Mind's Eye Theatre

# Faith and Fire™

## In the Courts, on the Battlefields

It is the Year of our Lord 1230, the hour is midnight, and all is not well. In the courts, princes thirst for territory. In the gardens, ladies twist acts of love into games of life and death. In the cloisters, zealots and heretics turn on one another. In the shadows, vampires hunt and feed, but at great peril. There are stranger things than themselves in the Dark Medieval world, and the dawn that approaches is heralded by the Inquisition's torches.

## The Long Night is Over

Faith and Fire is the revised edition of The Long Night, based on Dark Ages: Vampire. Here is all the new material you need to play, laid out in one place — the High and Low Clans, their strange Disciplines, the roads they tread, the courts where they play their games, and the fields where they do battle.

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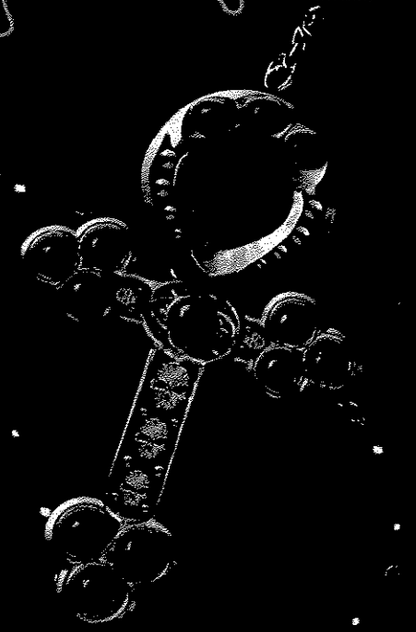
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# Prelude: To The Victor, The Spoils

Hauknefr twisted his blade roughly, and the body before him crumpled to the ground. With a flick of the tip to his ready stance, he spun to survey the bloodied battlefield. It was silent for the moment, barring the sound of the waves that crashed almost to his feet. Their eternal rumbling had masked the cries of the guards as they fell.

"That's the last of mine," he grunted, turning to look at his companion. "Are you fin— Must you play with them?"

"Every one of them that you kill is one less than I can question," his companion said. Paulo had a survivor held in his gaze, his will locked firmly about the soldier's mind. His left hand coiled about the soldier's throat, and his right index finger idly twisted a strand of his carefully curled hair. "Tidy up after yourself, if you would be so kind."

Cracking his knuckles, Hauknefr set about hiding the corpses he'd strewn about. A few sparse but hardy bushes dotted the ground hereabout, but the cracks between the great rocks afforded sufficient concealment for his purpose. He hoped the sea would wash away most of the new red pools. In years to come, the bones would grind away, their powder sinking to mix with the sand far below.

Paulo finally gave an exasperated curse. "So much in there. Hopes and dreams… but there's no time now." He quickly snapped the soldier's neck between his hands and said, "Come." Gathering his wool cloak about his waist, he stepped into the tiny hut that clung, limpet-like, to the side of the cliff. Within stood a wicker cage. Ropes and spindles would bear the cage aloft with two sturdy men sweating at the winch above.

Hauknefr disposed of the last body and wiped his weapon clean before clambering in alongside. He watched as Paulo concentrated, sorting his new memories, then strummed a pattern on the thin ropes that connected the basket to the heights above.

A tense minute passed. They shared a glance. No clamor came.

"Grigori has done his part in this, at least," Hauknefr said. "No guards wait above. Let us hope he has completed the rest of his duties. I still feel it was foolish to trust him."



"It was he who infiltrated the monastery and uncovered our target's resting place. Think of the glories the prince shall shower upon us when we unravel his mystery for him! Now get that over-muscled frame working for all of us. There's a good boy."

Hauknefr grunted, then rubbed false warmth into his hands. Gripping the rope Paulo indicated, he then began to haul them both up into the darkness.

• • •

"Silence!" Grigori had hissed in warning as he reached out with his mind to cloud them from the minds of others. By this point, he was nearly cursing aloud himself. They had not yet made it across the treacherous rocks that jutted like the broken teeth of a giant out to the blunted fang of the monastery's foundation. Thrice already, Paulo had cried out in faux-panic when his foot slipped or his hand missed a grip. Thrice, Grigori had admonished him in lisped whispers (drawing humorous looks from Hauknefr) of the perils beyond and instructed him in the need for extreme caution. Thrice, he had patiently rewoven the concealment.

Now the Norseman bore his load with ease, the hefty bundle draped across his shoulders. When they reached the cover of the forest at last, he dropped his burden and propped it against a tree.

"Careful!" Grigori snapped.

"What's the problem?" Hauknefr growled. "He's basically just bones — he doesn't feel a thing."

"Have you ever been in his position? Staked, left to dry? Do you know what that feels like? What that can do to a Cainite? Some say it drives you mad being just helpless, pathetic meat… so vulnerable. He might be awake… he might… feel and hate yet!"

"Indeed he might, so we shall keep him this way until we have the information we want," Paulo sneered. "Alright, Hauknefr. What now?"

Hauknefr crouched to test the bindings on the bundle. "I've arranged a site near the port. We'll hide him there for the duration. Remember, once we return, we must continue to go about our nightly business, or the others might suspect we're up to something."

"Suspect and try to steal our glory," Paulo added. "They'll find out eventually, but not until we're ready. Oh, I can almost taste the accolades…."

"You're too focused on yourself, and not enough on the mission."

"Don't presume that I'm as blind as you are. You sally along on your ignorant path of self-righteous 'nobility,' but you're blind! A Cainite survives on his reputation. This will *make* mine. It could make yours as well if you would only let it."

As the two exchanged plans and barbs, Grigori sat to one side, playing a game in his mind. He envisioned his place in his world as a juncture on a spider's web and looked out at the neighboring threads. Straddling each was another Cainite, some local, some distant. Each had something to offer him, and each posed a threat. Sometimes, those threads thrummed with excitement, and if he put his ear near the

sticky cable he could make out those voices. Those voices were the guides he had heard and followed since before his Embrace. Sometimes he even beat staccato rhythms in reply. He hoped that they could hear him as he heard them. He hoped they approved.

Paulo shook his shoulder and broke his trance. "We're moving," the Spaniard insisted. "It's still four miles back to the city, and the sun's not going to stay down forever."

"Your observational skills astound me," Grigori said, climbing to his feet. "Perhaps when we get to the city you can astound me once more with your capacity for silence."

• • •

Almost all the vampires in the city had heeded the call of the prince. His ghouls had visited as many of his subjects' haunts as they knew and asked those they met to spread the word that Prince Salvatini had matters to discuss with his domain. Such a summons had occurred rarely, and several rumors were quick to form as to the reason for such a gathering.

A score or so were in attendance, and they milled about for an hour waiting to see what the prince considered so important. Hushed conversations took place in dim corners; louder ones echoed in the gardens beyond. At least one Cainite took the opportunity to rough up another, but few cared to intervene in such… personal matters. There would be no death — fear of the wrath of their prince ensured their adherence to that rule, and others — but severe beatings were well within the limits of Cainite law. Elsewhere in the gardens, vampires argued philosophy, compared tales of battle and tried to manipulate each other to their own ends.

Eventually, ghouls asked each group to join the prince in the dining hall, so they gathered with nervous haste. The room had mostly been cleared of its decorations, and Prince Salvatini stood before a row of five simple chairs, his being central. Behind him sat his four closest advisors, all powerful elders in their own right. He waited until his subjects had settled before he spoke.

"My valued friends," he began. "I have news of great importance."

Susurrations rose — young and ancient voices alike mixed like sand then sifted away as Salvatini raised one hand.

"You all know of the untimely demise of my sire at the hands of unknown assassins." He paused and noted the heads that nodded and the heads that shook. "A loyal coterie has recently brought me information that one of those assassins has dwelled amongst us for many years." He paused again, noting the shocked looks, genuine and carefully feigned alike. He saw his target out of the corner of his eye. "Come forward, Paulo, Hauknefr and Grigori. Present your case to my people as you have presented it to me."

The trio made their way forward to their prince's side. Grigori remained aside from his companions, seemingly distracted and glancing into the dark corners. The prince stepped back, waving for them to speak. With a grand bow, Paulo began.



"Honored Cainites," he said. "Ours is a tale grand in the telling, of danger and daring! Such were the intrigues and battles that brought us here to where we stand tonight…."

"Cut it short," Hauknefr grunted. "They'll die of old age at this rate!"

Humorless laughter scattered about the room, and Paulo blanched, his moment stolen yet again! Hauknefr stepped in front of him before he started another tirade. "We hunted down and captured another of those responsible for the death of Lord Damiano," the Brujah said. "We gained from him the knowledge that the murderer yet walks among us."

All the audience saw shadows gather behind the chairs, a miasma coiling to strike. The darkness paused. Waited.

Prince Salvatini stepped up beside Hauknefr and addressed the crowd. "All of you know my laws, and they are simple ones. If you cannot abide by them, you have the choice: leave or die." He then turned back to Paulo and said, "Make your accusation that all may hear. Quickly."

Paulo inhaled, waited a moment to extend the tension, then spoke. "Primogen Madeline is guilty of the murder of Damiano."

"Madeline has sat at my right hand for many years as my advisor," Salvatini said like a seasoned actor. "We all consider her the very paragon of loyalty to our state. What evidence can you present to me that she was complicit in the death of my sire?"

Paulo looked back to where she sat stunned and furious at the gall of her clanmate. "Madeline," he purred. "I have a message from your accomplice: Mars is in Scorpio and the moon doth shame the sun!"

At this, her eyes opened wide, and blood tears streamed down her cheeks. "Yes! No… I did not know I had! I… dear God! I did it! The taste… sweet still!" She broke down sobbing in confusion.

The shadows solidified and struck. They hoisted Madeline from her chair and carried her high over the assembly. At this cue, Salvatini's ghouls stepped to the edges of the hall and snuffed torches and candles until the room was only barely lit. The tension among the crowd grew apace. No one noticed Grigori slipping toward the side door.

Madeline now hung far above them all, blackness holding her crucified in mid-air. She attempted to continue her denial, but a blob of shadow shifted to fill her mouth, muffling her cries. Salvatini's eyes glazed as his Beast pushed him further toward brutality. He felt the rush overwhelm him, and he went with it.

Paulo turned his head to Salvatini and sneered, "I believe a confession should be proof enough, my prince." He could not help the smug smile. He was still smiling when Salvatini's stake entered his heart.

A second thereafter, Hauknefr found he was entangled in the same darkness with which Madeline was held aloft. "What in Hel is this?" he roared. The captives struggled against the black bonds, but they would not yield. All Hauknefr's might could not break these strands that pulsed with the puissant power of the prince. "Kalen! Brother!"

If Kalen heard his brood mate's cry, he did not answer it. Perhaps he was absent. Perhaps there were other reasons.

Salvatini controlled himself long enough to turn on the Norseman. "Did you idiots expect a reward for what you did? You're fools! You let one traitor get away in exchange for information about another! Grigori told me everything!"

He then gripped his fist, and the arms about Hauknefr tightened, snapping ribs. The Brujah bellowed, straining harder against the tentacles. They began to thin under the strain. Other Cainites, either fervent followers or curriers of favor, had begun to surround and restrain him. Another stake found its target, and he struggled no longer.

Madeline fell from the ceiling, landing with a crunch, and was swarmed by Salvatini's ghouls.

"Take them away!" the prince cried. "If I ever see them again, you will all suffer their fate! Now come, Grigori, and let us hunt the traitor your comrades let free. Grigori...?"





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# FAITH AND FIRE™

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# Chapter One: Introduction and Setting

## Stories Around the Fire

Once upon a time, long before television, computers or even books, people sat around the fire and told stories for entertainment. Whether it was a ballad of a hero's latest exploits or a cautionary tale about dealing with the hidden creatures of the world, storytellers were valued by their communities as teachers and entertainers. And tale-telling was hardly a passive art — the storyteller relied on his audience for reaction to his tale as he spoke. How else would he know if they were enjoying the story or getting bored?

Time marched on, and technological developments began to change — even interfere with — the storyteller's art. The availability of books (and the development of greater literacy among people) meant that someone could simply read a story whenever he liked, instead of hunting down a storyteller to tell it. Radio and television remade the storyteller into an impassive creature that did not encourage audience participation. Stories were still told, and in great quantity, but they were largely sterile, unliving things.

Now we come to the 1970s and the era of roleplaying. A group of players sits around a table listening to their leader describe scenes of dank dungeons and dark cities, and they choose which path to take next. At one of these sessions, someone gets the idea to stand up, move and think as her character might. Over time, more players do the same, creating what will become known as live-action roleplaying (or LARP). In fact, this "new" entertainment is a return to the oldest. The leader was the storyteller, taking his listeners on a new journey, and the listeners were responding in kind, taking on the roles of the characters in the story, telling this new tale to the storyteller, the other player-listeners and to themselves.

## What is Mind's Eye Theatre?

This game is probably unlike anything you have played before. In many ways, it's not really a game, because it doesn't have a lot of the trappings of games — such as cards, dice or a playing board. It's also far more concerned with the stories to be told along the way than "winning." It's far more like the make-believe of childhood than what most people typically think of when they imagine "games." This book contains all the information you'll need to start playing and telling your own stories. You create the action, you choose the path to follow, you decide what risks to accept. We call this style of game **Mind's Eye Theatre**.

Playing **Mind's Eye Theatre** is like being in a movie. You and your friends are the characters, but there is no script. There may be a framework or setting that determines the parameters of the world, but you and the others around you are creating the story as you play. The "director" of this movie is the Storyteller, assisted by Narrators. The Storyteller creates the stage and the minor characters with whom the players interact to tell this story.

Most scenes in **Mind's Eye Theatre** are played out in real-time — an hour in the make-believe world is 60 minutes long, and it takes up 60 minutes in the real world — and always in character. Players always remain in character during the game unless a rules dispute arises.

## Characters

When you play this game, you take on another persona, most likely that of a vampire. Your character can be almost anything — from any walk of life, age, creed, race or sex. The only limit is your imagination. When you create this character, you decide what she says or does. You decide where she goes and what choices she makes. During the game, you speak as your character, unless you're resolving a rules dispute or talking to the Storyteller. Because most of what a **Mind's Eye Theatre** player perceives around him depends on the other players, all players must be vivid and expressive.

While the characters direct the plot through their actions, the plot reacts in ways that direct the characters. For example, a character decides she wants to create a tavern with space for people to perform, and she invites another vampire to sing for an evening. Here, the characters are directing the plot through their actions. The plot reacts to this direction, however, as the Storyteller tells the characters that the performance has aroused some suspicious attention. It seems that the performing character reminds someone of another famous human singer, who also just happened to die at the same time the character became a vampire. Thus is a story built in **Mind's Eye Theatre**.

Creating a character for **Faith and Fire** is easy, and it takes just a few minutes. Only a few things become necessary to define the basic capabilities of a character, and when they're done, you can start playing. There's another phase to creating a character, though. A character is, by and large, like a person, and people aren't just flat cardboard cutouts with a few numbers to represent what they can do. People have pasts, likes and dislikes, goals and dreams — all the intangible things that make a person into what other people see when he walks into a room or talks to them. It's not much different from all the care that an actor or author takes when creating a character. So as you're creating your character, think a little about where she comes from, what she wants out of her existence, what she'll do to get it, what she loves and what she hates. Does your character love thunderstorms and watch them from the window, or have they frightened her ever since she was a small child? Does your character want to build a business to replace one that was lost several years ago — one he'll bargain with the Devil himself to get? While certain personality quirks and details will emerge as you play, it's a good idea to have the basics in place for the first time you walk into a room and meet the other characters.

Characters are the heart and soul of the story. Without them, all the efforts of the Storyteller would be for nothing, and there would be no stories to tell.



### Dark Ages: Vampire and Faith and Fire

This book is based on the tabletop creation **Dark Ages: Vampire**. While it is not necessary to own or know **Dark Ages** to play this game, some players might find it helpful for more setting material. There are a number of **Dark Ages**-related books with material that can be adapted for live-action play.

This edition of **Faith and Fire** has been created to update the setting for the live-action adaptation of **Dark Ages**. Those who own **The Long Night** will find some significant differences between the two — not the least of which being the change of setting. It is advised that a Storyteller rule which resource is canon for the game for the sake of clarity and consistency.

## The Storyteller

The Storyteller is the one who creates the world through which the players move. She creates a skeletal framework of setting and plot, then turns the characters loose to put flesh on its bones. More than that, she acts as an impartial judge when the rules are questioned, describes scenes that can't be staged and even plays the parts of antagonists or other people with whom the characters interact. The Storyteller is usually assisted by Narrators, who play their own characters but are ready to answer rules questions when necessary.

Storytelling is a demanding (and occasionally exhausting) task. A Storyteller must oversee the events to be certain that people have a good time, that the rules are being followed and that the story is running smoothly. Sometimes she must create plot elements on the spur of the moment or adjudicate between several quarreling players. In spite of all this responsibility, there is something immensely satisfying about watching the players create something remarkable with the plot elements given them. It really makes the headache all worthwhile.

More on the Storyteller's role can be found in Chapter Six.

### Elegantly Simple

This game was designed to be easy to play and easier to start. Character creation takes only a few minutes. The basic rules are simple, and they cover most of the encounters that a new player will enter. Even new players who have never played **Faith and Fire** or LARP before will find that this game takes little effort to pick up.

## How to Use This Book

This book gives you all the basic rules that you'll need to start playing or storytelling **Faith and Fire**.

**Chapter One: Introduction and Setting** — The introduction to **Mind's Eye Theatre**, the World of Darkness and the Dark Medieval.

**Chapter Two: Clans and Bloodlines** — A complete overview of the vampire clans and bloodlines available for play in the World of Darkness.

**Chapter Three: Character Creation** — Everything that you'll need to create a character to start playing.

**Chapter Four: Disciplines** — Descriptions of the mysterious powers granted with the Embrace.

**Chapter Five: Rules, Systems and Drama** — The chapter starts with the basic rules you'll need for play, followed systems for combat, derangements, health, healing and more vampiric issues, such as the blood oath.

**Chapter Six: Storytelling** — This chapter speaks to Storytellers and Narrators, both old and new, containing all the ins and outs of how to craft stories and deal with players.

**Chapter Seven: Allies and Antagonists** — This chapter provides a basic overview of some of the other denizens of the World of Darkness, as well as ways to incorporate them into stories.

## The Rules Thou Shalt Never Break

These are the most important and immutable rules of **MET**, the ones that keep your game and your players safe from folks who either don't care that you're playing a game, or who take the game *way* too seriously. Always adhering to these rules will also keep your game amenable to law enforcement and other non-player folks.

### No Touching. No Stunts.

That means none whatsoever. It's far too easy for things to get out hand in the heat of the moment. Save the stunts for your imagination. If you can imagine you're a centuries-old vampire, then you can certainly imagine you're swinging on a chandelier or leaping across rooftops.

### No Weapons.

No matter how careful you are. Whether it's to prevent some fool from skewering himself on your new dagger or to make sure the police don't think you're a threat, weapons of any sort are forbidden. Even fake or toy weapons, trained attack gerbils or laser pens are not allowed. Use item cards instead.

### No Drugs or Drinking

Well, duh. Drinking and drugs do not inspire peak performance, and players who are so impaired are a threat to other players and the game. It's one thing to *play* a character who is drunk or tripping on hashish, but it's another thing entirely to actually come to a game under the influence. At best it's tasteless; at worst it's illegal. Don't do it.

### It's Only a Game

If a character dies, if a plot falls apart, if a rival gets the upper hand, it's just a game. You and the rest of the players are doing this for fun. Taking things too seriously, or taking character issues into real life, will only spoil everyone's enjoyment, including yours. Remember, playing a game should be fun. If you're not having fun, it's time for a reassessment.

Remember to leave the game behind when the session's over. "Soft" roleplaying (i.e., conversing in character without challenges) can be fun, and there's nothing wrong with talking about the game afterward at the local diner. On the other hand, demanding weekly clan meetings or trying to rouse your prince to discuss battle-plans at three in the morning signifies the need for a change in perspective.



### Be Mindful of Others

Not everyone around you is playing the game, and it's in extremely poor taste to try to feed off passers-by. You want to ensure that your game and your players are welcomed. Frightening people and getting the local law enforcement called on you is not the way to do it, especially in these tense times. This is particularly true if you're playing in a public area, such as a park. It can be a very good idea to alert local merchants and police before you play so that they'll be prepared. If you get curiosity-seekers, try to have some business cards on hand and offer to speak with them when you have more time.

### Do What Works for You

We at White Wolf often call this proviso "the golden rule." Your game might have special circumstances that require a few extra bells and whistles to the rules, or your troupe might find a way to handle something that works better for you. As long as people are having fun, go ahead and run with it — it's your game.

Likewise, if you see something that you want in your game that doesn't appear with an **MET** system, then sit down and cobble up something that will work for you. If **Mind's Eye Theatre** is all about telling stories, then here's the part where the Storyteller improvises.

### Have Fun

Not "Win." Not "Go out and conquer everyone else." Just have fun, because in **MET**, it's not about how the game ends, but what happens along the way.

## A World Lit Only by Fire

The Dark Medieval would seem to differ little from the one you can read about in history books. Peasants toil for indifferent lords, knowing only lives of cold, hunger and hard labor, yet hoping that obedience to God will grant them salvation. Priests exhort their flocks to follow God, describing the torments of the damned in gruesome detail, and it seems that salvation is all too rare. Across Europe, feudal lords from knight to king survey their domains, seeing their positions as birthright and privilege. And when the sun sinks below the horizon, men of every rank retreat to their huts and castles, fearing the creatures of the night — witches, goblins, demons and vampires. In the shadows, though, this is a world of horrors, where the vampires, witches and demons are indeed real.

### The World by Day...

It is the Year of our Lord 1230. The 13th century begins with the badly managed Fourth Crusade (1202-1204), directed by Venetian interests into destroying Constantinople, which was considered the greatest of the Christian cities. At home in England, King John signs the *Magna Carta* at the "urging" of his barons, establishing the duties and responsibilities of a king to his subjects. Powerful barons frequently challenge his heir, Henry III, drawing his attentions from France. In response, King Philip II of France reclaims most of the territories held by England in France. With the Battle of Bouvines in 1214, Philip establishes France as one of the century's major powers.

In the east, in Flanders and Germany, Emperor Frederick II unifies the Holy Roman Empire but quarrels with Rome and the pope over the question of choosing bishops for the empire embroil him in intrigue and conflicts. To the south, in Iberia, the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon encroach on the Moorish stronghold of al-Andalus in a venture

called the *Reconquista*, seeking to return the peninsula to its Christian roots, willingly or not. One city after another falls — Majorca in 1229, Cordoba in 1236, Sevilla in 1248 — until only Granada is left as the sole Moorish city on the peninsula. It stands until 1492, but its wealth and scholarship make it one of the continent's treasure cities. Ghengis Khan dies in 1227, but his heirs ride into Europe, overrunning Persia in 1231, southern Russia in 1236 and even reaching Poland and Hungary in 1241.

The century also sees the birth of the papal Inquisition as the Church deals with enemies both mundane and supernatural. The Cathars are one of its first challenges, resulting in their city's destruction to a man. The Teutonic Knights march under the black cross into Eastern Europe, battling pagans and other threats to God. Four different crusades enter the Holy Lands during the century, and despite the lack of success, the popes continue to make the call to "free" the Holy Lands. The Church proclaims that the signs of the Apocalypse are everywhere, that demons wait in the night, and that only Mother Church knows what is right and best for every man.

### ...and Night

The Dark Medieval is ruled by superstition, religion and monarchy in equal measure. The people are well aware that the Devil and his minions lurk in the shadows, waiting to tempt the faithful into sin and thereby dooming them to eternal misery. They also know that there are *things* in the forests. They have seen strange marks made on stones, heard whispers of sweet music on the wind on the night of the full moon and believe wholeheartedly in ghosts, demons and vampires. The people might pray in church by day, but then they make offerings to appease the usurped old gods, because they know and believe that the old ones still have power in their former havens. Cities are created to suggest safety and freedom, but their alleys and politics are just as imprisoning as the isolated villages in the woods.

And through all this, the vampires walk.

## The Damned

The nights of the Dark Medieval belong to the vampires. They believe that they are descended from Caine, son of Adam and killer of Abel, and they sometimes call themselves Cainites. They rule without fear and drift through mortal society and lives without thought or care. Some carve out kingdoms for themselves in the wild places of the world, while others hover around the cities and royal courts. They wear guises from priestly robes to kings' crowns, but whatever they wear and wherever they go, they must accept the one fact that they are monsters who stalk the night and crave the blood of the living. Each one is cursed to linger throughout endless nights as a parasite on humankind, pursued by a terrible hunger that drives them on. Worst of all, by their change, they have lost the promise of Heaven and salvation that is preached by the Church.

## Caine

Caine is considered the progenitor of all vampires, and he is worshipped as creator and destroyer. In these times, Caine carries three faces — the Dark Father, the Wanderer and the Dark Tyrant. The Christian symbolism is not universal — Muslim, pagan and Jewish each consider Caine through their own lenses.

Caine the Dark Father is the one whose sin reaches through the ages to curse his progeny, but he is also their link with God. Cainites look to Caine as proof that God exists. If Cainites are cast into the darkness, it was by the will of God, and further, there must be light in which God exists.

Caine the Wanderer is the mystic of the trinity. The Wanderer helps Cainites to cope with the loneliness and isolation of their curse. He shows them a path in the wilderness, one that might lead to redemption.

Caine the Dark Tyrant strikes fear into even ancient vampires. *The Book of Nod* speaks of a night when Caine will return and sit in judgment over vampires. Most will fall to ashes, others will be consumed by the hunger of their sires, and when the ashes settle, Caine will rule for a thousand years of darkness. Some Cainite mystics claim that that night is close at hand.

## The Endless Death

Through the Embrace, vampires become alluring, capricious, powerful and terrifying creatures. All gain gifts, called Disciplines, upon their transformation, which allow them all the powers of legend — to cloud men's minds, to unhorse a knight in full armor with a single blow, to command the dead, fade into shadows or transform into wolves, bats or even mist. They can shrug off almost any injury that would normally kill a man. But for all their power, they still have weaknesses that can end their unlives or make those unlives an endless torment

## The Embrace

Perhaps the greatest pain of the Cainites' existence is loneliness, and the greatest cruelty is their ability to force their existence on others. The creation of another vampire, the Embrace, is considered an act of great hubris and cruelty by many. All vampires eventually crave companionship for various reasons — a need for worthy heirs, a kindred soul who shares their curse and pain — but no reason could ever justify giving the Embrace. And in the end, no matter why it was done or how a vampire tries to ensure otherwise, his childe will be a hunter and predator — a bloodthirsty monster of the night, just like himself.

The Embrace itself is more than a simple bite. A Cainite must gain permission from the local prince to create a childe, lest he risk being slain in retaliation. Further, some high-generation vampires discover too late that their blood is too weak to pass on the curse. Only if all is in order may the vampire proceed.

