is actually made up of three separate cities, Buda, Obuda (or Old Buda) and Pest, which have long functioned as a single unit but only formally declared themselves a single principality in 1873 (much to the chagrin of some Kindred of two of the three cities, I'm sure!).

Buda, on the west side of the Danube, sits upon a rolling, hilly stretch of land. It boasts beautiful ancient churches and public buildings and is traditionally the seat of government for Budapest. On Castle Hill, the Royal Palace stands behind fortifications built in the 13th century. Beside it, Matthias Church has only recently been completed, built on the design of a much older church that once stood there. The Citadel, built atop Gellért Hill in 1851, was intended as an Austrian military outpost but was never used.

Pest, on the east side of the river, is flat and more generally industrial than Buda. Still, it boasts its own share of antiquity. The *Kis körút*, or Small Boulevard, circumnavigates the oldest portion of the city. The *Nagy körút*, or Great Boulevard, lies further out in the city. The Town Hall, the Hungarian National Museum, the Renaissance-style State Opera House and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences all populate the old town. Beyond the Great Boulevard, Pest consists almost entirely of industrial and residential areas. Perhaps most strange is Vajdahunyad Castle, in the city park at Pest's north end, a complex castle built of canvas, constructed for an exhibition only within the past year. Some citizens talk of reconstructing it out of more durable stone, but so far, no steps have been taken in that direction.

Budapest is, in some respects, one of the last bastions of civilization before entering the Hungarian wilds of Transylvania, and this makes it of vital import to the

Kindred. The city's prince, Vencel Rikard, has been the preeminent Kindred here since before the Middle Ages. I understand he once, long ago, had a reputation as a weakling and an inactive prince, but he shows no trace of this now. Rikard maintains his domain as forcefully but fairly as any Kindred I have seen. Not only does he have allies or pawns in nearly all parts of Budapest itself, he has powerful allies among the Russian Kindred as well: Rumor tells that his sire relocated to Russia within the past century.

Concerned about the Tzimisce and other, fiercer things that stalk the Transylvanian wilds, Rikard and his allies keep Budapest free of most outsiders. The Ventrue, Nosferatu and Brujah make up the majority of Budapest's population. That said, a small population of the nomadic Ravnos has a semipermanent enclave near Pest's south end. These vampires, led by one Danior Raskov, have no obvious purpose here except to occasionally prey upon the faults of the locals, yet I think there may be more to them than is readily apparent. From a bit of eavesdropping, I have learned that they do, in fact, serve some absent figure, a woman they call "Durga Syn." Apparently, this mistress of theirs dwells in Russia, though I heard no mention of her in or around Saint Petersburg. Also in Budapest dwells one of those strange Middle Eastern Kindred I saw in London. His name is Sajid al Misbah, and again, I would be tempted to label him Assamite, save that he is clearly no kind of assassin, but is instead a blood sorcerer who has offered his services to Rikard as a bastion against the magics of the Tzimisce.

Transylvania translates as "the Land Beyond the Forest," an apt name indeed, for as one moves south and east, as one passes through the thick woods, it is much as though one has entered another world. Vast portions of the Transylvanian and Romanian countryside have not changed since the days of the Crusades. Much of the region is inaccessible by train, and rather than disturb the passengers with my presence, I was forced to sit atop a horse-drawn carriage to make my way. Tiny villages, a few dozen houses built around a dilapidated church, are still the primary form of community for many of these areas' poor peasants. Atop high hills and rocky promontories, ancient castles reach for the gray skies like the grasping hands of drowning men. In these edifices lurk Tzimisce and other Kindred as ancient as their homes. For these creatures, the nights of vampire lords have not passed; they still demand fealty of those poor souls who live in their shadow, feasting upon them often and openly. The people here are as superstitious as any I have heard of, putting their faith in folk remedies and old wives' tales rather than the science embraced by the rest of the world. They fear everything, distrusting strangers



CHASING SUNSET (GEOGRAPHY)

as though they carried the plague, and I cannot, in good conscience, fault them for any of it. Were I a normal, living man, forced to make my way with the aid of the natives, I would have found my journey impossible, for few indeed would have willingly spoken to me at all, and none on my particular topic of study.

Things stalk the shadowed forests in these untamed wilds. Some are creatures of Tzimisce make, flesh-twisted horrors spawned by the fevered imaginations of these inhuman lords. Others, including but hardly limited to the snarling werewolves, are wholly alien to the Kindred and would as happily rip apart the undead as the living. Leaving the carriage behind when its passengers stopped for the night at a rundown inn in a rundown village, I wandered the countryside a bit and saw, firsthand, some lumbering horror, possessed of multiple clawed arms and the head of a horse, hunkered down in an old graveyard, exhuming and consuming the bones of the deceased. Something so blatantly unnatural, I can only assume it was the work of one of the Tzimisce, but being, as I was, revolted at the entire scene, I did not stay to resolve the issue.

Of all the villages and towering fortresses, the one most frequently spoken of is Bran Castle, high atop the Borgo Pass. Here, they say, dwells a vampire the likes of which the world has never seen. From his lair, he feasts upon those who dare approach. He sees all and knows all, intelligence brought to him by a network of Gypsy (and Gangrel and Ravnos) agents. Yet, I cannot put to him a name, other than "The Devil" or "The Dragon," for none seem willing to speak it.

I would have thought that the Sabbat would maraud here uncontested, so great is the Tzimisce presence, but I found, instead, that the Sabbat is only moderately more common in this part of Eastern Europe than the Camarilla. For every Tzimisce lord who swears allegiance to that sect, one or two others refuse to bow their heads to any greater authority. Truly, Transylvania and Romania are no less wild and dangerous for the Kindred than for the men on whom they feed.

For a long time, the Ventrue challenged the Tzimisce for the region. Some few small cities even have surviving Ventrue princes. The greatest of the Ventrue princes, one Nova Arpad (a direct relation to the ruling Arpad Magyar family of the Middle Ages), has been missing for decades, however, and Tzimisce dominance suffers no serious challenges. Even Bucharest, the capital city of Romania, is now claimed by a Tzimisce *voivode*.

I would make mention of one unusual feature of which I heard but for which I could find no confirmation. Centuries gone, there was a hideous place in the Carpathian Mountains called the Cathedral of Flesh.

This temple to depravity was constructed by a powerful Tzimisce lord from the skin and bones of thousands of his victims! The Cathedral and its master were the terror of the region until they were both destroyed in, I believe, the 15th century.

There exists, however, a small but growing cult of vampires (largely Tzimisce but claiming others as well, including several Ravnos) who appear determined to reconstruct this grizzly edifice. I am unclear on their precise beliefs. Do they think, perhaps, that they can gain the power of this Tzimisce ancient by recreating his work? I cannot say, but I would hope that some faction among the Kindred might learn of this horror and put a stop to it before it grows too large. Already, scores of poor mortals have been condemned to endless suffering in the walls of this new Cathedral.

It is, perhaps, the most concise — if also most horrifying — statement yet on what Eastern Europe has become.

Athens, Greece

The journey south across the Balkan Peninsula, which required numerous transfers from train to carriage (as transportation in this part of Europe is not yet up to modern standards), was marked by a notable shift in the weather. Even now that winter has passed, the north of Greece is remarkably cold, but the temperature rises rapidly as one approaches the central regions of the nation. I cannot say why the climate changes so drastically — it cannot be due to the mountains, for much of the country boasts such features, and the Pindus range extends south to north — but it may have to do with the patterns of weather in the Mediterranean Sea. It does not rain often, but enough to allow for a reasonable amount of agriculture. The farms and vineyards that litter the countryside hearken to peaceful, pastoral days of years gone by. The people here live simple lives, unaided (but also, in some respects unburdened) by the modern world.

Greece, formerly a province of the Ottoman Empire, won its independence in 1827, after several failed revolutions. The country was, I should point out, aided against the Ottoman Navy by a joint French, Russian and British force (led by a British admiral, of course). The Ottoman Empire did not actually recognize Greek independence for two more years, though. Greece grew further still in recent years, when the Ottoman loss to Russia in 1878 forced it, by order of the Congress of Berlin, to cede Thessaly and portions of Epirus to Greek control. The Greeks, however, still seek to expand into regions controlled by Turkey; they have just recently, in fact, unsuccessfully attempted to aid the island of Crete in a revolt against Ottoman rule and have been forced by

the European powers to pay reparations to the Ottoman Empire. Greece itself has a two-part political system. The king (who was chosen from other royal families of Europe) has vast control, but all the nation's male citizens are permitted a vote on many regional issues.

Athens is surrounded by mountains on three sides and claims the port of Piraeus within its jurisdiction, despite the full five miles separating them. The Acropolis and the Parthenon, as well as other structures from antiquity, stand in the center of a city that looks surprisingly modern (it was largely rebuilt by German architects during the reign of King Otto, which lasted from 1832 to 1862). This juxtaposition of old and new sometimes makes Athens appear like two cities overlaid atop one another. It is, come to think of it, not entirely unlike the manner in which I and other spirits to whom I've spoken sometimes see the rest of the world. Athens gains much of its income from visitors, those who have traveled far to see these relics and ruins of ages gone.

Athens' prince is, unusually, a Malkavian vampire called Peisistratos. Known among the Kindred as a theologian and a philosopher, Peisistratos is almost a stereotypical example of an ancient Greek — a frightening thought, if he is actually as old as all that. He is wise enough not to dress in the ancient ways when out among mortals, though he does, in fact, attend many Kindred functions garbed in a long toga. Thoughtful in most respects, his dominance is somewhat hindered by his refusal to acknowledge any of the female Kindred of the city as equals of the men. Even the eldest of the women among the primogen must speak through male ghouls or childer at Elysium, a situation that enrages a great many of them.

That primogen, and indeed the greater portion of Athens' Kindred population, consists largely of Toreador, with Ventrue, Brujah and Nosferatu skulking liberally about. A small enclave of the loathsome Giovanni thrives here as well, apparently at Peisistratos' invitation. For reasons the reader will probably consider obvious, I chose to keep distant from the Italian Kindred, though I did learn that one of their number, Genarro Giovanni, has an illicit (and, dare I suggest, romantic) relationship with Epikaste Rigatos, Toreador Primogen.

I have learned that several mortal families dwelling in the region have connections, albeit tenuous ones, to the Tzimisce of Hungary and Romania. These reticent individuals seem to exhibit many of the signs common to a vampire's ghouls, yet I have found no evidence of any Kindred lurking among them to offer his blood. I know not what this may mean, save that the Camarilla Kindred of Greece have a Sabbat presence in their midst of which they are utterly unaware.

Legend among the Kindred suggest that Greece is home to a sizable number of true Ancients, Kindred of great power who disdain the politics of their contemporary cousins and hold themselves aloof from their fellows. I myself encountered no such venerable creatures, but allowing for the long history of Greece, I am unwilling to dismiss the possibility of their existence. One can only wonder what such a creature's objectives might be.

Istanbul, Turkey

The Ottoman Empire, though still certainly a world power and an important player on the world stage, is hardly what it used to be. From its height under Suleiman I in the 16th century, it has weakened and contracted to its current borders, occupying only Asia Minor and portions of the Arabic world. Considering that it once owned vast portions of Eastern Europe, Greece and beyond, this is a substantial decline indeed.

Despite Islamic laws that demand otherwise, the leadership of the Ottoman Empire is inherited, and the Turks believe that their emperor rules by divine mandate. Numerous Ottoman Kindred believe this as well, which is why Mustafa still claims his domain in Istanbul despite his weakness of will — but more on that in a moment.

Until relatively recently, the Ottoman Muslims allowed Christians and Jews to thrive within their territories unharmed and unchallenged, but this is an attitude that has, sadly, waned within the past decades. Those Kindred of the region seem, for the time being, to remain largely unconcerned with such distinctions; a frightening comment on the state of the world, when the Kindred are, in any way, more just than we.

The soldiers of the empire, who, like scholars and religious leaders, are exempt from taxes, keep scrupulous records of taxes imposed on and paid by their citizens. These taxes, already notably high due to the empire's crumbling economic base, have grown ever higher in recent years. Its former military might has begun to show signs of weakness, and many of its victories would not have been won without British aid (an alliance that lasted until 1892). The Sultan Abd al-Hamid II, who has, in his reign, established the first Ottoman constitution, attempts to strengthen his nation's ties with the newly united Germany.

Istanbul (still known in many regions as Constantinople, though the Ottomans have called it by its current name for centuries) boasts the distinction of being the only city to sit on the divide between two continents. Just as the city straddles the border between

Europe and Asia, so too do its culture, its people and its Kindred hail from separate worlds.

The weather here is temperate, comfortable for all involved. Were it not for the region's occasional earthquakes, it would — so far as acts of God are concerned — be a near perfect environment. Istanbul's coffers earn much from merchants and visitors, attracted both by the climate and the opportunities for trade. A narrow channel of the Bosphorous called the Golden Horn separates one of the city's oldest portions from the rest of Istanbul. This area, called Stanbul, is walled, though those fortifications have certainly seen better days. Here can be found Topkapi Sarayim, the sprawling palace complex of the Ottoman sultans, as well as the Hagia Sophia, an Orthodox church built in the sixth century that has since been converted into a mosque. Numerous additional mosques, some with frescoes dating from the Byzantine Empire, exist here as well.

Across the Golden Horn lie the city's port and many of its businesses and commercial establishments, as well as the Galata Tower. Further east, the city encompasses a number of smaller areas, almost towns in their own right. Here can be found several palaces, built for various sultans throughout the past century.

Prince Mustafa, a Ventrue, ostensibly claims the domain of Istanbul. Sent to Malta as a child, raised and eventually Embraced by agents of Antonio Cardona, he maintains his claim, so far as I can determine, only because he is a relative of the Ottoman royal family. It is an open secret among the Kindred here that it is the Toreador Vashtai and her childe Nakshidil who truly wield princely power, "advising" Mustafa on every decision he makes.

In addition to the Ventrue and the Toreador, Istanbul is home to a goodly number of Brujah and Nosferatu. A cadre of Egyptian Followers of Set dwells here as well, under the leadership of the so-called "priest" Mersekhemre, an urbane, cultured man, educated in England. Those Middle Eastern scholars of whom I have made mention dwell here in great numbers, as do many Assamites, offering their bloody services to all and sundry. Lasombra come with Spanish traders, and some few Tzimisce still dwell here from the nights of the Ottoman invasion of Hungary. I have even seen, on occasion, those strange Oriental vampires of whom I first made note in Saint Petersburg. Mustafa must receive absolutely brilliant advice from his Toreador puppeteers, or else, he has some unseen assistance from outside, for the notion that a prince as weak as he could possibly maintain influence over so varied and conflict-torn a population is laughable at best. It would be interesting to

observe what happens to Istanbul in the coming years, but I do not suppose I will be around to see it.

The rest of the empire, so far as I can determine, is rather evenly divided between clans. The Ventrue hold most of the princedoms, but the Assamites seem to have the greatest degree of influence over the mortal population.

Her Majesty's Colonies

I can only ask the reader to forgive me for the breach of the scientific method I must now commit. While it means leaving my work less complete than it might be, I will not travel to Arabia or the Holy Land. The Ottoman repression of the natives in its Arabian territories is horrifying to contemplate — and must surely have resulted in literally thousands of Restless Dead. I am, though it shames me to admit it, simply unable to cope with the emotional toll it would take to confront so many of the dead. Further, having already escaped the clutches of the Giovanni twice, I will not risk an encounter with those necromantic Kindred who have surely been drawn to the area by the plethora of spirits to be had.

I shall, instead, focus on those regions of the world that the Empire has, to date, succeeded in civilizing — or at least in beginning so long and arduous a process.

Cairo, Egypt

In many respects the cradle of civilization, a rich if flawed model of cultures to come, the history of Egypt is truly the history of man (albeit an incomplete one).

Cairo stands, as it has for six thousand years, near the delta of the Nile in northern Egypt. Although a substantial portion of it retains the look of old, many of its newer buildings are constructed in the Western style. The city lies on both banks of the great river, as well as upon several river islands. Tahrir Square, on the East Bank, is considered the center of the city and is home to many of Cairo's most impressive structures and cultural establishments (including several new museums, with which we have aided the natives in preserving worthwhile elements of their own history). The river island Zamalik sits not far from Tahrir, and many of Cairo's wealthy make their residence here. The island also boasts the Cairo Opera House. Further still along the East Bank lie the city's Islamic districts; the many mosques are marvels of architecture, but the people dwell here in such crowded and often filthy conditions that it pains me, as a civilized man, to observe. The city is also home to the famous Al

Azhar University, the oldest such institution in the world. It pleases me to see that the people here at least acknowledge the need for learning and education.

The British Empire has had an interest in Egypt for quite some time, one that extends well beyond the fascinating archeological finds of the past decades. In an attempt to aid the Viceroy Ismail Pasha, we loaned Egypt substantial moneys, so that he might build upon the civilized influences we brought to his land after the opening of the Suez Canal. Our current presence here is not one of conquest, of course. We simply wish to aid the natives in managing their country and obtaining the benefits of civilization, so that they might more effectively become productive enough to repay our generosity. Just as soon as they are capable of it, we will once again happily permit them to govern their own affairs.

We have, sadly, been forced to battle back against those nastier elements of Egypt's population, those who do not see the virtue in what we do; this bloodshed and loss of precious relics of the past, such as the unfortunate bombardment of Alexandria, harms the locals far more than it does us, and I pray the rebels will come to realize this. As it is, our military might is better spent on the effort to pacify the anti-Egyptian rebels in the Sudan.

The prince of Cairo, Mukhtar Bey, dwells on the Nile island Roda and makes his haven in a large manor in a neighborhood called Ezbekiyya. Some elders outside of Cairo are displeased with this prince, for he is, apparently, what the Kindred call Caitiff, or without clan. This is normally a mark of dishonor, I understand, but Prince Bey has proven his might and his skill time and again, not least importantly by maintaining a fragile but continuing peace between his own Kindred and the numerous Assamites and Followers of Set who dwell in the region. His loyalty to his people and to the Camarilla are unquestioned by those who know him well.

Although he seems to distrust the fellow, one of Bey's most frequent advisors is the Tremere Kasper Aupfholme, who appears to head a chantry located inside the Egyptian Museum and Antiquities Service. What deal Aupfholme might have made with the prince to obtain so valuable a property (both in terms of culture and the potential for arcane discovery), I know not, but it must have been a hard negotiation indeed. Perhaps Aupfholme's assistance with all matters mystical was part of that bargain.

The Toreador Jean-Baptiste Duval and his childe Andres LeCompte run yet another portion of the city, called by the Kindred "Banu Duval." Duval, one of Bey's primogen, arrived with the armies of Napoleon — and was, or so he claims, partially responsible for negotiating the little dictator's withdrawal. In exchange, Duval was

granted a Toreador demesne within Cairo, which he runs almost as a city within a city. Duval's territory also includes many of the docks along the Nile, making him not only one of the most powerful, but possibly the wealthiest of Cairo's Kindred.

Bey should, I imagine, be grateful that he does not have the Sabbat to worry about (the local faction, led by the Lasombra Munther al-Aswad, is not especially potent). The constant warfare between the regional Assamites and Followers of Set brings enough chaos to his realm as it is. Izzat al-Khunzir, an immense and apparently hairless man, appears to be foremost among the local Setites. While he appears to me to be no less contemptible than his fellows, my observations lead me to believe that his goals are not entirely in line with theirs. Al-Khunzir's primary objective seems to be the expulsion of the British from his homeland; clearly, he is one of those poor blind savages who cannot see the good we do in civilizing his people. Still, he has been somewhat successful, in that, between his own activities and the might of Bey himself, few British Kindred have settled in Cairo alongside my countrymen.

His efforts do not go unhindered, however. A truly powerful and deadly Assamite, called by the locals Antara the Shepherd, stalks the streets of Cairo with his brethren, his hatred of the Followers of Set at least as strong as al-Khunzir's hatred of my own people. Antara's skin is jet black, gleaming in even the faintest light. Truly, this is a deadly, inhuman and ancient creature. Further, his sole purpose in Cairo, as well as that of his followers, seems to be the war against the Setites. Were al-Khunzir not supported by a mysterious benefactor, one whom I have been unable to locate but who is clearly well versed in the ways of sorcery, he would surely have fallen to Antara's fangs by now.

I wonder, come to think on it, if Prince Bey might not occasionally stir up this feud himself, keeping the Assamites and the Followers of Set at one another's throats and preventing either of these powerful factions from growing strong enough to challenge his own claim to domain.

A sizable population of Nosferatu dwells here in Cairo, in addition to the numerous Toreador, Ventrue, Followers of Set and Assamites, but they seem, as they often do, determined to remain detached from Kindred affairs. Also, creatures other than the Kindred stalk the sands of Egypt, occasionally venturing into Cairo proper. The werewolves have a presence here, a breed that appears almost more jackal than wolf wanders the burning wastes, and though they leave the Kindred alone much of the time, they are no less deadly than their European cousins when aroused. The Kindred speak, as

well, of mortal sorcerers of great power and of beings older even than the vampires themselves, beings utterly beyond the reach of death itself.

Through Uganda, by Caravan

Seemingly endless and blisteringly hot savannas, dense jungles in which all sorts of loathsome beasts dwell, mountains that seem always far enough away that they cast no shade across one's path — this is Uganda. Surely, any who doubt British generosity in bringing civilization to the savages need only look here to see how much trouble we undertake on their behalf. We arrived here seeking the primary source of the Nile (which, as it happens, is Lake Victoria, located in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania).

Uganda was not a unified country when we arrived, but rather the site of several small kingdoms. We have, of necessity, been forced to remove several of the local kings, including Kabarega of Bunyoro and, just recently, Mwanga of Buganda. Will these people never learn?

We have few large cities here but, rather, score upon score of native villages that are slowly but surely benefiting from an influx of culture and proper education. British officers and personnel, aided in their governance by assistants from among the natives who recognize the gift we bring them, oversee these villages. Most of these small towns and colonies are far too small to support a viable Kindred population. They boast, at most, one or two of the Kindred, and many are completely free of such parasites. This is the case, I understand, not only here, but through much of our territory in Kenya, Bechuanaland and Rhodesia as well. Most of these Kindred seem to hail from the Ventrue, Gangrel or Nosferatu, but nearly all the clans are represented in some manner or another. The Tremere send agents here on a regular basis to investigate tales of mysterious local creatures and magics, most of whom either return empty handed or not at all. The Sabbat and the Camarilla both claim numerous villages, but it is all bombast and hot air, for no one truly cares whether one side or the other possesses more of this empty land.

Rarely, the Kindred in such a village experience strange mishaps, much like those attributed to the fae in Ireland. Sometimes, important items are lost. Other times, Kindred or their servants have been found murdered or else inflicted with a sickness of the mind that never fades. The worst punishments are inflicted on those who destroy relics of Africa's history or who harm the tellers of ancient tales, and the vampires have learned to give such items and individuals a wide berth.

Yet none of the Kindred, be they of European or African descent, seem to know a thing about the heart of Africa itself. Everything north of the Cape Colony and south of the Sahara is an enigma to Kindred and civilized man alike. Kindred enter the jungles or cross the great plains and are never again seen. The Kindred whisper of hideous beasts, shifters of shape beside which the dread werewolves pale. Worse, they speak of creatures, vampires, yet not Kindred. "Laibon," they whisper. "Kagn." What these things may be, I cannot say, for none of the Kindred seem to know. The wisest among them know only enough to stay safe in their villages and never to turn their eyes toward Africa's darkest heart.

Bombay, India

Travel from Africa to India across the Arabian Sea was easier to come by than one might expect. Given that we have commercial interests in our colonies in both regions, it is only natural that we would desire to facilitate communication and transport between the two. Thus, it was with relative ease that I found a vessel traveling to Bombay.

The summers grow blisteringly hot here, nearly as much as some portions of Africa, but the winters, at least, are mild. As I avoided the June to September monsoon season, I saw precious little rain. As I understand it, over nine-tenths of Bombay's annual rainfall occurs in those months and is often the cause of deadly floods.

The British Empire has had interests in India for centuries. The East India Company was founded in the year 1600, and when the Regulating Act granted the Crown and Parliament direct control over that company in 1773, our presence became stronger still. It was not, however, until the 1800s and the ascension of British naval superiority over the Dutch and our victory over the French in the Carnatic Wars that we truly assumed our place as India's stewards.

Bombay itself, a vitally important port city, was built upon a stretch of land that, at high tide, became a series of separate islands. Efforts at dredging the area have somewhat mitigated this effect, though the islands still become isolated communities during the heights of the monsoon season. Perhaps a third of the native population, who call the city by the name of Mumbai after some pagan god of theirs, live in ramshackle huts in the filthiest, most crowded, most flood-prone portions of town. These people seem often to resent our presence, despite the fact that we've shown them by our own example that a better life is available for those willing to strive for it. Some believe that the horrendous plague that decimated the city's population only last year may have sprung from the horribly unsanitary conditions in

which these people dwell; cleaning that squalor and improving the lot of the natives is the primary purpose of the Bombay Improvement Trust, which was formed in response to that plague.

I should point out that some truly disgusting creatures, loathsome even for vampires, may have been responsible for assisting the spread of the disease. The sick make easy victims, and the Kindred are quite capable of carrying illness from one vessel to the next. It sickens me that they have so little concern for the people around them. Even the most ignorant rancher knows that he must take proper care of the animals on which he intends to feed.

Bombay itself is a surprising center of commerce. In addition to its duties as a port, served by the Princess and Victoria docks, the city is home to a growing industrial concern, particularly in the form of cotton-textile mills. (One of their largest markets, interestingly, is the United States of America; apparently they're suffering shortages dating back to their so-called "Civil War.") Most industry, as well as a substantial portion of the city's cramped and crowded population, can be found in the center of Bombay, just south of Mahim Creek. At the southern end of this area is the former site of one of our military forts, torn down in 1861. Bombay is yet another of those cities with a hodgepodge of architectural styles, the more civilized and efficient British buildings slowly supplanting the more primitive Indian structures of wood and thatch (or, in the case of the older buildings, worked stone). Many of the roads are paved now, though more are still nothing but dirt, and for decades, the city has had piped water, rail service and even, in some places, gas.

The people here are largely Hindu, with a sizable minority practicing a form of Islam. Only a small percentage, as of yet, have been successfully converted by English missionaries.

Most of Bombay's citizens are, I think, wise enough to see the benefits we bring them. Our missionaries educate the native children in English, as is proper, and our administrators see that the people's needs are attended to. We treat them with only the greatest respect, save when they force us to do otherwise (such as during the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857). The requisite violence is unpleasant, and I pray that such actions cease to be necessary. Fortunately, the agitators are but few, fighting for the survival of a culture and way of life that is clearly ill-suited to the modern world.

A study of Bombay's Kindred (or, indeed, of any of India's Kindred) is very nearly an impossible undertaking. Were I willing to spend decades at the task, I might begin to piece together more than the very basic knowl-



CHASING SUNSET (GEOGRAPHY)

edge I have now. The situation is complicated far beyond the cultural barriers into which one must expect to run.

People in India are born into castes, levels of society in which they remain for their entire lives. Unlike the class systems of many other nations, no hope of social advancement exists. Someone born Pariah ("untouchable") will remain on the lowest rung of society's ladder until the day he dies. The Indian Kindred choose to complicate matters by forming specific caste/clan relationships! That is, the Ventrue, the Malkavians and the local variant of the Followers of Set (a strange combination, to be sure) are considered Brahmin, a dominant caste of priests. Kshatriyas, members of a warrior and landowner caste, claim Assamites, Brujah, Ravnos (a clan that seems far more numerous here than anywhere else in the world) and God knows what else in their number. The "middle class" farmers, tradesmen and merchants, called Vaisyas, also claim a large number of Ravnos, which clan seems to be the only one with numerous members in multiple castes. The Sudras, a caste of menial laborers, include the Nosferatu (strange, that, for I had expected them to be untouchable) and Gangrel. Finally, and most inexplicably, the Kindred of India number the Toreador among the Pariah — I never was able to determine why.

Indian Kindred refer to themselves almost exclusively by caste, only rarely by clan, and to confuse matters even further, the above connections are tendencies only, not ironclad rules. As such, I was able to identify the clan of only some of Bombay's vampires.

Adding yet more to the chaos — as though I required more — is the constant war that wages among India's undead population. The native Kindred battle furiously against "encroaching" Kindred of the British Empire, and they fight, as well, against a mysterious enemy from the East. Furthermore, while less frequently than it might, the Sabbat occasionally attempts to make inroads into Camarilla territory, bringing that conflict to India's lands as well. The mortality rate here is high, and vampires of all ages, from newly Embraced to hoary elder, meet death on a nightly basis.

The self-proclaimed Prince of Bombay is an English Brujah named Colonel Reginald Avery (who insists on being addressed by his old rank). He and his fellows (mostly Ventrue, though Brujah, Nosferatu and Tremere all make their havens here) have succeeded — barely, I might add — in maintaining dominance in the face of growing resistance from the natives. An Indian Brahmin called Sundervere has, for the past decades, waged a war against all European Kindred in India, and Bombay is one of his favorite battlegrounds. This creature possesses an expert grasp of several unholy magics and is widely

feared by his enemies and allies alike. Were it not for Avery's Tremere allies, Sundervere would surely have destroyed the Brujah long ago. Somewhat closer to home, as it were, the Ravnos Rukhmini Kumari and the Kshatriya (I could not learn his clan) Manmohan Birodkar lair within the slums at the northern edge of Bombay, assaulting the agents of Prince Avery and in all ways attempting to drive him out.

As a side note, I think it would interest the British government to learn that the Thuggee cult, thought suppressed in the 1840s, still survives in several underground movements. The English Kindred are convinced that the Assamites have joined the Thuggee en masse, in order to force the Camarilla from India. The truth, so far as I can tell, is that but a single Assamite claims membership in the Thuggee (as does a single Ravnos) and that he does so for his own reasons, not as part of any great conspiracy.

It is my understanding, based on what I have heard and learned in Bombay, that the Kindred situation throughout the other major cities of India is similar to that which exists here — that is, encroaching European Kindred, mostly of the Camarilla, vie for supremacy with native vampires, and the Sabbat lurks always at the sides. I believe I shall forbear any further travel in this land.

The United States

As I can find precious little reason for the reader to share my boredom, I will not greatly dwell on the journey from India to the shores of the "New World." I will say only that it required a great deal of tedious travel, by train and by ship, much of which took me back through regions I had already examined and in which I learned nothing new. The journey across the Atlantic required nearly three weeks, as I was forced to sail aboard an older, wood-hulled vessel. An unfortunate delay in my studies, to be sure, but it did provide the added benefit of ensuring that I missed the lingering traces of the New England winter and, instead, arrived well into spring.

What can I say about this nation, these children of ours, if you will? With the ingenuity and grim determination they inherited from their British forefathers, they have carved a thriving nation from the wilds of an untamed land. The United States government now owns all the lands between Mexico (rife with Sabbat, so I hear) and our own Canadian territories, and from, as one of their rather silly songs would have it, "sea to shining sea." Owning is not, however, the same as controlling by any stretch of the imagination; still their western frontiers are wild and untamed, harsh of weather and environment, rife with outlawry, claimed by Indians who are

often hostile to the settlers. The Americans' odd notion of manifest destiny, combined, I've no doubt, with a practical need to expand to fit their growing population, forces them westward still. With them, of course, go the Kindred. As no vital cities have arisen yet in the American West, however (and as it appears to be the youngest of vampires who travel thus, determined to make domains for themselves away from the eyes of their elders), I find that the prospect holds little interest for me. What need I, in my study of Kindred politics and activities, to observe those who have, as of yet, few political aspirations beyond survival? When those who have gone west have overcome their own internal struggles, the environment, the werewolves and, above all, the Sabbat, then they may be worthy of further study.

Along similar lines, the majority of the elder Kindred in the Americas seem to congregate in the New England region (a name I find vastly amusing, given their insistence on throwing off our guiding hand). The eastern portions of the country are dominated by the Camarilla in theory, but the Sabbat has a powerful presence here as well, and conflict is frequent (though far less so than in the West). The American South is still undergoing a period of Reconstruction, and is far less technologically advanced than the North. (Hypocrisy is another distinctly American trait — less than a century after their own desperate revolt against us, they refuse to allow near half their own number the same right of "self-determination." Had not American slavery been one of the issues decided in that silly little war, I'd have precious little good to say of the Northern states.) There, the Sabbat presence is greater, bolstered by its Mexican presence, but still, the Camarilla maintains a tentative superiority.

Of course, the end of slavery is still nearly a myth in many parts of the country. The colored are treated horribly in much of the South, and I hear tell of Kindred in the Southern states who still keep herds of slaves, bound by their will. Even here, in the North, Blacks have a difficult time of life, often relegated to duties even worse than those permitted Chinamen.

Still, this region is far more cosmopolitan than many, and here can be found perhaps the greatest of all American cities.

New York, New York

I must admit, it is viscerally thrilling to sail over the waters toward Bedloe's Island in New York harbor. To see the Statue of Liberty rising tall from the walls of the old fort, gleaming in the sunlight — it is, truly, almost enough to make one believe America's conceit that it is the home of freedom in the modern world. The statue does not gleam as brightly as perhaps she did when she

was first unveiled 10 years gone — her copper flesh has begun to darken with the verdigris birthed by the salty sea air surrounding her — but still, she is one of the most impressive sights a man might hope to see.

New York itself, constructed on the island of Manhattan, is very much the modern city. Along with its surrounding communities of Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx — I should mention here that a movement is afoot to join all these communities, and others as well, into a single municipality — it is clearly the construct of men of English descent. In many ways, New York truly appears to be a younger and somewhat immature reflection of London itself. Where we have the stately Thames, they have the Hudson. They have a far greater admixture of races and nationalities dwelling here — everyone from Chinamen to Irishmen to free Blacks to Italians can be found here, often in their own isolated communities — but their citizenry is very clearly divided, as is London's, between the affluent and the working classes. As one travels down the cobbled streets, dodging pedestrians and carriages alike, one can look up to see the rich black smoke of the factories and manufacturing concerns mingling with the gray clouds of the New England sky. I imagine that the winter snows provide quite the contrast to these darker shades; but avoiding winter here, as I explained I had done, I saw nothing but the soaking rains that are very much like those experienced back home (if somewhat less frequent).

New York boasts an astonishing system of public transportation. Elevated trains and the new electric trolleys cross the city at regular intervals, allowing even the most impoverished to move from one end of the city to the other, and into the neighboring communities as well, at need. Not that most of the working class have far to go. Large tenements ("apartment buildings," to use the American vernacular) stand within blocks of the factories, which are themselves within blocks of street after street of storefronts of all sorts, enabling the workers to live their entire lives within the space of a few square miles. Most of the city's well-to-do dwell in several particularly pricey residential neighborhoods on the outskirts of New York or else outside Manhattan proper. Much of the city is lit by electricity, not gas — a development that even London itself has yet to accomplish.

New York has swiftly become a primary center of American culture (although some might argue that no such thing exists). The Metropolitan Museum of Art boasts an impressive collection of artifacts, Central Park provides the people of the city a place in which to enjoy some semblance of natural surroundings, and the Acad-

emy of Music and the Metropolitan Opera House provide ample opportunity for New York's elite to enjoy an evening out. Many of America's wealthiest families make their homes here, as do many of the nation's political figures. Tammany Hall, a political organization run by a man called "Boss" Tweed, holds a great deal of power in the city despite a temporary weakening in the 1870s. Through illegal favors and vote-gathering techniques, they can make or break any of the aforementioned political hopefuls — an important tool, particularly in the hands of the city's rampant Sabbat. Luckily, they are too manic to bring it under their sway.

I must confess, I found myself taking a rapid dislike to those of New York's upper class around whom I spent a great deal of time. They wish to be taken seriously, not as wealthy patrons of New York, but as scions of distinguished families and the elite of a city rich in history.

I cannot help but scoff at them. New York is impressive, this I grant them. But it is not stately. It is not elegant. It is, when all is said and done, the crown jewel of a nascent country with very little true history or tradition to call its own. For the wealthy here to play at being the equivalent of the old families in England, with whom they do, indeed, seem to compare themselves in many respects, would be insulting were it not so bold.

That said, New York is a powerful city, particularly in financial arenas. The growth of the American commodities market is staggering, and much of it is controlled through stocks and bonds purchased and traded here. This, if nothing else, makes New York prime territory for both Kindred sects. Within the shadows, beneath the streets and hidden within wood-paneled offices, New York is a city at war. The Sabbat presence here greatly overshadows the Camarilla — but it is, at least for the nonce, the Camarilla that struggles to establish a foothold in the financial and political heart of Manhattan and, thus, of New York City.

It is nigh impossible to compose a list of the important Kindred of the region, for the mortality rate is staggering. Joseph Wellesley, who hails from a long line of Ventrue lords in Europe, claims a domain in Manhattan only through desperate measures. His connections with Tweed and others in Tammany Hall have been sufficient, to date, to prevent the Sabbat's Cardinal Francisco Domingo de Polonia (an expert at political maneuvering, especially for a Sabbat vampire) from establishing many of his own pawns in New York's municipal government. Wellesley's Tremere allies, operating from a hidden chantry, ward off the mystical forces of the Sabbat (as well as keep an eye on the growing Giovanni presence among the Italian immigrants). A tiny clutch of Nosferatu prowls the city's

growing sewer system — though it is said that horrid creatures dwell in the depths that frighten even these loathsome Kindred — and a Toreador coterie, or two, gathers about New York's museums and speak ill of its enemies, as though that would do any good.

The Sabbat, in turn, holds the surrounding communities. From havens hidden throughout Long Island and Brooklyn, Polonia leads an attack on multiple fronts. His Brujah and Tzimisce soldiers take to the streets, while his Lasombra brethren and their Ventrue allies slowly assault the Camarilla's minuscule political base of power. Should nothing change, it is but a matter of time before New York, this prince of the Americas, falls utterly to the Sabbat, but still, the Camarilla battles viciously, and neither side can truly claim to be uncontested at this point. The Sabbat cause is somewhat hampered by power struggles among Polonia's "bishops" and "archbishops" — Turlev and Ecaterina (called "The Wise") being the two greatest of these.

Of course, many Camarilla Kindred of Manhattan are also distracted by other, petty concerns. In addition to the standard political games that all vampires seem to play with one another, the Kindred of New York seem particularly determined to prove their "worth" to their European cousins. In the past century, the world has come to see the United States as a nation in its own right — but to the deathless Kindred, this country is still an upstart place to which troublesome childer may be sent to play. It is an attitude that chafes more conservative Kindred and their ilk and renders them incapable of drawing upon all the resources (such as favors, boons or familial connections) they might have at their command, for fear of appearing weak.

In the filthier neighborhoods lurk Kindred who seem unconcerned with the progress of the war. Nosferatu, Brujah, Followers of Set, Giovanni — perhaps even some of the Asian vampires — these all dwell away from the halls of power, concerned with nothing but their own needs. Many claim individual neighborhoods like independent fiefs, and the Sabbat luminaries neither know nor care enough to reign them in. Life is a hard lot for the mortals living within these territories — for, like their spiritual brother Prince Fagin in London, the local undead have no pity for the "cattle" on which they feed. The worst of the lot is Lenore, a Follower of Set who has begun to form an alliance of these Kindred "robber barons." Unwilling to bow to either the Camarilla's "stifling traditions" or the Sabbat's "religious mania," these independent Kindred may prove a deciding force in the conflict gripping New York — if they can work together without tearing one another apart.

Through New England, by Coach

Truly, this entire region is the work of men who long for the grandeur of England without truly understanding it. I had noted the architecture in New York and thought it perhaps a quirk of the city... but no, many other cities of New England show it as well. Buildings are constructed large and looming, faced in stone, often decorated with strangely sculpted eaves and even looming gargoyles. Without the history behind such edifices, though, they come across not as majestic, but as desperate, a mad grab for a grandeur they have not earned. And they seem, if I may be excused a lapse into anthropomorphism, angry, menacing, as though frustrated by their failure to achieve the magnificence for which they strive.

Between these cities, spread throughout wooded hills and grassy plains, tiny villages sit nestled into the landscape. Oblivious to the growth and progress of the cities around them, these hamlets, not unlike their English counterparts, exist as they have for generations. Here, wood houses and log cabins are still the norm, roads are unpaved, and faith flourishes, for God has not yet been dethroned by philosophy and technology. The people live simple lives; they hunt, they farm, they attend church fastidiously, and they travel to the nearest city when they require something their pastoral lifestyle cannot provide. Further, they try their hardest to avoid the Kindred and other things that stalk the night and the woods around their homes.

As with the villages in the English countryside and throughout Eastern Europe, many of these towns are populated by a single Kindred occulted in their midst. Most of those here in America do not tout themselves as "lords" or royalty, however. In one such town, northwest of New York, the Ventrue Thomas Eckhardt literally rules as judge and magistrate, punishing the townsfolk who violate his "law." In another, in Massachusetts, an elder Malkavian "Inquisitor" holds the entire town in fear, as though it were still the 1600s. The mad Kindred's servants quickly levy a charge of witchcraft against any who challenge his superiority.

These, and countless others like them, hold New Englanders in terror, but they are not the only dangers. While less common here than they are out West, werewolves stalk the woods of New England. Other creatures, less easily identified, lurk about the edges of the towns. Angry spirits, many of whom represent the displaced natives, flit about the wilderness, shaking impotent (or occasionally not so impotent) fists at white travelers, and bizarre mishaps befall human and Kindred alike should they violate strange and ancient customs of the land.

Some Final Words

I had thought to continue. I had thought to study some of the original colonies south of the New England area, for they have become prosperous indeed and must surely have attracted more than their share of Kindred. I had even thought of traveling through Mexico itself — and certainly through the British colonies in Canada.

But I will do none of these things.

In a small town near Washington D.C., I found Jonathan — my son. I had known he was talking of moving his family to the States, but I had no idea he had already.... How long have I been dead?

This must be the purpose behind everything I have done. Jon has followed in my footsteps, as both doctor and scientist. I have high hopes that my grandson, and his children, will continue to do so, that my family may always struggle to enlighten mankind and advance the sciences.