First, the vampire must drain the would-be childe of blood to the point of death. Some childer claim to see visions of angels shutting the door of Heaven as they die, while others see a rush of memories of their old lives. The sire then lets some of his own blood fall into the childe's mouth. The Embrace takes hold, allowing the Beast to enter the childe's spirit, twisting it into the new mockery that he must endure for the rest of his unlife. The childe awakes with a ravening hunger that desperately needs sating. Some sires provide a store of rodents or a hapless victim or two, but some may cache their childer's mortal families or friends, the better to cut off ties from their previous lives. After the first hunger is sated, the childe emerges from the throes of Embrace one of the Damned.

## Destruction

Vampires are not as indestructible as they would have others, including themselves, believe. Final Death, the ultimate destruction of the vampire body through decapitation, sunlight or fire, haunts every one of them. No one knows what happens to one of the Damned when they meet Final Death. Some claim that those who have sought God's forgiveness and lived righteously will see their souls released from Caine's curse and welcomed back to Heaven. Others insist that only Satan and the Pit await the Damned.

There are many myths about how to destroy vampires, but most are just that. A stake through the heart only paralyzes a vampire. Crosses, rosaries and other holy items are of little use on their own, but when wielded by those of great conviction and faith, they become devastating weapons. Salt, garlic and roses are only trappings with little merit. Vampires can injure each other with ease, sometimes unto death, and enough mundane wounds can send a vampire into the Final Death. More likely, the injured vampire suffers a deathlike sleep called torpor, which can last for a few nights or a few centuries. The length of sleep depends on the age of the vampire, which is why the Antediluvians sleep for centuries or longer. The very ancient ones can still communicate with their childer in torpor, but the majority of young vampires cannot. Some even seek the sleep voluntarily when plagued with melancholy.

All Cainites fear fire and sunlight, two of the greatest instruments of destruction. Even the merest glint of sun or a candle's small flame can cause painful wounds. Some are driven by the pain into a panicked terror in the face of certain death. Others hate and despise fire and sunlight as the gifts of the Children of Seth (i.e., mortals). Sunlight only reminds Cainites of what they have lost with their Embrace, and many find that their last memories of the sun haunt them as a symbol for everything they've lost.

## Hunger and the Beast

Vampires crave the blood of the living. It is the basis of Caine's curse and one of the things that drives their existence. The hunger is insatiable, and it can make even the most noble and pious into ravening monsters. Cainites must feed — there's no way around it. However they seek and sate their hungers, though, they often bring death with them. Many fledglings are shocked by the first few deaths they cause, but time will inure them to the idea.

For many vampires, feeding grants one of the few physical pleasures a vampire can experience. The Kiss — the act of biting and feeding — induces an ecstasy in the victim that makes her submit to the Cainite's feeding, while the Cainite enjoys the rush of warm blood and pleasure that some have described in carnal terms. Some vampires, however, have lived for so long that human blood no longer sustains them. These very old vampires usually crave vampire blood, and some whisper that the clans are merely stables of milch kine for the Antediluvians to feed their hungers, but many younger vampires scoff nervously at such tales.

The ravenous hunger that leads all vampires and warps their desires is known as the Beast. It comes with the vampire's Embrace, but no one is quite sure what it is intended to be — a reflection of the original curse of God, or even something of the Original Sin inherited from Adam and Eve. Whatever it is, the Beast howls for blood, loves cruelty and violence, and represents every base desire, rageful temper and foul need a vampire has. As long as there is a Beast, the vampire is doomed to be beyond redemption, for the Beast will taint everything she touches.

The Beast perverts the flaws in a vampire's personality upon the Embrace. She who was impatient may become violent with too much waiting; he who was righteous becomes blinded by his set ways until he excuses his own misdeeds. The Beast wants Cainites to sin in the hope of being released to follow its own bloody urges. The weak who give in become mindless ravening monsters who are quickly put down by their fellows. The strong survive, turning to dark faiths and philosophies in an effort to learn controlling techniques.

As troublesome as the Beast is, it provides many of the closest approximations to emotion that vampires have had since their Embraces. Its efforts allow them to live in what should be shambling, rotting corpses. Without the Beast, Cainites could not exist as they do.

The Beast also represents the animalistic instincts of a Cainite, including the primal fear and rage that comes with survival instinct. A vampire who is crazed with hunger or rage loses herself to a frenzied blood rage. If she is panicked by fire or sunlight, she may fall to the terror of Rötschreck.

## Disciplines

Legend claims that Adam's first wife, Lilith, taught Caine the blood-magic inherent in his veins — what Cainites later called Disciplines. Lilith is revered as the Dark Mother, complete with cults devoted to her worship. Like the Marian cults of the medieval world, each congregation focuses on a particular aspect of Lilith. Because of Lilith's power and role as Caine's teacher, female vampires are usually treated as equals. The current patriarchal Christian climate means that some Cainites do not acknowledge the role of a woman, especially Lilith, in teaching Caine his Disciplines.

There are almost a score of Disciplines known, granting almost every conceivable power over mortals, the elements, the wild beasts and even the Cainite body, spirit and Beast. Some secretive clans and odd bloodlines boast unusual powers that they claim to have developed themselves, powers that they do not share with outsiders.

## The Roads

As terrible as the Curse of Caine and the threat of the Beast might be, there is still hope. Vampires are denied Heaven, but between salvation and damnation, there are the roads, mystical beliefs developed by Cainite scholars to help vampires rein in and channel the urges of the Beast. Some roads organize themselves like churches, while others are closer to cults in outlook and practice. Roads are not interested in denying what a vampire has become or claiming that she's something other than what she is. Roads teach belief and philosophy, giving the Cainite a means to anchor herself, understand her curse and eventually accept herself.

Unlike the Church, there is no monolithic road that every Cainite follows. The roads change and adapt with the times. In the 13th century, there are five major roads that most Cainites follow.

- The Road of Sin focuses on a Cainite's darker side, urging the vampire to feed her Beast's malevolent urges, lest they overwhelm her.

• The Road of Humanity teaches that vampires might be cursed, but they were once human, and humanistic thoughts and urges are the means to combat the Beast.

• The Road of the Beast calls on Cainites to embrace their predatory natures as the supreme predators.

• The Road of Kings teaches that vampires are clearly superior to humans, and because of that, they are destined to rule over humanity.

• The Road of Heaven teaches that while Cainites might be cursed, they are agents of a higher power, with a divine nature and a mission to help fulfill God's plan.

## The Generations

Blood is what ties Cainites together. Abel's blood cursed Caine, and Caine's blood now curses every vampire on the Earth. This blood, transformed by the Embrace, now bears magical qualities that grant them their inhuman abilities and Disciplines.

Vampires trace their ancestry based on how far removed they are from Caine, how many generations they are down the family tree. Those who are of low generation, removed two or three steps from Caine, are accorded more prestige than those who are nine or 10 times removed. Only 13 generations are known in the Dark Medieval, with those of greater generation considered mostly legendary. With each generation, Caine's blood dilutes in strength, so high-generation vampires are weaker than low-generation ones.

• **Caine** — First among vampires, Caine vanished from history after the Great Flood. Some vampires claim to have met a strange wanderer wearing a cloak of night, and some mystics fear that this wanderer might be Caine, returning to bring the judgment prophesied in *The Book of Nod*.

• **The Second Generation** — These are the three childer that Caine Embraced, the sires of the Antediluvians. History claims that they either perished in the Great Flood or the upheavals of the Second City.

• **The Third Generation** — Legend claims that only 13 vampires (the clan founders) belong to this generation, but only Caine and the Second Generation know for sure. These are the Antediluvians, who survived the Biblical flood. Most slumber the centuries away in torpor, and it is said that their awakening will herald Gehenna.

• **The Fourth and Fifth Generation** — The Methuselahs are almost as powerful as their sires, and their Disciplines and age make for a dangerous combination. Some while away their time by scheming; others fall prey to the ennui of the ages and seek to cure their boredom by playing games of intrigue.

• **The Sixth and Seventh Generation** — Many of these vampires are the elders of the Dark Medieval, and the oldest vampires most Cainites will meet. While not as powerful as Methuselahs, they are still forces to be reckoned with. Many rule vast kingdoms as monarchs.

• **The Eighth and Ninth Generation** — These vampires are the most visible in the Dark Medieval. They stand on a razor's edge. Their blood is stronger than that of the younger generations, but they have nothing of the age of the lower generations.

• **The Tenth and Eleventh Generation** — Most vampires created in the last few centuries belong to these generations. Many have only recently left their sires' care and come into their own. They burn with conviction and passion, not yet dulled by Caine's curse like their elders.



• **The Twelfth Generation and beyond** — These fledglings are the children of the present nights. Most were Embraced in recent decades, and while they might not be as old or powerful as the lower generations, they understand the world much better, and even their relative weakness sets them leagues above mortal men.

Rumor claims that those of the Thirteenth Generation are so weak-blooded and far removed from Caine that they are not even full vampires. Many fear that the 13th-generation vampires who survive will be the heralds of Gehenna, so most 12th-generation vampires are forbidden to sire.

## The Society of the Night

Cainite society is a dichotomy — vampires are solitary predators without a true need for fellowship, yet they crave the companionship of their fellow creatures. Like other predators, the strong lead, and the weak hope for their protection. Few Cainites are so solitary that they can go without any form of companionship of their brethren, and those who do are distrusted and eventually hunted down in the belief that something must be wrong with them. While Cainites are monsters, they are also refined creatures who enjoy beauty, the arts and learning. Their society is strictly governed to prevent a collapse into anarchy. Unlike the society they came from, vampires learn that birth station means nothing — only blood and age elevate one above another.

All vampires can trace their lineage to one of 13 clans or a handful of bloodlines, which are usually offshoots of one of the clans. While each vampire is unique, she inherits certain legacies from her clan, such as Disciplines and one of the strange curses that Caine pronounced upon the Antediluvian founders of the clans when they displeased him.

### The High Clans

The High Clans reign supreme in the night. They are the most likely to be the nobility and princes. They believe that their progenitors were the first Embraced, and that the deeds of the Low Clans in Enoch created strife and eventual destruction.

• **Brujah** — This clan is known for fiery tempers and deep passions. Stunning defeats and amazing accomplishments checker its past. In these nights, the clan wars with itself. Elders are lost in melancholy for the clan's great past, while the youth seek action and chafe under their sires' philosophical waiting.

• **Cappadocian** — The Cappadocians are revered as scholars and mystics. Many are found in courts as advisors to princes, but they prefer to remain aloof from the schemes of the High Clans in favor of quiet contemplation of their favorite subject: death.

• **Lasombra** — The Lasombra are some of the most skilled manipulators, and they are convinced of their own superiority. They rule church and crown with shadowy hands, and they love power above all else.

• **Toreador** — The Toreador are the Cainite muses, poets, artisans and lovers of beauty. Only the foolish believe that their love of beauty implies that they are weak or empty-headed. Their creation, the Courts of Love, has become a powerful factor in the War of Princes.

• **Tzimisce** — The fiends of the Carpathians rule over frightened peasants as dread *voivodes*. Their inhuman cruelty and alien thoughts make them the most distant from mortals.

• **Ventrue** — The Ventrue are rising to challenge the Lasombra's hold on the night. While the other High Clans are lost in their own schemes, the Ventrue are forging ahead to create new empires in Britain and Germany and to secure their place as the leaders and defenders of all vampires.

### The Low Clans

The Low Clans are despised by the High Clans, either for their foreign ways (such as the Assamites and Ravnos) or for the depths of their bloodlines' curses which make socializing almost impossible (Malkavians and Nosferatu). Despite being shut out of the ranks of the proud High Clans, the Low Clans have been gaining ground, as they are more in tune with the times than their isolationist brethren.

• **Assamites** — Vampires of this proud clan come from the Middle East, believing themselves to be judges of the night and soldiers of Caine. Warriors, mystics and scholars fill their ranks.

• **Followers of Set** — This clan rejects the legend of Caine, claiming to be descendents of a dark god from Ancient Egypt. They take pride in peddling sin and damnation, following the Crusades into the new hunting grounds of Europe.

• **Gangrel** — The Gangrel reject the chains of lord and vassal, choosing instead to roam the night as hunters par excellence. The vampire is a predator no more evil than any other. The only question left is whether one is a wolf or a dog.

• **Malkavians** — These madmen are cursed to see the world as a shattered mosaic, never quite able to discern the whole picture. Once they were revered as oracles, but now they are cast out in fear that their madness is contagious.

• **Nosferatu** — Hideously deformed by Caine's curse, Nosferatu are despised as visible signs of the evil within every vampire. Still, they seek to accept their curse and repent in hopes of redemption.

• **Ravnos** — These travelers carry a wily Beast that revels in sin and vice. Few are trusted in Europe, and the smaller number that are accepted travel as messengers and spies for the courts, in between their own agendas.

• **Tremere** — Many vampires refuse to acknowledge the Tremere as a clan, since these thieving wizards gained their status by genocide. Their eldest is said to have slain Saulot, the Antediluvian founder of the Salubri, and committed diablerie upon him. The crime was compounded by the wholesale hunt and slaughter of the Salubri. The warlocks command powerful blood-magic, but they are beset on all sides by enemies. Still, as the War of Princes grinds on, many princes put aside their distaste in the hope of gaining an edge through the Tremere's magic.

## The Courts of Princes

Since the First City, vampires known as princes have ruled over their kind. Princes do not rule for altruistic reasons — they do so to feed their own need to dominate others and provide for their own security. There is no democracy, only the strong who rule as prince. The titles and duties of the office have changed as civilizations changed. A "prince" may be known as "king," "duke," "archbishop" and others borrowed from human history. Women rule as prince, gender be damned, or they may be known as "queen" or "duchess."

It is traditionally the eldest Cainite who rules, his age conferring the honor. In the Dark Medieval, though, age does not necessarily translate into power, and only the strong rule. In the War of Princes, many younger vampires are seizing domains from complacent elders, and the elders are choosing to either bequeath their titles to the young in the hopes of hiding in the shadows or defending their domains with talon and fist.

Predators are territorial, and domains mean power. Without domain, a prince is not a prince. Domain may mean a university town in England or a stretch of plains in central Europe ruled from a stronghold. The larger the domain is, the more power and influence the prince holds. Usually a prince rules a city and claims domain over everything within, which forces other Cainites to acquiesce to his rule by fealty or brute force.

### The Officers

No prince rules completely alone. No single vampire could enforce his will across vast stretches of domain without vassals to act as his hands and eyes. Wise princes court influential, talented Cainites when making their bids for power, creating a cabinet of advisors to assist them in handling some or all of the duties of a fiefdom. The following posts are most often seen at courts:

• **Sheriff** — The sheriff handles matters of security and jurisdiction, keeping the neonates from raising too much hell and keeping unwanted visitors out. In war time, sheriffs may become sergeants for the warmaster, assisting in coordinating defenses for the city when the prince and warmaster are on the battlefield.

• **Warmaster** — He is the general of the prince's army, and only to a prince who can muster enough forces to be called an army. If the sheriff is concerned with city security, the warmaster is concerned with the domain as a whole.

• **Seneschal** — The seneschal is the prince's right hand, the one occupied with the dry business of governance. It is he who chooses (with the right bribe occasionally) which complaints will go before the prince. In some domains, seneschals are mere lackeys. In others, they wield considerable power and are perhaps the true power behind the throne.

• **Keeper** — The keeper is the prince's spiritual advisor and counselor. Some still use the older Malkavian and Nosferatu oracles, but most call upon the ashen priests, the teachers and leaders on one of the roads of enlightenment. Keepers advise their princes on matters political and mystical and may lead sacraments of the roads.

• **Chamberlain** — She is the social heart of the prince's court, organizing the feasts and tourneys and welcoming visiting dignitaries. She is also a skilled gossip and rumormonger, able to take the pulse of the subjects and discover detractors.

• **Scourge** — The scourge acts as the prince's private executioner, patrolling the domain for unwanted visitors — Caitiff, Autarkis and other undesirables — and either bringing them to the prince or destroying them outright. The scourge need not worry about the political ramifications of his acts or the sniping of a prince's critics, as the sheriff often must. The post is not one to encourage friendly relationships, and many Cainites fear and distrust the scourge.

## Rights and Responsibilities

There is no universal code of princely conduct. Aside from the Old Ways, a prince may govern as he sees fit. Still, a prince is measured by the power and influence he wields over his subjects. Some princes are mere figureheads, powerless to act without the support of the elders, while others rule like tyrants, destroying any who dare speak out against them. Most princes lie somewhere between, knowing that only the threat of violence and censure is enough to keep most in line, but always with a weather eye for the troublemakers. Princedom grants a prince certain rights and privileges, but it also demands that certain expectations and duties be followed. Princes who ignore their responsibilities often find themselves without support.

- **Destruction** — Only a prince may destroy (or order the destruction of) another vampire. The power of Final Death over vassals is the ultimate proof of a prince's claim.
- **Siring** — Only a prince may sire freely, while other vampires must gain his permission. Those who disobey are destroyed along with their childer.
- **Domain** — Any vampire in a prince's domain becomes his vassal. The prince may bequeath domain as a reward or offer it as a bribe.
- **Feeding** — The prince establishes feeding grounds and any rules governing feeding.
- **Upholding the Old Ways** — The Traditions grant a prince the charter to rule, but only if he upholds the Traditions. Only the complacent rule through sheer force.
- **Protection** — The prince must be ready to defend his subjects at any time. A prince who does nothing when a vassal is destroyed by a rival or another vassal risks losing his credibility.
- **Shepherding the flock** — The prince must make sure that there are enough humans to sustain his vassals. As much as he sets hunting limits and determines feeding grounds, the prince must also make sure that the mortal flock remains healthy, lest his vassals be at each other's throats from hunger.

## The Traditions

A prince's authority is largely derived from the Traditions of Caine, or the so-called Old Ways, the largely oral tradition of vampiric codes of law and conduct based on the Traditions. The Old Ways are the underpinning of Cainite society and the only real social compact that the monsters of the night hold with each other. Most obey out of tradition, with a little fear of divine retribution. The Old Ways are the remnants of Caine's rule at Enoch, making them respected but not always strictly followed. The Old Ways form the compact that princes draw upon to legitimize their claims and rights. Many elders do not consider a childe a vampire until his sire recites the Traditions to him, sealing the covenant with Caine.

**The First Tradition: Covenant**

*"Thy blood makes thee my brood, crafted in my image. My curse thine, my salvation thine. I stand before and above thee as god-regent. I am the way, my Traditions covenant. Renounce me and renounce all hope."*

In this Tradition, Cainites recognize Caine as the lord of the night and affirm their lineage to him. For them, the Old Ways and the covenant indicate a spiritual link with Caine. Caine is not myth — he is present in the Old Ways. Those who despise their curse look to this Tradition in hope that Caine's ways will lead them to salvation. Princes and lords use it to legitimize their rule, citing Caine's covenant as proof of their right to lead.

**The Second Tradition: Domain**

*"As I am the master of Nod, thy domain is thine own concern. Thou art its master, and all will respect this or suffer thy wrath. All will present themselves when entering, and thou shall protect them in turn. By right, thou art allowed to hunt within the bounds of thy domain, its blood thine own. Accept its responsibilities, minister thy domain and pay others the same respect thou expect."*

The Second Tradition has long been important to Cainites, especially during this time of feudal relations. Domains indicate influence and protection, plus they serve as the holders' feeding grounds. A Cainite who holds domain can continue to feed and may protect it by keeping other vampires out.

Domain-holders — prince or neonate — are bound to offer hospitality to those who enter and present themselves. While in the domain under hospitality, a visitor can expect to be treated with respect, protected from threats and permitted to feed there. The domain-holder is responsible for her guest's safety and well being. Those who abuse hospitality can face penalties. When tensions flare in the War of Princes, some close their domains entirely, sentencing unwelcome visitors of any kind to death.

Domain is one of the pillars of princely rule. A prince extends her influence by acquiring more domain, which she then parcels out to loyal vassals, which further solidifies her power and attracts more Cainites to her banner. Some Cainite lords have occasionally claimed domain over individual vampires and demanded that those vampires supply them with tithes of blood and victims in return for patronage or domain.

**The Third Tradition: Progeny**

*"Thou shalt only sire another with the permission and blessing of thine elder. To create is the providence of those closest to me, for they shall be accountable. Break this, and both thee and thy progeny shall be slain."*

According to this Tradition, only the eldest can grant permission to make progeny, but princes have held this right for as long as many can remember — the better to control the Cainite population in their domains. Too many vampires can overtax a domain's resources (especially for feeding) and limit the ability of a prince to care for his vassals. It's also a means of keeping rivals from amassing legions of newly created vampires as shock troops. The right to sire is often given as a gift for loyal service or to obtain favors from another Cainite. Vampires who create without permission face the destruction of their childer and perhaps their own. Because it can be impossible to monitor who is siring, many sires send their childer away until the time is right. Princes must deal harshly with those who are caught, lest their subjects begin to question their authority.

**The Fourth Tradition: Accounting**

*"Those thou create are thine own blood until released from thy charge. Until that moment, their sins, their blood and their punishments are thine."*

This Tradition warns Cainites to choose their potential childer with care and demands that sires both educate and protect their childer. To do otherwise brings a

penalty — the sire pays for her childe's indiscretions. Those sires who use too free a hand with their childer eventually face the wrath of the prince. Some sires seek to avoid this by forcing their childer to take the blood oath, thus guaranteeing loyalty and obedience. The Fourth Tradition also institutes a custom of presenting the childe to the prince for approval. The prince decides if the childe is worthy to join the Cainites or if she should be destroyed. Some princes keep their vassals in check by granting the right of Embrace, then destroying the childe, citing improper tutelage.

**The Fifth Tradition: Destruction**

*"Forbidden art thou to spill the blood of another of thy kind who is elder. This right belongs only to the closest to me and none other. It is forbidden for those of weaker blood to rise against their elders. This is my final covenant."*

Princes guard the Fifth Tradition jealously, the better to keep their vassals in line and deal with troublemakers. This right is the final pillar of a prince's authority — the prince may punish any offense with the Final Death. In the Dark Medieval, the prince may confer this right upon his sheriff or warmaster as a gift, the better to enforce the prince's rule. Princes are generally cautious about destroying the vassal of another lord or prince. While some do not pause, the more careful send the offender back to her own lord for punishment. If the offender is not dealt with, it could be grounds for war.

**The Sixth Tradition: The Silence of the Blood**

*"Never shalt thou reveal thy true nature to those not of the blood. Doing so shall renounce thy claims to my covenant."*

Cainites depend on a certain amount of secrecy and deception to keep their nocturnal realms secure from the mortals around them. Most medieval mortals know that there are things stalking in the night, but they generally prefer to avoid them, mostly out of a lack of knowledge of how to deal with them. Should humankind fully understand the weaknesses and customs of Cainites and realize how fully the Cainites had infiltrated their society, a great purge could be possible. Princes enforce the Silence of the Blood with varying degrees of strength. Some hold it sacrosanct, especially in large cities. In other places, it receives lip service and little else. Some vampires attend mortal courts and rule openly through terror, but they do not last long before the Church arrives. Generally, Cainites allow manifestations that keep the mortals cowed, but they ban those that would bring organized resistance.

## Crime and Punishment

Princes rule through the Lextalionis, the vampire law set down by Caine and described in the Traditions. It is rooted in Biblical tradition: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Those who break the law are slain. With Lextalionis, a prince may strip a Cainite of domain, exile him or order his destruction for the most grievous offenses. Any Cainite may invoke Lextalionis to air a grievance, but only the prince can enforce it. A prince who abuses Lextalionis may find herself victim of her own punishments, so she must walk a fine line between strict justice and leniency. It is the privilege of the prince to decide how strictly she will interpret the law, what constitutes an offense, the guilt of the accused, and the style and severity of punishment

**The Blood Hunt**

The blood hunt is a death sentence that few escape. The prince must formally announce the hunt, and the accused has until midnight to leave the city. Once the hunt is called, any vampire may hunt and destroy the accused, though the sheriff usually leads the hunt. Some princes offer rewards to the vampire who destroys the offender, and choice prizes such as domain can inspire the formation of a lynch mob. Regardless of her actual guilt, the accused vampire will find very few to help her. Anyone caught aiding and abetting the fugitive is considered an accomplice and will likewise be hunted.

Blood hunts are traditionally called only in extreme cases, as once called, they cannot be stopped. Political enemies are the most common targets, but anyone who crosses the prince may find herself targeted.

**Branding**

Minor infractions (theft or trespassing in domain) are punished with branding, which makes their crimes visible to all. The guilty party receives a mark burned into the face, arms or somewhere visible, which is then rubbed with salt to slow healing. A severe infraction might see the brand reapplied every few weeks to prevent it from fully healing.

**Exile**

Some crimes are not serious enough for the blood hunt, but serious enough to deny the Cainite the protection of the city and prince. Such vampires, called Autarkis, are branded and cast out of the domain. Without rights or protection, many Autarkis are considered fair game for hunting. Others fall prey to Lupines while trying to survive in the wild. The luckiest find their way to bands of outlaws called the Furores.

**Ordeals**

In an ordeal — a borrowing from mortal society — a prince might allow the offending Cainite to prove her innocence by enduring a challenge. Most are designed to be more entertaining to the court than fair to the Cainite on trial. Mortal society believes that those who are innocent will survive through the grace and aid of God. Innocence rarely plays a part in Cainite ordeals. The most common types involve trial by combat (frequently given to princes and elders), ordeal by fire (seizing a ring from a blazing fire, forced to walk across hot coals), test of the Beast (being hung in a cage and denied sustenance; those who frenzy are destroyed), and purifying light (forced to endure the rising sun for a set period).

## The Kingdoms of Night

Cainite society has found its fullest feudal flowering, which vampires call Feudal Lextalionis. This is at the heart of the War of Princes. The system is tied closely to the Road of Kings, which is concerned with proper distribution and maintenance of authority. Not all rulers follow the Road of Kings, but they at least pay it lip service with the help of knowledgeable advisors. Unlike mortal nobility, gender is no barrier to power — men and women alike fill every rank. The occasional foolish male Cainite might cling to his mortal conceptions of the "gentler" sex, but he usually does not last long.

While the High Clans enjoy many benefits of Feudal Lextalionis, the Low Clans are not so fortunate. They rarely receive the same treatment that High Clans are routinely given. It is possible for a Low Clan vampire to rise in the ranks, but

she must work twice as hard and endure a lot of suspicion and second-guessing from her superiors. The low-blooded are more likely to receive a posting at court that carries no noble rank. Still, the War of Princes has begun to blur the lines between the High and Low Clans. Some low-blooded vampires have distinguished themselves on the battlefields, winning title and domain for themselves.

• Monarchs — Monarchs are the regents of Cainite kingdoms that span across Europe and into Outremer. Most are Methuselahs, and all were once lords who grew powerful in the years between Rome's fall and the end of the Long Night. In the War of Princes, monarchs goad lords and princes into battle, seeking to expand their domains and secure their uncertain futures. Some monarchs prefer to rule in secret, while others, such as Hardestadt of Germany, are not shy about appearing, the better to inspire their lords.