But I fear that, in their studies, they may do as I did and attract the attentions of creatures beyond the ken of those sciences.

So, I will leave my journals — my studies of Kindred physiology and family, as well as this treatise on their behavior — where he may find them. That, I finally see, is why I have been unable to move on, not to increase my own understanding, but to protect my family.

Perhaps, with the knowledge contained within these journals of mine, my son and his sons may avoid the Kindred in their quest for understanding. The Kindred have taken my life already. I only hope that, with the knowledge I can bestow, no more of my family need ever involve themselves in the world of the Kindred.

I love you, Jonathan.

Your father,

Dr. Cornelius Netchurch





Chapter Five: Storytelling

Telling stories might well be the oldest art form known to our species. The ability to enthrall members of an audience by using words to put pictures in their heads – pictures that amuse, touch or scare them – is a skill. At its highest levels, roleplaying can be described as people jointly telling a story to one another, and to that, there is a fine art. As we're using the term here, art is the ability to create something that evokes emotion in its audience. *Victorian Age: Vampire* is a challenging variant of the game you think you know. It differs from *Vampire: The Masquerade* in setting, obviously, but, more importantly, in tone. The Cainite world doesn't change that much in the space of just over a century. While the former gleams its flavor from the cooling asphalt of city streets and the jagged screech of punk music, the sensibilities of *Victorian Age: Vampire* are built almost entirely upon those of the Gothic novel.



If you're wondering if there's enough difference between *Vampire: The Masquerade* and *Victorian Age: Vampire* to make an entire storytelling chapter necessary, rest assured, there is. *Victorian Age: Vampire* is storytelling for the advanced player. It's not *Superhero by Night*; it's not about rolling dice and kicking ass; it's about evoking mood and slipping into another, darker, world as much as your imagination and the spoken word will allow. This is storytelling for adults.

The point of *Victorian Age: Vampire* is to bring the Gothic literary sensibility to bear on roleplaying. While doing so may require more effort and focus than some troupes are up for, the rewards for such a complete interactive experience are greater as well — after all, this tradition sees the origin of the vampire as something other than a mindless, bloodsucking monster. The goals of this chapter are to provide you with a quick introduction to the Gothic literary genre and to provide you with some tools to give your Victorian chronicle a transfusion of old-fashioned Gothic horror.

Gothic 101

The Victorians were on closer terms with their fears than we are, and really, how could they not be? Despite their much-vaunted civility and stoicism, the only thing standing between them and the dark of the night was the light provided by fires and gaslights. The Enlightenment remained a relatively recent phenomenon, and the forces of superstition — old, powerful and deep-rooted — had yet to be effectively expelled from the public psyche; the last execution for witchcraft took place in Germany in 1793, only one century earlier.

The first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* was published in 1765. It was eerie, disturbing and bizarre. It concerned itself with sentiments and situations proper gentry best ignored. The story itself was frightening, lurid and, remarkably enough, spectacularly successful. For the next several decades, the Gothic novel thrived. *The Castle of Otranto* was followed by other Gothic classics, all of which added their own take on the genre of the bizarre and the disturbing: Gregory Lewis' scandalous *The Monk*, Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, William Beckford's *Vathek*. Each of these titles spawned literally hundreds of imitators. From 1765 through the end of the Victorian era, anyone accustomed to picking up a book from time to time was very likely to have read at least one tale of horror, madness, monstrosity, death, disease, terror, evil and twisted sexuality. Such was the popularity of the Gothic genre.

The Victorian age officially began in 1837 with the coronation of Queen Victoria and ended with her death in 1901. The era was marked by change — political, industrial, economic and cultural — and any time a great deal of change happens in a very short time, it almost inevitably triggers a sense of unrest and nervousness, if not outright fear. And what scares a man also seems to fascinate him. So it was that the Gothic genre — the literature of the dark, the eerie and the dreadful — was one of the most popular genres of the century. Gothic tales focused on precisely those things that proper Victorians didn't talk about: cruelty, incest, sickness, horror and madness. They were interspersed with mention of creatures that proper, literate Victorians didn't believe in, such as ghosts, demons, witches and, in time, vampires. They took place in foreign, exotic lands, derelict mansions and eerie, abandoned castles. These were the tales that the Victorians had

grown up reading. With such an appetite for ghosts and the like, it was only a short step, then, to a full Victorian fascination with the vampire.

The Victorian age witnessed the debut of the vampire (as we know it today, in any case), and the bloodsucking undead seemed to be everywhere. Purportedly factual news accounts of bloodsucking corpses had made their way from Eastern Europe into English tabloids. Those accounts, in turn, paved the way for the publication of John Polidori's "The Vampyre" in 1819. Karl Marx likened the wealthy to vampires feeding off the life's blood of the proletariat. Following his example, the common man began accusing the British aristocracy of vampirism while the aristocracy began accusing the commoners of being torchbearing rabble (another image that has made it into the Gothic image vault thanks to *Frankenstein*). The public had a seemingly endless thirst for accounts of vampirism, and throughout the 19th century, writers were more than happy to deliver, with each lurid account outdoing the last until the culmination of the form in *Dracula*, published in 1897 — the last year of the timeframe covered by **Victorian Age: Vampire**.

Functions of the Gothic Game

The Gothic genre is, above all else, the literary form of the eerie and the disturbing. That is the mood that you, as Storyteller, must try to cultivate with every setting, character and incident you create. The primary challenge in running a purely Gothic game is establishing and maintaining a persistent and claustrophobic sense of dread.

While it may not seem particularly difficult, consistently maintaining a dark mood during a roleplaying session is not easy.

Having friends over to roll some dice and do some character grandstanding while finishing off some snacks and soft drinks — that's easy. It's social, it boosts everybody's ego, and it's not unduly taxing. It also won't take you very far out of your everyday existence, and it certainly doesn't count as an art form.

Traditionally, Gothic storytelling is challenging. It's probably more appropriate to serious Storytellers with a small, dedicated group of perhaps two to four players who are ready to conduct their roleplaying with a greater degree of introspection. Players who need constant combat to keep their attention, who play only to develop hyperpowered characters or who are just tagging along to be in the presence of a romantic interest are not good candidates for a Gothic chronicle; the intensive characterization necessary to maintain the mood combined with the step by step descent into

unnerving scenarios wherein they may at times be all but powerless will probably not suffice to keep their attention.

Players must be willing to forego powergaming. The Gothic novel is about a protagonist becoming embroiled in an increasingly complicated web of eerie and bizarre occurrences and wondering if he'll escape with his body (or at least soul) intact. It is not about swaggering around the streets of London looking for Sabbat thugs to burn between downing draughts of prostitute's blood. At its root, the Gothic novel isn't about heroics, but, rather, victimization. Players should know before starting a chronicle such as this that their characters may be in for some tough times; it's common in the Gothic novel for protagonists to be tortured, to go mad, to suffer the miseries of the damned or to die. The Gothic genre is all about dread, and before the Storyteller can plausibly create a mood of dread, the possibility of horrible outcomes for the characters must exist.

The Elements of Gothic

Gothic novels relied heavily on many of the same elements and literary devices to make them appealing to their readers; they used similar techniques to achieve their mood and their disturbing tone. Throughout this chapter, the major elements of the Gothic novel will be broken down, and we'll show you how to incorporate those elements into your **Victorian Age: Vampire** chronicle in order to replicate the effect of the Gothic novel: creating a sense of dread in an audience — in this case, your players.

Gothic storytelling is all about atmosphere. Enumerating the standard tropes of the Gothic is like trying to describe a disease by its symptoms. You get the general idea, but without gaining any knowledge of the underlying phenomenon itself.

There's nothing magical about the following list of Gothic plot devices, but they're the ones that have been used to good effect by the Gothic novelists of the past, and they're the ones with which you're most likely familiar. One critic claims that for a work to be Gothic, it should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration. That sums it up fairly effectively, but it can seem like a tall order if you don't break it down a bit. Just remember that the thing that takes precedence in Gothic literature is mood, and any setting and any plot elements that you can use to cultivate and maintain a dark and disturbing mood will strengthen your chronicle and make it memo-

rable for your players long after they've forgotten those other games they may have played.

The Weight of History

The Gothic novel itself owes everything to history. It was his fascination with Gothic architecture that led Horace Walpole to write *The Castle of Otranto* in the first place, and nearly every work published in the genre since has had a looming sense of history to it. The events of the Gothic novel are frequently the consequences of some dreadful event that took place years (or, in some cases, centuries) ago, and the protagonist's role is to discover what those events were and to put to rest any ghosts, literal or figurative, that may still be causing trouble.

What role this sense of history plays varies from novel to novel. Sometimes, it figures as the weight of tradition or the sense of obligation to an old, powerful family. Sometimes, a grim history threatens to repeat itself against the wishes of those living in the present. In other Gothic tales, history is just used for comparison, to show how far the denizens of the modern age have fallen into decadence. In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the eponymous house (both the edifice and the bloodline) is old, bordering on ancient, and both the house and the family clearly evince the decay and decline of venerability. Poe comments repeatedly on the great age and history of both over the course of the story, and by the end of the narrative, both have fallen prey to decay.

As a Storyteller, it is up to you to determine how much history comes to bear on your chronicle. Are the characters caught in a reenactment of a tragedy that first unfolded centuries ago? Does the weight of history and tradition push a vampiric prince to do something horrific? Is one character in love with a woman who is the reincarnation of the dead bride of an old and powerful vampire?

As a Storyteller for **Victorian Age: Vampire**, you have some pronounced advantages when dealing with the weight and consequences of history. Vampires are ageless, allowing the originating incident to be all the further in the mysterious past. No other creature is so well suited to suffering the ravages of time, history and decay as the vampire. As Storyteller, it's your job to highlight that fact.

Vampires may even grow physically stronger even as their consciences degrade. What must elder vampires seem like to neonates? The weight of history must seem heavy indeed. Conflicts with the past are plentiful for vampires, and ancient nemeses aren't difficult to come by when you consider the constant nightly struggles being waged by shrewd elder vampires.

You and your troupe can even play out that history if you're so inclined. **Dark Ages: Vampire** gives you the ability to play out some pivotal event from history even as you're playing out its consequences in **Victorian Age: Vampire** through alternate storytelling sessions. In the **Dark Ages** game, players could take on the role of their Victorian characters' grandsires, and by alternating games, the precipitating historical event could finally manifest just as its horrible after effects come into play in the Victorian game. To go *really* hardcore with your storytelling experience, you could run a third game of **Vampire: The Masquerade** wherein players portray the childer of their **Victorian Age: Vampire** characters.

You'll need to ask yourself exactly *how* you want history to play a role in your chronicle. You don't want to hit the players over the head with it, but, like everything in the Gothic genre, drop subtle hints frequently enough that the players are able to put the pieces together for themselves. Part of the appeal for the players should be discerning just what the impact of history has been on the situation in which they find themselves.

As Storyteller, you'll need to plot out exactly what happened in the past. Did a precipitating event occur? If so, how long ago did it take place? Who was the victim, and who was the perpetrator? Was it covered up? If not, why not? How are the events of the past connected to the present? What connects the players' characters to that event? One suggestion: Err on the side of complexity. The more Byzantine the backstory, the more interesting it will be for your players to untangle over the course of the chronicle, and the more true to the source genre you will be.

The Fascination with Place

The Gothic genre was so named because many of its seminal works took place in the gloomy castles built in some pseudo-historical age by the Goths, a much-mythologized tribe of Germanic barbarians. Those castles were inevitably full of suits of armor, hoary secrets, ghosts and at least one cruel lord who ruled the castle with an iron will. Such Gothic castles, often thinly disguised as abbeys, mansions and other extravagant pieces of real estate in later works, provided the setting for Gothic novels for the first several decades of the genre's existence.

A respectable portion of the Gothic sense of dread comes from lonely and haunted settings, so once you've attended to the events that have launched your Gothic chronicle, it's time to handle the specifics of the location. Many early Gothic novels take their names from the desolate places in which they are set, including *The Castle of Otranto*, *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Wuthering*

Heights, illustrating the prominence locale has on the genre.

As Storyteller, you can easily exploit the Gothic genre's traditionally eerie settings to heighten the mood of your chronicle, but don't start there. Begin the chronicle in a safe and unremarkable setting. Allow the characters some easily resolved conflicts to bolster their confidence (or foster overconfidence, as the case may be), then slowly reveal that the course of the story is going to take them out of their moderately comfortable Victorian surroundings. Make it clear that the place the characters need to travel to is foreboding; warn the characters that it is a place they ought not go — and then, make it so mysterious, alluring and inescapable that they can't help but tempt fate through a visit.

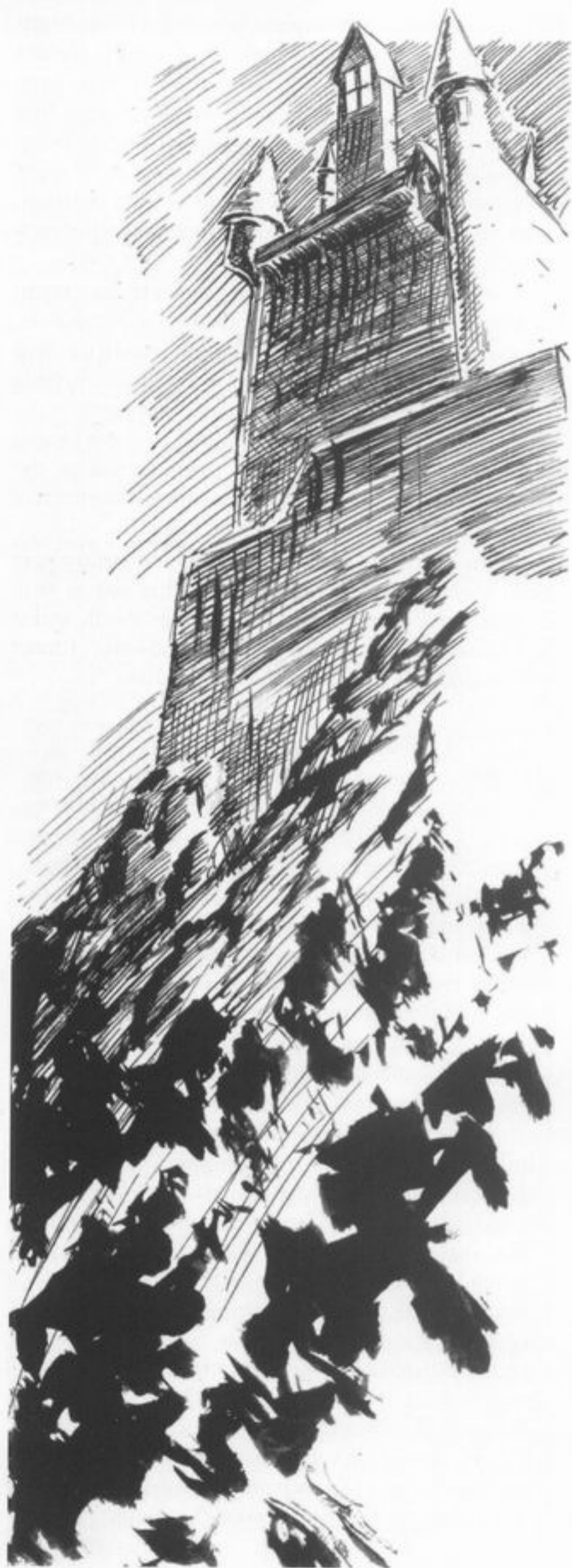
The Journey

It may take a significant journey for the characters to arrive at their Gothic destination. It's not the next street over, but rather *hundreds of miles away*, possibly in an exotic foreign land, and the train won't take them there (not all the way, in any case). Travel was a much slower process in 1888. Travel time was considered part of the experience, not the brief bit of annoyance that happens between origin and destination it is now. Some portions of the journey may need to be done by ship.

The characters' journey to their Gothic destination should be ill-omened in whatever ways you can manage. Let those with Auspex have terrible dreams or visions relating to their destination. The Medium Merit is excellent for giving characters ghostly warnings of what is to come. Malkavians, as lunatic savants, should be particularly haunted by upcoming events; visit upon them terrible hallucinations containing veiled hints (or red herrings) having to do with the upcoming conflict. Alternatively, they might hear spirits or ghosts warning them away or enter into an automatic writing trance wherein they write down terrible prophecies concerning the journey or what awaits them at their destination. Optimally, the journey should provide the chronicle with a moody and eventful prologue and provide an introduction to the chronicle's tone. Let the characters feel they are making a descent into dread. Gothic literature provides plenty of examples to draw upon. Jonathan Harker's journey to Castle Dracula through the wolf-infested Transylvanian countryside plays a crucial role in establishing the mood of *Dracula*. For a more recent cinematic example of the journey from the mundane into Gothic, check out *Apocalypse Now*, which is itself based on Joseph Conrad's very Gothic *Heart of Darkness*.

Isolation

Isolation plays an integral part in creating a mood of dread. Gothic literature abounds with lonely and der-



elict castles, abbeys, sanitariums, boarding schools, hunting lodges, hospitals and hotels. Any lonely, distant locale is ideal. The goal is to remove your players from any convenient source of help. Some players may find even the lack of cell phones to be problematic, so being four night's journey from the nearest ally can be especially disturbing. Reinforce the players' sense of isolation. Come up with subtle ways of reminding players just how isolated — and therefore vulnerable — they are.

Gothic literature is rife with examples to draw upon: Frankenstein and his creature wind up at the North Pole, as isolated as it is possible to be. The eponymous castle of Otranto is located in the wilds of the Italian countryside — a setting intended to be both isolated and exotic at the time it was written. You're not limited to those locales used in fiction, however. Ghost towns, missions, deserted islands, lighthouses and mines are just as effective as the ubiquitous abbey or ancestral mansion.

In the World of Darkness, the lonely and wild places of the world can amplify dread in another way as well: Those are the places where the Lupines dwell, and if there's anything that can evoke a profound sense of dread in a vampire, it's the presence of werewolves.

A Word About Ruins

No discussion of place in a Gothic chronicle would be complete without mentioning the importance of ruins. Roman ruins, Gothic ruins, ghost towns, creepy rotting mansions out in the middle of nowhere — they all work. Gothic literature abounds with examples of ruins. Not only do they hearken to the Gothic milieu's origins, but they evoke a sense of history and the inevitability of decay like nothing else. Additionally, ruins are often haunted, if not by ghosts, then by memories of what the place was like before its abandonment, details that you can use to help build the mood of your chronicle.

When describing ruins, evoke the sense of loneliness and desolation of the place. Guide the characters to wonder what the place was like when it was first built and why the place was abandoned. The answer to the latter question could play a particularly disturbing part in the chronicle, depending on what kind of history you have established for the place. Hint: In Gothic novels, places are usually abandoned for very good and extremely creepy reasons. Even if you never explicitly define why the place was abandoned, let the implication be that it was abandoned for very good and extremely creepy reasons. It'll go a long way in establishing the sense of dread you're building in your chronicle.

Claustrophobia

Gothic literature frequently dealt with themes of entrapment of various sorts. Sometimes, this was more metaphorical — being trapped by one's family, by tradition or by responsibilities, for example — but physical entrapment in labyrinths, caverns, oubliettes, dungeons and the like played a key role in the genre. Immurement, premature burial and the creation rites of the Sabbat all pick up on this theme nicely. Remember this in designing the settings for your chronicle and in the course of play — don't let your players forget that their movement is constrained. Let them bump their heads on a low ceiling from time to time or describe the sensation of being walled in that they feel when they're in those settings.

One way to heighten the sense of claustrophobia while varying the setting is to set portions of the chronicle underground. Caverns, catacombs, subterranean vaults and dungeons are all good settings for Gothic chronicles to unfold. Don't start thinking of the story as a dungeon crawl (or let your players do the same), otherwise, the game will lose its sense of mood, but you can easily heighten the eerie tone of the game with even a short subterranean excursion.

Other types of settings might also lend themselves to the Gothic mood. Laboratories, lunatic asylums, mines and the like work well, but again, be careful not to overplay the setting and let the game devolve into a caricature of itself.

The Tyranny of Power

Throughout your **Victorian Age: Vampire** story, you'll want to be alert to power issues between the characters. Power and powerlessness played major themes throughout the major works of Gothic literature. Possession, ownership, obligation, dominance and servility are concepts that were frequently analyzed through the Gothic tradition. It's no accident that so many vampires in Gothic literature are aristocrats. It's also no accident that the vampire was purported to sap the will of its servants, turning them into fractured, Renfield-like toadies.

In the Gothic genre, those with power almost always misuse it; while they may have some streak of nobility left in them, they can't help but be cruel to those they command. Likewise, those without power are always trying to acquire it, but they're usually so petty and undeserving that even if they briefly get their hands on power, it fits them poorly and they lose it in short order.

Be alert to power issues both within the troupe and between the characters and those they encounter. You can do certain things as Storyteller to heighten the

awareness of power disparities — invoke characters' social standing, note a character's cultural ostracism, pit esteemed clans against coarser ones — so feel free to do so. While the characters don't have to be consciously aware of it, it shouldn't take much for relatively powerful party members to slip toward cruelty and for the others to slip toward servility.

The Gothic Antagonist

Power plays an important role for the Gothic antagonist. He likely has a significant amount of it, and in all likelihood, he abuses it to the detriment of those around him. In the Gothic novel, the antagonist was typically the lord of the place where the story took place. His word was law, and those who questioned him were punished or killed. His cruelty knows only the limits of his power.

It's important to note, however, that the Gothic antagonist is not Snidely Whiplash. One thing the Gothic antagonist is not is a one-note, moustache-twirling caricature out of melodrama. The Gothic antagonist doesn't work unless he is in some way an admirable figure. While his behavior may be malevolent, he should be driven by conflicting passions, each clashing violently with the next in the battlefield of his mind. He should be complex, conflicted, driven by opposing desires. Typically, the Gothic antagonist is a meritorious individual with great advantages, great strengths and great determination. He should have been a virtuous and noble lord, *but...* somewhere, something went wrong. Maybe power had more pull than humanity for him. Maybe someone he loved was taken from him, and everything warm and compassionate in his heart turned to bile. One of the great *modern* examples of the Gothic villain is Hannibal Lecter: brilliant, cultured and insightful, yes, but also a psychopathic cannibal. So it is with the Gothic antagonist. His virtues are great, but they are eclipsed by his madness, his cruelty and his lust for power. When portraying your antagonist, be sure to show both sides of his character. Sure, he may be malicious, but he's also educated, refined and, at times, disturbingly admirable.

The Gothic genre has its share of larger than life female antagonists as well. In some ways, the women seem more villainous than the men. Whereas hunger for power seems almost natural in men, it's strange to see in a woman. While Lady Macbeth predates the Gothic genre by a couple of centuries, she epitomizes the wanton lust for power that characterizes the female antagonist of the Gothic tale. Whereas men use brutality and cruelty to accomplish their ends, Gothic's evil women scheme, seduce and lie their way into positions of power.

Visions

Throughout the Gothic genre, dreams, visions, illusions and the like play an important role. Anytime the novelist wanted to convey information that the character couldn't obtain through more normal means, he could rely on dreams and the like. Readers of Gothic literature were willing to accept almost any sort of strange or wondrous phenomenon, and dreams and visions were just one more means of highlighting the supernatural.

While dreams were the easiest of these phenomena to bring into play, it wasn't unheard of for a character to have a vision after fainting, to have insightful hallucinations after taking opium or to wax oracular during a powerful fever dream after becoming ill or suffering a powerful shock of some sort.

In the case of your chronicle, it's up to your discretion how you want to convey information. Some Merits and Flaws work particularly well with visions of this sort, including Nightmares and Oracular Ability.

A related phenomenon, the omen, also needs to be given its due. Whether you use them as foreshadowing or as a means of giving oblique feedback to the players, omens can add a lot to the story. Just be careful how frequently and how obviously you use them, however, lest they inadvertently become comical. An omen can be anything from a black bird following the characters to a rat bolting from the shadows, spinning counterclockwise three times and then dying at the characters' feet. While an omen can take any form, the general gist of the warning (or the good tidings, if you want to use it that way) should be unmistakable.

Ghosts

No supernatural creature better fits into the Gothic pantheon of literature than the ghost. Even more so than the vampire, the ghost and the ghost story were staples of Gothic literature, and a chronicle told without one seems somehow lacking.

While there are plenty of rules and source materials for ghosts in the *World of Darkness*, you're no more tied to these than you are to the characterization of werewolves in that other game. If you want ghosts to be mindless drones replaying their own deaths endlessly, so be it. Alternatively, if you want ghosts to be powerful malevolent spirits that are out to punish the denizens of the physical world, that works too.

Your best bet with ghosts, however, is to make them subtle. Let them be near figments, little more than hallucinations glimpsed out of the corner of the eye or touched briefly a moment before the character wakes up.

Suggestion: If you have *A Turn of the Screw* at one end of the spectrum and *Poltergeist* at the other end, you'll have an easier time of maintaining the atmosphere of subtle dread if you stay closer to the former than to the latter. Ghost stories by M. R. James or Algernon Blackwood can also provide some inspiration and guidance as to how the Restless Dead may be effectively employed.

Much of the folklore around ghosts can be subtly brought into play here: The presence of ghosts causes rooms to grow colder, the touch of a ghost feels like a current of cold water on the skin, ghosts can communicate only in whispers (if at all), ghosts can't leave the room where they were killed.

Obviously, if one of the characters in your troop has the Medium Merit or the Necromancy Discipline, you'll have carte blanche to make even heavier use of ghosts in your chronicle. Just be careful not to make ghosts such a commonplace occurrence that they lose their ability to elicit fear.

The most important thing to remember is that ghosts must be rendered with a great deal of subtlety. A certain vagueness, an element of mystery, is essential. Too much power over the material world, too obvious a manifestation, and the creature's potential effect in your chronicle is undermined as the ghost goes from being a mysterious agent of fear to being another Storyteller bad guy to be dealt with.

The Summoned Thing

It happens frequently in Gothic fiction that Things are somehow conjured forth that ought not be summoned. Demons and stranger things that should remain outside human experience find themselves called into play by power-hungry mystics who can't resist the temptation to have some great entity do their bidding. It's one of the more enduring Gothic tropes, as effective in *Hellraiser* as it was in Lewis' *The Monk*.

For a *Vampire* story, such summoned things can be particularly appropriate. The Disciplines of Thaumaturgy and Necromancy are perfect for allowing crafty old antagonists access to Things From Beyond. In fact, with a little careful improvising on the rules, it could even be the characters themselves who summon something into being — or who are somehow summoned by an unsuspecting "sorcerer" themselves. This dovetails well with the Victorians' heavy emphasis on the occult, secret societies and spiritualism. It's also the perfect way to give sorcerers a way to terrorize the characters.

It's worth noting that the most effective way to wring as much terror as possible from creatures from beyond is *not to show them*. For as long as you can, and to as great an extent as possible, do not let the players have

a good look at whatever the creature is, whether demon, ghost or something else. Make it afraid of light or transparent or simply too fast to catch more than a glimpse of. Give some hint of what the creature might be like (a weird and disturbing roar, a horribly mutilated victim, an enormous misshapen footprint), and let the players' imaginations do the work for you. Ignorance and uncertainty breed fear, and fear is the name of the game in Gothic storytelling.

There are a number of storylines that could use the Summoned Thing. Most straightforward, an antagonist might summon a creature from the other side to kill the characters before they can interfere in his eldritch plans. Alternatively, the characters might themselves summon something, either out of hubris or out of desperation, and lose control of it. At that point, the characters are forced to deal with their original antagonist as well as the one they brought upon themselves. To heighten the suspense, let the characters know that their sect is sending an investigator of things occult. If the characters don't destroy or banish the thing by the time the investigator arrives, they'll be drawn up on charges of trafficking with forbidden powers. The thing could even have been set loose long ago at the place where the characters have just arrived. It could be the reason that the locale was abandoned in the first place. The thing has been sleeping or quiescent for decades and was forgotten with the passage of time, but with the coterie's arrival, something happens that wakes it up, starting the cycle of horror and tragedy all over again.

The Double

The idea of a dark second self — of a horrible other lurking within us or loosed somehow into the world beyond — is central to the vision of the Gothic genre. Echoes of the self appear in mirrors. Examples of uncanny resemblances and doppelgangers are common in Gothic tales; we see different takes on the device in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Stephenson's *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. While the types of double are largely used in different ways, they can play off each other to create a range of effects in a chronicle. In any case, they make for wicked, visible echoes of the characters that they should find, at the very least, unnerving.

Uncanny Resemblances

While walking through the candlelit gallery of the ancient castle, a character glances up and sees a painting (or bas relief or statue) of himself that had to have been done years before his birth, not to mention his Embrace. What is it doing there? Where did it come from? If it is not the character, then whose image is it?

While not among the stranger events to unfold in a Gothic tale, the uncanny resemblance is one that can bring the characters more completely into the story. In the Gothic novel, the technique was almost overdone, though a good and subtle Storyteller can still pull it off as a weird twist in the chronicle. The big question is whether you want to ultimately explain the remarkable resemblance or if you simply want to leave it as a unpleasant mystery for the players.

Doppelgangers

A doppelganger is a creature that can take on the appearance of whomever it chooses, and it can be the source of a great deal of dread and eeriness in a chronicle. The doppelganger may or may not have any actual connection to the person it resembles. It may resemble one character coincidentally, or it may be able to take on the likenesses of others at will. In the former case, the doppelganger is likely to be very good at causing trouble for the character it resembles, and in the latter, the sense of paranoia that comes from not being certain of someone's identity can be a great technique for inducing dread and horror in your players.

At its simplest, the doppelganger is simply an evil twin of the character, and perhaps, that's as far as you'll want to take it. Maybe the character *did* have a twin who was Embraced by another clan and now strives to complete that which he was unable to accomplish in life: to bring ruin and shame to the sibling he so hated. Be careful with this, as it can smack of artifice if used awkwardly, but it's so central to the genre that we mention it here.

Another possibility is for one of the characters to have a split personality, and while the doppelganger actually uses the character's body, it's another personality directing its actions.

Alternatively, the doppelganger could simply be a talented Tzimisce whose skills at Vicissitude make him very good at assuming the appearances of others.

Automatons

One of the stranger elements from Gothic literature is the presence of the unliving human facsimile: mannequins, life-size dolls, clockwork automatons, golems, moving statues and the like. While these don't necessarily resemble any one individual, unlike the two previous types, what makes them disturbing is their semblance (more specifically, their imprecise semblance) to people. More disturbingly, sometimes, the automatons come to life. The animated creature doesn't necessarily need to be malevolent; in fact, a mannequin that comes to life and "falls in love" with a character is just as disturbing as one that clearly has murder on its mind. The best-known example of the simulacrum brought to life is obviously



Frankenstein's monster, although other examples, like E.T.A. Hoffmann's *The Sandman* or the legend of the golem are worth drawing from as well. The trick here is to focus on the disturbing almost-but-not-quite-human nature of the creature.

The Sublime and the Supernatural

Gothic literature was steeped in strange, supernatural events. The genre's portrayal of the supernatural was probably the main reason that some people read it in the first place. The explanation for why that was so becomes a little complicated, but it's worth repeating here so you can include supernatural events in your chronicle with the proper Gothic mentality.

"Supernatural" can refer either to something ghostly and unexplained (in some ways the very essence of the Gothic tale), or it can refer to something that is above or outside of nature. That latter definition dovetails neatly with another favorite notion of Gothic writers: the sublime. The sublime, essentially, is concerned with feelings of spiritual awe and extremity of emotion. Gothic writers frequently tried to capture the overwhelming, oceanic sensation of being swept away by extraordinarily powerful experiences. The Gothic emphasis on the sublime comes directly out of a book entitled *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which was published in 1757 by Edmund Burke.

The Gothic genre benefited hugely from its audience's hunger for accounts of the supernatural. The Enlightenment, driven as it was to base everything on rationality and pure logic, had effectively stripped mainstream religion of its ability to impress, frighten or inspire. However, it had done no such thing to the stranger, more menacing concepts of the sublime or supernatural. Consequently, many readers of Gothic literature participated in the genre to get their fill of the spiritual, irrational and awe-inspiring feelings that religion could no longer provide.

That said, the whole reason for including the supernatural in your Gothic chronicle is to evoke that same sense of awe, the same experience of the sublime, in your players. The supernatural loses its kick if you invoke it every five minutes. However, if you cultivate a sense of awe and wonder around the supernatural and use it sparingly, then it will carry a good deal more impact when you do bring it to bear in your game.

Inclusion of the supernatural in your chronicle is like cooking with a very potent spice: Give your players only a taste. Otherwise, you'll cloy their palates, and the banquet will come to a tragic and premature end.

The Hegemony of Mystery or the Rapture of the Hidden

Secrecy makes people crazy. The desire to discern a tantalizing secret can drive whole chronicles, especially when the antagonist is strongly motivated to see that secret remain secret.

The Gothic novel was all about the secret, the hidden and the mysterious. In some ways, mystery was the *raison d'être* for the Gothic genre; the Enlightenment had seemingly laid bare the secrets of the world, and readers wanted to retreat into uncertainty, just for a few hours. The Gothic novel gave them all the mysterious goings on they could ask for and then some. Strange, unnamed characters, coming from unknown places for mysterious purposes, were commonplace. They were generally explained by the end of the book, but not always.

When plotting out your chronicle, don't be stingy with secrets. Let the secrets build up one on top of the other to give the characters more to explore. Let the characters themselves have secrets from each other. Mechanically, the Dark Secret Flaw is perfect for this purpose, though more sophisticated troupes can dispense with point-balancing altogether and simply collaborate to make their backstories occlusive.

Very little in a Gothic chronicle should be what it appears. Everything from motivations to societal behavior should have a façade to be seen through. Keep the players in a constant state of doubt. Let them be torn by desire alloyed with disgust or revulsion. While key storyteller characters should be terrible and frightening, they should also evoke a sense of desire, pity or some other unexpected feeling in the characters. Be careful. It takes good storytelling to make such ambiguous characters work, but those are the characters the players will remember long after the chronicle is over.

Secret Societies

Victorian social norms were particularly conservative; everyone was expected to abide by strict social codes, and if one rebelled too visibly against those codes, one's avenues for social interaction would, one by one, dry up. If one's personal code of behavior didn't line up with that of society, however, one could always seek out the company of like-minded others and form a miniature society based on those shared sensibilities. Thus, secret societies thrived throughout the Victorian era. Hellfire clubs, magical orders, mystical cabals, theosophical societies, molly houses, cabalistic fraternities, Fabians, Freemasons, anarchists, Illuminati, cryptopapists and other secret clubs of all description quietly came into

being with no one outside the membership being any the wiser.

And with so many people becoming members in this or that secret society, there was plenty to provide the masses with fodder for paranoia. It was all very well and good to read about the Golden Dawn magical order, but the possibility that the strange young man next door might be a practicing member was disturbing. Another thing the Victorians were very good at was minding each others' business....

The Sects

In your chronicle, two additional secret societies exist with which the characters are likely to be familiar: the Camarilla and the Sabbat.

The Camarilla, in particular, has the feel of an old, moneyed secret society. It likes to play by the rules and fit in. Its membership is, to a large extent, well-to-do and complete with its wily old strategists, its Bohemian artists, its adventurers, its scholars and the like. In any city of significance, Elysium is likely to be held in opulence and luxury, as the favored members of vampiric society meet to curry favor with the prince. It's probable that a city's elders, without even being conscious of doing so, Embraced from the wealthy and privileged classes as a means of safeguarding their own social standing.

The situation would vary for independents. The Giovanni may or may not be present; their money and their smooth manners are as likely to grant them admittance as anti-Italian and anti-Catholic sentiments (in England, anyway) are to keep them out. The Followers of Set might parlay their "pleasing exoticism" into access to a city's social network.

Given the blatant class warfare so predominant at the time, an "alternative Elysium" may have sprung up for those who didn't or couldn't at least put up a façade of normalcy (in most cases, this probably included most of a city's Nosferatu, Malkavians and probably a ragged Eastern European Gangrel or two).

The Sabbat, on the other hand, was probably not as well funded. The split between the shrewd elders and the rank-and-file is probably too vivid to make any sort of society function very smoothly. The Sabbat is more likely to Embrace from the under classes that Marx called the "lumpenproletariat."

Paranoia

Any time it's hard to tell if someone is "one of us" or "one of them," a climate of paranoia is likely to settle in, especially if the consequences for mistaking the latter for the former are severe. The more different and alien *they* are and the better *they* are capable of fitting in, the more



intense the paranoia. If you're not sure what we mean by "climate of paranoia," rent any of the versions of *The Thing* or *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. While not really Gothic, they do illustrate paranoia well.

For the purposes of your chronicle, the more paranoia you can generate, the better. Paranoia is a close relation of dread, and dread is, after all, the Gothic's prevailing mood.

The Spiral Toward Extremes

The Gothic novel was a sort of antidote to the excess of rationality that prevailed in the wake of the Enlightenment. Readers were tired of seeing sensible, sane and safe characters in their literature. Luckily for them, the Gothic novel specialized in showing its readers states of mind outside the norm, and the more luridly, the better. The Gothic novel showed its readers cruelty, wantonness and madness so fascinating that they couldn't look

away. Characters in the Gothic tradition sometimes started out seeming relatively sane, but over the course of the novel, the cracks in their sane veneer would show, and the character would begin an irreversible spiral into insanity. Gothic novels show every possible descent into madness: slow and disturbing (*The Yellow Wallpaper*), fast and violent, even episodic (as in Stephenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*). It was one of the attractions of the genre.

Characters in a **Victorian Age: Vampire** chronicle have vast potential for insanity. The fang-gnashing madness brought on by the Beast, the degeneration evinced by frenzy and Röttschreck and the slow, inevitable loss of Humanity mirror the Gothic conventions beautifully. As Storyteller, it is your job to determine how best to place these incidents of madness to further the story you intend to tell.

Alternative Degeneration Systems

If you're wanting to play up the theme of degeneration in your **Victorian Age: Vampire** chronicle, you may want to consider making it easier to lose Humanity. Be forewarned, however, that this can shorten stories a bit unless you also allow players to earn back Humanity.

Know, however, that madness, while terribly Gothic, can be disruptive to the mood of a story and to the blossoming of your carefully constructed plot. Be aware that it might be preferable to let madness remain a phenomenon largely experienced by Storyteller characters (and, of course, Malkavians).

A word to the Storyteller: Modifying the degeneration system can be a touchy issue, so talk it over with your players first. If you have visions of all the characters plunging into stark lunacy by the chronicle's end and your players want to play a relatively normal game, there could be trouble on the horizon.

- The difficulty of degeneration rolls goes to 9. This is the harshest of the alternatives because it all but assures that characters will likely lose Humanity if they violate their Hierarchy of Sins even a little. On the other hand, it gives the characters powerful motivation to behave with all the propriety of the stiff and stoic Victorians they're portraying.

- A player makes a degeneration check any time the character succumbs to frenzy or Röttschreck. This is another way of emphasizing the Victorians' priority on maintaining control over oneself. In such cases, the Storyteller may want to drop the difficulty of the degeneration roll to 7. Otherwise, characters may be ravening fiends by the end of the prelude.

- As many as five derangements may be taken in place of lost Humanity points, thereby making the characters more "interesting" over the course of the game instead of more overtly bestial. This approach deftly captures the Gothic emphasis on madness. When a player takes a derangement for her character instead of losing Humanity, the Storyteller should pick a suitable derangement, which should be in keeping with the character's personality. If possible, it should also take into consideration whatever act the character committed to earn the derangement in the first place. You may want to think twice about letting Malkavian characters use this alternative. There is such a thing as overkill, even in a genre as gleefully lurid as the Gothic.

- While the Gothic novel was largely a genre of the dark and bizarre, it's not all degeneration and decay. If you're telling a story wherein Humanity is easy to lose, you may also want to consider allowing players to gain Humanity back by doing some great deed or by fighting for some noble ideal (however tragically doomed). The number of Humanity points gained should never outstrip the number lost, but it gives players some respite to constant degeneration.

The Horror of Entrapment

Throughout the Gothic genre, examples of the horror of entrapment populate the narrative. Protagonists are trapped literally (in pits, in catacombs beneath a castle) and metaphorically (trapped into being the concubine for a cruel and noble lord, trapped by circumstances in the ancestral home with a family that slowly becomes insane).

In the case of your players, consider other approaches to entrapment to explore as well.

Trapped in the Jyhad

The players may be pawns to an elder vampire who is, himself, trapped in the Jyhad. While he may be remarkably powerful compared to the characters, he is still trapped by his circumstances, and the moment he tries to escape, the conflict he's been embroiled in for so long will consume him as he tries to free himself. One possible chronicle idea to explore is the notion that a vampire wrapped up in the Jyhad approaches the characters and asks them to protect him from the conflict he's been part of until he can slip into hiding. How do they know he's not just using this as his latest strategic feint? More problematically, can they be sure that they're up to the task (especially if the elder in question had made powerful enemies in the course of his long involvement with the Jyhad)? How could they, as obviously younger Kindred, be effective?

Trapped in Vampirism

For a chronicle with only one or two players, it's possible to deal very intimately with the subject of being trapped in a vampiric existence. The night-to-night horrors of vampirism, the tedium of the static existence, can be played up to bring out the drama and the revulsion of the vampiric condition.

Trapped by the Blood Oath

The sense of loyalty created by the blood bond can be arduous. Any mortal, ghoul or Cainite in such a situation is at a decided disadvantage in making his own choices. A vampire fighting against the blood bond or a cabal of characters trying to find some way of undoing the blood oath of one of their allies can make for an interesting chronicle, especially since the secrets of undoing the blood bond are known only to a select few, who are likely to ask a very steep price for their services.

Nature Disturbed

It should go without saying that only two kinds of weather occur in a Gothic tale: violent storms and heavy, obscuring fog (okay; it's not that reductionist, but these carry the greatest weight in the genre). While these conditions require only a few words to establish at each

session of the chronicle, it makes sense to have the weather impinge on the troupe's awareness at key points in the story. Storms, obviously, are good for establishing a tone of anger or violence, and fog can play an important part if your storyline calls for the characters to get lost.