• Lords/Ladies — Lords and ladies command vast armies of princes, barons and knights and rule territories that run along similar borders to medieval kingdoms. Most lords hold their own courts once or twice a year, spending the rest of the time traveling to their vassals' courts, settling disputes, and attending ceremonies.

• Princes — "Prince" is a generic title for any vampire with domain over a significantly large and strategically valuable territory that is tied to the feudal system. Princes who ruled fiefdoms before the First Crusade are called counts or dukes to distinguish them from the younger princes of these nights.

• Barons/Baronesses — These are the Cainites of action, usually the officers of princes and lords. Barons and baronesses serve as sheriffs, warmasters, chamberlains and the like, posts that have been granted to them due to their talents and services. With enough good service, a baroness may eventually earn her own fiefdom and become a prince.

• Knights — The lowest-ranked Cainites, but also some of the most important. It is they who fill the armies of night and clash on the battlefields of the War of Princes. Many serve as spies or messengers for their lords, or they might be granted small domains to test their worth. Knights are usually low-ranked vampires who have proven themselves worthy and sworn fealty to a baron or prince. Knighthood is still a noble rank and one that puts a vampire in the chain of vassalage. The knights are the most likely to leave only their ashes on the battlefields, but they have just as much opportunity to gain domains as spoils of war.

### Fealty

Feudal Lextalionis is governed by a network of oaths and alliances that tie the courts of Europe to their lords and the monarchs, called fealty. When one vampire acknowledges another as her superior through fealty, she makes a pledge of loyalty in return for protection and support. This chain ties the nocturnal nobility from the knights to the monarchs.

In swearing fealty, the vassal — knight, prince or lord — offers loyalty and support (political and military) to his liege. He vows never to attack his liege, although the War of Princes has seen this last vow dropped occasionally. In return, the liege may grant the vassal a domain to rule, the size based on his rank. Knights are given taverns or neighborhoods, while barons may rule larger estates or guilds. The liege also vows to protect the vassal in court and on the battlefield. The Traditions of Caine cement the rule of the liege, by allow him to protect and offer domain and gifts to his vassals, as well as give him authority to punish transgression. Many princes require that a tithe be paid as part of fealty, such as a percentage of the income a domain generates, or to raise an army of ghouls or vampires in time of war.

Princes are vassals to lords or monarchs, but the fealty is not as strict. Princes often hold fiefdoms that were bequeathed to them, or because they pay enough tithe to prevent the lord from invading them. Many princes ally themselves with a lord to present a united front against a mutual enemy, and rivals consider very carefully before starting a war with a prince who is allied with a lord or monarch.

## Sects

While feudalism dominates the Dark Medieval night, not all vampires rally under banners and crowns. Cainite society has always had its blood families and cults who gather vampires secretly in the shadows of princely thrones.

### The Inconnu

Many old, powerful Cainites of Rome simply vanished after its fall, apparently never heard from again. Rumor has it that these vampires lair beneath the cities, watching their younger brethren. Some attempt to guide them from afar into avoiding their mistakes, while others are vengeful and wish only for all to suffer as they did in Rome. Some believe that the sect was responsible in part for the fall of Constantinople. If so, then the sect has changed its tactics recently, deciding only to watch but not interfere. The Inconnu are also believed to be leading the preservation of old, precious manuscripts as the War of Princes rages. Most princes publicly discount the Inconnu as Cainite folk legends. Behind closed doors, though, they are less boastful.

### The Order of Bitter Ashes

Cainites of this order seek the redemption of God that Caine rejected so long ago. No one quite knows when the order began, but it has spread through Europe and the Middle East. The knights believe that it is their duty — a mandate from Christ Himself — to find and protect relics from falling into the wrong hands, be they Cainite or mortal. Some claim that the knights ride ghoul stallions and battle the infernal, while others tell that they have drunk Christ's blood and been freed from the Beast. Unfortunately, time has not been kind to the order, and its power is waning. Much of its holdings are in ruins due to the Crusades, the Albigensian Crusade, the *Reconquista* and Cainite squabbles. Its headquarters in Scotland stands fast, but who knows how long it will last? Many knights are being baited by princes into fighting their wars, lured by promises of relics. Still, the Ashen knights hold fast to their mandate and continue to search for and protect those worthy of God's redemption.

### The Furores

Wherever there are powerful people, there are malcontents and outlaws. The Furores are considered rebels and bandits, refusing to bow to the Traditions of Caine and the rule of the elders. Unlife should be a gift, not a shackle of eternal servitude, they say. Furores comprise vampires of both Low and High Clans who are not afraid to get their hands dirty by carving out kingdoms amid artisans, performers and laborers in the growing cities and middle class. Still, as outlaws

under Cainite rule, the Furores often face a nightly struggle to survive, whether in colonies outside the cities or in using the guilds to hide their movements.

### The Prometheans

This sect remembers and longs to re-create Carthage as it was before it fell into infamy. Naming themselves for the god who brought fire to humanity, these vampires want to enlighten both Cainites and kine in a "new Carthage." The sect has adherents from the High and Low Clans, who hope that targeting the lower classes and the new middle class will bring better results than trying to change the minds of elders. Prometheans have influence over the criminal elements of the cities as well as merchants and guilds.

### The Cainite Heresy

The Heresy is one of the worst stains upon the Dark Medieval. A strange brew of Gnosticism, early Christian thought, Cainite beliefs and outright lies, the Heresy has used blasphemous teachings, coercion and evangelism to spread across the Church and Europe. The cult's most influential priests, the Crimson Curia, lead the Heresy by setting doctrine and attempting to coordinate its movements. The Curia maintains that God's mark upon Caine shows that he was God's favorite, and since Caine was touched by God, his descendants should be treated as prophets and angels. The Heresy has slithered into the Catholic priesthood, and even influenced the Road of Heaven, sending would-be pious Cainites into a spiral of further damnation.

## The War of Princes

The fragile peace of the Long Night crumbles, and Cainites rally around the banners of their lords and princes, vying for power or in the name of long-held grudges. This "war" is first a conflict between a number of very powerful, very active Methuselahs. The princes, who control discrete domains, are considered the most valuable pawns — they may swear fealty to others, but their domains can still be usurped through force of arms, treachery or even from within if a prince can be persuaded to switch sides. As princes have the most to lose or gain, it has become their war.

War among Cainites is not new — the Second City, Carthage and Constantinople all bear witness. But like those conflicts, the War of Princes has overflowed, becoming a general state of strife. The war has spread across Europe and into Outremer. Even the most conservative Cainites must react or be swept into the pyres.

### Origins

The War of Princes had been brewing long before it received its name. Like all wars, it began with a series of smaller events that fanned the flames into what now rages in Europe — a withdrawal of support here, a conflict there. But many point to the slaying of Saulot as having perhaps the greatest impact. Almost overnight, Tremere changed the Cainites forever, and even the Antediluvians shuddered in their sleep. Never before had one of the Ancients fallen, and the event continues to have repercussions in the Dark Medieval.

The rise of the Tremere was soon followed by the rising of several Methuselahs from torpor. While some had remained active through the Long Night — Michael of Constantinople and Montano of Sicily could be noted — even more began to rise, stirred by mortal events. The Ventrue Methuselah Mithras awoke following the Norman Conquest of 1066. When the First Crusade took Jerusalem in 1096, Caliph Jamal of the Assamites called on his clan to push back the European vampires who came with the crusaders. Montano exerted influence over his Christian clanmates in Iberia to expel the Moorish vampires from the peninsula, beginning a "Shadow *Reconquista*." High Lord Hardestadt of Germany moved east into Tzimisce lands to acquire domains for the Holy Roman Empire. French Toreador, perhaps in response to France's position between two powerful Ventrue in England and Germany, withdrew support from the Ventrue prince of Paris. Some Methuselahs preferred to remain in the shadows to make their moves. All created new kingdoms from the princely domains that had been part of the Long Night. As each bumped against the other, old rivalries were rekindled and new ones begun. The Fourth Crusade proved the final spark to set things blazing.

The sack and destruction of Constantinople by the mortal crusaders was devastating enough, serving no interests beyond those of greedy Venetian traders and petty French nobles. For the Cainites, things were far worse — no faction could seem to influence the crusaders, no matter what measures were tried. The loss of Toreador Methuselah Michael the Archangel and many of his powerful subjects only deepened the loss and chaos.

The debacle that would be called the Bitter Crusade was nothing unusual on its own — empires had risen and fallen before, vampires had met Final Death before — but the current tensions put things in a different light. The mortal herd was growing angry enough to turn on the vampires, and that *no one* was completely safe. Michael, a powerful Methuselah, had been reduced to ash. If a vampire wanted to survive this coming time, he needed to cement his power and move against his enemies before they could move against him.

### Fields of Battle

The fronts of the War of Princes are many and various — some subtle, some obvious. The last 40 years have seen a distinct change in the intensity of conflict. Where Cainites were once content to use mortal cat's-paws, honeyed words and political intrigues, they now marshal nocturnal armies. The time for the subtlety of the Long Night has largely passed. The games are now a shadow war of murder and betrayal.

The term "vampire army" is misleading, though. The largest vampiric force on the battlefield rarely holds more than a few dozen Cainites, but they can bring great destruction. Add to them thralls, ghouls and mortal cat's-paws, and one has the makings of a true army. For every prince who leads troops in the field, there are five more who host ambassadors at their courts and make new alliances every night.

The following are the most active fields of conflict:

### The Crusades

Each new crusade brings more and more Cainites into its grasp, despite its initial appearance as a mortal concern. The Fourth Crusade marched on Constantinople, the Fifth travels to Damietta (Egypt) and the Sixth goes to

Jerusalem. In Europe, the Albigensian Crusade hunts the Cathars in France, and the Livonia Crusade sends German knights into Prussia and the Baltic to battle the pagans of the East. Some Cainites attempt to ride the wave of whatever the crusade brings, while others use the battles to claim domain and hunt enemies, which leads to retaliation. The rest must deal with armies marching across their domains and shifting borders.

### The Eastern Marches

Ever since mortal magi used Tzimisce blood to change themselves into the vampiric Clan Tremere, the *voivodate* of Eastern Europe has made it their mission to wipe out the usurpers. Called the Omen War, their campaign has shown no sign of surcease, and 200 years of fighting has only deepened the hatreds on both sides. The Tremere seek out allies, using the Fiends' traditional isolation against them, and they have found that many princes are quite willing to offer covert support in exchange for a little blood magic.

The Omen War has provided a great deal of fuel for the fire of the War of Princes. Tzimisce and Tremere envoys across Europe play games of cat-and-mouse while lords of other clans try to take advantage of the situation. The Ventrue of Germany and Hungary see things as the chance to make greater inroads into traditional Tzimisce territory in Prussia and Livonia. Rumor even whispers that other mortal wizards are joining the fight or using the chaos to cover their own activities.

### The Inquisition and the Cainite Heresy

The Albigensian Crusade, aimed primarily at destroying the Cathar heresy, is but the first glance of a greater papal directive to hunt all threats against the Church. In 1230, what will become known as the Inquisition has not yet fully appeared, but Cainites are reporting shadow operatives who are apparently the foot soldiers of this coming wave. Ranging from monks and laity to knights of holy orders, they seemed to be armed with faith and some impressive powers and resources.

The Cainite Heresy blends Gnostic tradition with Cainite apocrypha, and it worries about the Church's hunt for heretics. The involvement of the Heresy's Archbishop Narses in the Fourth Crusade has only further convinced princes and ashen priests that the Heresy must be destroyed. Not all do so for benevolent reasons — many are envious of the Heresy's wealth and power. But those who prepare to move against the Heresy are aware of the depth of its influence and power The Crimson Curia, which leads the Heresy, has become divided by the Fourth Crusade, and the sect suffers internal strife.

### The Shadow Reconquista

Al-Andalus, the last Muslim stronghold in Europe, stands against the combined might of the Christian kingdoms of Aragon, Castile-Leon, Navarre and Portugal. Cordoba and Seville suffer the brunt of attacks, but Granada braces for its turn. Despite the troubles, al-Andalus continues to remain a center of learning and the domain of many Muslim Cainites. But while the mortal kingdom of Spain struggles to reunite, the *Reconquista* is tearing the Lasombra apart. Divided over which side to support, the Moorish and Christian Lasombra fall into undeclared civil war.



### The Low Clans

Ignored and spat on, the Low Clans are beginning to plan their move against the arrogant High Clans. While princes look elsewhere, preoccupied with the War of Princes, members of the Low Clans grow their own power as bandit kings and guildmasters. Many are members of the Prometheans and Furores, and they whisper of a great revolt that is apparently in the making against the High Clans.

## Lexicon

Cainites use a variety of terms to define aspects of their existences, especially ones that they could not have imagined as mortals. What follows are some of the most common.

**Amaranth, the**: The act of destroying another Cainite by drinking his blood to the point of death and then assimilating something of his spirit.

**ancilla**: A vampire between 100 and 200 years old; considered an "adolescent," as he is no longer a neonate, but not yet an elder (pl. *ancillae*).

**Antediluvian**: A vampire who survived the Great Flood, one of the Third Generation.

**ashen priest**: A vampire who offers instruction on one of the Roads of Enlightenment, especially one who teaches on the Road of Heaven.

**Autarkis**: A vampire without status in Cainite society and barred from all domains.

**Beast, the**: The instinctual, destructive drive that creates the most basic effects of vampirism, such hunger for blood and fear of fire. Many Cainites struggle to control this drive, considering it a devil and hindrance in their nightly existence.

**Becoming, the**: The act of changing into a vampire.

**Bitter Crusade, the**: The Cainite struggles that followed the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204). The conflicts began the War of Princes.

**blood oath**: A supernatural loyalty created when anyone drinks the blood of a vampire three separate times. This can be performed on a vampire or mortal.

***Book of Nod, The***: A collection of texts supposedly detailing the earliest nights of Cainite existence and the story of Caine. Many consider it to be a sort of Cainite Bible.

**Cainite**: A vampire, one descended from Caine, the first murderer.

**Caitiff**: A vampire without clan affiliation, due to an anonymous Embrace, banishment or very weak blood. They are considered to be lower than dust in Cainite society.

**childe**: A vampire's created progeny. Also, one who has not been released from her sire's responsibility or presented to the prince.

**clan**: One of the 13 vampiric families founded by an Antediluvian. Clans share certain aspects, such as Disciplines or weaknesses.

***consanguineous***: A vampiric lineage, especially that of sire and childer.

**coterie**: A group of vampires who work together to accomplish some task, such as maintaining a large domain.

**Damned, the**: Vampires.

**diablerie**: Another term for the Amaranth.

**Discipline**: A supernatural power that comes with the change to vampirism, such as great speed or strength, communion with wild beasts or the ability to cloud others' perceptions.

**domain**: A fiefdom claimed by a vampire. Tradition holds that the vampire has the right to feed in his domain and gains other powers of authority.

**domitor**: A vampire who feeds blood to a mortal in order to ghoul her.

**elder**: A very powerful vampire at least 300 years old.

**Embrace, the**: The act of changing a mortal into a vampire by draining her of all her blood, then feeding some back to her at the point of death.

**Erciyes Fragments, the**: A collection of fragments found at the Cappadocian temple of Erciyes in Anatolia, supposedly an apocrypha of *The Book of Nod*, or perhaps another version altogether. Caine supposedly penned some of these.

**fledgling**: A newly created vampire.

**Gehenna**: The night that the Antediluvians will rise and devour their descendants. The vampire equivalent of the Biblical apocalypse.

**generation**: A measure of how far a vampire is removed from Caine — thus a ninth-generation vampire is eight steps removed from Caine. The lower a vampire's generation is, the more powerful her blood is and the more powerful she can become.

**ghoul**: A mortal (human or animal) who has drunk vampiric blood and been granted a measure of the vampire's power, such as ceasing to age and a little bit of her supernatural abilities.

**Golconda**: A legendary state in which much of the vampiric curse is alleviated, including the hunger for blood. It is now considered a lie promulgated by devious pagans.

**haven**: Where a vampire sleeps or finds shelter.

**kine, the**: A contemptuous term referring to mortals. Its original meaning is "cattle."

**Kiss, the**: A vampire's blood-drinking, which creates an unnatural ecstasy in mortals. Occasionally used to mean the Embrace.

**Lextalionis**: Vampire law, based on the Traditions (and traditions) of Caine. European Lextalionis is feudal in nature, but it also emphasizes the Biblical concept of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

**lineage**: A vampire's family tree, traced from sire to childe.

**Long Night, the**: Considered the period lasting from the fall of Rome to the burning of Constantinople.

**lord**: A vampire with a vast domain and several princes as vassals. Some are independent, but most are vassal themselves to a monarch.

**Lupine**: A werewolf.

**Methuselah**: A vampire of the Fourth or Fifth Generation. Very few are active on a nightly basis, as they frequently slip into long periods of torpor.



**monarch**: The most powerful vampire in the European feudal system, one who rules a domain the size of a mortal kingdom, with princes and lords as his vassals.

**neonate**: A young vampire, usually not more than 25 years from her Embrace. Once she is presented to the prince and released from her sire, she is considered a full member of Cainite society in spite of her "youth."

**Old Ways, the**: The Traditions of Caine and the body of Cainite law. The Lextalionis.

**prince**: The leading vampire in a region, such as a city or country. Prince is the most common and traditional term, but duke, earl and queen are also used to convey a particular sense of status.

**progenitor**: A vampire who founded a recognized line of vampires; the Antediluvians are the progenitors of their clans.

**regnant**: A vampire who holds another in the blood oath

**revenant**: One of a ghoul family born with vampiric blood in her veins. Clan Tzimisce breeds revenant families as servants and soldiers.

**road**: A Cainite system of belief and behavior that keeps the Beast in check and allows a vampire to exist without devolving into bestial urges. There are five major roads currently followed by the majority (Road of the Beast, Road of Heaven, Road of Humanity, Road of Kings, Road of Sin) and many smaller paths. Sometimes called a road of enlightenment or a *via* (pl. *viae*).

**sire**: The vampire who Embraced another, or the act of Embracing another.

**Thaumaturgy**: Literally "the making of miracles," it is a form of blood-magic practiced by the former magi-turned-vampires of Clan Tremere. Thaumaturgy's power and versatility grants the small clan a potent weapon.

**Third Mortal, the**: Caine.

**thrall**: One who is bound to a vampire by the blood oath.

**Traditions of Caine, the**: The six laws of Cainite culture that structure their society. They are Covenant, Domain, Progeny, Accounting, Destruction and the Silence of the Blood. Sometimes they are simply the Traditions or the Old Ways.

**vessel**: A source of blood, especially a human.

**vitae**: Blood, especially vampire blood.

**War of Ages, the**: Called the *Jyhad* in the Middle East, this is the legendary battle between the Antediluvians, said to be fought through subterfuge and slow moves.

**War of Princes, the**: The war among the Cainite princes of Europe. While monarchs are the ultimate leaders, princes and lords do battle on many fronts on a nightly basis.



*Four years earlier, Hauknefr had found himself in a new city and a new court. He felt distinctly uncomfortable without his sword at his side, but knew that such would have been out of place here. He trusted his boot dagger would remain undetected. He'd spent too long preening for this evening.*

*Kalen — his brother in arms; the Cainite who had invited him to this city — gave him an encouraging grin. "Salvatini's no worse than any other prince you might have met in your travels. Hard of mind, hard of behind."*

*"So just toe the line as usual, eh?"*

*"Indeed. He's as liberal as the next prince!" They both laughed, then Kalen fell into thought for a moment. "He's been pre-occupied since the death of his sire. I heard that others of his lineage had died in the last century also. No wonder he's cautious when choosing those who might sit near him in authority. Many of the others here could care less about authority over the other vampires, but there are, as you know, always those who will vie for position. Most are more concerned with their reputations or their personal properties. On the whole, it's a quiet city, which I enjoy. More time to talk with the scholars who travel through here, rather than worrying about sniping with some Toreador."*

*"You always were more a man of words than of action, Kalen."*

*"Yet I still survive, do I not? Don't undervalue verbal sparring, brother." Kalen smiled. "Go. You have the protection of the prince — at least until you decide to get stupid and discard it." He waved Hauknefr into the hall.*

*Cainites clustered in small groups, whispers and murmurs echoing through the arched structures of the estate at which they had gathered. In an ostentatious show of wealth, the place contained a number of contemporary paintings from England and France, as well as several examples of ancient earthenware from much of the world. As Hauknefr walked away from Kalen, he overheard a retainer assuring his master that he would soon be in receipt of more exotic pieces from the east, some that supposedly dated back to the time of Christ. The retainer's master looked up sharply at Hauknefr and briskly chased to his heel and barked, "Sir!"*

*Hauknefr stopped short and turned. "Sir?" he asked. Others had turned at the sudden raising of voices.*

*The well-heeled dandy of a man was a Spaniard, impeccably garbed in silk finery. He looked his target over. "You're new in town, aren't you? In civilized cities, it is normally considered polite to greet one's host."*

*"I see. Thank you for informing me. Get him for me, will you? There's a good lad."*

*The Spaniard visibly restrained his anger and said through gritted teeth, "I am Paulo Alberto Rodriguez de la Peña, and I, sir, welcome you to my estate."*

*"And I, sir, am Hauknefr. You'll forgive my lack of a long name. Such a one as yours would, I fear, bear me down too much in my travels."*

*Somewhere in the shadows just out of a mortal's earshot, someone applauded softly and sank back into an alcove.*

# Chapter Two: Clans and Bloodlines

The Embrace into the Endless Darkness is a traumatic experience. Becoming a vampire ends old ties to family, friends and, in many cases, faith. These ties are quickly replaced with the new family of blood and clan. The Curse of Caine forges bonds stronger than those of life with blood literally being thicker than water. Blood conveys a history, a heritage and an inheritance for the supernatural powers passed down from the clan founders. Acceptance of the childe into the new family is vitally important, as the clan is the only safe place for a new vampire to learn and grow during these times. Each clan confronts the world in a completely different manner, suited to the histories and legacies that the clan has created for itself and continues to fashion in the future.

## The High Clans

Through the centuries, Cainite society has mirrored the evolution of the mortal civilizations around it, albeit more darkly, warping principles as necessary to fit its own needs. Like mortal society, Cainite society insists that some are more fit to rule, indeed *destined* to rule. Those clans with a propensity for rulership — through exerting influence, dominating those around them, or outright enslavement — are known as the High Clans. In the Dark Medieval, six clans have embraced the feudal system of the era — Brujah, Cappadocian, Lasombra, Toreador, Tzimisce and Ventrue. Cainite feudalism is based on the mortal variety — a vassal swears fealty to a lord or lady, who swears in turn to protect and care for the vassal and provide stability and security within the domain. The Traditions of Caine lend themselves to this overall political establishment, but with the constant intrigues of Cainite society, this stability is even more strained than that of the mortal city-states around them.

Loyalty within the Cainite feudal system is based on a constant re-evaluation of power and oaths of fealty. Cainites are willful, independent monsters who need the constant attention and assurances that the feudal system has allowed to foster on the surface. The High Clans have accepted and integrated this feudal structure the most, and many hold positions of power throughout Europe. These clans are the first to support and defend the feudal system, knowing that the legitimate path to power lies within and that their rise will eventually come.

Moreover, these High Clans seem to benefit the most from the gifts of Caine and lack the extreme curses that the Low Clans suffer from. Some even claim that their clans were somehow blessed by Caine, destined to be his successors by their legitimate Embraces and great deeds, whereas the Low Clans were cursed for foul deeds (such as murdering their progenitors, or having mongrel blood).

## The Low Clans

The feudal system assumes that rulers are supported by vassals and peasants who exist to serve and maintain their lords. These are generally garnered from the remaining clans. These Low Clans comprise the Assamites, Followers of Set, Gangrel, Malkavians, Nosferatu, Ravnos and Tremere. The Low Clans do not wholly fall into the role of vassal, but they exist outside of the feudal system for a variety of reasons. Whatever the reason, it is this lack of acceptance that puts them toward the outside.

The extremes of the Curse of Caine, which often risk the Silence of the Blood, contribute to some of the Low Clans being ostracized from the mainstream. A Nosferatu's hideous visage prevents even casual inclusion in general society. The mad outbursts and disturbing behavior of the Malkavians are not fit for courtly life. The Gangrel freely scorn the trappings of civilization, and their bestial features only serve to remind civilized Cainites of the Beast that lies beneath their own hearts.

Other Low Clan vampires are seen as foreigners and do not permanently belong within the domains of Western European society, especially when such foreigners are seen as the causes for crusades and other miseries. The Assamites and their associations with Muslims are alien, if not outright heathen, to European Cainites. The Ravnos, linked with the Roma Gypsies of India, have no established homeland and little to commend them, except as thieves and cozeners. The Followers of Set claim that they are not even Cainites but descendants of a dark pagan god, which is heresy among Cainites of many stripes. The Tremere are viewed with extreme distrust due to their questionable origins and command of blood magic. Indeed, many Cainites believe that they should be culled as aberrations.

Even with their status as pariahs, many of these Low Clans seek to gain influence and advantage just as their "higher" brethren do, but they do so in their own ways and places. Only the young or foolish believe that the divide between high and low is set in stone. Individual achievement holds more sway than pedigree, and several princes across Europe and Outremer are Cainites of the Low Clans. In some places, those clans who hold the greatest sway are not necessarily the high-born (as the Ashirra of the Levant would happily point out), and elders recall times in history when some High Clans were treated as foreigners and scoundrels.

### The Seventh High Clan

Many in the High Clans hark back to their lineage in the Second City, and some recall that a seventh High Clan once held a position of respect and power there. The Salubri was one of the original founded clans, led by the Antediluvian Saulot. In recent times, this clan of fierce warriors and mystic healers has almost completely vanished, and no one quite seems to know why. Rumors range from the clan being infernalists, to the destruction of their founder at the hands of the upstart Tremere clan. Although this last is scoffed at by the young, the swift rise in the Tremere's fortunes has a number of elders watching them very carefully.

The overall cause of such a ruinous fall is unclear, but like all great things, time will either expose the truth for all to see or bury it completely in legend.

## Advantages and Disadvantages

Each clan carries certain particular strengths and weaknesses, gifts (or curses) from Caine and their founders. These characteristics pass from sire to childe. In some rare instances, these characteristics do not manifest fully, but a childe generally holds the same potential as the sire (limited, of course, by weaker generation).

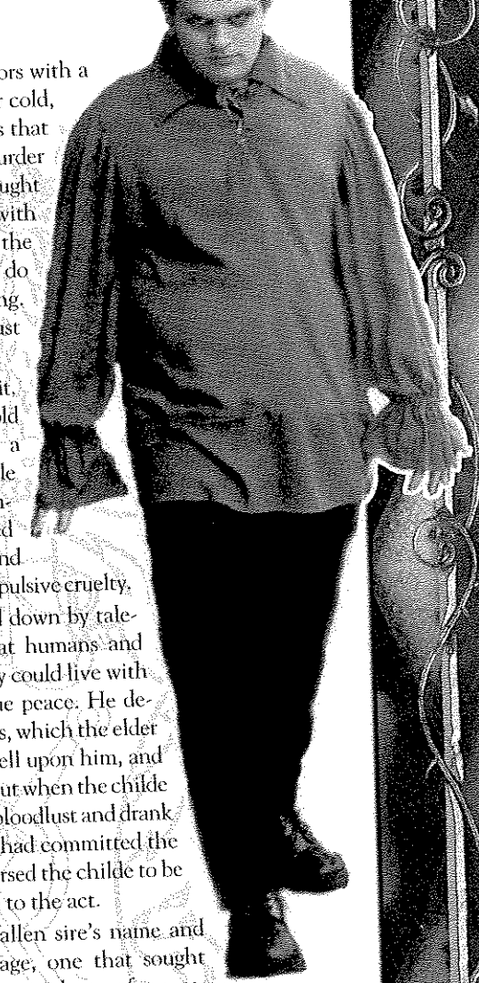
Bound together by blood, each clan member shares certain predilections. Though the Curse of Caine bestows a wide range of capabilities, the specialized powers of vampires manifest in different propensities among the clans. Thus, each clan or bloodline has three Disciplines, powers that are most common among members of that line and that come more easily than others. Conversely, each clan also passes on certain weaknesses and frailties to its childer. This effect might manifest as faults in personality, temperament or disposition. In others, more mystical traits or even physical alterations appear. These weaknesses often tie to some apocryphal story of the clan's founder, usually some personal failing or a curse bestowed by Caine.

Many Embraces happen because a potential vampire shares certain predilections of temperament or knowledge with her would-be clan, so therefore, most vampires of a clan share certain abilities or benefits. As a result, a vampire's clan offers particular advantages that are common to all members. Even those individuals who are Embraced outside of a clan's normal range are instructed or assisted quickly in developing these benefits. It is always the choice of the individual whether or not to follow such direction.

Clan advantages and disadvantages can never be bought off with Experience, permanently altered or negated through Merits or Flaws. Most Cainites would not dream of tampering with them anyway. To do so would be to flout the natural order of things — Cainite society, Caine, even God.



## Brujah



The Brujah are warriors, but always warriors with a cause. The fierce heat of passion burns in their cold, dead breasts, driving them to champion causes that will improve the world around them. Caine's murder of his brother and the subsequent horrors it wrought must be corrected. Every Brujah's heart blazes with a vision of some cause that she seeks to bring to the world — justice, cleansing, peace — and she'll do whatever it takes to bring that cause into being. Debate, manipulation or force of arms are just some of the clan's means to their end.

Such passion was not always a Brujah trait. Troile, the clan founder, was chosen for his cold reasoning, valued for his ability to consider a problem without the taint of emotion. What little emotion he did possess, however, withered completely as the nights passed. He performed "experiments" to test his pet social theories and whims, using Cainites and mortals alike with repulsive cruelty.

One of his childer (his name not passed down by tale-tellers) had other plans — he believed that humans and vampires were not meant to be used, that they could live with an understanding of each other, if not a true peace. He demanded that Troile cease his foul experiments, which the elder dismissed with a sneer. The enraged childe fell upon him, and Troile could not withstand his childe's rage. But when the childe tasted Troile's blood, he was consumed with bloodlust and drank uncontrollably, until the elder was dust. He had committed the first diablerie. Enraged by the deed, Caine cursed the childe to be forever prey to the rage that had driven him to the act.

The new Antediluvian assumed his fallen sire's name and sought to remake the clan in a new image, one that sought betterment of the world through the passionate embrace of a cause. The clan responded enthusiastically, culminating in the creation of Carthage, a city where vampires and mortals lived alongside each other in full knowledge of the other, each benefiting the other. For some reason not quite known, though, Troile departed Carthage. Some claim he was disappointed by the rage that his clanmates sometimes fell to, which often destroyed their works. Carthage degenerated until the Baali were welcomed into its walls, resulting in so many terrible acts that finally the Cainites of Rome took it upon themselves to raze the city.

The failure of Carthage continues to both goad the Zealots into pursuing their causes (as a sign of how great things might be achieved) and rankle them (as a sign of their terrible failure, one that the other clans have not forgotten). The clan wants to do something, but what that something should be and how to go about

achieving it has been steadily splintering the clan. Elders and younger Cainites clash, sometimes violently, over the method the clan should follow. Elders prefer debate and observation, the better to determine how society falls before acting, while the youth heed the passion in their blood and demand action *now*, often through force of arms. Some youth, despairing that they will ever achieve their goals, simply throw themselves into endless combat, seeing only the latest battle as their sole passion.

The Brujah of the Dark Medieval come from across the stratum of humanity. Some followed religion or philosophy, others sought learning and scholarly works, while still others had skill at arms. Some never had the opportunities for these things, but they had the passion and zeal that many Brujah seek as marks of hidden greatness. Who knows who holds the true spark, the final answer, to at last shape the world into something worthy?

**Roleplaying Hints:** Change is your cause and passion your strength. You will do whatever it takes to bring your cause to fruition, the better to return the world to its first state of grace. You use whatever skills are at your disposal in whatever arena you are thrown into. Perhaps you manipulate the courts, perhaps you debate in the halls of learning, or perhaps you simply hope to beat into the thick skulls of your opponents. When you unite with your clan over a single cause, no one could hope to stand in your way. When the fight is over, though, you return to your cause with the same fury, no matter who is getting in your way.

**Disciplines:** *Celerity, Potence, Presence*

**Advantage:** Many Brujah often retain ties to their former lives, granting them two free Traits of *Allies* or *Contacts*.

Brujah band together more tightly than most clans in light of past defeats. If a brother or sister is in need and calls for aid, he or she can expect the other Brujah in the area to give assistance, regardless of personal feelings. Those who refuse risk the scorn and censure of the clan. The one who calls had best have a very good reason for doing so, lest he risk losing the aid of the clan.

**Disadvantage:** Brujah tempers are renowned for their fury, ready to boil over at a moment's notice. Although passion is lauded within the clan, others find it difficult to deal with the Brujah's emotional instability. Brujah suffer a two-Trait penalty on challenges to resist frenzy.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Kings, Heaven, Humanity.



## CAPPADOCIAN



For Cappadocians, their bloodlines are both philosophy and lineage. The vast majority of Cappadocians are fascinated with death and undeath — particularly with what remains when the soul leaves the body. Some were scholars in their mortal lives, while others were clergy or philosophers. The Embrace does not dull inquisitive natures, and Cappadocian minds are quite active in considering the metaphysical secrets of the night. The varied paths of their proprietary Discipline of *Mortis* reveal the manifestation of their obsessions.

The Graverobbers are much more than a handful of morbid curiosity-seekers. Some fought in the Crusades, while others studied the events from afar or in the middle of battle. The clan is not as political as some others, but its members' knowledge and contacts keep them valuable to the High Clans. The scholars among them prefer monastic libraries, graveyards and catacombs, the better to continue their studies, while the clan's few politically motivated members act as royal tutors or advisors to princes and kings (mortal and immortal alike).

The clan is believed to originate in Anatolia or Armenia; clan legends speak of shifting sands and subterranean cities under rolling plains. Its founder, Cappadocius, asks nothing of his childer, except that they continue the quest for knowledge into the undead state. History suggests that the clan was once more common, but some speculate that many Cappadocians are either in torpor or have immigrated to Outremer to continue their studies.

The Cappadocians revere the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, and they often meet in temples, libraries and universities to share what they've learned, from gossip to scripture. The clan's spiritual center is said to be the temple at Erciyes in Anatolia, where the fragments of *The Book of Nod* were collected and where the Erciyes Fragments reside. Outsiders are not welcome to Erciyes, which leads some to doubt its existence. Cappadocian neonates claim to have heard stories about even older temples, buried under sands or housing necropoli older than many European cities.

The Cappadocians have Embraced a broad variety into their clan, the primary criteria being an abiding interest in death and a keen mind. Members have hailed from Moorish Spain, Persia, the Coptic settlements in Africa, the courts of the pashas and caliphs, and most recently across Europe, particularly in the city of Venice. The clan has been taking great interest in a merchant family called the Giovanni, who have been making great inroads in *nigrimancy*.

Most clans see the Graverobbers as unhealthy and secretive, which is often true. Their research requires long, patient research without interruption and vast quantities of dead flesh to work with. Many Cappadocians closet themselves for years to follow a single line of inquiry, leaving only to find sustenance and

experimental subjects (often the same thing). Though they are cold and very alien to many Cainites, they delve into mysteries few have the stomach to follow.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You have a fascination with death and undeath. Although many see this morbid curiosity as untrustworthy and unhealthy, you have found secrets into your condition that members of the other clans will never find out. Your appearance and alien thoughts prevent you from much interaction with mortals, but that does not matter since corpses and the dying yield more information than the living, and conversation can be quite tiresome. You are equally comfortable working in solitude or in debate with others to discuss the different paths of research and theories.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Auspex*, *Fortitude*, *Mortis*

**Advantage:** As scholars first and foremost, all Cappadocians gain one free Trait of *Health*, *Learning* or *Occult Influence* and an associated Ability of *Academics*, *Medicine* or *Occult*. Their reputations as scholars often admit them to just about any library.

**Disadvantage:** Cappadocians are forever cursed to look like corpses, with ghastly pallor and emaciated bodies, no matter how much blood they drink. They can never induce the appearance of life in themselves by spending blood, although blood may be spent normally otherwise. This disadvantage grows worse with age — many elder Graverobbers look like shrunken, unwrapped mummies. They suffer a one-Trait penalty on Social Challenges where their appearance is visible.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Heaven or Sins. The most spiritual (and morbid) members follow the Path of Bones (see **Laws of the Night**).



## LASOMBRA



The refined Clan of Shadows sees itself as first among equals, a superior bloodline among the High Clans. Whereas the Low Clans are meant to bear the burden of Caine's curse, the High Clans — led by the highest among them, of course — are the inheritors of his glory. The Lasombra embody Divine Right, and as such, they are the epitome of Cainite existence. While they will admit that each clan has its place in Cainite society, their place is meant to be above the rest. They have no equals among the clans.

Clan Lasombra has always been associated with the lands of the Mediterranean, where Lasombra himself was supposedly born and brought into unlife. Since then, the clan has spread outward into all the surrounding coastal lands, including the Byzantine Empire, Italy, Iberia and North Africa. On the isle of Sicily is the center of this dark empire, *Castel d'Ombro*, where their founder is said to lie in uneasy torpor. Many Lasombra make pilgrimage here to meet with the Cainite king of kings or his regent, Montano.

No matter where a Magister hails from or what faith she follows, she bears a tremendous lust for power in some form, from the cloisters to royal palaces. Some Lasombra believe that this lust is an outward sign of their internal struggles with the Abyss itself. Their powers of shadow and their own existences condemn them to be outlets of the Abyss, but if this is so, then undeath appears to more than mere hungers. So they seek to master this conflict, and in doing so, they often seek out both spiritual revelation and power in the Church, perhaps the greatest power of medieval Europe. The Church practically seethes with the clan and its mortal hands at all levels, and power in the Church often leads to power within the clan.

The spread of Islam through Iberia has created a great rift among the Magisters. Many Muslim Lasombra claimed vast domains in al-Andalus, igniting shadow wars with Christian clanmates already in residence. Even the clan's secret ruling council, the *Amici Noctis*, could not keep peace, as it was split internally due to religious differences. The *Reconquista* only added fuel to the fire. Christian Lasombra mounted a "Shadow *Reconquista*" against their Muslim counterparts, and recent mortal events have begun to turn the tide in their favor. Rumor claims that Montano has made secret accords with Muslim Lasombra, urging them to accept Christian victories and abandon Muslim allies in other clans in return for keeping their domains. If it's true, there are Muslims who reject these deals outright, no matter who they come from.

Whatever the clan's feelings are on Iberia, they are united in their hatred and crusade against the Cainite Heresy. The beliefs of the Heresy rankle even the most egotistical Lasombra. Lasombra Heretics comprise the majority of the Crimson Curia that rules the Heresy, and their blood and breeding has made them powerful, subtle leaders indeed. The Heresy has seen troubled times recently, though, and many pious Lasombra of many faiths are uniting to crush it once and for all.

Lasombra choose those of noble blood, the most likely to succeed, the best and brightest. Anything less would drag the clan into degradation, and those who cannot or will not measure up are excised quickly. They respect only excellence.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You were born of noble blood, and your family lineage is a matter of personal honor dating back generations and giving rise to your current station. Your Embrace only cemented this nobility, making you a first among equals. Born into wealth and privilege, your mannerisms reflect your continued dominance over your inferiors. Your clanmates respect you for your ancestry and your accomplishments as you respect their noble heritage.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Dominate, Obtenebration, Potence*

**Advantage:** As first among equals, Lasombra carry themselves with dignity that cannot be denied. Because of their imperial bearing and behavior, they gain a free Status Trait.

Lasombra were often members of the nobility or clergy in life, so they gain one free Trait of *Church*, *Learning* or *Political Influence*.

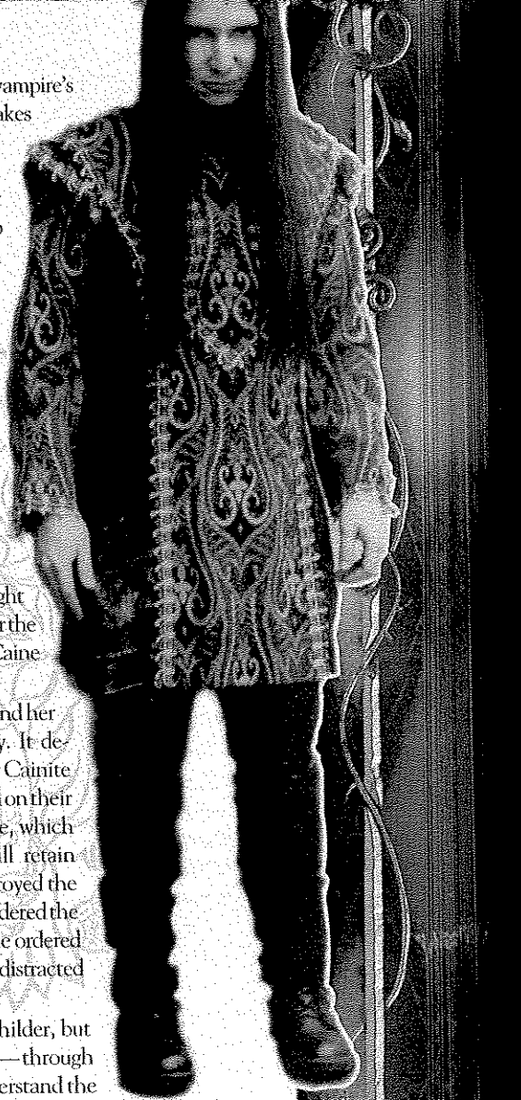
**Disadvantage:** Due in part to their association with shadows, Lasombra cannot be seen in mirrors or in other reflective surfaces, such as pools of water or quicksilver.

Additionally, the Lasombra's connection with shadow seems to affect their ability to deal with light. The touch of sunlight inflicts an extra level of aggravated damage.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Heaven, Kings. Some few walk the clan's own Road of Night (see **Laws of the Night**).



# TOREADOR



The moment of the Embrace marks the end of a new vampire's days as human. Each night of existing as an undead creature takes him further away from what he once was. He loses empathy, interest in the lives of others, even some of the things that perhaps endeared him to his sire. Toreador, however, fight to avoid this distancing. They believe that keeping up relations with mortals, understanding what makes them tick, helps them to rein in their Beast. One of the Second Generation believed so too, during the time of Enoch. He watched Father Caine, his own siblings and their childer all grow remote from the mortals as they became absorbed in their own affairs and abilities, despite living alongside mortals. Caine became frustrated in attempting to mediate the tensions between Cainites and mortals, mostly because he could no longer understand mortal concerns and views. His childe went to seek an answer and returned with Arikel, a mortal master sculptress, and set her to creating a piece for Caine, one that would describe the feelings and situation of the mortals in Enoch in a way that Caine might better understand. For almost two months she worked under the childe's direction. The work was completed at last, and Caine was called to see her triumph.

Arikel's work was indeed beautiful, but her subject and her rendering displeased both Caine and his childe greatly. It described God's curse upon Caine, the Beast that rode every Cainite and its hungers, and how mortals suffered the Beast's touch on their world. Neither vampire saw the culmination of the piece, which showed how Arikel believed that vampires might still retain something of their human souls. An enraged Caine destroyed the work and ordered his childe to drain the artist. As he considered the dying woman, though, he suddenly changed his mind. He ordered his childe to Embrace her, then cursed her to be forever distracted by beauty, to suffer for the art that had displeased him.

Arikel did suffer Caine's curse and pass it to her childer, but she remembered her work and passed its secrets to them — through the appreciation of beauty, the Toreador could still understand the human condition. Every time an Artisan sees an amazing work of art or something of great beauty (and a great many things qualify as beautiful), he feels a rush of the old emotions that the Embrace buried, a reminder of all that was good and pleasurable in life. For some, there is no greater pleasure in unlife.

The Artisans continue to move among mortals and society, courting the best craftsmen, sages and artists. Such work keeps the Toreador in touch with both what they were as mortals, and with the changing mortal world around them. Let other Cainites cling to their pasts, and see how much good it does them when they're still

wearing togas and speaking senatorial Latin! The Toreador's ties with the mortal world allow them to interact and adapt with the changing times.

The Church has long been a source of Toreador fascination, patronage and childer. Its continued growth is both threat and promise for the clan. Many Toreador become involved with the Church at some point during their unlives. Some were Embraced from the ranks of clergy, some patronize the art and scholarship that the Church preserves, and others see it as a potential source of redemption. Where they do not patronize the Church, the Artisans follow the noble courts, both vampiric and mortal. The Courts of Love continue to be one of their greatest achievements, particularly since what began as social gathers have now become one of the major power-players in the War of Princes.

Yet, for all their passion for beauty and art, the Toreador are still vampires. Patronage may well be a first step in manipulation, and two or more Toreador may claim areas of society to cultivate, then argue over who has made the greater contribution. Some claim that such manipulation grants greater insight into the human soul, but the games of aging Toreador seem to grant little revelation beyond suffering. Elder Toreador are usually jaded creatures who can experience pleasure and emotion only through proxy or with astonishing cruelties. The reactions of the subjects, they claim, are also part of the human experience.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You were chosen because you stand out, whether for your features or your skills. It is your duty and pleasure to raise the standards for all, to keep the world from becoming a sinkhole of ignorance and hardscrabble survival. You seek art and beauty in all its forms, and when you cannot find it, you create it somehow through patronage, through your own work, or simply your scintillating existence. Mortal life continues to fascinate you, and you hope through your work and interaction with mortals that you can find and keep some small spark of what you once were still burning within.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Auspex*, *Celerity*, *Presence*

**Advantage:** Toreador are masters of some art form, be it painting, sculpting or devastating social commentary. Even if one has no particular talent beyond her physical beauty, she quickly learns how to patronize the arts and make witty comments. All Toreador begin with two free Traits of *Academics*, *Crafts*, *Performance* or *Subterfuge* (any combination or two of one Ability).

Toreador tend to attract mortals more readily than other Cainites — some with their personalities, some with their abilities, some with their beauty. Consequently many Toreador have an easier time gaining blood. They may have *Herd*, but by expending the above-mentioned Abilities, they may gain a Blood Trait (*"I would be pleased to see your studio, monsieur…."*). Each Trait gained requires 15 minutes out of play and expending one level of Ability.

**Disadvantage:** Caine's pronouncement on Arikel continues to plague the clan, and all Toreador confronted with beauty risk distraction. This beauty may come in the form of a piece of art, a person, music, nature or even an intellectual idea. Whenever the vampire encounters a piece of artistic work created with *Crafts*, *Expression* or *Performance* at three levels or greater, or a person who strikes her fancy, she falls into a reverie of studying the work. This reverie can be broken by winning a *Self-Control/Instinct* Challenge against four Traits, by an attack (the vampire is considered to be surprised), or by the object leaving her presence.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Humanity, Kings.



## Tzimisce



No one seems to remember a time when the Tzimisce didn't lair in Eastern Europe. When the gods of Egypt warred among themselves, the Fiends were being worshipped as gods. When the Ventrue of Rome attempted to demand homage from the east, the Tzimisce simply took the legions and lackeys that had been sent and returned them with the messages inscribed on their flesh. Always, they ruled unopposed in the night, as they believed themselves born to do.

The clan's lorekeepers and sorcerers — the *koldun* — tell of how the Tzimisce himself left the Second City and his squabbling siblings behind, choosing to create his own dominion in the mountains of the lands that his childer would come to call home. They say he made pacts of blood with the old gods of the earth, creating kinship with the land and his lineage. Through these ties, the Tzimisce ruled their domains and served the old gods, offering blood-sacrifices to renew the earth, even giving of their own strength. For centuries, the Tzimisce have ruled unchallenged in their own lands. Until now.

The Dark Medieval sees the Tzimisce attacked from all side, both within and without their own camps. The rise of the Tremere as a vampiric clan — an event that occurred by the theft of Tzimisce blood and domain — has provoked a war the likes of which has not been seen since Carthage. The Germanic Ventrue take advantage of the clan's war with the Tremere, invading pagan enclaves in Lithuania and Livonia, and undermining Hungary with commerce. Within the clan, petty power squabbles and hereditary feuds sabotage attempts to unify against either foe, and the loss of *koldun* to such bickering means loss of precious old knowledge.

The Fiends would rather be tortured to insanity than admit any failings to those not of their blood, and they do not admit it to themselves even now. White-hot pride blinds them to their personal failures, including the fact that the forces

arrayed against them might actually defeat them this time. For them, unlife continues as it always has — elders rule the childer, childer scheme and serve to curry favor, and childer sire more childer who will be ruled by them in turn and scheme in the same way. Tzimisce values will not change, no matter what else might — respect for (and submission to) elders, personal honor, obeying the demands of the family, and deep devotion to the homeland.

The Tzimisce belong to the land like no one or nothing else ever has or ever will. Some call themselves the soul of the land, but ties of blood and earth will not suffice in the coming nights. Survival for the Tzimisce will mean yielding personal arrogance and ambitions beneath the hand of a single leader who can shape them as they shape themselves.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You were raised on the traditions of the old ways — honor, respect for the land, hospitality. You grew up understanding the responsibilities that awaited you, perhaps as a revenant child, or perhaps your sire saw something in you that bespoke the clan's ways. One night you were Embraced and given the sacred funeral rites, creating your bond to the earth. Your strength lies in your honor, your blood and your ties to the land; without them, you are nothing. You have no real ties left to your human life. Such things are for the weak, and the clan has inspired you to an altogether inhuman outlook.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Animalism, Auspex, Vicissitude*

**Advantage:** Tzimisce, as lords of the manor, carry great respect and are accustomed to the privileges of rank and title. Every Tzimisce gains either a *Court* or *Political Influence* Trait at character creation. Their deep ties to their pagan heritage and the old ways earn them a free *Occult* Ability.

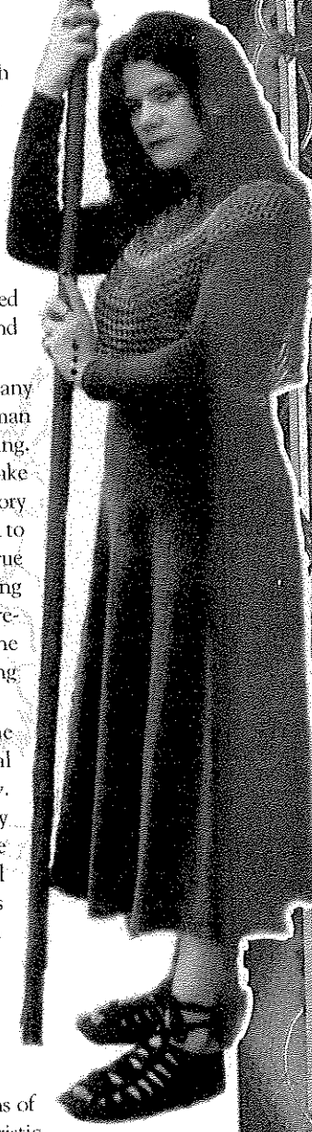
Tzimisce may keep revenants as *Retainers*. Revenant ghouls do not require regular maintenance with vitae, but they may be otherwise treated as normal ghouls. See Chapter Seven for more about the revenant families.

**Disadvantage:** The ties of blood and spirit to their homelands have run very deep in the Tzimisce soul. Every Tzimisce vampire must take her daily rest surrounded by at least two handfuls of soil from the land of her birth or her grave. Failing to do so causes the Tzimisce to suffer a two-Trait penalty to all challenges, and this penalty continues until the vampire rests in her native soil for at least eight hours.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Heaven, Kings. Some true monsters prefer the cult like Road of Metamorphosis (see **Laws of the Night**).



# Ventrue



At the end of all things will be a night when two armies face each other with drawn swords, and the battle that follows will determine who is saved and who is damned. Call it Gehenna or Armageddon, when it comes, the true warriors and knights — the Ventrue — will stand ready, willing and very able. These are not the empty words of Brujah braggadocio or some Low Clan whelp's posturing. The Ventrue are the king-makers and empire-builders of Caine, the noble warriors and knights who are descended from the first childe of Enoch, eldest of the Second Generation. They are destined to carry the burden and mantle of leadership, to unite Cainites and strengthen them to face what comes.

A history of warriorhood is not always a noble, epic saga. Many Ventrue identify with the late Roman Republic and early Roman Empire, seeing Julius Caesar as the exemplar of the warrior-king. The late empire, however, saw the Lasombra and Malkavians take over the reins of the Eternal City, and even their combined victory over the horror that Carthage had become is not quite enough to remove the stinging insult when other clans call the Ventrue "Patricians," after the inbred Roman noble caste. The Long Night that followed the fall of Rome brought no urge for empire-building, though skill at arms remained important. Without the battlefield, Ventrue chose other fields of honor, becoming guildmasters, courtiers and seneschals.

The War of Princes has changed everything, and the Ventrue feel their blood stir in an old, familiar way. Several elders gather armies and seek to claim kingdoms of shadow. Many Ventrue seek knighthood; a warrior-lord bound by honor and judged by his skill is their ideal made manifest. The clan even maintains orders of chivalry. When they call themselves Warlords, it is no empty boast. But the clan does not unite under a single banner. Many warriors clash with each other as often as they do outsiders, either under the banner of a Ventrue faction or in personal quarrels. Some have refused to return to warrior ways, if they ever were warriors, preferring to remain as merchants and courtiers.

The Ventrue splinter in several factions, each with its own ideals and goals. The Norman Ventrue follow Mithras of England, and are known as highly organized and very militaristic. Hardestadt of Germany seeks to draw power away from Paris and the Courts of Love, but the Courts of Love maintain position as a neutral ground where warring factions may come to deal. Merchant-princes build empires around systems of cooperative guilds and money-lending, to the consternation of traditional elders. Other warlords include the Arpad brood of Hungary (who have supposedly begun to adopt some Tzimisce customs) and freelancers who fight in Iberia under the Lasombra banners.