Other sorts of exotic natural phenomena sometimes show up in Gothic tales: screaming winds that incite madness, sudden whirlpools in large bodies of water, the aurora borealis, meteor storms, earthquakes and the like. The only rule is this: If it heightens the sense that something is wrong to the characters, that nature itself has been disordered by the dark events unfolding in your chronicle — and if it's not *too* over the top — use it.

Dread

Looking at the elements of the Gothic novel is like looking at the symptoms of a disease. The question remains: What is the underlying phenomenon? All of the elements described above were brought to bear for one reason, all of the horror, madness, monstrosity, death, disease, terror, evil and twisted sexuality of the Gothic genre come together to evoke a sense of dread in the reader.

What is dread? It is anticipation's nocturnal twin. Dread is the feeling you get when the worst thing that could happen unfolds right in front of your eyes and there's not a thing you can do about it. It is the sensation you have when you wake up from a nightmare and try to scream, but you can't make a sound. Dread is the feeling you get when your darkest expectations have come to pass and things grow steadily worse.

Dread is like fear but more organic; it is more drawn out and has an element of anticipation to it, as though you've already seen what's going to happen and all that's left is for the horrible, bloody pieces to slip into place. Which they will. Inescapably.

That's the sort of sensation that you, as Storyteller, are trying to impart upon your players. It's a tall order. The natural tendency in a social group is for someone to want to joke around to break the tension, but the point here is that you *want* that tension. In theory, your players do, too. Otherwise, they'd be off playing something else.

So what establishes a mood of dread? Some writers have suggested that nothing is more horrible than to find the unfamiliar when you expect the familiar, and that that is the essence of dread. It may well be, but an ongoing chronicle requires a constant stream of little descriptions and events to fuel the mood you're creating. Almost anything, properly described, can become a source of dread: an antagonist's yellowed teeth, the sickly pallor of a prostitute's face, the sheen of rain on the

cobblestones of a deserted street. Don't waste too much effort on any one detail, or you risk overstating your point, but do let each carefully described detail add its weight to the net effect you're going for: the evocation of dread in your players.

When it comes to describing the source of dread, the Storyteller must tread carefully. A certain vagueness, an element of mystery, is crucial. As long as you hint and suggest and dance around the true horror, the players will be sucked into the mood of dread, but the moment the mystery is laid out for the players, the spell is broken, and the story is likely to be anticlimactic for some time to come.

At the beginning of the chronicle, the Storyteller should allow both players' characters and Storyteller characters to go about their business in whatever fashion is natural for them. The sense of dread should start off as a vague shadow falling over the characters, and as the characters are pulled increasingly deeper into the events of the chronicle, that shadow should grow both darker and come more sharply into focus until, after several sessions, it is the relentless sense of dread that holds center stage.

The Storyteller needs to dole out the extremes of dread frugally. Extremes of emotion can be maintained only for so long, after which the players will become a little jaded regardless of the excellence of your storytelling. After your characters have been on the edge of their seats for 30 minutes or so, let the mood relax a bit — let the players reach a safe haven, or let their antagonist withdraw inexplicably — before upping the stakes again and plunging them more deeply into the dark events of your chronicle. Let the mood build and relax, build and relax, but every subsequent peak of dread should be a little more intense than the one that preceded it. If you do it right, you should have players calling you the next day and congratulating you on running a great game (or complaining that they weren't able to get to sleep afterward, which is high praise in its own right).

Horror and awe evaporate with prolixity. In any good monster movie, the director only teases the audience with hints of the monster (*Alien* is a good example of this). He knows that giving too clear a shot of the monster too early robs the viewer of anticipation, and anticipation makes up the majority of dread. Likewise, the Storyteller should give only vague hints of what the players' characters are up against. The players should have ample opportunity to let their imaginations run wild, and when the time comes to reveal their characters' nemesis, it should still be worse than what they had expected.

A Word on Understatement

A Storyteller never wants to be shrill. Ever. It has the effect of turning even legitimately creepy events into melodrama.

Even when you're describing the most horrible monstrosities, the vilest acts and the most shocking events, it's in your best interest to understate everything. The trick is to let your players in on the fact that you're understating things, however, and they'll follow along and adjust the shrillness knob in their own heads so that they embellish and heighten everything you say, giving it more weight and effect, without you having to endanger your credibility as a Storyteller.

Understatement is one of the Gothic Storyteller's most powerful tools. The note of true terror is most effectively struck with eerie suggestion, with nothing ever being stated directly. This isn't to say that you should be deadpan in your role as Storyteller, only that less is more when you're giving descriptions.

That doesn't necessarily mean that the coterie's foe is physically monstrous. On the contrary, he could be more beautiful than they had expected, but that beauty could have garnered him a widespread cult of followers who report back to their master. One of the players themselves (or one of their alleged followers or allies) could be one of his dupes.

One highly effective technique is to allow the sensations of normal physical repulsions to reinforce supernatural horrors. Certain physical sensations are inherently disturbing — the sensation of being crawled upon by insects, for example. If you can reinforce the characters' experience of supernatural threats with those preprogrammed revulsions, you will have taken the sensation of dread to the next level for your players.

The art of Gothic storytelling lies in the evocation of fear (or one of its many thrilling siblings including, but not limited to, terror, paranoia, anxiety and dread). Evoking mood is, at its simplest, a two-step process of creation and seduction.

The first step involves mapping out the territories you want to explore in your chronicle. As the Storyteller, you are the spider spinning a web of plots, characters, connections and agendas. Determine the backstory and its relevance to the basic plot. What happened in the past that affects the players in the present? Any properly Gothic situation likely has its roots buried somewhere in the distant past. From there, follow the plot threads up

through the present and possibly into the future based on courses of action the characters might take. You are the players' guide through the story; if you try to lead them through it without being familiar with the various twists and turns of your own plot, you'll be so busy wrestling with basic plot mechanics that you'll be too distracted to maintain the mood necessary to transport your players into that other world.

There are pitfalls to running a game of Gothic horror and keeping the sense of dread at a maximum. The greatest of these potential Storyteller traps is melodrama. If you overstate things in an attempt to intensify the mood, you can easily slip out of tense and powerful storytelling into cheesy theatrics. One slip into melodrama and you lose your credibility as a Storyteller, at least temporarily. At the very least, you're likely to lose a great deal of the mood you've worked to create, and you'll have to start building the sense of dread all over again.

The Gothic sense of dread must be cultivated slowly, nurtured carefully if it is to be brought to fruition. Dread will not be rushed. If you're hoping to get your players into the proper mood within the first 15 minutes of gaming, you're probably going too fast. If you've jumped from emotional neutral to high horror in the space of 15 minutes, you've probably left your players several stages back, and what appears thoroughly dread-inducing to you (because you've been planning it for hours or days or weeks) will, in all likelihood, strike your players as overblown and silly. This is where empathy enters the picture. As Storyteller, you are responsible for building the mood, and if, for whatever reason, that isn't happening, you need to discern where your players are in the process and change tactics so that they're following right along with you.

The second step in evoking a mood requires you to lure your players into those daunting lands you just mapped out. Hint by hint, mystery by mystery, entice them deeper into the labyrinth. Help your players stay in character; seduce them bit by bit into shedding their quotidian identities in favor of their troupe personae.

The creation of mood is the all-important element of storytelling because, by session's end, the criterion of success is not the careful construction of plot, but the creation of a given sensation. Discerning players don't judge a story on the Storyteller's intent or on the mechanics of his plot, but by the intensity of the mood he creates. After you've created the setting, the characters and the plot, after the chronicle has been played, your players are the final judges. If, at the end of the session, they enjoyed your storytelling and the frisson of fear you allowed them to feel, all is well. If they did not enjoy your



storytelling, it is pointless to tell them why they ought to have done so.

Paranoia

A more 20th century version of dread, paranoia can do wonders for a chronicle's mood quotient. The Victorian world was the setting for any number of secret societies, from Freemasons to the Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon to various hellfire clubs. In such an environment, it can be hard to say who is playing on whose side. Ideally, at least one player will have some interest in playing a member (or past member) of one of these groups, and while that connection will give the group some insight into the organization, it will also make that player a little more suspicious to his fellows.

Diceless Storytelling

At root, roleplaying games are like the games of make believe we played as kids. Most of us get burnt out on cops and robbers after the third time we shoot our adversary and hear the dreaded reply, "Did not! You missed!" Roleplaying games work around this little problem by using some objective method for determining the outcome of conflicts, dice being the most common.

While dice are a relatively quick way to determine outcomes, they still can become unwieldy, especially during long stretches of combat. Worse, rolling dice can easily ruin an intense moment of storytelling by causing a player (or the Storyteller) to switch from drama mode to system mode, thereby breaking the spell that the troupe had been working together — for a length of time that could be minutes or months — to build. Few gaming experiences are as anticlimactic as building an intense atmosphere or mood only to have it shattered by the phrase "Can you hand me the dice?"

The key issue involved here is trust. The more the players and the Storyteller trust each other not to do something unfair, the more the dice can be left alone and the more free players and Storyteller are to immerse themselves in the unfolding interactive saga.

Victorian Age: Vampire, because of its emphasis on mood, works better as dice rolling decreases. Nothing ruins a carefully crafted sense of dread quite like calculating dice pools and throwing little clattering polyhedrons across the table.

All of these alternatives to the usual dice system have one thing in common: They're intended to make the storytelling experience more complete, with the outcome being that the game is more intense and, therefore, more enjoyable for all involved. If your troupe tries some of these techniques and the results aren't more fun, you can always go back to gaming as usual.

A word of caution: If one (or more) of your players is a rules lawyer who quotes **Vampire: The Masquerade** and its many supplements chapter, page and paragraph, switching to a dice-light or dice-free approach to gaming could prove to be a more difficult (but all the more worthwhile) endeavor. Those folks tend to cling to structure with an almost fanatical zeal, and while they're the ones who will rail against the following systems the loudest, more often than not they're also the ones who will benefit the most from a game based on drama and roleplaying instead of numbers, charts and dice.

Dice-Light

There are a number of techniques for determining outcomes that make relatively little use of dice. Of these, simple comparison of dice pools is the simplest. The basic premise of this approach is that he who has the larger appropriate dice pool wins. To incorporate an element of chance into this (every Goliath has his David, after all, and every daring protagonist needs some hope of overcoming more powerful adversaries), the Storyteller rolls a single 10-sided die from which he determines whether fate has gone as the dice pools would suggest or she has waxed perverse. The Storyteller has full authority in setting the chance number and might adjust the number according to any number of extraneous circumstances (light conditions, the player's attitude or a character's sheer determination) that can be brought into play depending on the needs of the story.

Example: The noble Charles Exeter is fighting the cruel and powerful Duke Vallach. Charles has a Dexterity + Brawl pool of five, while the Duke has a pool of nine. Taking all salient circumstances into account, the Storyteller determines that, under most circumstances, Charles would prevail against the odds only if the Storyteller were to roll a nine or a ten. However, the Duke is a truly wicked monster, and since the sun has but recently set, he's at a slight disadvantage, so the Storyteller judges that Charles will prevail on a roll of eight, nine or ten. While they're not the greatest odds, they give Charles a 50 percent greater likelihood of winning than if he had waited until later in the evening to make his bold move against the old fiend.

This method can be used on a punch-by-punch approach, or it can be used to determine the outcome of the entire battle, and the Storyteller's narration can fill in the blanks between the beginning of the conflict and its outcome.

Dice-Free

If you have a good bond with your players, you can also try playing a purely narrative game. This is just like those old games of cops and robbers, except the Storyteller has complete control over outcomes. Most chronicles edge in this direction over time, but it's a big

deal to dispense with dice entirely. While the completely diceless approach makes for the most smoothly flowing games, the players have to trust the Storyteller implicitly. Not only do they need to trust her to be impartial, but they have to trust that she knows their characters' abilities well enough she can accurately gage a character's relative chances of success in any given conflict.

While it's the most complete immersion in the story, completely dice-free Storytelling has drawbacks of its own. Storytellers frequently hesitate to take extreme action (killing a character, for example) without having dice to back them up for fear of angering a player. Also, without an element of randomness, it's possible for the Storyteller to get too predictable.

The solution to the first problem is for the Storyteller to give the players ample warnings from the start that characters may die. Following that, characters who are getting in over their heads should be given at least one chance to make a bolt to safety; if they don't take the out when it's given to them, the outcome of the battle falls on their heads.

Predictability should never become a problem. If the players notice that the Storyteller is doing something in a predictable fashion, they simply need to mention it to the Storyteller, who can take steps to keep the chronicle fresh.

That Which Is not Spoken of in Proper Society

As taboo as sex and its polymorphous perverse variants were in the Victorian era, its more lurid aspects were mainstays of the Gothic novel, and therefore, it potentially has a place in your **Victorian Age: Vampire** chronicle, if you (and your players) approach the subject with the requisite maturity.

It is an understatement to say that the Victorians were prudish. Sex didn't just offend them, it *horrified* them. The primal, earthy drive to couple was more than just an affront to the civil, sterile, polite world that the Victorians were trying to create, it was perceived as an insidious threat to the moral order. If morality were not policed, the Victorians seem to have believed, then nothing less than civilization itself was in peril.

Intercourse was viewed as little more than a woman's unpleasant duty to her husband, the price paid for creating a family, and proper Victorians of both sexes did everything they could to avoid enjoying the experience. Even masturbation was seen as a moral evil, a form of "self-pollution" that, if practiced with any frequency, would lead to the degeneration and ultimate ruin of a person's character.



Unsurprisingly then, homosexuality was beyond the pale for most Victorians to even think about, despite the booming trade done by male brothels called "molly houses." The 1895 trial of Oscar Wilde had a profound and chilling effect on the novels and plays seen by Victorians. Wilde had long been one of England's most popular and beloved writers, but after he was convicted of committing acts of "gross indecency" with a number of young men, he was sentenced to two years of hard labor in Reading Gaol. The experience was so devastating that it effectively destroyed him; bankrupt and with his reputation destroyed and his health shattered, Wilde died not long after completing his sentence, at the age of 46.

Various writers of the time, including Wilde, had included subtly homoerotic elements in their writing, but after his conviction, even subtle references to "the love that dare not speak its name" were henceforth considered utterly out of bounds. If the foremost man of letters of his day couldn't get away with such things, then no one else cared to try.

While a Viennese physician named Sigmund Freud would soon be effecting a sea change in how Victorians both perceived and portrayed sexuality, the period in which **Victorian Age: Vampire** is set has yet to see Freud's profound influence.

Perverts

On the surface, the Victorians were one of the most sex-panicked societies the world has ever seen. Given that outlook, it's peculiar then (if wholly unsurprising), that prostitution and pornography were so ubiquitous and lucrative throughout the Victorian era.

In actuality — and despite public appearances — Victorians were no less sexual than modern Americans. On the contrary, they were probably more so; they simply did a better job of keeping it a dirty little secret. But the secret was still a poorly hidden one, particularly by Victorian gentlemen who spent enough on prostitutes of both sexes to bankroll an entire social stratum (albeit a base one).

The Gothic novel not only contained copious hetero- and homosexuality (or the suggestion thereof), it featured sexuality's more lurid variants, the most common being incest, though bondage, sadomasochism and necrophilia are also touched upon in various tales and novels of the genre. The portrayals of these subjects ranged from subtle suggestion to thinly disguised pornography — and the Victorians ate them up. Sexuality, particularly fringe sexuality, was one means of making contact with the sublime, that feeling of gaining spiritual transcendence through extreme feeling.

What the Gothic genre did not contain were portrayals of pure or healthy sexuality. Readers of Gothic works didn't want simple vanilla, they wanted stranger flavors: bitter chocolate, exotic fruit and licorice twist. Sex in the Gothic novel was always an appetite, an addiction, a crime, a perversion or a means of controlling or debasing another, and given the nature of vampires, that's the role it's likely to play in your chronicle as well. Since this is a game about vampires, it should be stressed that lust is a type of hunger, and hunger, especially ravenous, immortal hunger, can make individuals do... questionable things.

Disclaimer

This section does not advocate the running of deviant, perverse and bizarre sexually charged vampire chronicles, it simply tells you the role the Gothic novel played in the Victorian era and how to properly introduce such content into your own chronicle if you're so inclined. If mom, the wife or some other squeamish type happens to lurk by the kitchen door or creep into the basement while you're telling a story and hears you describing the vile way that that Vorlasch the creepy Nosferatu feeds from the femoral arteries of little orphan girls, don't blame us.

Besides, if you're that lax about security, it's your own damned fault.

If you choose to use them, disturbing erotic undertones, like most of the bizarre elements in a Gothic chronicle, should start out so subtle that they are easily missed: a hungry glance, a too-friendly handshake or a vague sensation of being followed. As the chronicle progresses, the pursuer may become more suggestive or even aggressive, and somewhere deep in the heart of the pursued, a tiny bud of terror should begin to bloom. The full intensity of the pursuer's hunger should slowly come into play, and the characters can then determine how to proceed. This formula can be disturbing enough if the pursuer is a stranger and the pursued is a member of the coterie, but things become creepier still if it is a coterie member stalking some victim with whom she is obsessed (necessitating an intervention by her associates) or if the pursuer and pursued are both members of the same coterie (a situation that has to be handled carefully by players and Storyteller alike, but which can yield some amazing roleplaying). While it's not exactly Gothic, the film *9 1/2 Weeks* shows one way of dealing with a slowly intensifying sexual connection that goes disturbingly awry.

Old-fashioned stalking and sexual deviance on their own can be disturbing enough, but in a genre that highlights the lurid, even those things can be intensified. Add to that the mundane techniques of blackmail or extortion and your story takes a darker twist yet. But when the supernatural comes into play, it grows even darker still. A blood bond or Presence Disciplines can blur the line between consensual sex and rape to disturbing effect. The "victim" may not even be aware that he is being victimized, nor may he want the victimization to stop. In fact, a properly subjugated thrall will fight to the death for the privilege of being victimized in whatever vile, painful, debased way to which his domitor has conditioned him... and therein lie the seeds of horror.

Deviant sexuality can add an intimate, visceral feel to a Gothic chronicle that would be hard to get otherwise. That said, there's an effective way to include the sexual element in your game and many, many wrong ways.

Following are some things to take into consideration if your game has a pronounced sexual bent.

It's not for everyone — The first requisite element for a game featuring pronounced eroticism is mature players. Choose players who can deal intelligently and maturely with the scenarios you present to them. The time and effort you put into creating a setting and cultivating a mood of growing dread will be for naught if, at a key, sexually charged dramatic moment, your players start snickering like 14-year-olds telling fart jokes.

Give the material its due — Likewise, it's your job as Storyteller to present the material in a way that doesn't make light of the subject matter and *invite* snickers from players. If you're going for laughs, you're probably playing the wrong game. One obvious guideline: Don't fall prey to stereotyped portrayals. You want to portray characters, not caricatures. Using a buxom German sadist named Ilsa or making your gay character a fey, lisping, effeminate stereotype detracts from your chronicle and undermines the mood you're trying to generate. If the sexually unhinged characters in your chronicle are indistinguishable from any other character — initially, at least — then so much the better. Obvious freaks of nature certainly make effective and frightening antagonists, but it's far more disturbing when the monsters look just like everybody else.

Don't pander — Don't incorporate lurid sexuality into your story just for the sheer titillation of it. If weaving a thread of dangerous sexuality into your chronicle reinforces the sense of looming dread and strengthens the game, that's excellent, and you should continue to do so. On the other hand, if it doesn't add significantly to the game, you may want to think about

leaving it out altogether, especially if it's distracting you or the players from the story's more important dramatic characters or events.

Be sensitive to your players — It should go without saying that you will want to be extraordinarily aware of what's going on with your players if you choose to include overt sexuality in your game. Empathy for your players is crucial if you're dealing with highly charged and potentially disturbing subject matter. Most experienced players of White Wolf games are either mature or jaded enough that they're not likely to be offended easily, but remember to take your players' sensibilities into account at all times. A new, young or more sensitive player might not be ready to deal with roleplaying a darkly erotic scenario (like the one in the prelude fiction, for example). If that means tempering your material to suit your players (or picking players mature enough to deal with your material), so be it. It is the Storyteller's place to entertain, to enthrall, to transport his players to a place outside of their own lives and — possibly — to push the envelope of his players' comfort zone just a bit. It is *not* the Storyteller's place to offend or seriously freak out his players. The point of storytelling games is to entertain the players, not to traumatize them.

If you handle the elements carefully, you can give your players the same disturbingly intimate deviant thrills provided to the Victorian readers of Gothic fiction, and your legend as a Storyteller will grow. Handle the subject matter poorly, however, and your players will rebel, and you'll be stuck with a scarlet letter P for Pervert.

Avoiding the Supernatural Trap

Elements of the supernatural figured in the Gothic novel as a kind of highlight, a connection to more intense spiritual sensibilities that the Enlightenment, with its unrelenting emphasis on rationality, had all but purged from both religion and daily life. Not only had the Enlightenment explained away the old superstitions, it had explained away God and spirituality right along with them, and the human mind is bored by a world lacking mystery. As portrayed in the Gothic novel, the supernatural was a connection to the sublime, that extreme state of sensation that exists entirely beyond the bounds of daily life. As such, the supernatural was a sacred, heady and, above all, rare phenomenon in most Gothic writing. Like gilt on a painting, the supernatural was a precious pigment frugally applied.