Regardless of their differences, certain traits are constant among Ventrue. All possess a sense of destiny to unite and protect Cainites from the coming apocalypse, honor and a personal nobility of spirit and bearing. Childer are chosen with care, and sires take great pride in grooming their offspring in the ways of war, rulership and power. Most childer are extensions of their sires' power and philosophy after such tending. Many Ventrue are Embraced from the ranks of nobility, maintaining their lineage as carefully as mortal nobles might. Others are chosen from powerful mortals, whatever their profession might be — military leaders, merchants, even knights of holy orders.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are among the elite of Cainites by dint of blood and duty. It is both your right and responsibility to lead the Cainites in preparation for the Final Nights and Gehenna. No other vampires have the talents or capabilities to lead or rule; it is all up to you and the clan. Whether you have skill of arms, monetary wisdom or intrigue and subterfuge, you lead in whatever you do, and others follow (if they are wise). Never forget that a good leader leads best by example; remember that when considering those around you.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Dominate, Fortitude, Presence*

**Advantage:** Ventrue have many connections, mostly made after their Embraces as they learn the ropes of power. All Ventrue gain one Trait of the *Resources* Background that can never be lost permanently. Additionally, all Ventrue gain one Trait of *Court* or *Political Influence*, indicative of their social standing and acumen.

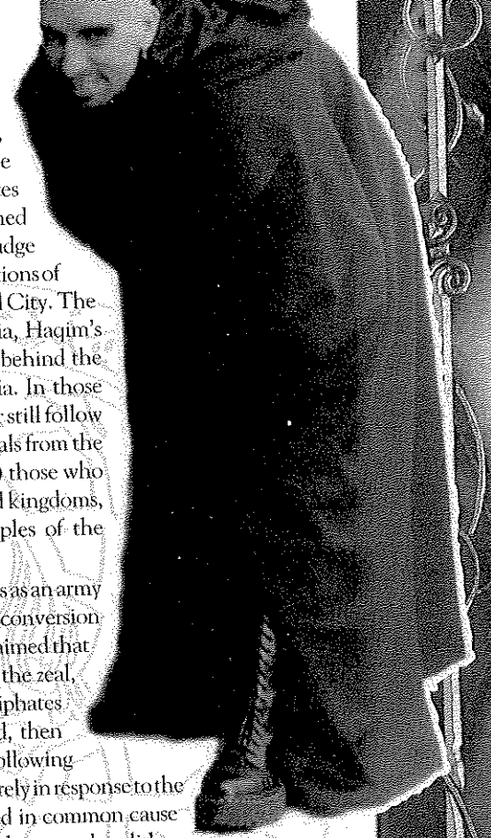
Ventrue believe in the feudal system quite thoroughly, and they are some of its staunchest supporters. Many Ventrue are in vassalage to lords, or they are liege lords themselves.

**Disadvantage:** Ventrue have such rarified tastes that they exclude all but one type of prey from their hunting, and they may only feed on mortal blood meeting from that dietary restriction. The prey type is chosen at the time of character creation, and might be Englishmen, Muslims, women, virgins, the clergy or the like. A Ventrue who feeds from a vessel that is not part of his exclusive prey reflexively regurgitates the blood, gaining no nourishment from it. This disadvantage can be suppressed long enough to create a childe, and it has no bearing on Cainite blood.

**Suggested *Viae*:** There are Ventrue on every major road, but they most strongly identify with the Road of Kings.



## Assamites



The Cainites of Europe know them as Saracens, fanatics, assassins and diablerists. They call themselves the Children of Haqim, and it is they who are the lords of the night in the Levant kingdoms and Outremer. While Cainites have disdained Haqim as a traitor who abandoned his siblings, Assamites recall him as a warrior-judge who turned against the squabbles and machinations of the rest of the Third Generation in the Second City. The Assamites trace their lineage to ancient Persia, Haqim's birthland, and claim to be the Cainite power behind the empires of Babylon, Assyria and Mesopotamia. In those nights, Haqim laid out the laws that his childer still follow — honor the eldest among them, protect mortals from the schemes of other Cainites, judge (and punish) those who are found lacking. With the collapse of the old kingdoms, the clan has associated with the tribal peoples of the Middle East, and through them with Islam.

Most European vampires see the Assamites as an army of zealots. Islam, however, was not an overnight conversion for the Children of Haqim. Clan leaders first claimed that the new faith violated the laws of Haqim, but the zeal, wisdom and unity that marked the early caliphates entranced many Assamites. The clan divided, then fractured, with some following Islam, others following older faiths. Some renounced their lineage entirely in response to the strife. Haqim's splintered childer finally united in common cause against the Baali, who had taken advantage of the quarrel to slither in, infecting the mortal herds and unwary Cainites with infernal practices. A bloody protracted shadow war followed, but the clan emerged more unified, if only to safeguard itself and its holdings against such further incursions. Most of the clan is now associated with Islam and the Muslim kine, but minorities call themselves Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian and other, more obscure faiths.

Faith is not the only difference among the Saracens. The clan is broken into three castes — warriors, sorcerers, viziers — each following Haqim's laws in their own way. Warriors have not always been the dominant caste, but the death of the Prophet Mohammed has brought the caste to prominence, and many are fiercely devoted to Islam. Sorcerers practice some of the oldest forms of blood-magic (or so they claim). Many use *kalif*, hashish that has been watered with blood which is smoked by mortals and their blood drunk by the sorcerers as a means of focusing their consciousness. Many sorcerers have developed mystical means of communication, allowing the clan to remain so tightly organized. Viziers spend a great deal of time in other Cainite courts as diplomats and sages. The most successful are considered wise counselors and objective third parties for Cainite negotiations.

The last crusade left a number of cities, such as Acre and Jerusalem, in the hands of Christians, and many Saracen efforts to assist their mortal brethren and drive the Frankish vampires from their lands have grown both more patient and more desperate. Some Assamite princes have been attempting to leverage greater stability in the region, with varying success rates.

Assamites honor the eldest among them not in torpor as the "Old Man of the Mountain," the leader of the clan who dwells at Alamut. Unlike European vampires, who grow paler as the nights pass, Assamites grow darker with age. Their elders are noted by their lustrous, ebon skin.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You survived a long apprenticeship both before and after the Embrace, and you have been found to embody the legacy of Haqim — faith, dedication and loyalty above all else. Others might have been found wanting, but not you. Wherever you are sent, you know with absolute certainty that you act in the best interests of the laws of Haqim and the faith. The games and machination of the infidel are not for you — the laws of Haqim are your guide.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Celerity, Obfuscate, Quietus* (warrior); *Auspex, Quietus, Thaumaturgy* (sorcerer); *Auspex, Celerity, Quietus* (vizier)

**Advantage:** Warrior Assamites start with two free Ability Traits of *Archery, Brawl, Dodge* or *Melee* (two of the same, or two different ones). Sorcerer Assamites begin with a free Trait of *Occult* and a level of *Occult Influence*. Vizier Assamites may start play with two free Ability Traits of *Academics, Expression, Law* or *Politics* (two of the same, or two different ones).

**Disadvantage:** Warrior Assamites are marked by their tradition of ritual diablerie. Any supernatural test for diablerie confirms the warrior as such, even if he has never tasted Cainite blood. Sorcerer Assamites are easily identifiable as such to supernatural means, and any mystical means to determine magic use on or around the Assamite gain a two-Trait bonus and are considered to be two levels higher should the sorcerer wish to contest them. Vizier Assamites develop an *Obsession/Compulsion* derangement related to their highest creative or intellectual Ability. Should their Ability levels change, the focus of their derangement changes as well.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Heaven, Humanity, Kings. Very traditional Assamites follow the Road of Blood (see **Laws of the Night**).



## FOLLOWERS OF SET



"Recognize Eden by its serpent," the priest tells his flock. And the serpents among the garden of the night are the Followers of Set, a clan of Egyptian and Eastern vampires rumored to practice every ignominy under the night sky. These vice merchants truck in all manner of desire and fancy, cultivating a bloom of corruption and heresy across the face of the known world by appealing to their clients' baser hungers. The Setites, however, see themselves as merely practitioners of ancient traditions, who cherish freedoms that have been stamped out in a world that has lost its way. They prefer shadows because light is the vanguard of hubris, while darkness breeds humility and proper respect for the great mysteries.

The Followers of Set claim lineage to Set himself, a god-figure on equal footing with Caine, if not God himself. Indeed, the Followers dispute any ties to Caine. They trace their history back through to the ancient nights when the desert sands were still mountains. It was in these mythic times that the great hunter Set tore into Geb's bosom and drank of the earth god's blood, thus making himself a god and his children the avatars of his divinity. Cainites claim that these were corrupt and debauched times, but the Setites remember them as times of uncensored freedom... at least until the war against Set's brother Osiris and nephew Horus took its toll. Accounts vary as to the victor of this bloody feud, with the Followers claiming the upper hand and their enemies asserting otherwise. Alas, Egypt fell to a march of foreign mortal conquerors, forcing the Setites deep underground where they perfected their insidious ways.

Calamity struck again in the early nights of the first century, when Set vanished from his sarcophagus after plaguing his eldest childer with prophetic dreams. Now, slowly, the dreams come to fruition, and the Followers of Set debate the dogma of their clan with a greater interest in the world. Once they limited their activities to the shores of the Nile, but they now wander the known world, spreading Set's wisdom from dark caravan tents or in shadowy chambers over wines and hookah.

The Followers embrace misfortune, disease, tragedy and disaster because such conditions create those in need of their services. They cherish unmitigated freedom, the chaos of fulfilled desire and the satisfaction of want, *any* want. They revel in sensation and pleasure, twin connections with their god, but times are changing. The Setites spread beyond the Nile out of necessity, but they chose to keep Set's blood mostly to Africans and Saracens, the better to keep their traditions

thriving. Only occasionally did they Embrace *Desheru* ("the red ones") or those Franks with the prized red hair (which is believed to be a mark of Set). Now, however, some *Desheru* breed without care and establish nests in Europe, away from the control of the traditional caste of ancient Setite priests known as Hierophants. These mongrel Setites are an abomination to Set's gift. They ignore tradition and spend more effort succumbing to their own vices than cultivating it in others. This is creating friction among traditional Setites and the *Desheru*, who say that the legends of Egypt are fading and that the new Eden is Europe. Some Hierophants have responded by traveling west and north to investigate these claims and prove to the renegades that their holy traditions need not be abandoned simply because the site of a temple is.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are the disciple of a dark god, and you must uphold that faith to the best of your ability. Since none outside the clan understand or will serve Set, you must bring them to the truth by ensnaring them in their weaknesses. By plying the trades that feed the hungers of others, you can force them to pay to support their needs — with deeds, with secrets or perhaps a blind eye at the right moment or "a few favors." All must know the dark god, the better to make his place in the world more secure.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Obfuscate, Presence, Serpentis*

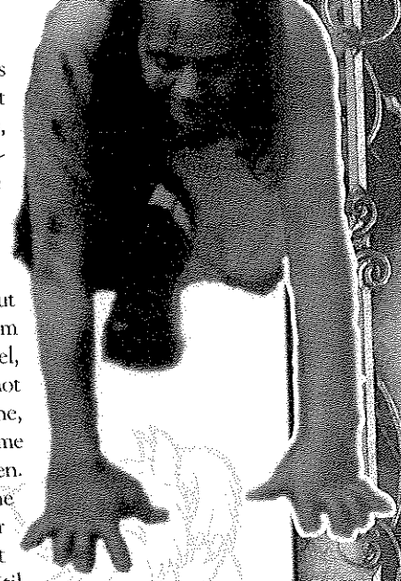
**Advantage:** As peddlers of vice, Setites soon become acquainted with both the seedier underside and the secret halls of power. Others prey on the weaknesses of others and find ways to acquire contacts. Followers of Set start with one free Trait of *Court, Street* or *Transportation Influence* and an Ability Trait of *Commerce* or *Subterfuge*.

**Disadvantage:** Setites' connection with shadow and darkness causes them to shun the day, the time ruled by Osiris and Horus. Setites suffer twice the aggravated damage when exposed to the sun. Even bright lights (torchlight, bonfires) can affect them. Serpents suffer a one-Trait penalty in all challenges under such conditions.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Beast, Kings, Sin. The most orthodox of them follow the Road of the Serpent (see **Laws of the Night**).



## GANGREL



The natural tendency of humans to create towns and live together has been a boon to Cainites. Most choose to follow their prey into the towns and cities, where the feeding is easier. The Gangrel are the exception to this rule. From the Tartars and Tuaregs of the east to the Bedouins of the south and the barbarian tribes of the north, the Gangrel make their homes among the wild people and places of the world.

History has seen cities and civilizations rise and fall, but the wilds are always there, and those who can survive them can survive whatever fate throws their way. To the Gangrel, cities are traps where strong Cainites grow weak and lazy, not that Gangrel believe themselves to be descended from Caine, though. In the days before history, before the world became as it is now, the greatest gods chose many to be their children. A pair of twins among the gods became bitter rivals. One twin, Ennoia, chose the fiercest, strongest warriors as her children. The other, Churka, chose those who were most clever in deception. The broods warred for many years, until Churka coerced two of Ennoia's most trusted children to leave the battlefield at a crucial moment. Enraged, Ennoia decreed that the children of both twins should have to depend on the blood of others for their lives. The other gods approved of her decree, and so the Gangrel, the children of Ennoia, came to be.

The Animals believe that their mother will call upon them to fight for her once more some night. Only then, will Churka and his minions finally suffer the fate that has been due them since the dawn of time. It is the duty of the Gangrel to ensure that only the most hardy and skilled join their numbers, so that they may triumph when the night of that final confrontation comes. Only then they will be welcomed back into their mother's love.

Civilization is a trick of Churka to ensure that those who deceive are better suited to the final conflict than those who fight. The Gangrel refuse to fall into the trap of their ancient enemy, and instead choosing to recruit and hunt among the nomads and wild peoples of the world. The chains of master and slave, of lord and lackey, are anathema to them, and hierarchical European society repulses them. They see the ability to survive and prosper under all conditions as the greatest test of an individual's worth. Their condition is almost a gift, one that constantly reminds them of their need to be the greatest warriors and survivors the world has seen. They value simple but profound concepts such as bravery, honor, martial prowess, survival skills and knowledge of the land. They respect only strength and deeds, not empty boasting.

Necessity forces the Gangrel to spend long stretches of time on their own. More than one vampire preying on a particular group of humans quickly reduces the number available to feed from or rouses suspicions enough that a confrontation is inevitable. A good hunter knows not to wipe out the prey. Many Gangrel learn to survive alone simply because it is all they have ever known. Sires often leave

their childer to fend for themselves, to see if they have the mettle of true Gangrel. Solitude cannot last forever, though. On a practical level, there is value in numbers if only to form hunting packs. But even then, unlife is hard away from the cities, and Gangrel face constant dangers. Lupines stalk many woods, and few rural vampires escape direct confrontations with them. It requires cunning and stealth to catch human prey without alerting the whole group to the vampire's presence.

Most Gangrel spend at least some time among other vampires. Testing themselves against humans and animals is well and good, but the truest test comes from challenging those like themselves. That means spending at least a little time in the cities, learning the ways of the other clans. A few even live in cities full time, lurking in the hidden corners and prowling the night when most prey are locked up in houses, trapped for easy feeding. Time spent in the cities only reaffirms their faith in their own view of unlife. The weak, diseased, ineffectual humans who dwell with manipulative vampires that feed on them breed contempt in the Gangrel. For most of the clan, unlife is a series of long periods of rural solitude and interludes of a few years among the massed herd and rival predators.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You were picked for your strength and determination to survive. Since your rebirth you have reverted to a more natural state, no longer burdened by the false concepts of civilization. Petty politics and bickering is a waste of one's immortality. You give your respect only to those who have earned it through strength and deeds. You are master of the wilds — you *are* the wild.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Animalism, Fortitude, Protean*

**Advantage:** Gangrel are hardy creatures, capable of surviving in just about any territory. The presence of Lupines makes living in the wild considerably more dangerous, but Gangrel are well aware of how to travel the open road or hide in the wild. As wanderers, they choose where they go, when they go, and care little for society's rules. Most princes find it easier to let them enter and leave as they please rather than attempt to enforce a ban on their movements. A Gangrel who's out in the woods enough can learn *Lupine Lore* by observing (and evading) the shapechangers. Lupines are unlikely to be well disposed toward a vampire of any kind, but it means that the Gangrel is more likely to survive her encounters with them.

Gangrel also start with two free Ability Traits of *Animal Ken, Brawl* or *Survival*. These two Traits can be from the same Ability or from two different ones.

**Disadvantage:** The Gangrel's affinity with nature and their animalistic side makes them more susceptible to the inner Beast. When a Gangrel frenzies, the inner Beast invokes a physical change, transforming her outward features to match her inner nature. The player determines these animalistic features (catlike eyes, clawed feet, etc.) at the time of the frenzy. Wolflike features are common, but just about any creature known can visit its features upon the vampire.

In addition to the physical change visited on the Gangrel, the character gains a new Negative Social Trait of *Bestial, Feral* or *Repugnant* to represent this new alteration. These Traits can never be bought off or removed without some sort of assistance (such as *Obfuscate* or *Vicissitude*). No more than five Negative Traits can be gained with this disadvantage.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Beast is the most common, but a few walk every major road.



## MALKAVIANS



Medieval folk fear the mad. It is never clear whether the mad are touched by God, the Devil or both. Some say that their ways are infectious or that they've been touched by the Fair Folk. In any case, it is best to leave them alone, lest they curse any who cross their path. In Clan Malkavian, such fears find their most terrifying expression. Acute madness, oracular insights, ceaseless hungers and the Blood of Caine combine to make these vampires among the most feared in the Dark Medieval. A few simple words can drive an elder mad or reveal frightening insights of genius. In moments of perfect lucidity, they might hear the music of the spheres that cause the turning of Creation. They see everything in one grand picture and touch even the face of God Himself... but only for the briefest instant. Then the truth escapes them, leaving only the memory that they once had understanding and then lost it. In their quest to regain understanding, they achieve lesser insights: glimpses of the future, the true nature of the soul, the grand schemes of nations, the portents in the stars. It all pales in comparison to their goal, but it keeps their quest for perfect, maddening apotheosis burning in their unliving hearts.

Cainites remember the clan's founder Malkav as the oracle and prophet of the Third Generation. Some legends say that Malkav failed to warn Caine of the depredations of the Third Generation in the Second City, and an angry Caine cursed Malkav and his progeny with madness so profound that they could no longer share their wisdom with others. Others claim that Caine's curse was unintentional, that he shattered his grandchilde's mind when Caine shared his memories of the face of God at the moment of his own curse.

While scholars of Nod trade speculation about Malkav's affliction, few ask the Madmen what they believe. In truth, the clan welcomes its so-called lunacy because, at the very least, madness is a vibrant, creative force in their otherwise dead and decaying world. It is not a block on their insights, but the cause of them. Even beyond that dynamic seed in their breast, madness also unites the clan in a way that outsiders cannot understand. Their shared connection with the architecture of Creation creates a common frame of reference, and some Madmen are said to communicate in a secret language all their own. The problem is that their vision is too great to take in at once, so all Malkavians see different portions of the picture at the same time. That is why they prize the perception of others, if only to gain a sense of the landscape beyond their ken.

Malkavians are social, passionate creatures. Some say that madness is only determined in company, but the truth is that Malkavians appreciate the insight of others and adore unique perceptions. Perhaps this is why they flock to causes as easily as they abandon them, or why they enter seemingly fruitless alliances.

Unfortunately, much as the Madmen love companionship, few can appreciate their company for very long. An ambitious lord or lady might tolerate an evening with them, gleaning some greater truth to his or her predicament, but it is usually a very disturbing night's entertainment. It is rarely clear — usually when it's far too late — when an individual Malkavian has crossed the boundary between strange sage to fiendish devil. Trying to guess the madness of a Madman is like taking flame to different powders, trying to determine which is incense and which is explosive. What frightens Cainites most is not the Malkavians' own nature, but that they can share their insanity through their Discipline of *Dementation*. Only the courageous or desperate court a Malkavian's attention for long.

The history of the clan is a pendulum swinging between respect and terror, between status and disgrace. When they are in the graces of their brethren, Malkavians are advisors, seers and oracles of Cainite society. Inevitably, tolerance becomes wariness, then fear. Now the Madmen have lost their mantle as one of the leading clans of Imperial Rome. They are cursed for tainting that great enterprise, and they are said to be servants of dark powers. At best, Cainites in the Dark Medieval pity and offer charity to the supposedly infirm clan. At worst, Malkavians must face persecution, torture and even destruction.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Since you were brought over, your madness has deepened, as have the visions. Truth of the universe is revealed in the most obscure locations. When the visions are not blinding you to your surroundings you flock to destruction, ruin, chaos, because in the broken patterns one may discern order. You *see* with a clarity that scares those around you, or is it your insanity?

**Clan Disciplines:** *Auspex, Dementation, Obfuscate*

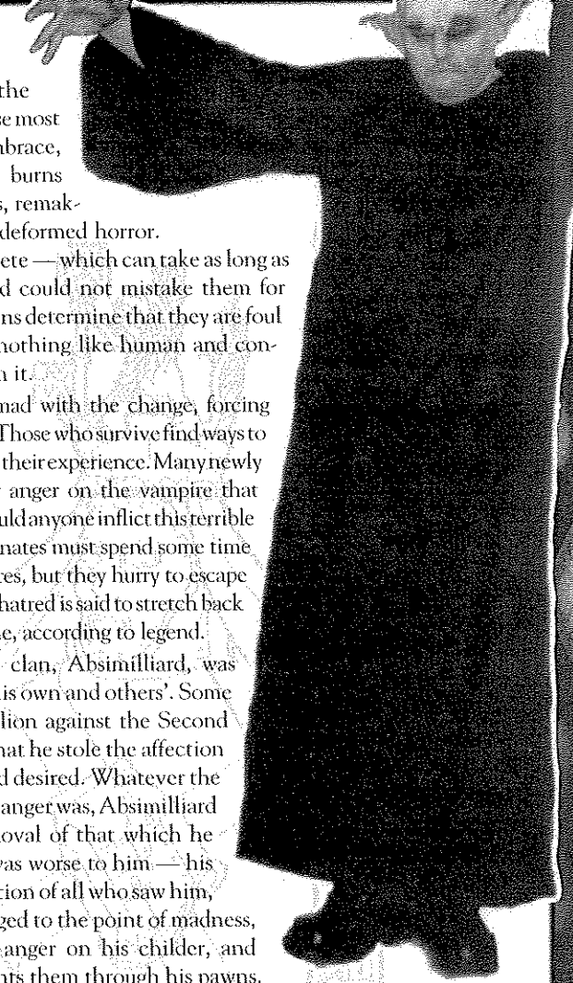
**Advantage:** The Madmen seem blessed with a strange insight into the secret workings of the world. They follow patterns that few others ever see, whether through casting augury with human entrails or watching the ripples of a baptismal font's water. Once per session, a Malkavian may attempt to pull some clue or bit of wisdom from these patterns by succeeding in a Mental Challenge. What the Malkavian learns is up to the Storyteller. Malkavians also begin play with a free Trait of *Occult* or *Theology*, which many learn something of to better understand their visions.

**Disadvantage:** Caine supposedly offered Malkav the great truths of his existence, and the answers maddened the Antediluvian so thoroughly that his descendants share that madness. Not every Malkavian is mad upon Embrace, but the blood quickly changes that. All Malkavians begin play with one derangement that can never be cured or overcome.

**Suggested *Viae*:** There are Malkavians on every major road, but Heaven remains the most popular.



## NOSFERATU



Of all the clans, the Nosferatu feel Caine's curse most painfully. Upon their Embrace, the clan's tainted blood burns through their dying veins, remaking each into a hideous, deformed horror. Once the change is complete — which can take as long as a week — even the blind could not mistake them for human. Their twisted miens determine that they are foul creatures, sin incarnate, nothing like human and condemned to live apart from it.

Some Nosferatu go mad with the change, forcing their sires to destroy them. Those who survive find ways to cope, but all are changed by their experience. Many newly sired Nosferatu turn their anger on the vampire that Embraced them — why would anyone inflict this terrible fate on another? Most neonates must spend some time under the wings of their sires, but they hurry to escape as quickly as possible. This hatred is said to stretch back to the very first of their line, according to legend.

The founder of the clan, Absimilliard, was obsessed with beauty — his own and others'. Some say that he led the rebellion against the Second Generation. Others say that he stole the affection of a mortal that Caine had desired. Whatever the cause of the Dark Father's anger was, Absimilliard was cursed with the removal of that which he held most dear. Which was worse to him — his own ugliness, or the rejection of all who saw him, including his lover? Enraged to the point of madness, Absimilliard turned his anger on his childer, and some whisper that he hunts them through his pawns.

Out of necessity, the Nosferatu have learned ways to conceal their curse. They are masters of hiding, deception and subterfuge, both supernatural and mundane. While some of their abilities allow them to appear normal for a while, the pain that surges through them from their Embrace never entirely leaves. It remains a constant reminder of what they have become. Cainites of the Dark Medieval see these afflictions as visible signs of the evil within every vampire and their own selves, and they shun the Nosferatu, lest they think too long on their own damnation.

The Lepers deal with their affliction in many ways. Some turn to religion, hoping that God will forgive their sins, heal them and grant them salvation. They quest as knights, seeking to do good deeds, or they mortify their undead flesh in penance. The Church's offer of universal forgiveness through Christ draws many seeking redemption. Others find that one of the many heresies offers a lifestyle and a set of strictures that pleases them more.

Others hide from society by living among the fallen of humanity — the leprous, the diseased — and make themselves useful by bartering information that they gather as they watch, listen and learn from the shadows. As much as the High Clans scorn these wretches, few would ever admit how much they have come to depend on the Nosferatu for advantages in the War of the Princes. These Nosferatu often gather in small groups, concealing their numbers from their vampiric neighbors.

Members of the last group see their visages as an irrefutable sign of damnation. Their souls are clearly corrupted beyond redemption, so why should they make any effort to win the favor of a God who clearly cares nothing for them? Instead, they become monsters seeking revenge on living and Cainite society however they can.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You might look hideous to others, but you are no less a person for it. Having lost your human visage, you shun the trappings and emotions of mortality as well. You are considered crude, bestial and monstrous by your "fairer" brethren, so who are you to disappoint them? Among your clan, you are brothers in arms, so treat your fellows with civility and grace. After all, without them, you are even more alone in the world.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Animalism, Obfuscate, Potence*

**Advantage:** Nosferatu begin the game with one free Trait of *Survival* and a free Trait of *Stealth*, to reflect their experience at hiding themselves from society and avoiding unwanted attention. Many become experts in learning all the byways and hidden cellars of the underside of wherever they dwell.

**Disadvantage** All the Nosferatu are hideously deformed from the moment of their Embrace. No Nosferatu may possess the Social Traits *Alluring*, *Gorgeous* or *Seductive*, and he gains the Negative Social Traits *Repugnant* x 3. When his true form is visible, he may not initiate any Social Challenge except for the purpose of intimidation. These Negative Traits may never be removed, nor may the Nosferatu's true form ever be "cured."