Ideally, the same ought to be the case in your Victorian **Vampire** chronicle. Even though the characters, as vampires, are themselves supernatural, the Gothic mood is heightened most by recognizing that fact and

making spare and strategic use of other, more blatantly supernatural elements.

While *Victorian Age: Vampire* mimics the Gothic genre, the translation of *Vampire* into the Gothic idiom is imperfect inasmuch as the Gothic hero or (more commonly) heroine was quite human and, consequently, prone to the thousand natural frailties and shocks that flesh is heir to. In *Victorian Age: Vampire*, the protagonists are powerful, if tormented, creatures of the night. To capture the sense of dread of the Gothic novel, it's necessary to downplay somewhat the characters' supernatural nature and abilities in order to put them not in the role of supernaturally powerful creatures of nightmares, but in the role of tragic, flawed and — very possibly — doomed protagonists. If their supernatural abilities make them more than mortal, the Beast makes them much less. Somewhere, somehow, you will need to help the players strike a comfortable balance between those poles.

A similar balance needs to be struck by the Storyteller. Of course, the Storyteller should acknowledge that the characters are vampires, giving due to all that entails — it's one of the cornerstones of the game, after all — but don't dwell unduly on it or let them become inured to the supernatural by using it to explain away every mysterious occurrence. A manifestation of the supernatural should be eerie, mysterious and unfathomable, and it should leave the characters changed in some way. If their eyebrows don't go up a bit, if you don't detect a hint of "Wow!" in their faces, you may be doing something wrong.

Admittedly, this is a high wire act for Storytellers. Much of the game's horror comes from the fact that the characters *are* monsters and, therefore, uncanny creatures themselves. But overuse of the supernatural elements of the World of Darkness will cause your players to grow jaded. There can be no sense of dark wonder if every other foe your characters face calls on weird supernatural abilities. Not every threat will be a brilliant and devastatingly powerful mage, a 5th-generation past master of Necromancy or a similar grand threat. Such chronicles easily fall prey to the Monster of the Week syndrome that plagues too many Vampire games already. Threats of that caliber should provide the characters' primary foil, the one they face at the chronicle's climax — but for most of the story, he'll likely be operating behind the scenes through mortal agencies or, possibly, through ghouls. Only eventually, when such measures become obviously necessary, will he work through other vampires or similar monsters. It is in the best interest of your chronicle to avoid escalating power levels unnecessarily. Some stories, like some Gothic novels (such as

Charles Palliser's *The Unburied*), only contain the appearance of supernatural events, and everything is neatly explained by the end. Then again, depending on what you want from your game, supernatural forces *may be* behind every mysterious turn of events, but unless they're really foolish supernatural forces, you can bet they won't be doing their own dirty work. If your chronicle calls for a haven to be torched, a greedy thug-for-hire or an easily duped chronic arsonist with a hair-trigger firebug derangement make far more practical and less traceable enemies than Frater Conflirago bani House Flambeau or Severus Strick, the wayward Tremere elder. If you start at the top, you'll have nowhere else to go, and your chronicle will be short-lived.

That said, toward the end of the game, preferably at the climax, when the characters' primary supernatural foe does make an appearance, play it for all it's worth. Tell the players what they see in minute detail, give vivid sensory descriptions to pull them into the scene, and let your well-chosen words convey the majesty, the horror, the raw power of the supernatural forces that their enemy has unleashed upon them. Speak slowly and clearly, allowing every word that falls from your lips to have impact. Every cheap manifestation of the supernatural that you've withheld from your players throughout the course of the chronicle should be paid to them with generous interest at that point. It's the payoff, the money shot, the grand finale. As a general rule, you're allowed one, maybe one-and-a-half scenes like this in any given chronicle, so make it count.

If you've been careful throughout your chronicle to dole out the supernatural events frugally, your players' appreciation of such things will not have been dulled, and the full-scale barrage of the climactic scene will blow them away. A week or two after the chronicle has wrapped up, you'll still have players talking about the dramatic final scene and, better yet, asking when you plan to run another chronicle.

Pacing

Although it's been mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, it bears repeating: The gothic mood of dread has to be built unnerving detail by unnerving detail. Quick, simple, linear plots are somewhat unsatisfying in this kind of chronicle. The Gothic chronicle should be rich and complex, and complexity takes time. That said, the Storyteller needs to determine the pace according to what is taking place in the story. While the chronicle as a whole may (and should) unfold at an unhurried pace, certain scenes need to occur at a faster, perhaps even torrid, rate. The Storyteller who tells his or her tale at one speed will, in time, lull even the most enthusiastic

player. The following section suggests both ways of using the slow pace of the Gothic to your advantage and ways of varying the pace. A Storyteller will do well to remember that, in gaming, as in life, variety adds spice.

The Ritualistic Evocation of Dread

Dread is not an easily summoned god. Its sinister presence will not be rushed. Simply calling its name and willing it to manifest will not invoke it. On the contrary, evoking dread requires time, empathy with the players and, most importantly, skillful Storytelling. And, perhaps, a little sacrifice....

Time is the key element in establishing dread. The Storyteller must be able to bring her players to a boil slowly. Various encounters in the course of a long and carefully plotted chronicle should have the players fearful of (but hungry for) the climax of the story — while hoping it will be put off just a little longer because the game is so enjoyable. The Storyteller has to learn to tease players with small, fearful details and odd but seemingly inconsequential events resulting in a sense of simultaneous foreboding and anticipation. Ambivalence, after all, is classically Gothic.

On the whole, the Gothic genre is not a high-octane car chase, not a rock video and not montage of quick-edit cut scenes. Its power comes, in part, from its methodical, unhurried pacing. The slow build-up gives the players time to slip increasingly deeper into the spell woven by the Storyteller and for the characters to be pulled more deeply into the complex and disturbing events of the story. It is crucial, however, that a slowly unfolding story doesn't mean a boring game.

Theme and Variation

If you could freeze music, it would be architecture, and the Storyteller creating a powerful chronicle, Gothic or otherwise, is both architect and composer in the plotting of a chronicle and contractor and conductor once play has begun.

Before you even talk to your players about "this chronicle I've been thinking about running," you should design the chronicle — the basic plot structure, the antagonists' personalities, the relative timing of key events and so on. Once you have determined those elements, bear in mind that theme and variations on that theme are the heartbeat of art. When you're plotting out your game, choose a theme, a unifying thread that runs throughout the chronicle, and in each different scene, allow your theme to play out in a slightly different way. And each different scene should proceed at a different

pace. Alternate frenetic scenes with quiet, deliberate ones, mundane occurrences with bizarre ones, and be sure to vary your variations as well because the moment you become predictable, your players will start to become bored. Different events require different pacing. A gathering of primogen has a different pace than a secret gathering of anarchists seeking to overthrow a prince; a meeting with a mortal witch-hunter is likely to have staccato pacing, while a conversation with a noted occultist is probably going to move a bit more slowly and evenly. And all the while, the scenes themselves will begin to change more quickly as the chronicle nears its climax at the moment of its greatest conflict.

The fundamentals of good pacing also suggest that you linger on important details longer than inconsequential ones. Some details (the curious design on the antagonist's calling card, the mysterious wailing that occasionally slices through the thick fog around the castle, the feral glint in a stranger's eye) have an important function in the chronicle's plot, and those details should be emphasized over details that simply enhance the mood or setting. Likewise, tedious, mechanical or oft-repeated action (travel between two proximal havens, for example) can be glossed over ("You make your way through the roiling fog to the glassworks unnoticed."), while action that is key to the unfolding plot should be described in some detail.

While the chronicle should unfold slowly, no single scene or gaming session should ever *feel* slow to the players. A good Storyteller uses varied pacing to his advantage. Between the major plot developments (which tend to unfold more quickly and dramatically), give the characters time to regroup, to interact with each other, to take note of and compare small, disturbing details and to more fully explore the rich world crafted by the Storyteller. While the players are likely to do their own thing as a part of the interaction and roleplaying, the responsibility for keeping the game interesting falls to the Storyteller. Pacing, like every other part of roleplaying, is a cooperative effort between players and Storyteller. Obviously, the Storyteller accelerates the pacing as the players approach each significant event in the unfolding plot. At the peak of a confrontation, the pacing is likely to be so fast that the Storyteller can barely talk fast enough to convey everything that's taking place. Likewise, just after the major encounters, there will be a lull when players can relax, get something to drink and focus on character development.



Chapter Six: Antagonists

*Malice is like a game of poker or tennis;
you don't play it with anyone who is mani-
festly inferior to you.*
— *Hilde Spiel*

*Not every shadow flitting through the
moon-drenched night nor every horror lurking
in dark alleys and dim courtyards thirsts for
blood. More than fellow vampires threaten
the Kindred, and Final Death can
take an infinite number of shapes.*

*This chapter presents a number of foils,
antagonists and bizarre characters the Kin-
dred might encounter (much to their chagrin)
in their nighttime excursions. The templates
provided represent archetypes only; Story-
tellers should alter them to fit the needs of
any particular character. Rules for making
full use of these templates can be found in the
antagonists chapter of the *Vampire: The
Masquerade* core book (beginning on p.
290). Many antagonists' powers
(werewolves' healing and "gnosis," for ex-
ample) are detailed there.*

Witch-Hunters

In these nights of Her Majesty's reign, the kine are relatively frequent foes of the Kindred. As science clashes with the occult on the battlefield of public opinion, many people still choose to believe in creatures beyond scientific understanding. The Masquerade, though vital to the survival of the Kindred, is less all-encompassing than it will one night become. Mortals learn of the vampires at times, no matter Kindred desires to the contrary, and many of them set forth to rid their world of these Godforsaken creatures.

Some rare witch-hunters possess, in addition to those abilities presented in the following templates, a True Faith score; most such hunters have a Humanity score of 9 or 10.

The Doctor/Scientist

A man of education and learning, erudite and meticulous, the doctor hardly fits anyone's image of a dangerous hunter of monsters. The doctor is far more effective than he appears, however, for this is a man of great knowledge, knowledge he devotes to the destruction of the supernatural. The doctor is a man of science, but it is a science about which he is passionate in the extreme. Some hunters of this sort are drawn into the world of the Kindred through an attack on themselves or their loved ones; others discover the existence of the vampires and seek their deaths for moral and philosophical reasons. Common to both types, however, is the simple, unshakable knowledge that this is a world of science and of physical laws — and that the Kindred have no place within it.

The Doctor/Scientist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Empathy 2, Enigmas 2, Etiquette 1, Expression 1, Firearms 1, Investigation 1, Leadership 2, Linguistics (Latin) 1, Medicine 3, Melee 1, Occult 2, Ride 1, Science 2, Subterfuge 1

Humanity: 8, **Willpower:** 7

Equipment: Long coat, sliver-headed walking stick, doctor's bag (with stakes, silver bullets and holy wafers along with standard tools), small pistol

The Priest

If one obvious foil for the Kindred walks among the ranks of the kine, it would have to be the priest. As a community leader, it falls within his responsibilities to protect his flock from dangers, both physical and spiritual. As a religious figure, he must, by his very nature, stand against the forces of Satan and the supernatural. Priests who learn of the vampires in their midst frequently try to destroy them, though the rare man of God seeks only to save the souls of these poor damned creatures. Regardless of their chosen course, however, no true man of God can stand by and do nothing once he's learned of the horrors that lurk in the night.

The Priest

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3





Abilities: Academics (Theology) 4, Alertness 1, Dodge 1, Empathy 2, Enigmas 2, Etiquette 1, Investigation 1, Leadership 2, Linguistics (Latin) 1, Melee 1, Occult 2, Performance 1, Politics 1

Humanity: 7 to 10, **Willpower:** 7

Equipment: Clerical vestments (or comparable religious attire), crucifix or other holy symbol (hiding a silver blade), Bible or other holy book, stake, holy water

Note: The priest is slightly more likely than other witch-hunters to possess a True Faith score, although this is still extraordinarily rare. Such individuals usually have a Humanity score of 9 or higher.

The Tea-Parlor Mystic

Not everyone drawn into the world of the occult — and the Kindred — poses an obvious danger. Not all of them are even prepared when they attain what they thought they wanted. Particularly in London's West End, but to a lesser extent all across Europe and America, men and women with nothing better to do gather with friends around tea leaves and Ouija boards and attempt to summon up spirits and learn mystic secrets. When one of these dabblers finds herself exposed to Kindred society, she most likely ends up as someone's tea-time snack — but on occasion, such people survive their ignorance

and begin to learn what's *really* out there. While such individuals are rarely formidable in their own right, most of them are drawn from the ranks of society's well-to-do — and any vampire who doesn't see the power inherent in high society has clearly not been paying attention. Remember as well that these people know others equally fascinated by the supernatural, and some of them are far more dangerous.

The Tea-Parlor Mystic

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 1, Crafts 1, Empathy 3, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Finance 2, Firearms 1, Occult 1, Performance 2

Humanity: 8, **Willpower:** 5

Equipment: "Mystical" amulets (with no real power), crystal ball, Ouija board, stylish clothing, walking stick or parasol, mailing address of a *real* witch-hunter



The Vengeful Relative

Even the Kindred can make mistakes, and sometimes, those mistakes come back to haunt them — perhaps even to slay them. Maybe, the vengeful relative has a family member or a loved one slaughtered by a vampire, or perhaps, she seeks revenge for a loved one who was Embraced. Whatever the case, this hunter is not about to let go her vendetta, and what she lacks in knowledge of her chosen prey, she more than makes up for in bloody-minded determination. She has no interest in studying the Kindred, no interest in saving souls — she wants to kill and kill again, until she has finally poured out the last of her hatred, her grief, her boundless rage. She has not been doing this long enough to know that such single-mindedness will be the end of her, but perhaps that's all right because there are always more Kindred....

The Vengeful Relative

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Firearms 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Melee 1, Ride 1, Security 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Humanity: 5 to 8 (depending on what horrors she has committed in her quest for revenge), **Willpower:** 8



CHAPTER SIX

Equipment: Pistol, large knife, crucifix, notebook and pencil, locket with photograph of lost loved one

The Inquisition

Not every witch-hunter stands alone. The Society of Leopold, the “proper” name of the Inquisition, is an organization zealously devoted to the extermination of the Kindred (and other supernatural creatures as well). No longer officially affiliated with the Catholic Church (even the Pope remains ignorant of its continued existence), the Inquisition still fights the forces of evil in the name of God. Some Inquisitors abuse their positions, seeing in the Kindred not a Hell-spawned foe of all mankind, but an opportunity to be exploited for their ambitions. Most Inquisitors, however, see their violence as a necessary evil; they protect all men and women from the depredations of the Children of Caine. These Inquisitors shed tears over the loss of life, they pray for forgiveness for the stains on their souls, yet, they venture forth the next night to do it again because it must be done.

Although a movement is currently underway to consolidate the organization into larger groups, the Inquisition's current incarnation takes the form of numerous small cells hidden throughout Europe and the United States. Each masquerades as some sort of social organization — a gentlemen's club, a neighborhood beautification committee, even a “hellfire club” designed to attract those with an interest in the occult (no sense in hunting when one can invite the prey in for tea). Through contacts in all levels of society, from chimney sweeps to wealthy matrons to members of Parliament, these cells seek out Kindred activity in their assigned regions. Some seek to stamp it out immediately, while others prefer to watch in hopes of netting even bigger fish; all are exceedingly dangerous. They are “merely” mortal, but they are resourceful, and the educated vampire will remember that Inquisitors rarely operate alone, for those who forget rarely have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

Inquisitor

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics (Theology) 2, Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Expression 2, Leadership 3, Melee 3, Occult 3, Ride 2, Stealth 2

Humanity: 5 to 10, **Willpower:** 9

Equipment: Sword cane, rosary, crucifix, stakes, Bible, box of matches

Note: The Inquisitor is slightly more likely than other witch-hunters to possess a True Faith score, though this is still extraordinarily rare.



The Arcanum

Some organizations hunt the Kindred for purposes other than destruction. The Arcanum is a relatively young organization, founded only within the past decade for the purpose of studying the Kindred (and it is only its specific focus on the Kindred and other creatures of the supernatural, as opposed to a more general occult interest, that qualifies it as a "witch-hunter" organization rather than a "secret society" as defined below). The Arcanum seeks to understand; only then, when that nigh-unattainable goal is finally reached, will it decide whether it has any part in battling these creatures. As such, agents of the Arcanum rarely serve as direct antagonists to the Kindred; rather, they are a nuisance and a hindrance, often appearing at unwelcome times. Further, they are competitors, for they seek many of the same fragments of lost lore that the Kindred themselves strive to locate. Their information is, to date, only partially accurate, though they learn more with every night that passes, and the night may come when the Arcanum knows more about the Kindred than the Kindred themselves.

Rather than forming their own associations, the Arcanum often places agents in the upper echelons of preexisting organizations. Several members of the governing board of a university, for instance, or the curators of a museum might, in fact, constitute a hidden Arcanum cell. Access to a library or some other repository of knowledge is the only prerequisite; thus, nearly any educational or cultural establishment could well hide these watchers within its ranks.



Arcanum Scholar

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 4, Dodge 1, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Investigation 3, Leadership 2, Linguistics 2, Melee 1, Occult 4, Ride 1, Science 3

Humanity: 8, **Willpower:** 7

Equipment: Extensive research library on the supernatural, spyglass, notepad, various occult paraphernalia, horse-drawn carriage with curtained windows

Agents of the Queen

Queen Victoria herself remains as ignorant as most of England's citizens regarding the true nature of the world around her. Not so her physician, Doctor William Gull. Dr. Gull, while old and physically weak, possesses a keen intellect, a determination to protect the Royal Family and a substantial amount of knowledge of the Kindred. With the help of select others in both the Royal Family and Parliament, Dr. Gull has put together a small but elite association of agents gathered from Scotland Yard, the British army and even the criminal element whose stated and sworn purpose is to defend Her Majesty, the Royal Family and England (in that order) from

the threat posed by the supernatural. To date, they have accomplished little, save to prevent several attempts by overly ambitious Kindred to enthrall Queen Victoria herself. Slowly, however, they make their way into the darkened streets of London and, from there, throughout the Empire. It is only a matter of time before the Kindred become aware of their existence.

Although far less knowledgeable about the Kindred than the Arcanum or even the Inquisition, Gull's agents know enough to pose a real danger to any vampire they consider an enemy. With sufficient time and with the resources of the Crown behind them, there is precious little they cannot accomplish.

Her Majesty's Agents

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 1 (sometimes), Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Enigmas 1, Etiquette 1 (sometimes), Firearms 3, Investigation 2 to 4, Melee 2, Occult 1, Politics 2, Ride 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2 to 4

Humanity: 6 to 8, **Willpower:** 7

Equipment: Sword cane, pistol, other hidden weaponry of various sorts, magnifying glass, writ with the royal seal for access to police files and other restricted information, cyanide capsule in case of capture by monsters



Magicians and Witches

Some are wizened old men playing with alchemical formulae and ancient chants, who are guided by the position of the stars. Others are the last pagan remnants of faiths long dead, gathering herbs and the blood of animals to work their wills. Still others are men and women who never studied a day in their lives, unassuming sorts who simply discovered that they are gifted — or cursed — with abilities far beyond the norm.

For nearly as long as man has existed, some have learned how to shape the world around them without physical tools, through force of will alone. And for all that time, the Kindred have feared them. No predator, to be sure, likes the idea that its prey may grow an unexpected set of teeth.

In tonight's environment of flourishing occult societies and mystic fascinations, it should prove no surprise that witches and warlocks of all sorts appear with somewhat more frequency than they have of late. In the "civilized" nations of the world, they most often (though certainly not always!) take the form of the astrologer, the Hermetic wizard — with a scientist's approach to the non-scientific. Most normal people do not believe they exist, and those who do are either fascinated with them, already swept up in the popular perception of the occult, or terrified of them, convinced that they bear powers imbued by Lucifer himself. This is particularly true in the wilds of Scotland, Ireland and other regions where the old religions were once strong and where the magics practiced tonight most closely resemble traditional "witchcraft." In other regions, particularly in Africa and India, witches are viewed with far more tolerance, often accepted as spiritual guides, shamans or yogis.

The templates that follow are not divided by "type" of magic; that is, the Storyteller will not find one set of abilities for yogis, another for astrologers and so forth. These differences in style are more accurately portrayed by a Storyteller's choice of Thaumaturgy rituals and paths for an individual character.

Apprentice

Usually but not always younger mages, apprentices are individuals who, through whatever channels or rituals appeal to them, have but recently embarked upon their eldritch journey. An apprentice is a warlock who has learned but a handful of spells from a musty and ancient tome, a shaman who knows how to speak to the



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weakest spirits only or a worker of will who has just come into his unasked-for power. Many of these nascent wizards find themselves swept up in some occult society, ever seeking for greater knowledge. In some ways, these can be more dangerous than their more powerful counterparts, for wizards of true power are wise and clever enough to stay subtle, to remain unnoticed by those around them. These younger and more rash magicians are far more likely to resort to blatant spells of death and fiery destruction, if they happen to know such incantations.