**Suggested *Viae*:** Beast, Heaven, Sin.



## RAVNOS



Followers of vice and discord, misunderstood members of a society that cannot grasp the potency of the Beast that drives them, Clan Ravnos's compulsion to sin breeds distrust wherever its members travel. They are known by many, welcomed by few and trusted by almost none. Travelers by necessity, they move from city to city, rarely taking the time to build permanent connections or settlements.

The origins of the clan remain a mystery, even to the Ravnos themselves. Those who reside in Europe trace their lineage to waves of immigration from the eastern lands beyond Persia, as far back as Alexander the Great, but any earlier becomes legend, not history. Those first Ravnos immigrants broke into several distinct *jati*, or castes, lightly scattered across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. They claim that their founder rests in some far-off land, perhaps India, after he was banished there following the Great Flood. In the last century, a new wave of Ravnos has arrived from those same lands, and they tell a very different story about the clan's ancestry, claiming their founder was, at the very least, a great hero, perhaps even a god. But these newer Ravnos have been very critical of their more established clanmates and have offered no more information. What is truth and what is myth remains unclear, like so much surrounded the Ravnos.

The clan's weakness causes great discomfort to the high-blooded lords of Europe. Each Ravnos is addicted to sin, and members of the clan are accused of spreading chaos wherever they go. Yet only the foolish would mistake the Ravnos's indulgence of the urgings of their Beasts as the inability to maintain self-control. A foolish prince might banish the Ravnos from his lands, but many high-blooded vampires pass legends of the consequences for doing so. Such punishments only bring the wrath of the victim's *jati* upon the one pretentious enough to attempt such a feat.

The Ravnos are generally a disjointed clan, and they distrust one another nearly as much as others distrust them, perhaps knowing themselves too well. Eastern and Western Ravnos oppose each other, and tempers flare when opposing philosophies clash. Wherever they go, their reputation for deception precedes them. Many Ravnos excel in chicanery and legerdemain, and those they deal with must consider whether they are seeing something true or merely some fantastic trickery.

Bonds of family and caste provide a unique security for Charlatans. Ravnos leap to defend members of their own *jati*, and the closer the blood relation is, the swifter the response will be. A common cautionary tale among seneschals and scourges is that of a Ravnos who was wrongfully punished by a high-blooded prince (the details change with the telling). Soon thereafter, the prince found himself

besieged by "requests" from the victim's *jati*: her sire, her fellow childer, her progeny and so on. Ravnos have no interest in open warfare, preferring to bring a city to ruin by corrupting it from the inside. Leaders must carefully weigh the risks of a Ravnos guest against the legends of retribution.

Because of their reputation, Ravnos often adopt one of two means for survival in feudalism. Many choose to masquerade as a member of another clan. While such a con can be fraught with danger, the benefits are many. Few clans are as openly distrusted as the Ravnos, and the guise of a Ventrue knight-errant or a wandering Toreador troubadour leaves the Charlatan free to pursue her vices discreetly. Discovery means certain retribution, so some Ravnos spend decades building networks of people who support their false claims (usually unknowingly). Others spurn this approach, however, along with the idea that any Ravnos should be forced to hide who he is. They act openly as traders, messengers, mercenaries or spies.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You are the messenger of *svadharma*, the bringer of change and surprise. Some accuse you of being a landless thief or worse, but they do not know or understand your mission. Europe has proved a strange place, full of humorless mortals and Cainites. You carry all manner of trinkets and secrets for the worthies who can pay your price — too bad so few of them can't.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Animalism, Chimerstry, Fortitude*

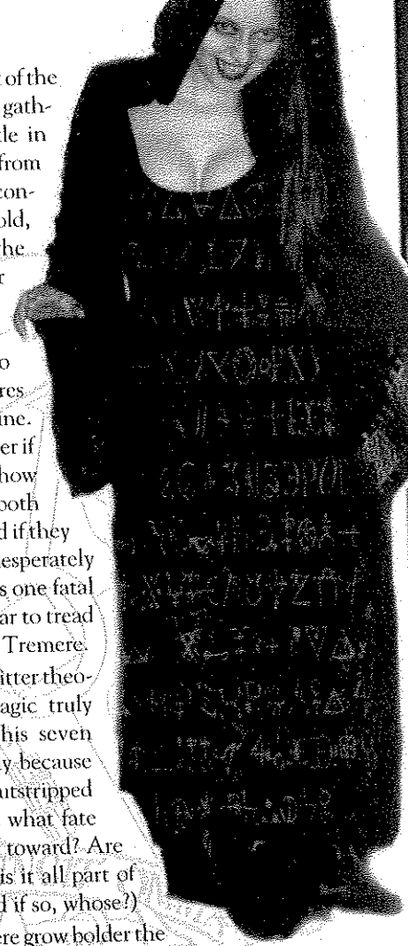
**Advantage:** Ravnos are known as drifters and their arrival into an area heralds a rash of deception and theft. Such is expected of them, and most victims generally feel too foolish to report when they've been taken. In this manner Ravnos can often get away with bending, and in some cases breaking, the laws of the local lords without much reprisal. This leniency from the local justice is not carte blanche, and such travelers are expected to move on in short order. As travelers, Ravnos start with one free Trait of *Street* or *Transportation Influence* and an associated Ability Trait of *Larceny* or *Scrounge*.

**Disadvantage:** All Ravnos suffer from some compulsive disorder related to a vice, chosen at character creation. Pride, lust, greed, theft, confidence schemes and opportunities to use others are all common. A Ravnos presented with an opportunity to sin cannot refuse, unless she makes a *Self-Control/ Instinct* Challenge (difficulty of three Traits), and even success might mean that she still hears the voice of the Beast urging her on. If no opportunity presents itself during a game session, she must set up conditions to attempt it at least once during the night.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Rumors say that every Ravnos follows Sin, but many follow other roads, especially Humanity. Very traditional Ravnos follow their own Road of Paradox (see **Laws of the Night**).



## TREMERE



On a chill, cloudy night in 1022, eight of the world's most accomplished Hermetic magi gathered in a hidden room in a hidden castle in Transylvania, stumbling and bleary-eyed from a sleepless week of preparations, ready to conclude a ritual which, they had been told, would put the Philosopher's Stone — the key to true immortality and limitless power — within their grasp. The promise was kept (after a fashion), but their deed plunged that house of scholars forever into vilest infamy, damning them as vampires through the usurpation of the Blood of Caine. Even some among that cursed eight wonder if their leader, Tremere himself, realized how fate would use him as her tool to alter both magi and Cainite history. They wondered if they would spend the rest of their existences desperately trying to escape the consequences of this one fatal act. But then, rushing in where angels fear to tread had always been the hallmark of House Tremere.

The two centuries since have seen bitter theorizing from within and without. *Is* magic truly dying in the world, as Tremere and his seven acolytes said, or did they believe it only because their lust for eternal youth and power outstripped the supply? Did they not know or care what fate they dragged their brothers and sisters toward? Are they improvising their moves now, or is it all part of some vast incomprehensible plot. (And if so, whose?)

All anyone knows is that the Tremere grow bolder the harder they are pressed. The once-great house of magi has yielded to a vampiric bloodline — the Hermetic Order banished them from the rolls in 1202, and the resultant war doomed their forlorn human remnants to Embrace or execution. Their Tzimisce foes, from whom they stole the Blood but who wavered for just a few precious years too many, have been fought to a standstill. Spells and strange beasts drive them back from the heart of the infection they would cauterize. Although the Tremere have never *officially* admitted that their founder murdered the Antediluvian Saulot and consumed his heart's-blood (thus making Tremere's line into a clan), few elder Cainites have failed to notice the Salubri's precipitous plummet in fortune as the ambitious newcomers wax in power.

And now these Usurpers, despite (or because) they are eternally besieged, cherish a new ambition: a place at the Cainite table. In this task they face their steepest odds yet. Even those vampires who don't personally hate the Tremere treat

them as unclean. Their strange powers have gained them little trust, and those elders who prized the Salubri will have nothing to do with them. Many young Tremere, suddenly helpless as the Embrace robs them of their mortal magics, has been discovered and slaughtered. Still other fledglings have been dragged before princes' thrones to answer for their ignorance with their unlives.

The Seven — Tremere's seconds and the night-to-night leaders of his house — have learned that they must placate their fellow monsters, must learn the rules of this arcane culture and at least appear to play by them. Surely the Tremere have much to offer. Their new blood-arts of *Thaumaturgy*, however effective against Tzimisce *koldun* in the Carpathians, may fall miserably short of the arts they once wielded as breathing warlocks. They feel more vulnerable than they might have ever been. But no *outsider* ever need know that. Wheedling and making oneself "useful" to others' ambitions does not come easily to the proud Tremere soul. Many chafe at having to smile while Ventrue lordlings use and abuse their gifts with seeming impunity. Yet they bear it in the name of desperation and enterprise. In private, they scoff. If they must bear the Usurper epithet, they will earn it.

Unfortunately, neither the clan's tightening hierarchy nor the partial blood oath each Tremere pledges to his superiors has brought the unity the Seven desire. In that, they only have three of their own to blame: Goratrix the Sleepless, lightning-rod for the clan's radical elements; Etrius the Reluctant, whose faction plays clan conscience; and wise Meerlinda, derided as a mere conciliator even as she assembles her own base of support. And there exist deeper rifts as well: between those who welcomed immortality and those who feel betrayed and enslaved, between authoritarians and champions of wizardly autonomy, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Still, most Tremere understand that the rest of the world hates them far more than they could ever hate each other. In the face of external threat or scrutiny, even the deadliest rivals close ranks.

**Roleplaying Hints:** Clan Tremere picks the most intelligent and enterprising people for induction into the sect. These people come from any of the sources of intellect in mortal society expounding the ideals of the Tremere, a blazing intellect with a hunger for secrets and a freebooting spirit. During these dark times, the hermetic order is your only friend, your chantry house your only home, and your teachings are your only truth. During your initiate training, you were introduced to the various mystical secrets of your order and your faith in the Pyramid. You fully understand your Tremere Oath, sworn during your Embrace, and you now have a concept of the dangers that face House and Clan Tremere. Enemies press in from all sides and your strength, along with that of your clanmates, is the only thing standing between you and oblivion. You cannot trust the other Cainite clans, as you know they will never truly trust you.

**Clan Disciplines:** *Auspex*, *Dominate*, *Thaumaturgy*

**Advantage:** The clan's tight-knit structure is one that encourages obedience to superiors, but superiors are also encouraged to assist the younger members. Members must still perform their duties — laggards are severely punished — but all can expect instruction and assistance from their elders. Of course, once the instruction is finished, the student will be expected to perform some duty.



Tremere start with one free Trait of *Learning* or *Occult Influence* and an associated Ability Trait of *Academics* or *Occult*, to reflect their magical training.

**Disadvantage:** The culture within House Tremere is one of obedience to one's superiors. Every new acolyte is partially bound to the house in blood oath by a drink of the combined Seven's vitae. Therefore, Tremere superiors have an easier time attempting to *Dominate* clanmates of lower rank, gaining a one-Trait bonus on such efforts. Finally each Tremere surrenders a vial of her own vitae to her immediate superior, which usually ends up in the High Chantry of Ceoris. With the knowledge that their vitae could be used against them for rites of punishment, few Tremere are willing to disobey.

**Suggested *Viae*:** Humanity, Sin. Many Tremere are unaware that there are any alternatives.

# The Bloodlines

## Baali

The origins of the Baali are unclear, but they are as ancient as any clan of Caine. The Baali are as old as the first dark rites, designed to take control of the forces at work in the world, rather than be at their mercy. An ancient tribe of humans desired power and so made a pact with darkness. Over time, these dark forces acquired many names and forms — the Children, the Lords and other, much stranger names. The Lords were called *Ba'al* in the language of the time, and so their servitors came to be known as Baali, and later, the Shaitan.

The transmutation of these mortals into Cainites is an event shrouded in mystery. The two constants in the stories of the Baali bloodline's creation are hubris and foolishness. As the stories have it, a Cainite toyed with the Baali — for amusement, to teach them the error of their ways, or to show them how pathetic their attempts at "evil" were, depending on the tale. Whether deliberately or accidentally, he touched them with his blood. Those who "survived" the attentions became the founders of this tainted line.

The Baali see existence as a struggle between two great powers. For lack of better definition, they call these sides good and evil, or light and dark. Much greater than the petty wars and sins of Cainites, these powers encompass all existence. Everything and everyone is a part of this conflict. To the Baali, the only measure of worth is whether you can participate in the game. The great powers have no need for Cainites — vampires have no souls, or are already damned. What these powers value are human souls, and anything of value to the great powers is of value to the Baali. Over the years, the Baali have split into different sects, each worshipping its own version of the dark forces: the Children, the Lords, insect-demons, ancient gods and more.

The Baali might have come into their own as a clan of power, but the Salubri long ago took up arms against them, crusading to wipe out the infernalists. Although the Baali brought down most of the Salubri warriors, the conflict greatly reduced their numbers and power as well. An Assamite holy war followed the Salubri assault, which further weakened the bloodline, but here the Baali struck back with a ritual that even now works its way through the Assamites, striking

them with an irrational thirst for Cainite blood. Despite this curse, the Assamites possess much more power than the Baali, and they make a formidable enemy.

Now diminished in strength, the Baali suffer further persecution by other Cainites, as well as mortal witch-hunts. Baali are generally actively distrusted and officially banned from many domains. A few may court them in hopes of gaining the favor of their infernal masters, but most use them as convenient scapegoats. For their part, the Baali try to remain inconspicuous, avoiding obvious positions of power. They operate outside the normal parameters of the Cainite feudal system, or pass themselves off as members of other clans. This low profile gives them considerable opportunities to perform valuable research for later schemes. They collect information, worm their way into positions of influence over those in power, seduce others and set themselves up for later advances. The major obstacle to these plans is the bloodline's current disunity. The disparate Baali sects quarrel continuously, sometimes using their accumulated influence to strike at each other rather than at their enemies.

The Embrace, like most Baali rites, is vicious and bloody. Once drained of blood, the would-be childe receives her blood through a gash in her heart and is tossed into a pit of corpses, which she must climb out of, the better to winnow the weak from the strong. A childe is indoctrinated into her sire's cult upon her Embrace, and is expected to follow his dictates. After five to 10 years, she is allowed to strike out on her own, although she may return to report to her sire, just as each sire must report back to his sire, and so on back to the Baali's infernal masters. Loyalty is valued, but blind loyalty, is the sign of a weak mind.

(**Note**: In case the previous history didn't make it clear, Baali are often destroyed on sight if they make their true clan know abroad. Storytellers are urged to think very carefully before allowing the Shaitans into their chronicle.)

**Roleplaying Hints**: You were brought into the truth because you had already glimpsed it from afar. Now, like a dark messiah, you seek to bring others to that truth by tempting, corrupting, whatever it takes to show them what you already know. There is little that pleases you like slowly peeling away someone's illusions, revealing them for the lies they are, before you reveal the greatest truth of all.

**Disciplines**: *Daimoinon*, *Obfuscate*, *Presence*

**Advantage:** The Baali's structure allows for one to ask for aid and assistance from her superiors, but beware, for the servants of the Lords have no patience for weaklings or laggards. If a Baali asks for something from her sire, be assured that he will demand something in return.

Many Baali are either brought into the dark rites after their Embrace, or they learned something of it before. Either way, all Baali begin play with one Ability Trait of *Occult* and one *Influence* Trait of *Occult*.

**Disadvantage:** As servitors of the Pit and the Infernal, the Baali suffer even more than other Cainites when confronted with holy power. True Faith and holy relics cause them twice the damage that a normal vampire suffers. The Baali are also particularly vulnerable to religious symbols — chanted verses of the Qur'an, crosses, Stars of David or the symbol of a pagan's True Faith will drive the Baali before them.

**Suggested *Viae***: Sin, but a *very* small minority follows the Road of Kings.



## GARGOYLES

Gargoyles — horrifying hybrids of Nosferatu, Gangrel and Tzimisce blood — were created by the Tremere as an experiment in slavery during the worst nights of the Tzimisce's campaign against them. The Tremere used captured Cainites as the basis, and imbued their creations with deep hatred for their "ancestors." The Gargoyles single-handedly turned the tide of battle, giving the Tremere a chance to survive despite the enmity of the clans. Since midway through the 12th century, Gargoyles have guarded almost every Tremere chantry.

The combination of blood in Gargoyles has resulted in a little less than a monster. Nosferatu blood gives them a hideous, demonic appearance, while Gangrel blood makes them little better than beasts. Their Tzimisce blood is perhaps responsible for the strangest of their mutations, such as the huge, chiropteran wings that sprout from their backs, and the tendency of their skin to harden into a stonelike substance as they age. In short, they look exactly like something that crawled down off a massive cathedral.

The Watchdogs generally have little intelligence, simple needs and few desires. They prefer the company of their own kind and are fiercely loyal to each other. They sleep heaped in piles, taking comfort in one another's presence. They will not harm the weak or crippled of their own race, bringing them animals from which to feed. They are also fiercely territorial. Anyone but their creators who enters their lairs is promptly beset by a horde of angry beasts.

Most Gargoyles are created from captured Cainites rather than Embraced by other Gargoyles, and the creation process is not always entirely successful. Some of these victims emerge as mad, degenerate creatures, who will obey their Tremere masters for only a few months before they must be slain. The creation process is overseen by the Tremere Virstania, who takes a motherly interest in the Gargoyles. She has allowed them to create a few nearly mindless ghouls to guard their lairs during the daytime.

Rumor has it that one early Gargoyle escaped Tremere control and formed a colony of free Gargoyles hidden somewhere near the High Chantry of Ceoris. This legendary figure is called the Rock Lord, and stories of his escape have done much to turn the thoughts of the Gargoyles toward freedom. Many love their creators — and they were designed for loyalty — but some Gargoyle minds do wander toward a desire for liberty sooner or later. For now, the escaped Gargoyles swell their ranks with their freed fellows, as they find it difficult to create more of their own kind. After all, a race that cannot reproduce will eventually die out, and even the Gargoyles realize this. They continue to experiment with Embracing captives, and if they ever produce sustainable progeny, free Gargoyles could become more than just pests.

No one but the Tremere tolerates the presence of Gargoyles. The other clans see them as enemy soldiers or abominations. Any Gargoyle seen without a Tremere handler is likely to be destroyed, or taken apart piece by piece by curious Cainites like the Tzimisce.

**Roleplaying Hints**: Serve the masters, love the masters, protect the masters. Without them, you would not exist. Give captured prey to Virstania — maybe she will make you a brother. You have no greater desire than serving the Tremere, but

sometimes, you wonder what it might be like to be your own master. Never speak of this to the masters, though.

**Disciplines**: *Flight*, *Fortitude*, *Potence*, Special (see p. 215)

**Advantage**: Gargoyles were meant to be guardians and protecters. They begin play with two Traits of *Brawl*.

**Disadvantage**: Meant to be slaves and servants, Gargoyles have weak wills, or soon will if their Tremere masters have anything to say about it. Gargoyles suffer a two-Trait penalty when attempting to resist *Dominate* or other mind-control.

**Suggested *Viae***: Beast, although a few follow the Road of Heaven to better understand their twisted lives.

## LAIBON

European vampires believe that the Laibon were created by Cainites who migrated to Africa before the spreading Sahara Desert cut off the southern part of the continent from the rest of the world. The Laibon believe that they descended from the spirits of the land, and they see most Cainite legends as perversions of their own beliefs.

Africa is still a wild place, where the dance of predator and prey is played out openly. The Laibon take their lessons from the spirits of predators, such as the big cats. Study of and kinship with animals has given the Laibon a greater understanding of and control over their Beasts. The Beast is not a separate entity that controls their actions, but the part of them that is closest to the animal spirits from which they came. This sense of kinship makes the Sphinxes formidable hunters. Like many of those great predators, they also tend to have large territories and defend them vigorously against intruders.

Laibon do not interact much with each other. Like most predators, once a childe is turned out of the home, she is no more a relation to her sire than any other member of the species. They may send messages to one another through intermediaries, but they do not enter another's territory without a clear invitation. Most Laibon will not even communicate with each other except on matters of importance to the bloodline as a whole.

Because of the Laibon's large territories and their lack of proximity to other Cainites and the War of Princes, they have more leisure time than other vampires. Some of the Laibon use this time to engage in scholarly pursuits, learning the languages of distant places and honing the fine art of storytelling. Most Laibon know the creation myths of their people by heart and pass them on to any Cainite who asks.

As a rite of passage, Laibon neonates travel extensively before taking on their own domains. Occasionally an older Laibon in need of a change will travel for a time. The Sphinxes believe that one cannot rule one's domain without some understanding of what lies beyond it. Some of these Laibon have traveled into Europe, paying for hospitality with tales from distant lands or amazing displays of grace and ferocity.

With trade routes established into the African kingdoms, Islamic vampires have moved into Laibon territories. The African vampires do not appreciate the intrusion of their Arabic brethren or the spread of the foreign faith in their lands, and they strike swiftly at any foreign Cainites they find in their territories. Now traveling young Laibon carry more than just stories. They also carry messages and warnings, accompanied by violence if it gets the point across. Although Laibon possess remarkable control over their Beasts and tempers, they have no compunction against striking out against their enemies when necessary.

**Roleplaying Hints**: You are brother of the lion, sister of the leopard, kin to the beasts of Africa and a walking part of its soul. You have no interest in power or games of the Damned. After all, what use does a cheetah have for a castle or men to command? You carry a stock of tales of your many travels, and you are pleased to share in return for hospitality. But let no one think you are domesticated. Should someone make that mistake, be pleased to re-educate him in the ways of the wild.

**Disciplines**: *Animalism*, *Abombwe*, *Fortitude*

**Advantage**: Laibon are still considered something of a novelty in many parts of Europe, uninterested in the power games and squabbles of the War of Princes, and because of that, they are generally allowed free passage without much hassle. Their appearance occasionally leads them to be mistaken for Baali or Followers of Set, but such mistakes are few and generally not made again.

Because of their extensive travels, all Laibon come into play with one *Survival* Trait and a level of *Transportation Influence*.

**Disadvantage**: Control over the Beast comes at a cost — a tithe of the blood a Laibon consumes and uses. Each time a Laibon uses or consumes blood, the Beast "consumes" a Trait or two if the change in blood pool is five Traits or greater in one scene. For example, if a Laibon vampire spends a Trait to boost her Physical Attributes, she actually loses two. If she drains a mortal of 10 Blood Traits, she only gains eight.

**Suggested *Viae***: Beast and Heaven, albeit with cultural variations.

## LAMIA

The very first Lamia was the daughter of Lilith. Some of the bloodline's legends say that Lilith became pregnant by Adam through rape after she refused to service him. Most Lamia sneer at this, insisting that Lilith would never have opened herself to Adam. "Lamia" became the title of the Dark Mother Lilith's high priestess, an inherited position passed down from mother to daughter. Each Lamia upheld the memory of the Dark Mother, venerating her with violent, bloody rites. Each Lamia gathered worthy women to her, instructing them in the Dark Mother's secrets and the twin arts of ritual and war, but always in secret.

One night, Lazarus of Clan Cappadocian found the temple at which Lamia performed her bloody rites. He was pleased by her fervor and wisdom, and determined to Embrace her. He bore down upon her and Embraced her by force. Lamia was overcome by dark visions as she sank into death. Lilith spoke to her then, instructing her to prepare for her coming. "I am Death," she said in a voice like the wind, "and your new patrons shall be the key to my return to the world. Protect them and see to it that their studies come to fruition."

When Lamia had completed her transition to undeath, Lazarus informed her that she would now join the Cappadocians in the study and contemplation of death. She smiled and whispered in his ear. Lazarus trembled and fled the glade then. No one knows what Lamia told Lazarus that night, but her descendants have

many theories. Some say that she told him a fraction of the revelation that Lilith had given her that night. Others say that she informed him of his position as Lilith's pawn, showing him just how small he was in the grand scheme of things.

Lamia journeyed to the Cappadocians, where Japheth, childe of Cappadocius, initiated her into the clan. Thereafter, the bloodline remained close to the Cappadocians. The Lamia shared the Cappadocians' thirst for knowledge, although they preferred to find it in sensation and experience, rather than in dry and dusty tomes. They shared the Cappadocians' reverence for and fascination with death, although they preferred to exult in it rather than study it. They reveled in vampirism as a gift from the Dark Mother, the natural evolution of humanity. They fell naturally into their new role as predators, which was little different from their previous activities.

The cult had always emphasized the arts of war, so the transition from cult to defenders of a High Clan was a small step for them. They believe that the High Clan unknowingly serves the Dark Mother, and they're happy to maintain that arrangement. Their exaltation of the female principle bothers many Cainites, so most Lamia keep their loyalty to Lilith private but not secret. Some Lamia spread their gospel under the guise of cults devoted to the Virgin Mary.

The Gorgons are few, but they are close-knit and loyal to their vision of the Dark Mother's plan. Their status as servants and guardians of a High Clan leaves some Cainites uncertain how to treat them, particularly given their bloody and zealous reputation. The Lamia usually receive respect denied to most other bloodlines and Low Clans, if only out of wariness and respect for the Cappadocians, giving them a sort of middle-class status.

Cainite legend claims that Caine stole his powers from Lilith by forcibly drinking her blood when she refused to teach him her magics. Most of the Lamia do not believe this, claiming instead that Lilith taught Caine only a bare fraction of her powers. The legend of the theft arose because Cainites (especially males) could not stand to believe their power was given to them by a woman, or that Caine was Lilith's subordinate.

**Roleplaying Hints**: You are a child of the Dark Mother, a priestess of her will, and for now, her will is that you protect Clan Cappadocian. Death is not something to be studied from afar, but to be reveled in as the bringer and creator. Wisdom is not found in dusty scrolls and tombs, but in experience and sensation. Drink the blood of sensation, revel in the death you bring to your enemies, but never forget your purpose.

**Disciplines**: *Fortitude, Mortis (Path of Four Humours), Potence*

**Advantage**: As warriors and guards for the Cappadocians, all Lamia begin with two Traits of the following: *Archery, Brawl, Dodge* and *Melee* (the choice may be two of one, or two different).

**Disadvantage**: Lamia carry a virulent plague that they call the Seed of Lilith. Anyone the Lamia feeds upon must succeed in a Static Physical Challenge (against six Traits for women, eight for men). If the challenge fails, the victim contracts a Black Plague-like sickness that kills after several days. Any vampire that consumes Lamia blood becomes a carrier of the disease until all the Lamia blood has been purged from his body. Those princes who know of the Seed of Lilith either ban Lamia from their domains or restrict their presence to leper villages.

**Suggested *Viae***: All the major roads are represented in the bloodline, but many follow the Cappdocians' Road of Bones (see **Laws of the Night**).

## Lhiannan

Most Cainites who know of Lhiannan believe them to be a subspecies of the Gangrel. After all, they're wild, fey creatures. They dwell almost exclusively in rural areas, and they still follow the old pagan traditions. No one knows exactly when the Lhiannan line started. Even the bloodline's elders only know that a woodland spirit was somehow bound to the body of a vampire at some time in the distant past by a shadowy female called the Crone, and the Druids trace their heritage from this.

Fragments of Europe's older cultures still survive in isolated villages, and where they survive, so do the Lhiannan. As Christian forces stamp out (or assimilate) the old religions and superstitions, the bloodline is pushed further and further from civilization. The bloodline is dying for several reasons. Their mystical nature marks them indelibly, giving them an aura that even ordinary humans can sense, and making them easy targets for witch-hunters. In addition, the spirit that gave them their identity and much of their power seems to be fading.

The spirit that joined with the first Lhiannan was highly territorial and bloodthirsty, demanding sacrifice. When the first Lhiannan Embraced the second, the spirit gave a bit of itself into a new spirit and passed it into the new vampire. That spirit has given itself many times over the centuries, and newer Lhiannan are much weaker than their elders. Each Lhiannan who makes a childe becomes weaker, and each childe is weaker than her sire. With each Lhiannan destroyed, the piece of the spirit that is part of her disappears. Because of this, the Lhiannan sire rarely, zealously guarding the shards of spirit they still hold. Only when loneliness overcomes them do they diminish their power by Embracing.

Lhiannan inherited much from the spirit that inhabits them. As fiercely territorial creatures, they choose an area and protect it jealously. Only emergency can force them out. They are strongly tied to the forests — cities make them uncomfortable, even ill. The Lhiannan also have power over spirits through their Discipline. They have tried without success to bind a new and powerful spirit to their bloodline to renew their strength.

European Cainites generally view the Lhiannan as savages. The Gangrel, however, bear them intense hatred and slay them whenever possible. The Animals give no reasons for their hate, but the elders sometimes mention a "great betrayal" when referring to the Lhiannan.

**Roleplaying Hints**: You are the soul of the old ways, Nature red in tooth and claw. The land is all you have left, your last tie to those days, and you are all that the land has left. Without each other, you will perish. The outsiders will never understand. In these times, the spirit in you is dying. You fear the night that it finally ceases to answer you, for then you and the land will be dead.

**Disciplines**: *Animalism, Ogham, Presence*

**Advantage**: Mortals who follow the pagan ways constitute a *Herd* from which the may gain one Blood Trait per level of *Ogham* she possesses. The Lhiannan must have access to her *Herd*, and each Trait gained requires 15 minutes out of play. Because of their ties to the old ways, Lhiannan begin play with one Trait each in *Occult* and *Hearth Wisdom*.

**Disadvantage**: The Lhiannan are part nature spirit, and their inhumanity runs strong within them. Even normal humans feel vaguely uncomfortable in their presence but will not understand why. Attempts to determine a Lhiannan's nature via *Auspex*, Numina or other supernatural means gains a two-Trait bonus.

Additionally, Lhiannan are even more tied to their land than the Tzimisce. A Lhiannan who leaves her territory becomes uncomfortable or even physically ill. She suffers a one-Trait penalty for each week that she remains outside her territory. Once she returns to her territory, her Traits return to normal within a few hours.

**Suggested *Viae***: Beast. A few follow the Roads of Kings or Sin.

## SALUBRI

It is hard to believe, gazing on the tattered remnants of the Salubri, that they were once a High Clan, considered matchless warriors, compassionate healers and learned scholars by their peers. Now they are haggard and hunted by the murderous Clan Tremere, which seeks to purge them from the earth to cover their crime of slaughtering Saulot. The healer caste does its best to hide from the Tremere and their other enemies. As Cainites, the healers are capable of defending themselves, but most are scholarly folk unsuited to a hunted existence. The warrior caste fights back where it can, which would mean much more if most of this caste had not been destroyed making war against the infernalist Baali.

Few Salubri are left in these nights, and to bolster their campaign, the Tremere have sought to turn them into the very things the Salubri despise. Where the Luminaries have spent centuries fighting the Baali and infernalists, the Tremere now spread lies and innuendo asserting that the Salubri are servants of Hell. They claim that the Salubri only waged war against the Baali to bolster their public image and place themselves above reproach. The Tremere make deals with princes and lords, offering magical favors in return for aid in hunting the Salubri. Where bribes do not work, they use threats instead, finding ways to put Cainites' most treasured possessions and companions in jeopardy. Rumor among the Salubri has it that a fledgling alliance has sprung up between a particularly unsavory Tremere lord and a sect of Baali. The two trade information on known names and locations of Salubri and aid each other in eradicating their mutual enemy.

With their high moral standards and their willingness to make war against anything they deem evil, the Salubri have made many enemies over the centuries. All of these foes are coming out of the shadows, taking advantage of the Salubri's plight in the name of revenge, chief among them the Baali.

Another difficulty the former High Clan faces is the loss of the Code of Samiel. The code was created by Samiel, first of the Salubri warriors, and his disciples. It laid out the proper nightly conduct of a warrior in war and peacetime and outlined the procedure for blooding a new Salubri warrior. This ritual was believed to purify the warrior, to charge him with his sacred duties and prepare him for his purpose. Over the years, many copies of the Code have been lost or destroyed, and most of the warriors who knew the ritual have been slain. The warriors have done their best to re-create the rite, but they have only come up with a largely bastardized version of the original. Some believe that new warriors no longer learn what Samiel would have wished them to and that they are lessened as a result.

The bloodline generally believes that the Code of Samiel is lost to them, but this does not stop them from searching for it, just as some Cainites search for *The Book of Nod*. The Code is their heritage and the inheritance of their childer; without it, they believe that they will ultimately fail in their work. A whispered tale has it that a couple of powerful Salubri remain in hiding, and that one of them might have a copy of the true Code of Samiel. This could be wishful thinking on the part of those spreading the rumor, but no one can be sure.

All Salubri must choose whether they follow the path of the warrior or the path of the healer when they begin learning *Valeren*, but their professions are not so restricted. Salubri have been teachers, courtiers, tacticians, relic-hunters, librarians — anything that allows them help those in need.

**Roleplaying Hints**: Whether you are warrior or healer, your cause is righteous. These are desperate nights as the Tremere hunt you mercilessly and so few Cainites seem to remember what good you once did. But desperation is no excuse to shirk your duty, and doing so only shames the memory of your founder. Go forth bravely, do your duty, survive to another night — that is all anyone can ask.

**Disciplines**: *Auspex*, *Fortitude*, *Valeren*

**Advantage**: Salubri have done their utmost to keep their bloodlines strong, the better to aid their childer. All Salubri begin character creation as 10th generation, instead of the normal 12th. Salubri also gain a level of *Linguistics: Enochian*, a dialect of the Second City they use among themselves.

**Disadvantage**: A warrior Salubri cannot refuse to aid someone in need. Should she do so, she suffers a two-Trait penalty on all challenges until she makes some restitution. A Salubri of the healer's caste may not harm another, even in self-defense. A healer who causes injury to another suffers a two-Trait penalty on all challenges for the rest of the scene.

Any use of *Valeren* above the Basic level causes the Salubri's third eye to open. Covering the eye is uncomfortable and the Salubri suffers a one-Trait penalty while attempting to use her powers with a covered eye. Many powers cause light to emanate from the eye, making it difficult to completely conceal.

**Suggested *Viae***: Heaven, Humanity, Kings.



*Initial sparring aside, and with the passage of time, Hauknefr had found the Toreador Paulo de la Peña to be a useful supplier of gossip, and Paulo found in the Brujah a tolerant ear and a sizable deterrent to his critics.*

*The two had taken to meeting in a tavern two streets from the port. Among its endearing qualities was the natural instinct of the kine to give their table considerable distance. Many of the sailors were brave, many foolhardy, but few were stupid.*

*"It's hardly a secret," Paulo said to his miserably under-informed companion. "Prince Salvatini scoured the city looking for the murderer. He was obsessed. Still is."*

*"I heard that others of his line have suffered similar fates," Hauknefr nodded. "But no one knows who's committing these atrocities?"*

*"I might," the Malkavian seer named Grigori said, sliding onto the bench beside Hauknefr. As he spoke, he stared straight into the single fatty candle on the table.*

*Paulo laughed to cover his surprise. He hadn't seen the notorious Malkavian arrive. "Oh, but of course. Perhaps the stars whispered it to you."*

*Grigori held his tongue a moment. "Perhaps you might prefer to remain in your comfortably trivial role, oh patron of pottery, or perhaps you will learn to recognize opportunity when it sits before you."*

*Paulo sneered, but his interest was piqued nonetheless. "Very well, speak on. Perhaps there is something in your words worth hearing."*

*"Someone — a conspirator involved in the murder — rests in torpor nearby," the Lunatic whispered. "I have been told of it in my way. If we can get hold of him, we can find out who really killed Damiano. Prince Salvatini will doubtless be grateful."*

*Several thoughts crossed Paulo's mind, but he settled on skepticism. "How do you know all this?"*

*"You know what I am capable of, yet you continue to doubt me. I hear things of which others are ignorant. I see things hidden from—"*

*"And they say Paulo is over-spoken," grumbled Hauknefr. "Are you going anywhere with this, Madman?"*

*Again, Grigori held back his venom. "A chance to right a wrong, Hauknefr. Surely you're ready to make your mark in your new home? It can't hurt to be the hero who brings the criminal to justice."*

*"So why not deal with this yourself?"*

*"I fear I do not have the prince's ear as much as I used too before his sire was slain. He blames me for not seeing clearly soon enough. Besides, I cannot act on what I know alone."*

*Paulo leaned forward. "But there will be rewards aplenty for each of us if we act together, I would wager. Tales will long be spoken of our deeds!" His eyes were alight with an intense need for the recognition of his peers. Chances for elevation in the eyes of the elders were few and far between, and Paulo would not miss out on his chance to shine.*

*"So where is this torpid conspirator?" asked Hauknefr.*

*"'High above and yet below, battered bastion, heart beats slow,'" Grigori said. "That is what the stars whispered to me, if you will."*

*"High… low… what?" Hauknefr murmured.*

*"Do they really say I'm over-spoken?" Paulo interrupted.*

*"Does that 'de la Peña' surname refer to the rock between your ears?" Grigori hissed. "It can only mean one thing."*

*"I'll have you know that my surname refers to the monastery where I spent my… Ah, but of course!"*

*"Indeed," Grigori said. "It seems that even the sane can see clearly from time to time. So, now that we have our destination, how should we investigate it?"*

*"Some of the brothers from my stay there were less than devout, if you catch my meaning," Paulo confided. "Brother Kristof, for instance, has a penchant for young men. I am no longer welcome there, but if someone were to find virtue in his weakness…"*

*"Yes," Grigori said. "Leave that to me."*



# Chapter Three: Character Creation

Before you can play **Faith and Fire**, you must create a character, for without characters, there can be no story. This chapter has all you'll need to do just that.

## Step One: Inspiration

Arguably the most important step in character creation is the formation of the basic concept. Every vampire was once a normal human, after all, with hopes, fears, dreams and ambitions. Once Embraced, the character brings her particular views to her new unlife. These strengths and weaknesses shape the character's Traits, capabilities and limitations.

The first step in creating a character is to come up with a basic idea of the person. This initial concept can usually be summed up in a single

### Quick Character-Creation Process

- Step One: Inspiration — Who are you?
  - — Choose a concept
  - — Choose a Nature and a Demeanor
  - — Choose a clan
  - — Choose a Road
- Step Two: Attributes — What are your basic capabilities?
  - — Prioritize Attributes (seven primary, five secondary and three tertiary)
  - — Choose Traits
- Step Three: Advantages — What do you know?
  - — Choose five Abilities
  - — Choose four Basic Disciplines
  - — Choose five Backgrounds
- Step Four: Last Touches — Fill in the details
  - — Assign blood (determined by Generation)
  - — Assign Willpower
  - — Assign seven Virtue Traits
  - — Assign your Morality rating (The average of your *Conscience/Self-Control* and *Conviction/Instinct*)
  - — Choose a derangement (if any)
  - — Choose Negative Traits and Flaws (if any)
  - — Spend five (or more) Free Traits and choose Merits (if any)
- Step Five: Spark of Life — Narrative descriptions

### Chicken or Egg?

Many Storytellers and Narrators think that when creating characters, the player must begin with the end result — what sort of vampire is the person creating? For those new to roleplaying or **Vampire**, trying to envision one's character that way is a little out of reach. After all, if they're not familiar with the vampire clans, how can they guess what they want to play? In such situations, another tack to take is to guide the new player through the creation of a *person*. In the end, no matter how some want to deny it, every vampire started off as a mortal. Creating the mortal can sometimes give the player an idea about what clan might have claimed him and why.

A concept shouldn't be another frustrating blank space to fill — it's meant to be helpful. If the way it's presented here doesn't help, ignore it or change it. Likewise, concepts do not always fit neatly into one-word definitions. Titling the character like a book or tagging her with a phrase that sounds right can be just as helpful — consider phrases like "Lady of the Manor," "Old Man of the Mountain" or "Forgotten Son."

word — scholar, drifter, dilettante, laborer, whatever. Don't worry about details now; think more in terms of broad brushstrokes. Create the *person*, before you create the vampire.

## Clans

By far, one of the most important steps in this process is the choice of your character's clan. A reclusive packrat makes a likely Nosferatu; a skilled court herald could be Embraced as a Ventrue. Breaking stereotypes can be fun, too — imagine these examples being reversed, for instance — but this initial concept shapes a character's outlook on her own clan.

The choice of clan is a permanent decision in a character's life. All sorts of goals and accomplishments in Cainite society, expectations and stereotypes of her fellow vampires, and — to some, most importantly — the Disciplines initially available to the character should be taken into account when the choice of clan is made. Note that some clans are not yet as widespread in these nights as they will become. Not every city has a Tremere presence and a chantry, but may be overrun with Cappadocians and their libraries.

If no clan strikes your fancy, a character can always be Caitiff — bereft of any known clan and possessed of an eclectic assortment of Disciplines. These vampires are almost uniformly of weak blood, high generation and limited Cainite standing, however, all of which might seriously hamper her in the Dark Medieval world.

## Nature and Demeanor

To define a character's personality, choose a particular Archetype. Each Archetype lists an underlying motivation, a reason for a character to behave in specific ways. The Archetypes described here are, by no means, the final list of personalities. Storytellers can suggest and approve any further numbers of Archetypes.



### Clans

**The High Clans**

- **Brujah:** Proud warriors and scholars, every Zealot has a cause that fires her blood.
  Disciplines: *Celerity, Potence, Presence*
- **Cappadocians:** Cold students of the grave, the Graverobbers seek the secrets of the dead.
  Disciplines: *Auspex, Fortitude, Mortis*
- **Lasombra:** Shadowy, decadent manipulators of church and crown, the Magisters seek power and control.
  Disciplines: *Dominate, Obtenebration, Potence*
- **Toreador:** The Artisans seek the beauty in all things and are consummate social predators.
  Disciplines: *Auspex, Celerity, Presence*
- **Tzimisce:** Inhuman lords of forest and mountain, the Fiends love pain and power in equal measure.
  Disciplines: *Animalism, Auspex, Vicissitude*
- **Ventrue:** The Warlords seek thrones and win them through manipulation and force of arms.
  Disciplines: *Dominate, Fortitude, Presence*

**The Low Clans**

- **Assamite:** The Saracens, judges of Caine's brood, hail from Outremer.
  Disciplines: *Celerity, Obfuscate, Quietus*
- **Follower of Set:** Lovers of decadence, the Serpents claim descent not from Caine but a dark pagan god.
  Disciplines: *Obfuscate, Presence, Serpentis*
- **Gangrel:** Wild, sometimes feral, outsiders and wanderers, the Animals scorn "civilized" society, preferring the barbarian hordes.
  Disciplines: *Animalism, Fortitude, Protean*
- **Malkavian:** The Madmen frighten with their lunacy and their shocking insights.
  Disciplines: *Auspex, Dementation, Obfuscate*
- **Nosferatu:** Twisted lurkers and penitents, the Lepers learn the secrets the shadows keep.
  Disciplines: *Animalism, Obfuscate, Potence*
- **Ravnos:** The wandering Deceivers travel as tricksters or thieves, enjoying the chaos they cause.
  Disciplines: *Animalism, Chimerstry, Fortitude*
- **Tremere:** Wizardly Cainites with a shadowy past, the Usurpers are still not welcome in many cities.
  Disciplines: *Auspex, Dominate, Thaumaturgy*

### Archetypes

Autocrat, Barbarian, Caretaker, Celebrant, Defender, Dreamer, Gallant, Jester, Judge, Pedagogue, Penitent, Rebel, Survivor

A character's Nature is her innermost persona, the true basis of her motives. Though many people bury their desires behind facades, the drives of the Nature often shine through. Since the character's Nature is a result of her upbringing and life experiences, Nature changes rarely. It takes extraordinary events to cause someone to change Natures.

By contrast, the Demeanor is the public face, the one a character shows to everyone else. Even if it is radically at odds with the character's Nature, the Demeanor provides a convenient mask against intrusion. Demeanors are subject to change at whim. Some characters might change Demeanors like some people change socks, while others choose a single face to present to the world. On occasion, Nature and Demeanor are the same, but few individuals are so open, especially in Kindred society.

## The Roads

Every vampire struggles with the Beast Within, the predatory drive of hunger that pushes Cainites to acts of fury, desperation and horror. Only by clinging to a moral compass — a philosophical ground to stand against the ravages of amorality — can a vampire resist the slide into total depravity.

### The Bloodlines

- **Baali:** Tempters who truck with dark powers, the Shaitans are feared and hunted by many Cainites.
  Disciplines: *Daimoinon, Obfuscate, Presence*
- **Gargoyles:** Magical constructs who serve the Tremere, the Watchdogs have a few secrets of their own.
  Disciplines: *Flight, Fortitude, Potence*, Special (see pp. 215-219)
- **Laibon:** The Sphinxes are African vampires with strong kinship to animals and the Beast.
  Disciplines: *Abombwe, Animalism, Fortitude*
- **Lamia:** Fierce female warriors who follow the Dark Mother, the Gorgons serve the Cappadocians.
  Disciplines: *Fortitude, Mortis, Potence*
- **Lhiannan:** The Druids are little understood, seen only as fey, pagan vampires bound to the forest and its old spirits.
  Disciplines: *Animalism, Ogham, Presence*
- **Salubri:** Warriors, healers and visionaries who struggle to survive, the Luminaries are hunted by the Tremere.
  Disciplines: *Auspex, Fortitude, Valeren*



### Roads

- **Beast:** This road teaches acceptance of the Beast and the cultivation of instinct. Ferals follow only the law of the wild. (*Conviction, Instinct*)
- **Heaven:** The Faithful who follow this road submit to Heaven's will despite personal damnation. (*Conscience, Self-Control*)
- **Humanity:** Prodigals believe in continued loyalty to the virtues of the living. (*Conscience, Self-Control*)
- **Kings:** The Scions follow a disciplined pursuit of personal excellence and power. Vampires are superior to mortals and meant to rule (*Conviction, Self-Control*)
- **Sin:** Sinners believe that indulgence in vice as one's destiny and nature. Vampires are damned — what worse can happen? (*Conviction, Instinct*)

Vampires have learned that enlightenment and guidance can take many forms. While some *viae* are more practiced than others, each has its own code of behavior and offers its own particular goals of achievement.

# Step Two: Attributes

Natural capabilities use Attributes for descriptions. Every character has certain innate qualities. Attributes describe these qualities, marking a character's particular areas of intrinsic talent.

## Choosing Attributes

Each character has areas of excellence and other areas of more modest skill. You determine your character's natural talents, selecting whether your character is to be physically adroit, mentally agile or socially adept. The character's concept should guide these choices, so a warlord is likely to be physically exceptional while a monk probably has more mental development than social.

- Physical Attributes measure your character's general health, stamina, agility and power. A character with modest Physical Attributes is probably not very athletic, while a character with high Physical Attributes is exceptionally strong, dexterous or tough.
- Social Attributes determine the force of a character's personality and ability to interact well with others. If your character has few Social Traits, she may be awkward, shy or just plain looking. A socially potent character is attractive, compelling or smooth.
- Mental Attributes help in problem-solving, learning, deduction and general alertness. With limited Mental attributes, a character is not particularly well educated, quick-thinking or perceptive. A strongly Mental character is conversely attentive, logical or intuitive.

Choose the priority of your character's attributes. Each character is stronger in some areas than in others, at least at first. Obviously, clan and concept shape these Attributes to some degree, but only a broad outline is needed in this step.

### Attributes

• Physical Traits: *Agile, Brawny, Brutal, Dexterous, Enduring, Energetic, Ferocious, Graceful, Lithe, Nimble, Quick, Resilient, Robust, Rugged, Stalwart, Steady, Tenacious, Tireless, Tough, Vigorous, Wiry*

• Social Traits: *Alluring, Beguiling, Charismatic, Charming, Commanding, Dignified, Diplomatic, Elegant, Eloquent, Empathetic, Expressive, Friendly, Genial, Gorgeous, Ingratiating, Intimidating, Magnetic, Persuasive, Seductive, Witty*

• Mental Traits: *Alert, Attentive, Clever, Creative, Cunning, Dedicated, Determined, Discerning, Disciplined, Insightful, Intuitive, Knowledgeable, Observant, Patient, Rational, Reflective, Shrewd, Vigilant, Wily, Wise*

### Choosing Traits

Once you've decided on your character's inherent strengths, you should describe exactly the sorts of exceptional characteristics he possesses. In your primary area of attribute development, choose seven Traits; in your secondary, choose five; in your tertiary area, select three Traits. Traits are adjectives describing the character, just like the descriptions in a novel or play. Therefore, a Mentally focused character might be more *Intuitive* than *Rational*, or a strong Physical character could be *Brawny* and *Tough* but not very *Quick* or *Nimble*.

A complete list of Traits starts on p. 100. Pick Traits that describe your character as if you wanted to write down the particular qualities of the individual. You can pick a particular Trait multiple times, if you like, to denote spectacular depth in an area.

## Step Three: Advantages

No character begins without education. The skills and learning acquired through living, and the friends made among various fields, all gift a character with resources. Furthermore, vampiric powers, called Disciplines, flow from the blood of all Cainites, granting them superhuman capabilities. Collectively, these advantages are learned or developed benefits not inherent to one's raw potential.

Advantages are divided into several categories. Abilities represent skills or training, allowing characters to perform tasks. Backgrounds are connections among the mortal and immortal communities, representing such diverse facets as friends, social standing or Cainite sponsors. Disciplines are the powers of the blood, the finely honed endowments that come with the Curse. Lastly, Virtues represent a character's strength of moral behavior, defining how well a particular vampire comports himself and holds to his ethics in the face of the Beast.

### Choosing Abilities

Select five Abilities that represent your character's education and training. Whether he learned them in his mortal days or honed them after death, Abilities set your character apart by letting him attempt tasks that less skilled compatriots cannot understand or complete. You can choose an Ability multiple times, if desired, to show greater expertise. A complete list of Abilities starts on p. 108. Note that some Abilities may be restricted by your Storyteller.



### Abilities

*Academics, Alertness, Animal Ken, Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Commerce, Crafts, Dodge, Empathy, Etiquette, Expression, Hearth Wisdom, Hobby/Professional/ Expert, Intimidation, Investigation, Law, Leadership, Legerdemain, Linguistics, Medicine, Melee, Occult, Performance, Politics, Repair, Ride, Scrounge, Seneschal, Stealth, Subterfuge, Survival, Theology*

### Choosing Disciplines

Select three Basic Disciplines for your vampire character. You must select them in the order listed (that is, you must take the first Basic level before taking the second Basic level in any given Discipline), and you can take only the Basic levels at this time. These Disciplines must come from your clan's specialty Disciplines. If you are Caitiff, you may simply choose any three Basic Disciplines desired, but your Storyteller may restrict you to the eight most common Disciplines — *Animalism, Auspex, Celerity, Dominate, Fortitude, Obfuscate, Potence* or *Presence* — unless you have an exceptional reason for learning a more specialized power.

A complete list of Disciplines starts on p. 152. See the previous table for a quick list of your clan's specialty Disciplines.

### Choosing Backgrounds

You may take five Background Traits for your vampire. Each Background represents a tie to a particular agency, organization or resource, whether mortal or Cainite. You can have up to five Traits in any Background, though your Storyteller may prohibit certain Backgrounds based on your concept, and most Storytellers will scrutinize any Background above three Traits heavily.

Background descriptions start on p. 114.

## Step Four: Last Touches

The final character Traits come together once your concept, clan, road, Attributes and advantages are chosen. Your last touches include Blood Traits, Willpower Traits, Road Traits and Virtue Traits.

### Blood Traits

Each vampire has a certain number of Blood Traits, or vitae. This blood can be used for a variety of different tasks, from temporarily improving one's physical prowess to healing wounds to powering Disciplines. You can hold a number of Blood Traits determined by your generation, as shown on p. 117. This number is modified by any clan disadvantages or Flaws that you may have relating to feeding, and it can be improved by the *Herd* Background (see p. 116).

### Willpower Traits

When all other avenues are exhausted, your Willpower measures your innate drive for self-preservation, your sense of mental fortitude and your ability to resist temptation and defeat. You can use Willpower Traits for a variety of tasks, such as redoubling your efforts in a task or resisting coercion.

### Quick Disciplines

- **Abombwe:** The Laibon power over the inner Beast.
- **Animalism:** Affinity with and power over animals, and the bestial side of humanity.
- **Auspex:** Preternatural alertness, perception and premonitions.
- **Celerity:** Superhuman quickness.
- **Chimerstry:** The Ravnos power of illusion and deceit.
- **Dementation:** The ability to induce and direct madness in others.
- **Dominate:** The power to command the mind of another person.
- **Daimoinon:** The Baali power of hellish corruption and horror.
- **Fortitude:** Superhuman toughness and resilience.
- **Mortis:** The multi-faceted Cappadocian arts of dealing with death and the soul. *The Grave's Decay* teaches how to harness the effects of decay. *The Corpse in the Monster* considers the ties between the dead and undead. The *Cadaverous Animation* teaches how to animate corpse-servants. The Lamia maintain *The Four Humours*, a means to shift and use the humours of the body.
- **Obfuscation:** The ability to conceal and disguise oneself.
- **Obtenebration:** The Lasombra power of mastery over darkness.
- **Ogham:** The Lhiannan power over nature and the forest.
- **Potence:** Superhuman strength.
- **Presence:** The power to sway the emotions in others.
- **Protean:** The Gangrel power of shapechanging.
- **Quietus:** The Assamite power of stealth and judgment.
- **Serpentis:** The Followers of Set power over serpents and serpentine transformations.
- **Thaumaturgy:** The newly created blood magic of the Tremere is highly varied. *Rego Vitae* teaches how to manipulate vampire blood. *Creo Ignem* summons unnatural fires. *Rego Motus* teaches how to move objects with invisible force. *Rego Tempestas* allow a wizard to control the weather, and *Rego Elementum* controls the four elements.
- **Valeren:** The twofold paths of Salubri warriors and healers. The *Path of the Healer* allows the Salubri to heal and safeguard those in his care. The *Path of the Warrior* grants pain and fear to one's enemies.
- **Vicissitude:** The Tzimisce power to sculpt living and unliving flesh.