Apprentice

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 2, Melee 2, Occult 4, Ride 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Equivalent Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dominate 2, Presence 1, Protean 1, Thaumaturgy 3 (one or two paths)

Blood Pool: 10, **Willpower:** 5

Equipment: Pistol, knife, ritual implements (blade, candles, robes, chalice, herbs, etc.), mystic talismans (which may or may not have any power)

High Wizard

Masters of the ancient ways, shapers of the world around them, these mages are the Merlins, the John Dees, the true magicians of the world. Capable of striking down foes from afar, favored (or so it seems) by lady luck herself, a true wizard is perhaps one of the greatest threats a vampire could hope — or hope not! — to face. Only their mortality and human frailties, failings that all resourceful Kindred know how to exploit, render them vulnerable. Some of these greatest of warlocks learn their magics from ancient tomes the likes of which younger wizards could never comprehend, but most seem to have a natural affinity for will-working. Unlike their younger brethren, experienced mages rarely waste their time with cults and secret societies; they have far better things to do than to seek “secrets” where all and sundry can find them or to bilk gullible aristocrats out of their money. If a vampire finds himself crossing paths with such a wizard, she can be certain that she is caught up in something far larger and more deadly than is immediately apparent.

High Wizard

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics 5, Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Enigmas 5, Firearms 1, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Leadership 2, Linguistics 4, Medicine 2, Occult 5, Ride 1, Subterfuge 3

Equivalent Disciplines: Auspex 4, Chimerstry 3, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Presence 3, Thaumaturgy 5 (multiple paths and rituals)

Blood Pool: 12, **Willpower:** 9

Equipment: Sanctuary with substantial occult library, ritual implements (blade, candles, robes, chalice, herbs, etc.), mystic talismans, sword cane, stylish clothing

Meddler in Forces He Cannot Understand

Some seekers of eldritch lore are obsessed (or foolish) enough to delve into realms of mystery that are beyond human comprehension. Whether these truly are secrets that man was not meant to know or whether they simply involve alien ways of thinking beyond the capability of a rational mind, the end result is normally a gibbering lunatic who can hardly feed or clean himself, let alone perform sorcery. Some, however, go mad in other, more subtle ways, ways that enable them to maintain their powers — usually in service to something else,



something that dwells in the shadowy corners where the real and the unreal intersect. Many of these entities change their servants in physical ways as well as mental, and some of these unfortunate souls no longer resemble anything even remotely human. Their goals are typically unknowable, but whatever they seek, they have few compunctions about destroying whatever might get in their way.

Meddler in Forces He Cannot Understand

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0 to 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Enigmas 4, Intimidation 5, Investigation 4, Law 2, Medicine 2, Melee 4, Occult 5, Science 3, Stealth 3

Equivalent Disciplines: Auspex 4, Dominate 2, Fortitude 4, Potence 3, Presence 2, Thaumaturgy 4 (multiple paths and rituals)

Blood Pool: 10 (poisonous — one aggravated health level per blood point consumed), **Willpower:** 8

Equipment: Scraps of clothing, any useful tools that might have been on him when he was human.

Note: Some meddlers, as stated above, no longer even appear human; like Nosferatu, their Appearance can never rise above zero. Although the meddler is intelligent, he is also utterly mad and may lash out violently at the slightest provocation. His Fortitude score is due to an alteration in his flesh, not to any use of magic.

Werewolves

The Kindred have reasons far beyond financial gain and political influence for encouraging the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of cities. Every tree cut down to make way for a road, every yard of grass paved over to expand a neighborhood, is one more victory in the ancient war between the vampires and the werewolves.

It is a war the Kindred can win no other way. Lupines are ravenous, feral killing machines; a lone vampire who confronts a werewolf faces a terrible mauling or worse. Even undying creatures that feed on the blood of humanity have nightmares — and more often than not, those nightmares have bloodshot eyes, thick fur and razor-sharp claws.

Those few Kindred who have made a practice of studying the werewolves (and survived) have found certain differences amongst the Lupines. The werewolves seem to have a clan structure not entirely unlike that of



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the Kindred, but one based along ethnic and national lines. The black-furred Lupines of Scandinavia are true berserkers, lusting only for the rush of battle. The slightly smaller creatures of the Irish countryside and Scottish fens are mystics, preferring magically enhanced ambushes to frontal assaults. Those inhabiting the New World are more spiritual still, sharing many of their practices with the native tribesmen. Perhaps most bizarre are the Lupines of India, who still consider themselves part of the country's caste structure — and who will not, even in the midst of battle frenzy, lay a claw upon a member of either the Pariah (untouchable) or Brahmin (priestly) castes, unless they are, themselves, of similar caste. (They even appear to have a mystic gift that allows them to determine a person's — or vampire's — caste.)

There would appear to be a political structure to these werewolf clans as well. That is, more often than not, members of some specific tribes appear to outrank members of others. Determining whether this represents a specific, universal hierarchy or whether it merely suggests tendencies (comparable to the notion that the Ventrue usually, but not always, hold more positions of authority than the Brujah) would require far more intensive and exhaustive study than any Kindred can safely conduct with present techniques.

Also like the Kindred, Lupines appear to gain in mystic might as they age, and the young tend to defer to the old when it comes to leadership of werewolf packs.

Young Beast

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Animal Ken 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Crafts 2, Dodge 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Leadership 1, Linguistics 1, Melee 2, Occult 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Equivalent Disciplines: Celerity 3, Potence 1, Protean 4

Humanity: 7, **Willpower:** 5, **Gnosis:** 4

Mature Werewolf

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Animal Ken 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Crafts 2, Dodge 2, Expression 1, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Leadership 1, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1, Melee 3, Occult 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Equivalent Disciplines: Celerity 4, Potence 2, Protean 4

Humanity: 6, **Willpower:** 7, **Gnosis:** 6

Elder Lupine

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Animal Ken 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Crafts 2, Dodge 4, Expression 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 4, Investigation 2, Leadership 4, Linguistics 1, Medicine 1, Melee 5, Occult 4, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Equivalent Disciplines: Celerity 5, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 3, Potence 3, Protean 4, one other Discipline at 4 (shamans may include Thaumaturgy in their repertoire)

Humanity: 5, **Willpower:** 9, **Gnosis:** 8

Fae

For all the growth of science in recent years, this is still a world of fancy and superstition. In parts of the world not terribly far from the industrial complex belching clouds of soot, people still leave saucers of milk on the doorstep, avoid rings of toadstools in the deep woods or even frighten their children into proper behavior by telling them "the goblins will take you." Most of the time, stray cats drink the milk, the toadstools are nothing but fungus, and the children continue screaming their misbegotten heads off.

In places where the old ways have not faded and banal science is not yet the order of the day, however, the fae still lurk just beyond the sight of man.

They are not the tiny winged sprites of children's tales, these fae. Although they are less than once they were, these are creatures of legend, of power. They are rarely involved in Byzantine schemes, such as those for which wizards (or the Kindred themselves) are known. Unlike the Lupines, they bear no special grudge against the undead (though they seem to find the presence of the Kindred moderately unpleasant). Many of them are consummate and incorrigible rogues, however, and they are all extremely possessive. What is theirs is theirs — be it a forest glade, a crossroads, a house or the family that dwells therein — and they take it amiss should anyone, vampire or mortal, encroach upon their demesne. It is in these fashions, either as the victim of deadly "games" or as an accidental poacher in their territory, that the Kindred normally encounter the fae. Wise vampires within a faerie's territory pay heed to the native superstitions, leaving offerings for the creatures as do the kine. This can grate on the pride of an arrogant vampire, but the first time she awakens at noon to find that she has been moved to a room with an open window is usually

sufficient to convince her to respect the fae as they demand.

The Trickster

Most tricksters dwell in the wilds along roadways, preferring a natural environment and an open road to the confines of any one community (although some do indeed make lengthy stops in particular communities, enjoying the sight of mortals dashing about trying to find items the fae have hidden and trying to fix tools the fae have broken). These are the most playful of the fae, and they will often let a traveler pass unharmed if he shows a sense of humor about their numerous pranks and shenanigans. Some are particularly fascinated by skillful storytelling and will refrain from tormenting those who

spin a good yarn. Others, however, prefer to take mortals (and even vampires) who catch their fancy away with them, to places beyond mortal ken. These enchanters are the most dangerous of trickster fae, for their beauty and their grace are both unnatural and inescapable. Their victims vanish, enraptured, into the dense woods, never to be seen again by the world they have left behind.

Fae Trickster

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 6, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Animal Ken 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 5, Occult 2, Performance 3, Security 2, Seduction 5, Stealth 5, Subterfuge 4



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Equivalent Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Chimerstry 3, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 4, Presence 4, Protean 4

Blood Pool: 10, **Willpower:** 6, **Glamour:** 6

The Guardian

Helpful and protective of those under their charge, these fae select a particular village, home or family with whom to dwell. They often perform helpful tasks around the house, mending shoes, cleaning rooms and the like. More importantly, they guard those under their charge from hostile forces, driving forth angry spirits, wandering ghosts and even hungry vampires. Strangely, any house with a resident guardian fae is protected from the Kindred, even if the faerie is not currently about; as in the old legends, a vampire cannot enter such a dwelling without being invited by a resident of the home. Although they prefer to frighten off invaders through the use of magics and illusion, these fae have been known to physically attack creatures that directly threaten their wards.

These fae are not inherently nice or kind, despite their protective nature; as with all fae, guardians expect to be respected and rewarded for their efforts. These guardians protect their charges only so long as the mortals dwelling within show them the proper respect

(leaving offerings of food and milk, offering prayers of thanks and so forth). A guardian who is ignored or treated with disrespect by its family may become a nightmare (see below) and take out its wrath upon those who spurned it.

Guardian

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 5, Animal Ken 2, Brawl 3, Crafts 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Melee 3, Security 5, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 4

Equivalent Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 2, Chimerstry 3, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 6 (can hide inanimate objects and even small houses), Presence 3

Blood Pool: 10, **Willpower:** 8, **Glamour:** 8

Nightmare

Whereas tricksters are merely wild, nightmares are actively malicious. These are the fae who curse entire families with ill luck, steal misbehaving children away in the night or leave babies dead in their cradles for the tiniest imagined slights of their parents. Some are large, hulking creatures who cause great damage to families and



homes alike; these "brutes" prefer direct violence against those who anger them. Other, more subtle nightmares prefer stealth and secrecy (and it is they who slink in through chimney flues to smother infants); these "creepers" are less hardy than their more violent counterparts, but far more clever.

Fae of other types who are unduly angered by the mortals around them may become, or at least act like, nightmares with little warning.

Nightmare

Attributes: Strength 3/5, Dexterity 5/3, Stamina 3/4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 4/2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Animal Ken 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 2/4, Dodge 3, Enigmas 2, Intimidate 3, Investigation 2, Melee 3, Performance 1, Security 3, Stealth 5/2, Subterfuge 5

Equivalent Disciplines: Celerity 3/1, Chimerstry 3, Dominate 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 4, Potence 1/3, Presence 2

Blood Pool: 10, **Willpower:** 7, **Glamour:** 6

Note: Numbers before a slash indicate a creeper; those after a slash indicate a brute.

Ghosts

The Kindred are not the only creatures to have cheated death. The ghosts of the deceased still wander earthly shores, seeking to fulfill some driving need that they were unable to achieve in life. They are creatures of passion, of heightened emotion, and they are, almost to the last, desperate, willing to do whatever they must to achieve their final rest.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for any material being to permanently destroy a ghost. The surest way to eliminate a haunting spirit is to either resolve or destroy whatever lingering issues bind it to the mortal world. Most ghosts are linked to a specific person, place, family or item (though some have several such links) and find it much easier to manifest near and to affect the environment around these "fettters." Only the very rare ghost, one bound by a purpose that knows no boundaries, has no difficulty operating anywhere.

Some cultures, considered primitive by the "enlightened" Victorian Englishman, honor the spirits of their dead, entreating them for aid and serving to complete whatever tasks they left unresolved. In most cultures, however, ghosts are viewed

as unnatural, a blight upon the world, an offense against the laws of God. Some ghosts are benign — or at least not actively hostile — but to the Victorian mindset, most are vile, vicious creatures, determined to cause the greatest possible suffering to those who still possess the gifts of breath and flesh.

The Poltergeist

This is perhaps the most common sort of spirit a mortal or a vampire is likely to encounter. Fortunately, it is also one of the least dangerous. Although most are hostile to the living, their ability to harm others is limited to simple illusion, hiding important items and to hurling objects about the room. Such behavior is frightening, yes, and can be deadly if the proper items are cast about, but poltergeists lack the power of other, more dangerous spirits. Some Kindred theorize that poltergeists represent ghosts whose passions are just barely strong enough to hold them from death or else those spirits who have been deceased but a short while and have not yet reached their full potential. Poltergeists rarely communicate with the living, so determining what binds one to the physical world can be difficult. Fortunately, they are relatively easy to banish or control with Necromancy, Thaumaturgy or other sorceries.



Poltergeist

Attributes: Strength 0/2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 1, Alertness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 1, Melee 1, Occult 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Equivalent Disciplines: Auspex 2, Chimerstry 2, Dementation 2, Dominate 1, Thaumaturgy 3 (Movement of the Mind only)

Willpower: 5, **Passion Pool:** 5

Driven Shade

The driven shade does not necessarily seek to cause harm to those mortals who cross her path; she simply desires to accomplish her goals in as expedient a manner as possible. Some have returned from death to complete their lives' pursuits. Others seek to find some item, to protect a loved one or to seek revenge on those who harmed them. These shades, who often require living hands to advance their agendas, are fond of possessing mortals (or even Kindred). They may not intend any harm to their unwilling hosts, but the shades rarely make an effort to unravel any compromising positions in which they have left their victims once they have departed. Although these wraiths are capable of causing great harm to those who would thwart their purposes and often intend bloody violence toward those who wronged them, their focused aggression marks them as very different beings from their murderous brethren (see below). Kindred, of course, are unnatural creatures who all too often bring about the untimely death of their victims; more than a few driven shades wander the world with the murder of vampires foremost in their minds.

Driven Shade

Attributes: Strength 0/3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 2 to 5, Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 3, Enigmas 4, Intimidation 3, Investigation 5, Law 2, Linguistics 1, Melee 2, Occult 3, Politics 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3, plus 2 to 5 additional dots based on the wraith's specific purpose

Equivalent Disciplines: Auspex 2, Chimerstry 2, Dementation 3, Dominate 5, Presence 2, Thaumaturgy 4 (Movement of the Mind only), Vicissitude 3

Willpower: 9, **Passion Pool:** 10

Murderous Spectre

Perhaps they were evil men and women when yet they lived, or perhaps the torments they have faced in their afterlives have driven them mad. Whatever made them what they are, these vicious ghosts now seek to cause pain, suffering and death to the living above and beyond any other goals. Some prefer more direct forms of physical torment, using solid objects as would a poltergeist (or even manifesting physically) to slash flesh and break bone. Others prefer more subtle tortures, tormenting their victims with awful hallucinations and creeping madness. Although they are somewhat less focused than their objective-driven counterparts, they possess more than enough hate and power to make their chosen victims suffer horribly. Those slain or driven to suicide by a murderous spectre often rise as similar ghosts, damned to haunt the world as they themselves were haunted until the ghost that slew them is laid to rest.





Murderous Spectre

Attributes: Strength 0/4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 0 to 2, Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 4, Medicine 0 to 2, Melee 3, Occult 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Equivalent Disciplines: Auspex 2, Chimerstry 1-3 and 5 (not 4), Dementation 4, Obfuscate 3, Obtenebration 3, Presence 2, Protean 2, Thaumaturgy 3 (Lure of Flames, Movement of the Mind), Vicissitude 4

Willpower: 7, **Passion Pool:** 9

Secret Societies

Not every hidden organization is related to the Inquisition; not every secret society cares about the Kindred. Most such organizations, from the Freemasons down to the high society social clubs, are far more interested in obtaining either political power or occult knowledge (or, quite often, both). Although these societies do not focus on vampires, they have certainly run afoul of Kindred schemes (or have seen Kindred run afoul of theirs) more than once. While these organizations occasionally claim wizards within their ranks, the vast majority of members are normal mortals, made dangerous by their wealth, political clout and eldritch lore, but not by any supernatural power. Storytellers can use The Doctor/Scientist and the Arcanum Scholar templates to represent most members of such organizations.

Freemasons

Originally an order of stonecutters, the Masons have allowed other wealthy and powerful men to join them since the 17th century. They are officially a Christian order, yet their ceremonies involve oaths and prayers to multiple pagan deities (such as Isis, Egyptian goddess of things mystical). The Masons claim to be a social club, and they do indeed participate in many charitable programs and society benefits. Within their ranks, however, are individuals affluent and well connected enough to steer the course of governments. Many prominent politicians and leaders are members, and while some are interested only in

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worldly power, others use the Masons' great stores of ancient lore and worldwide connections to bolster their knowledge of the occult. Some Kindred are members of the order, but the Camarilla still has reason to fear the Freemasons; should they consolidate enough to do so, the Masons might well have the clout to take entire cities from Kindred influence and place them under the Masons' own aegis. Any Kindred seeking to obtain influence in Great Britain, Western Europe or the United States will almost certainly have to deal with members of the Freemasons at some point during his efforts.

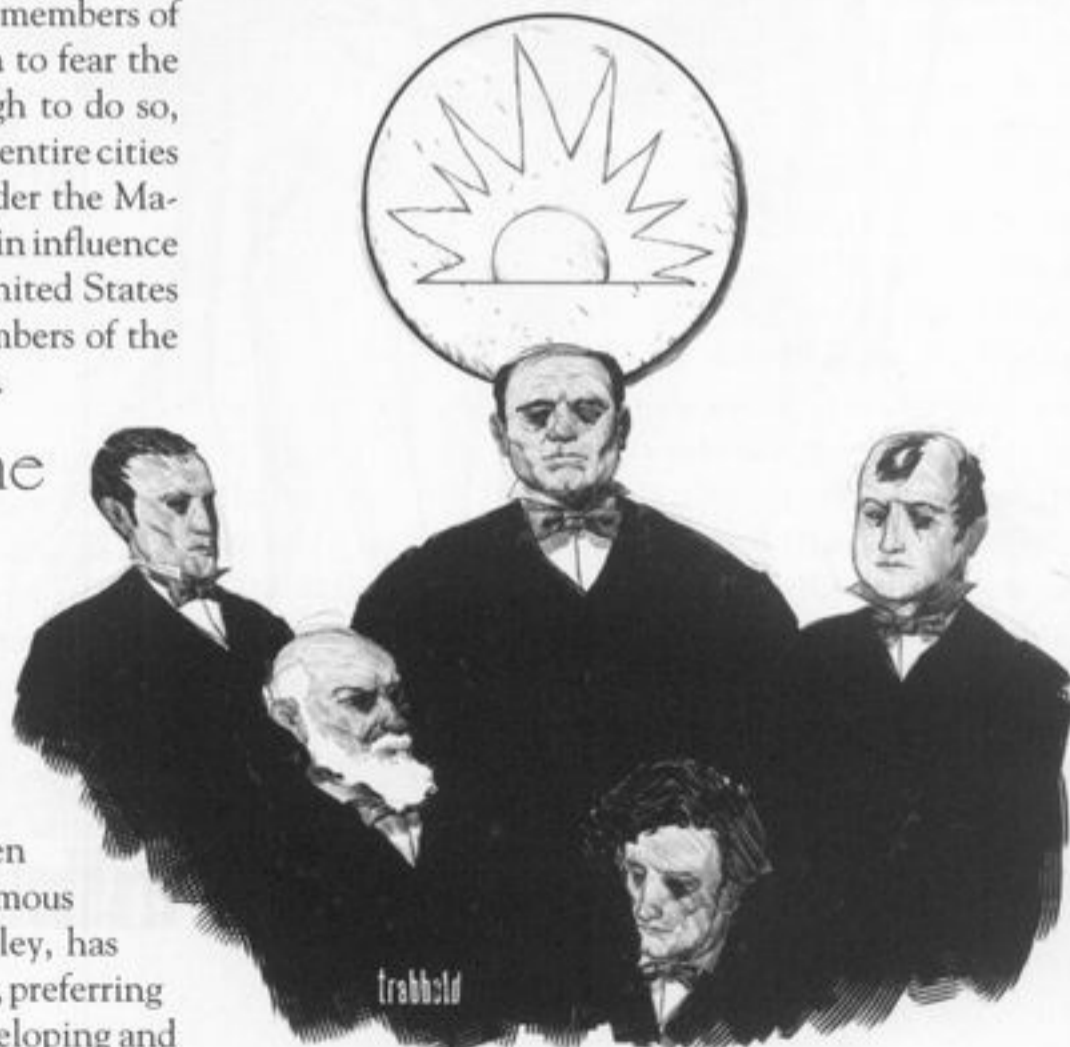
The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

This is an organization in its infancy at this time, having just split from the ranks of the English Rosicrucian Society (historically in the year 1897, though the setting assumes a prior split, so as to better be able to use the group in stories). The Golden Dawn, which will one day claim the most famous occultist of the modern era, Aleister Crowley, has little interest in worldly or political concerns, preferring instead to focus exclusively on learning, developing and

disseminating occult knowledge (to its members only, of course). Despite the youth of the organization, it already possesses a surprising amount of lore, though it hardly compares to older organizations such as the Arcanum. Much of this lore was copied or "borrowed" from the Freemasons, as many members of the Golden Dawn are also Masons. The Golden Dawn knows precious little about the Kindred — only a scant few members even know such creatures exist — but its members would surely love the opportunity to question or study a real "live" vampire.

The Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon

Already a rarity in that it is native to the United States, the Weeping Moon has only just begun to establish its presence in Queen Victoria's England. On the surface, the Weeping Moon appears to be just another occult society, similar in some respects to the Golden Dawn. It even holds power in many growing cities of the American West, where members can be found on governing boards, on city councils and in any and all imaginable positions of affluence and authority. In England, however, its presence is far more subdued; only a single large chapter, led by a "Revealer of Mysteries" named Tobias Lane, yet operates in the "Old World." Here, it does not hold sway over local communities, nor is it well known to the public as a charitable community





represented either by adding Thaumaturgy to The Doctor/Scientist or the Arcanum Scholar templates or by the use of the Apprentice witch template.

Others

Some horrors of the era simply do not lend themselves to easy definitions and templates. Not everything in the world obeys the same laws as do the Kindred, and not even the wisest Nosferatu lorekeeper or Tremere sage can truly understand the darkest mysteries of the night.

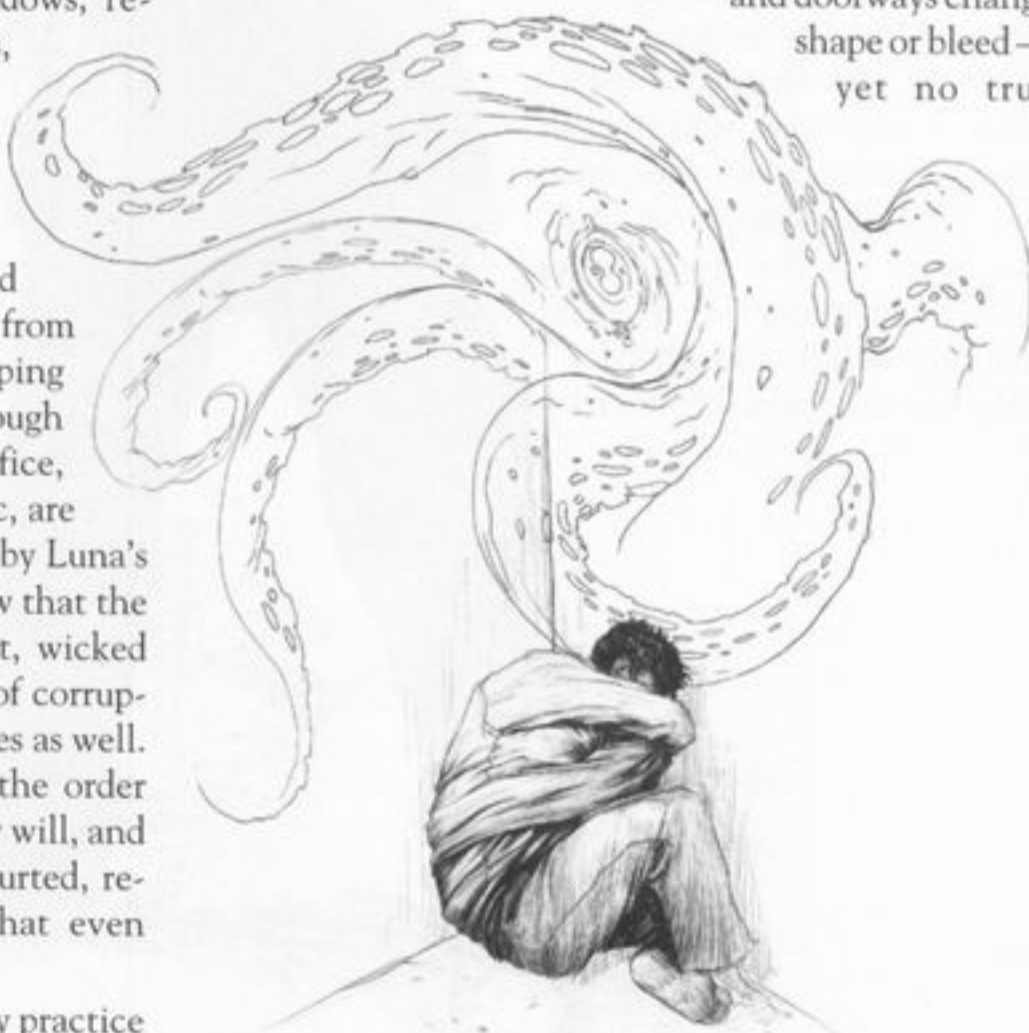
Madness Incarnate

Despite the growth of psychology and rational thought, the superstitious Victorian mind sees madness as a contagion, a creeping horror with an identity of its own beyond the fractured minds of those who suffer from it. Should many of the insane be gathered in one space, such as an asylum, or should a single lunatic languish in torment for years on end in some isolated manor, kept separate from calming influence of rational society, that madness can no longer be contained. It seeps into the very walls, the grounds around it, and the world twists. The effects of such a corruption in an area can vary. Some houses appear to be haunted — items change place, phantasms stalk the halls, walls and doorways change shape or bleed — yet no true

organization. Instead, it operates in the shadows, recruiting members from other occult societies, men and women who have moved beyond the “limited teachings” of their current groups.

It is its members’ focus on Luna herself — the moon — as their guiding spirit, whom they believe will one day descend to Earth and purify the human race, that distinguishes them from their brethren. Some members of the Weeping Moon truly believe that their rites, even though many are depraved ceremonies of bloody sacrifice, orgiastic rituals and workings of darkest magic, are for the good of mankind, who will be blessed by Luna’s eventual manifestation on Earth. Others know that the sect serves horrible creatures of vilest aspect, wicked spirits and their master, an unearthly power of corruption that bears some connection to the Lupines as well. They are subtle, seeking slow expansion of the order rather than bloody murder — but expand they will, and any Kindred who encounter them will be courted, recruited, destroyed or enslaved by powers that even vampires cannot comprehend.

Many members of the Enlightened Society practice a form of spirit magic called Saturnal. These can be



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restless spirit is present. In others, those who enter the area begin to mentally and emotionally break down, as the madness latches onto them as a new and better host. Little can be done to avoid the ravages of such a place, except to escape the grounds and flee to safety — often far more difficult than it sounds.

In some instances, disease, like madness, can seep into the very fabric of the world; a truly hideous ailment might even puppeteer its victims like a possessing spirit, seeking only to spread itself far and wide....

The Serial Killer

Jack the Ripper may have been the first, but now, he has opened a door through which evil will forever flow. Madmen stalk the night, slaying at will, slaying — apparently — at random. Whether this comes from an insanity that simply was not observed in ages gone or whether something in the Zeitgeist of the Industrial Age has birthed a new and murderous spirit upon the world, this slaughterer of innocents is no longer a thing unheard of, but a reality. Although few Kindred care much for the victims of such a killer, a nighttime stalker bears too much in common with their own hunting patterns for comfort. Many Kindred would prefer to hunt down and stop a serial killer themselves rather than let a frightened populace draw any

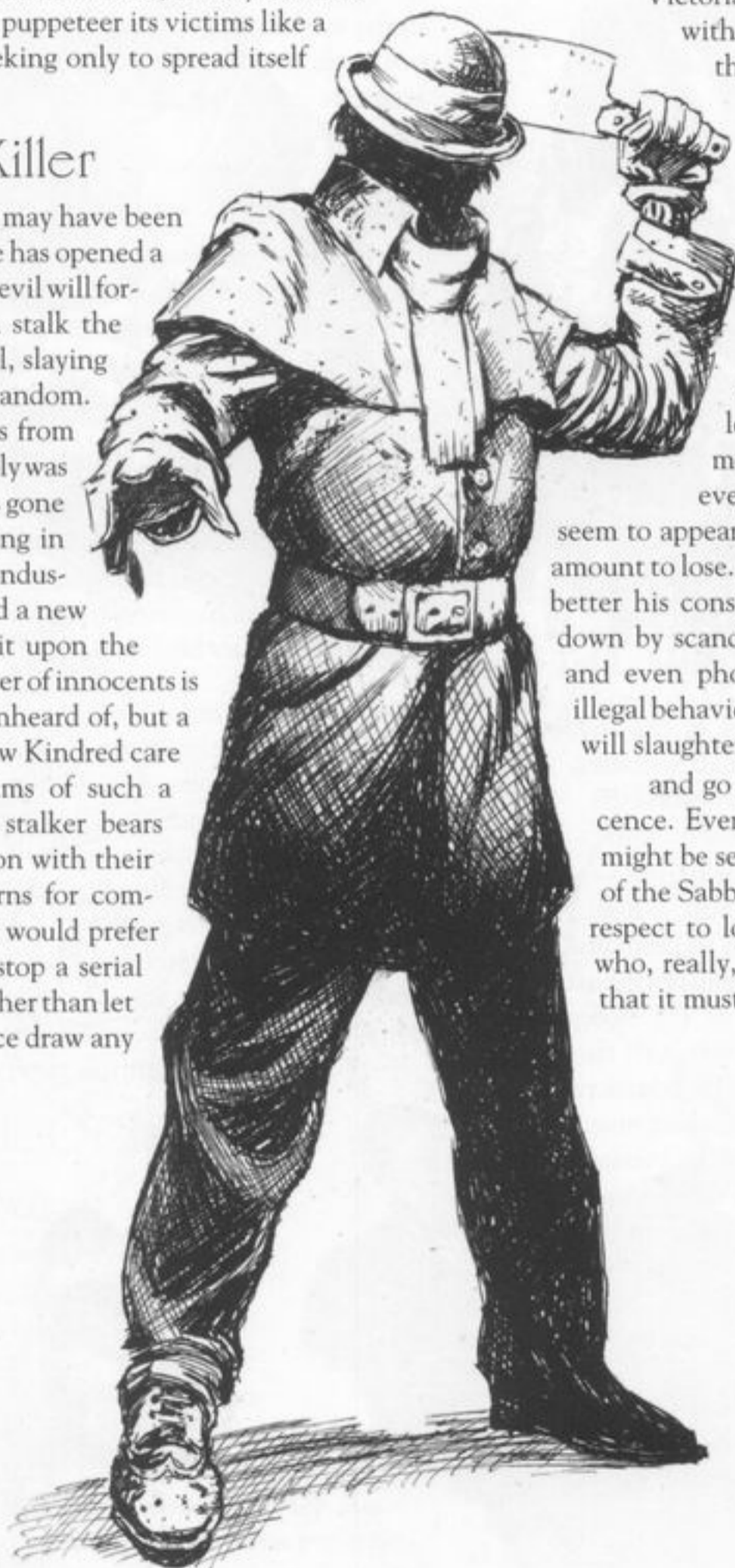
conclusions about the perpetrator. Even the Kindred cannot easily track down a clever murderer, however, and a well armed and intelligent killer can prove a threat even to the undead, especially one who seems to have his own source of knowledge about vampires themselves....

Evil Twin

Victorian literature shows a fascination with the concept of evil twins, and this fascination is mirrored — only rarely, but with drastic consequences — in the real world of mortal and Kindred interaction. These “twins” may truly be long-lost siblings seeking vengeance for imagined slights. They may represent some sort of spiritual doppelganger, birthed as an outlet for the victim’s darkest and most deeply repressed desires. Wherever they come from, these “twins”

seem to appear only for those with the greatest amount to lose. A political figure truly seeking to better his constituents will suddenly be struck down by scandal, with numerous eyewitnesses and even photographs to prove his lewd or illegal behavior. A respected member of society will slaughter a rival in broad daylight

and go to the gibbet swearing his innocence. Even a favored child of the prince might be seen meeting in secret with agents of the Sabbat. Anyone with both power and respect to lose is a potential victim — and who, really, would ever believe their claims that it must have been their “evil twin?”





Afterword

The book before you is a labor of love. Almost all books are, of course, and certainly all *Vampire* books are, but this one in particular stands as an example of a project conceived in a developer's mind and sold with enthusiasm to a group of managers who caught the excitement by exposure. Why hadn't this been done years ago? I don't know, but in a way, I'm glad because it gave me a chance to do it now.

Putting together a historical setting for a storytelling game is actually more difficult than it seems. The setting needs to be different enough from the modern setting to capture player's interest, but it also needs to retain that core spark of whatever it was that made the initial game so cool. Such being the case, *Victorian Age: Vampire* probably leans more to the Storyteller's side than the player's immediately, and by that, I mean that I hope people will think, "I want to tell *Vampire* stories in the lurid gaslight era" rather than "I wonder what Level Six of Bloushitupus did during the close of the nineteenth century." Those latter people will probably be in for a disappointment here, as there simply aren't a whole lot of mechanics in here — hell, there's not even a weapons list (though those of you who enjoy such things will take comfort in the fact that the forthcoming *Victorian Age Companion* has some of such quality crunchy bits within).

No, unabashedly, this book is all about the setting. It's a fellow volume to **Vampire**, not a whole-cloth replacement, and that made many of the content decisions. Careful readers will have noticed the seeming abundance of information on the independent clans, for example, in comparison to the smaller amount of information on the clans belonging to sects. That's for two reasons. First, the Gothic nights are a period when the world wasn't so cosmopolitan or (ugh) politically correct as it is now — those independent clans shine as examples of Kindred exoticism that takes on a different timber than it does in the jaded modern nights. Second, those independent clans willingly exclude themselves from the greatness (ahem) of the sects themselves. Indeed, sect is almost as important as clan during the Victorian era, which itself is almost as important as the simple state of being Kindred or Cainite. Quite a departure from modern **Vampire**'s sensibilities, to be sure, but it was an era of secret societies and I wanted to make sure that the writers imposed a bit more institutionalism on the sects than they have in the modern nights.

That's just one example of the stylized world my passel of writers and I have put before you. You'll see many others — the geography chapter of a **Vampire** book being narrated by a ghost; conspiracy theories (as opposed to actual conspiracies); potent witches and other threats for the Kindred to watch out for. By its nature, **Vampire** is a very self-sufficient — almost self-absorbed — game, because the Kindred themselves are that way. The Victorian era, however, simply won't allow them to be so insular, as the world belongs to Britain and so does everything in it. It is not so strange, then, to find the staples of the era's gothic fiction interacting with our own proprietary protagonists and antagonists.

Visual imagery alone can carry a Victorian story, and many of the tropes and concepts that just don't work in the modern nights (or do, with an inordinate amount of suspension of disbelief) have their heyday during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Capes and cloaks, sword-canes, top hats and theater gloves are the very costume of the literary vampire, but the nature of the Masquerade during the modern nights makes individuals clothed in such garments veritable magnets for suspicion at best and the Inquisition at worst. In the setting of **Victorian Age: Vampire**, however, they're the predominating style, so a dapper Lick need not worry that his sartorial flair might be attracting a perilous kind of attention. Any number of affectations made illegal or outstanding in the modern nights fit seamlessly with the gothic literary genre as well as the Victorian cultural norm: opium, absinthe, the Ripper hidden behind a veil

of fog, a Golden Dawn sorcerer conjuring "immortality." Yes; everything I bitch about being inappropriate or a blatant threat to Kindred existence in the Final Nights is fair game during Victoria's reign.

Of course, that brings us back to the beginning. That's why we tackled another historical setting. We wanted to tell stories in a different idiom, with different themes, and using different plot elements and set dressing than we could otherwise.

I think it's succeeded quite well. All the good stuff that makes a story perfect for **Vampire** is still there, and the change of setting gives us a whole new palate of other good stuff to work with, too.

Such being the case, the work of the writers and developer is done. We've had a great time putting the world together, but now it's time to turn the creative reins over to you and your troupe. We've built some plots and schemes, filled in some blanks so that a Storyteller wishing to undertake a chronicle in this most vampiric of all time periods won't have to make things up whole cloth. What remains is that spark of life (or unlife, perhaps) that makes the tale worth the telling. You've got the cast and crew, set and soundstage. It's time for me to shut the hell up and let you commence to storytelling.

Before I do — I know, I know; shut up already! — I would like to make a few acknowledgements. I want to profusely thank the writers, without whom this book wouldn't exist, or might exist in a less functional fashion. Our art director and artists also deserve special mention, for taking what could have easily been a phoned-in performance and bringing the brooding menace of the Empire to eye-popping reality. The managers and department heads as well have at least my thanks, for giving us the go-ahead on the project and turning us loose to make of it what we would. Most importantly, though, I want to thank you — that's you, the person who bought this book and has settled in to tell your own stories or just for a read. You're the one who makes this all worthwhile, and thanks for being with us.

Regards,

Justin

14 July 2002



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VICTORIAN AGE VAMPIRE

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
DEMEANOR:
CONCEPT:

GENERATION:
SIRE:
CLAN:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength_____●○○○○
Dexterity_____●○○○○
Stamina_____●○○○○

SOCIAL

Charisma_____●○○○○○
Manipulation_____●○○○○○
Appearance_____●○○○○○

MENTAL

Perception_____●○○○○
Intelligence_____●○○○○
Wits_____●○○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness	_____	00000
Athletics	_____	00000
Brawl	_____	00000
Dodge	_____	00000
Empathy	_____	00000
Expression	_____	00000
Intimidation	_____	00000
Leadership	_____	00000
Streetwise	_____	00000
Subterfuge	_____	00000

SKILLS

Animal Ken	00000
Crafts	00000
Etiquette	00000
Firearms	00000
Melee	00000
Performance	00000
Ride	00000
Security	00000
Stealth	00000
Survival	00000

KNOWLEDGE &

Academics_____	00000
Enigmas_____	00000
Finance_____	00000
Investigation_____	00000
Law_____	00000
Linguistics_____	00000
Medicine_____	00000
Occult_____	00000
Politics_____	00000
Science_____	00000

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUND

_____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000

DISCIPLINES

_____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000

VIRTUES

Conscience/Conviction ●○○○○

Self-Control/Instinct__●○○○○

Courage ●○○○○

- MERITS/FLAWS

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

• HUMANITY/PATH •

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

WILLPOWER

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

BLOOD POOL

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

-HEALTH

Bruised		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated		<input type="checkbox"/>

WEAKNESS

OTHER TRAITS

[illegible]

RITUALS

[illegible]

EXPERIENCE

TOTAL: _____
TOTAL SPENT: _____
Spent on: _____

DERANGEMENTS

BLOOD BONDS/ VINCULI

BOUND TO	RATING	BOUND TO	RATING

COMBAT

[illegible]

ARMOR

VICTORIAN AGE VAMPIRE

EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

MENTOR

CONTACTS

RESOURCES

FAME

RETAINERS

HERD

STATUS

INFLUENCE

OTHER

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FEEDING GROUNDS

VEHICLES

HAVENS

LOCATION

DESCRIPTION



VICTORIAN AGE VAMPIRE

HISTORY

PRELUDE

APPEARANCE

AGE _____

APPARENT AGE

DATE OF BIRTH _____

RIP

HAIR

EYES

RACE _____

NATIONALITY_____

HIGHT

Weight _____

Sex _____

VISUALS

COTERIE CHART

CHARACTER SKETCH

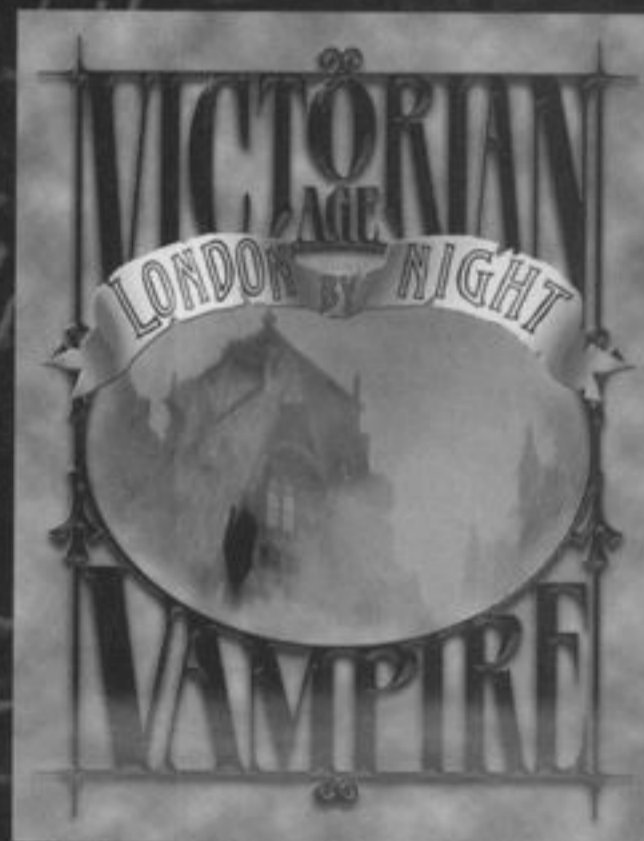


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