You come into play with a number of Willpower Traits dependent on your generation. The generation table on p.117 shows your starting permanent Willpower, indicating how many Willpower Traits you have. The maximum Willpower listing shows the highest rating that your Willpower can reach. You may choose



### Backgrounds

- **Allies:** Trusted individuals who share your cause.
- **Contacts:** Sources of information.
- **Domain:** Space in which to feed and rule.
- **Generation:** Strength of the blood.
- **Herd:** Mortals willing to offer their blood regularly.
- **Influence:** Authority and status among mortal institutions: *Church, Court, Health, Learning, Occult, Politics, Street* and *Transportation.*
- **Mentor:** A sponsor or guide among vampires.
- **Resources:** Property and other sources of value.
- **Retainers:** Personal assistants, both living and otherwise.

to have a card for each Trait of Willpower you possess, and you must turn the card over to a Narrator or Storyteller when you expend Willpower.

## Virtue Traits

Every vampire must resist the temptation presented by the Beast in some fashion. Virtue Traits are the spiritual endurance with which a character fights against the talons of the Beast.

Virtue Traits come in three categories: *Conscience/ Conviction* Traits, *Self-Control/ Instinct* Traits and *Courage* Traits. You get seven Traits to split among these categories. Each category must range from one to five total Traits.

Your *Conscience/ Conviction* is your degree of adherence to your chosen morality. If you have many Traits here, you feel remorse for your evil deeds (or you refuse to be bowed by concern for such), thus preventing the Beast from eroding your morality.

*Self-Control/ Instinct* Traits represent the ability to guide or resist frenzy. High Traits in this category help to fight off berserk rage or hunger.

*Courage* Traits battle against Rötschreck, the Red Fear. With many *Courage* Traits, you can withstand the terror of fire or sunlight.

The Virtue Traits that you possess depend on your chosen morality. You always start with one free Trait in *Courage*. See the quick listing of morality for a summation of the Virtues prized by each Path. More complete descriptions of the Virtues and Virtue Tests appear on p. 128.

## Road Traits

While your Virtue Traits represent your ability to hold out against the Beast, your Road Traits show how closely you adhere to your chosen code of ethics. A high rating in your Road Traits indicates that you set high standards for yourself, but you risk losing ground to the Beast with even relatively trivial violations of your chosen morals. Low Road Traits indicate that you are close to losing control to the Beast forever.

Your starting Road Trait total equals the average of your *Conscience/ Conviction* and *Self-Control/ Instinct* Traits, rounded up. Therefore, you have a Road rating

from one to five Traits. Your number of Road Traits determines how well you avoid some of the problems associated with the bestial nature of vampires (such as staying awake during the day, rising from torpor and dealing with mortals), but it also indicates what circumstances call for a test of Virtue.

During character creation, you may choose to lose one Road Trait in exchange for gaining two Free Traits. You may do so only once — losing a Road Trait counts as taking two Negative Traits. Be warned that doing so is a dangerous course. A low Road rating total practically guarantees eventual disintegration into the Wassail, the final frenzy.

## Negative Traits

Some characters have particular weaknesses or shortcomings. Others just never developed certain aspects or suffered injuries that set back otherwise strong attributes. Such hindrances are represented with Negative Traits. Though Negative Traits are not required, they can represent a deficiency or injury in your character.

Since few people actually want to play a character with handicaps and problems, Negative Traits grant bonuses in other areas of character creation. Each Negative Trait taken is good for one Free Trait later. You may take up to five Negative Traits, though you should not take more than three Negative Traits in any one Attribute category.

Unlike other Attributes, you should only take Negative Traits from the list here. Although there are certainly other adjectives that would appropriately describe a character's drawbacks, nobody can be expected to guess a Trait that isn't covered in the rules.

Remember to take Negative Traits that you can roleplay accurately and well. The Storyteller may force you to "buy off" Negative Traits that you ignore consistently.

A complete listing of Negative Traits, and how they affect play, begins on p. 228.

### Negative Traits

• Negative Physical Traits: *Clumsy, Cowardly, Decrepit, Delicate, Docile, Flabby, Lame, Lethargic, Puny, Sickly*

• Negative Social Traits: *Bestial, Callous, Condescending, Dull, Feral, Naïve, Obnoxious, Repugnant, Shy, Tactless, Untrustworthy*

• Negative Mental Traits: *Forgetful, Gullible, Ignorant, Impatient, Oblivious, Predictable, Shortsighted, Submissive, Violent, Witless.*

## Derangements

In addition to Negative Traits, you may choose derangements for your character. A derangement represents some sort of mental instability or neurotic behavior. Taking a derangement counts as two Negative Traits and thus grants you two Free Traits, but you may take only one derangement at character creation (or one extra, in the case of Malkavians, who all start with one). Be warned that derangements cause unpredictable and uncontrollable behavior at times, and a Storyteller is justified in asking you to "buy off" any derangement that you do not roleplay accurately.

Remember that playing a derangement is an exercise in advanced roleplaying. Insanity is neither humorous nor light. In the Dark Medieval, the insane are believed to be possessed by demons and are considerably more misunderstood (even reviled) than they are in modern times. You should always consult your Storyteller before deciding to take a derangement.

### Derangements

Amnesia, Bulimia, Crimson Rage, Fantasy/Delusion, Fugue, Hysteria, Immortal Terror, Lunacy, Manic-Depression, Megalomania, Multiple Personalities, Obsession/ Compulsion, Overcompensation, Paranoia, Perfectionism, Possession (Sanguinary Animism), Regression, Saint Vitus's Dance, Schizophrenia, Visions

## Choosing Flaws

Representing specific deficiencies or drawbacks aside from inherent weaknesses common to many people, Flaws showcase particular problems. As with Negative Traits, Flaws grant additional Traits to the user at character creation. Each Flaw is rated in terms of its value, ranging from one to seven Traits. The higher the value is, the more debilitating the Flaw is. A character may total up to seven Traits of Flaws. Elder vampires may have more Flaws; after all, age takes its toll....

Flaws begin on p. 133.

## Free Traits

You can customize your vampire to some degree by using Free Traits. They can improve almost all facets of your character, including Abilities, Advantages and Backgrounds. A beginning vampire character has five Free Traits and gains additional Free Traits for any Negative Traits or derangements that you selected earlier. Some improvements cost more Free Traits than others, though.

• One Free Trait buys an additional Attribute Trait.

• One Free Trait buys an additional Ability Trait.

• One Free Trait converts to an additional Background Trait, subject to normal Storyteller approval.

• At a cost of one Free Trait, you may take a specialization in an Ability that you already have (see p. 107 for information about specializations). Remember that each Ability may have only one specialization.

• Three Free Traits convert to an extra Willpower Trait, to a maximum of 10 permanent Willpower Traits.

• Three Free Traits allows you access to an in-clan Basic Discipline, or six Free Traits to an in-clan Intermediate Discipline with Storyteller approval.

• Two Free Traits can be used for an extra Virtue Trait. Raising Virtues in this fashion does affect total Road Traits.

- Three Free Traits can be spent for a Road Trait.
- Merits have a variable Free Trait cost, dependent on the individual Merit.

### Choosing Merits

The antithesis of Flaws, Merits represent special bonuses and capabilities beyond the norm. Each Merit is rated in terms of its Trait value. To take a Merit, you must expend Free Traits equal to the Merit's value. You can take no more than seven Traits of Merits, total (though some older vampires may have more).

Merits start on p. 133.

## Step Five: Spark of Life

Your character is more than a summation of Traits and numbers. At this stage, take the concepts you've emphasized and develop a story for your character. Look for explanations as to why the character learned certain things, failed in others and developed as she did. Think about the sort of person you're playing and the motives of the individual.

- Background — Think about the mortal life from which your character came. Where and when were you born? How were you raised? What sort of education did you have, if any? Did you have any particularly spectacular successes, failures, romances or businesses?

- Secrets — Secrets are major commodities in Cainite society. Do you have any secret regrets? Hopes? Ambitions? Do you know something that you shouldn't?

- Motivations — Why does your character interact with other Cainites and deal with vampire society? Do you seek personal gain? Are you hunting someone or running from persecution? Perhaps you want to impress your sire or find a companion. If you have trouble figuring out why your character would show up in the game, ask a Narrator or Storyteller for a couple of possible motives.

- Appearance — The Embrace often changes the body, whether to imbue it with the grace and beauty of a predator or to twist into some strange visage. How he stands, walks, holds his goblet or dresses will be one of the things that other characters will remember him by.

- Equipment — Your character's Backgrounds of *Resources* and *Influence* may grant access to certain pieces of special gear. Whether you have a fine gown, a short sword or a purse full of silver, talk to your Storyteller to make sure that your character's gear is accounted for. You can have a card for each special item that you carry, representing the object in question (especially for weapons, armor and other conspicuous devices that you shouldn't be lugging around in real life).

- Quirks — Everybody has distinctive behaviors. Anything from a habit of saying "Great Caine!" to fiddling with a pendant — such mannerisms show off your character's uniqueness. A quirk can even be used to distinguish you when in disguise or using Disciplines to possess another body — or you could copy someone else's quirks....

## Archetypes

Archetypes play a fundamental part in shaping the personality of your character, creating the foundation for the motivations inspiring your development. An archetypal Nature illustrates the inherent tendencies in a character's personality, what she is truly like on the inside. An archetypal Demeanor is expressed as the outward behavior to the world, the face that the character presents to people around her. Some characters have the same Nature and Demeanor, but such openness is unusual in Cainite society.

During game play, a character's Nature serves as a set of behavioral motives that are not easily swayed by intimidation or other means, which signifies that you can call for a retest if commanded or bullied into violating your Nature. It is essential to keep your character's Nature a secret as it can be used against you in the same fashion as a Negative Trait might be, compelling you into a challenge.

**Example:** *Halfdan, a Gangrel of the Black Forest with the Barbarian Nature, is leading five other vampires in a raiding party against a vampire lord's domain. One of the lord's mortal guards brandishes a torch at Halfdan, who tests for frenzy and fails. Halfdan's player calls for a retest, based on Halfdan's Nature — he's not letting a soft mortal cow him so easily. The player makes a second test and wins. Halfdan pauses for only a moment at the sight of the torch, just before launching himself at the startled guard.*

*Later, Halfdan is recounting his exploits at an althing, when Uwe, another Gangrel, attempts to discredit him by daring him to raid the domain of another, more well-defended lord. Halfdan didn't get to be 150 winters by accepting some arrogant pup's dare, so he refuses. Uwe replies: "I'm too* Persuasive *for you to completely refuse." He then adds: "You're not half the Barbarian I thought you were." Uwe's player calls for a Social Challenge, and because he guessed Halfdan's Nature correctly, Half's player must bid two Traits. The challenge is made, and Halfdan loses. He thinks black thoughts of revenge as he stalks out of the camp to prepare.*

- Autocrat — You thrive when you can take charge and bring order to chaos. You trust your judgments and believe that you have special insight into the world and its woes.

- Barbarian — Civilization and sedentary existence only entangles one or brings one closer to the grave. Empty words and meaningless customs mean nothing compared to deeds, for only deeds (real ones, not mere boasting) change the world.

- Caretaker — Your most important obligation is to care and provide for others. Your efforts aren't always appreciated, but you have no intention to quit.

- Celebrant — The only thing worth having is joy, and only the greatest joy will do. Once you've found your joy and pleasure, you will do your utmost to defend it.

- Defender — Everything that matters in the world struggles to survive in the face of its enemies. You find your fulfillment in defending the cause to which you've given your allegiance.

- Dreamer — You've built a haven for yourself, a little world that works the way you want. Let those who would disturb you beware, for you will defend your world at any cost.

- Gallant — You believe that style is the only thing that matters in the world — how you look, how you speak, how you behave. Without it, you are no better than the masses around you.

- Jester — You lead the proud into right behavior by displaying their folly, and you relieve fear and tension with smiles. In a world of woe, what else can one do but laugh?

• Judge — Someone must weigh the balance and consider the evidence, rewarding and punishing as necessary. Gratitude is not necessary — obedience is.

• Pedagogue — You find the greatest joy in correcting error and removing ignorance, whether others appreciate your efforts or not.

• Penitent — In the beginning, there was sin, and in the end, there will be judgment. In between, there is your guilt and the world's, for which you must atone.

• Rebel — Authority is your enemy, and you will do whatever it takes to topple it.

• Survivor — You'll do whatever it takes to last a little while longer. You'll use any tool available and make whatever hard choices need making.

## The Roads

When the first pulses of vitae course through a Cainite's body, a powerful, destructive spirit awakens within. This spirit, the Beast, hungers for savagery and destruction, gnawing at the soul and mind of its host. Night after night, the Beast cajoles the Cainite to perform acts that erode sanity and soul. Cainites must learn to suppress the Beast, or they will eventually spiral down a long path into self-destruction. Any vampire that goes too far down this path endangers not only himself but also the safety of Cainite society. In these times, vampires have developed a variety of philosophies to counteract the nightly depredations of the Beast. Some of these philosophies have existed since the first vampires walked, some have arisen in recent times, and still others have evolved over the long, dark centuries between. These paths that are used to calm the nature of the Beast are known as roads (or *viae* in Latin), and they offer hope to the Damned.

### The Essence of Roads

Similar to the philosophies of mortal men, the roads attempt to answer philosophical questions and give meaning to one's existence, suggesting a greater sense of self and purpose. The deeper a Cainite's devotion to her road is, the more easily it can soothe the urges of the Beast. Each seeks to provide solace from the Beast in its own way, be it through redemption and hope of salvation or coming to terms with the monster within by guiding it through its hungers. Even within each road, the methods and means of achieving these ends vary with each disciple. For some, a road's principles are equivalent to religious faith and beliefs. Conviction in these viewpoints often leads to the point of argument and occasionally violence, as any fundamental philosophical debate is wont to generate. And yet, despite the various unique perspectives found along a road, the basic tenets remain true and constant for each devotee.

### Choosing a Road

Shortly after being Embraced, a Cainite seeks out and learns to follow the road that fits into his nature. Initial understanding of the philosophy of a given road can come from a neonate's sire, meeting with other members of the clan, tutelage under devout followers or a myriad other ways. Regardless of the initial introduction, a Cainite starts to conform to their chosen path. Their particular Virtues are shaped to those found on their road.



The five main roads that are followed by the majority of Cainites are the Road of the Beast (*Via Bestiae*), Road of Heaven (*Via Caeli*), Road of Humanity (*Via Humanitatis*), Road of Kings (*Via Regalis*) and Road of Sin (*Via Peccati*). As a Cainite progresses along her road, she must maintain vigilance against the temptations of the Beast. Often this becomes a battle with the road's tenets on one side and the Beast on the other. Although it is not an easy path, it is the only one that stands between the Cainite and spiraling madness in these dark times.

Most times, after her initial exposure and development onto a particular road, a Cainite stays with that path throughout her entire existence. It has been known, however, for a Cainite to have a change of heart about her elected course and decide to follow another road. Such a course is both extremely difficult and rare, as the vampire has decided that her years or centuries of achieving an understanding with the Beast were wasted and she casts it aside to start all over again. It takes an extraordinary event, and even more extraordinary effort for the vampire to make such a change. Rarer still is a Cainite that forgoes his road completely, as the Beast — held at bay for so long — ravages the Cainite completely in an orgy of vicious savagery.

### Aura of Conviction

Passionate belief and devotion to a road creates the confidence and certainty in a Cainite's chosen philosophy. This confidence is instinctively projected to some extent as an Aura of Conviction that others around the Cainite can sense and unconsciously react to. The greater the road rating is, the stronger an aura is projected. Similarly, bystanders perceive the lack of confidence and uncertainty that is brought about from a low road rating. Regardless of the strength or frailty of the Aura of Conviction, it affects Social Challenges associated with the vampire's road or with Disciplines if they conform to the type of Aura of Conviction as listed on the following table.

| Road Rating | Aura Modifier |
|---|---|
| 5 | Two Traits up |
| 4 | One Trait up |
| 3 | No modifier |
| 2 | One Trait down |
| 1 | Two Traits down |

### Clan-Specific Roads

The five core roads are not the only ones that exist. Indeed, there exist specific roads that have been developed by clans to embody their own precepts and goals. These roads are not outlined here, as they are minor roads compared to the mainline philosophies. The Road of Blood (*Via Sanguinis*) is followed by members of the Assamite Clan. The Road of Bones (*Via Ossium*) is practiced by the Cappadocians. The Road of Metamorphosis (*Via Mutationis*) is a secretive road found among the Tzimisce. The Lasombra embrace the Road of Night (*Via Noctis*), while Ravnos follow the Road of Paradox (*Via Paradoxi*), and the Road of the Serpent (*Via Serpentis*) is enjoyed by the Followers of Set. Unlike the main roads,

these clan-specific roads tend to be ingrained more into the beings of the Cainites that follow them, with a even greater degree of stricture that outlines the acceptable actions within the basic tenets.

Those who wish their characters to follow these *viae* (with Storyteller approval, of course) should look up **Laws of the Night** for MET systems, supplementing it with **Dark Ages Storytellers Companion** for any medieval touches.

## Road of the Beast

Believed to be the oldest of the philosophies, the Road of the Beast is also the most innate to the newly Embraced. Viewed by the High Clans as crass and base, the *Via Bestiae* is based upon raw instinct and impulse. Followers take on feral personalities, regarding themselves as predators without equal. Abandoning society, they become animals in character, reacting only through instinct. In acting instinctively, they satiate the Beast within without becoming lost to it. They respect only those stronger than themselves and show no mercy to those who threaten their territory. Like animals, they value their freedom and wander where they want, living by natural law.

When an animal is hungry, it hunts. When it kills, it does not waste time in regret. When an animal tires, it sleeps, and when it is threatened, it responds without mercy. This is how a Feral views his unlife. He exists only in the now — the past is gone and the future is not yet written. Planning wastes time, and most Ferals have no patience for it. Only action matters — preferably action taken immediately.

Like predators, Ferals generally travel alone or in hunting packs (which have their own pecking order). Most reject Cainite society, and some even reject the idea of descent from Caine, believing themselves to come from pagan lineages. They value their freedom above all else and avoid the blood oath, except as a pledge of loyalty. When a Feral pledges his word, he will do what he says — deceit is not the way of animals. They give their bond and trust only to those who have earned it by proving their strength of mind, body and spirit.

Ferals range from fur-clad barbarians to naked savages to clever trackers and woodsmen. Very few vampires of the High Clans follow this road, and those who do are often quickly exiled from princely courts. This road is most popular with the Low Clans, especially the Gangrel.

**The Ethics of the Beast:**

- Exist in accord with the needs of the Beast.
- Do what you must to survive. No more, no less.
- Mercy is for the weak. Only the strong survive.
- The past is over, the future is not yet written. There is only the present.
- Respect only the strong, and swear fealty to no one.

**Aura of Conviction:** *Menace*. Being in the presence of a true predator instills feelings of dread upon lesser creatures. Disciples of *Via Bestiae* emanate this trepidation on others, imposing an aura modifier that takes effect when terrifying or cowing an opponent.

**Road Virtues:** *Conviction, Instinct*



### Hierarchy of Sins Against the Beast

| Score | Minimum Wrongdoing |
|---|---|
| 5 | Putting yourself at risk needlessly; not challenging a weak leader |
| 4 | Killing for any reason other than survival; avoiding contact with nature |
| 3 | Needless torture or cruelty; making a sacrifice for someone unrelated to you |
| 2 | Refusing to kill when important to your survival; failing to defend your territory |
| 1 | Showing mercy to an enemy; abstaining from feeding when hungry |

## Road of Heaven

God has a plan for everyone, including those that have been Damned. Followers of the *Via Caeli* know this and accept the burden that the Lord has laid upon them. Even though their existence is a constant test of faith, knowing that they work for a divine cause is enough to save their souls. However, the destinies that are followed in God's name are not the same for everyone; likewise those that follow *Via Caeli* pursue it differently. Some believe that they are blessed by God and that they follow the teachings of the Church. Some use the knowledge that God has cursed them and become His vengeance on earth. Others believe that they have sinned and must seek to redeem themselves in His eyes through penitence. Regardless of the personal twist that they place on their journeys on the *Via Caeli*, all adherents know that God's word is law and that Satan exists.

The Beast is the voice of Satan and is to be spurned. Likewise sin, temptation, infernalism, demons, followers of the Road of Sin and devil-cults are to be rejected as they are tribulations that lead to damnation beyond that which has already stricken Cainites. The Faithful continue to carry out the sacraments, and tend to organize themselves in small congregations to worship. Some support the mortal Church, while others fall into Gnostic heresies, especially those that claim that the material world is Hell. Others turn to more orthodox Western and Eastern Church teachings. All agree that while Heaven is not unattainable for them, it will take that much more work to achieve as the Damned than they might have gained it as the living.

The Faithful are found anywhere Christianity springs, but not all follow Church. Some Faithful follow Islam or Judaism, especially in Outremer. Some even claim to have met pagans on *Via Caeli*, usually in the northern lands or in Britain.

**The Ethics of Heaven**

- God laid His mark upon Caine and his childer as part of His great plan.
- The word of God is law. Defiance of God is sin that leads to damnation.
- No one is above God's law.
- Love and serve God in all things.
- Deny the Devil through denial of the Beast and all creatures of Hell.

**Aura of Conviction:** *Holiness.* The devout nature of followers of the *Via Caeli* inspires those around them and creates an aura modifier that applies to their appearance as divine beings.

**Road Virtues:** *Conscience, Self-Control*

### Hierarchy of Sins Against Heaven

| Score | Minimum Wrongdoing |
|---|---|
| 5 | Violating any of the Ten Commandments, for any reason; failing to speak out against corruption and sin |
| 4 | Acting out of pride, avarice, gluttony or some other sinful impulse; theft, robbery, willful vandalism |
| 3 | Causing harm to a pious and virtuous person; feeding from an innocent without permission |
| 2 | Blasphemous or heretical acts; allowing a crime or major sin to go unpunished |
| 1 | The murder of innocents; aiding a demon or other supernatural agent of evil |

## Road of Humanity

Opposing the Road of the Beast in thought and form is the *Via Humanitatis*. Where *Via Bestiae* advocates the change into an instinctual animal without compassion or mercy, followers of Humanity believe that only by maintaining their hold on their humanity can they survive against the horrors of the Beast. The Beast seeks to create monsters out of Cainites, and through humanity, they counteract the call that plagues them. This creates a dangerous game of survival, as Cainite society is neither peaceful nor humane. For this reason, followers of this road often cling to the remnants of human society. They interact with mortals, they pursue religion with greater fervor than they did in life, and above all, they try to continue in death as they did in life.

Prodigals believe that humanity is not an accident of birth, or a state created by a beating heart. Humanity is the result of a feeling heart. One is truly dead when one's heart is corrupted and blackened with deliberate wickedness or callused with uncaring. The Beast represents everything that Prodigals fight: hunger, cruelty, selfishness, madness, depravity for its own sake. So followers of the road hang on to what uniquely human behaviors they can and commit smaller sins (such as feeding) in an effort to forestall greater ones. When they sin, they seek penance and redemption.

*Via Humanitatis* comes by instinct to many vampires on their Embrace. After all, they were once human, and some attempt to continue on as they were. Many Brujah follow this road, as it embodies many of their clan ideals and suggests a possibility for living in harmony with mortals. Most Prodigals live near or among common folk, and they often seem little different from the mortals around them.

**The Ethics of Humanity**

- A man is measured by his words, his deeds and his heart, not his birth or circumstance.
- The ability to reason separates man from beast.
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- All men are brothers.
- Freedom is earned with dignity and justice.

**Aura of Conviction:** *Normalcy.* Seeking to maintain their sense of humanity, followers of *Via Humanitatis* don't project their aura as other roads do so much as suppress the unease that their supernatural form would normally inspire in others. Their Aura of Conviction, therefore, works when they are hiding their supernatural selves and trying to appear normal.

**Virtues:** *Conscience, Self-Control*

### Hierarchy of Sins Against Humanity

| Score | Minimum Wrongdoing |
|---|---|
| 5 | Selfish thoughts; minor selfish acts |
| 4 | Injury to another person (deliberate or otherwise); theft and robbery |
| 3 | Accidental violation of another (e.g., drinking a vessel dry from starvation); wanton destruction |
| 2 | Impassioned violation of another (e.g., killing in frenzy); planned violation of another (e.g., murder) |
| 1 | Casual violation of another (e.g., wanton killing, feeding past satiation); the most heinous and demented acts |

## Road of Kings

God ordained that Man would have dominion over the beasts of the earth. Followers of the Road of Kings believe that as much as Man is above animals, Cainites are above humanity and that they have dominion over the herds of humanity. Likewise, as God ordains the just rule of human kings over their subjects, *Via Regalis* teaches that certain Cainites are predestined to rule over their kind. To rule others, however, one must first rule oneself through inner discipline and self-mastery, mastery that includes controlling the demanding inner voice that is the Beast. Only then can you command the loyalty of your subjects and be a true king. Followers of this path also honor the fealty of their betters, understanding that those above them are owed the respect that rulership brings.

Many Scions war among themselves for control of Cainite lands and domains, arraying lesser vampires and mortals like chess pieces. But they are not all about wars and trumpets. They are concerned with rulership, and one must rule the Beast within before commanding another. One is either ruler or ruled, and a Scion cannot rule if he himself is commanded by the Beast. The Beast stands in the way of a Cainite's destiny — it is all the dark impulses that lead to betrayal and rebellion. Such impulses must be reined in and channeled in greater actions. A Scion who wishes to rule must learn to master the Beast, to defer to his betters, to command inferiors and to claim the power laid before him.

The Scions appreciate the bonds of feudal society and have embraced chivalry wholeheartedly. Cainite orders of knighthood are sponsored by lords as schools to better teach the ideals of the road. Some Scions, however, are discovering a conflict between the road and chivalry. Lords see themselves as the ultimate authority, and many chivalrous knights are holding first to moral codes drawn from mortal chivalric orders or those handed down by Caine or the Salubri knight Samiel.

*Via Regalis* draws many of the High Clans, especially the Lasombra, Tzimisce and Ventrue, and many princes are often revealed to be followers of this road. Scions do not hoard power for its own sake — that's for the Beast — but they rule with an eye on statesmanship, making justice for their subjects and inspiring loyalty in their vassals. In order to better understand how loyalty functions (and what can sour it), many Scions spend time as courtiers, knights, magistrates and judges in the service of others.

**The Ethics of Kings:**

- There are only two roles in this world: that of master and that of servant.
- You are superior to mortals, made to rule.
- To master others, you must first master yourself and the Beast within.
- Only those who seize power gain it; only those who use power keep it.
- Your word is your bond. Without it, you are nothing.

**Aura of Conviction:** *Command.* Followers of *Via Regalis* demand respect, and their commands are followed without question. Their Aura of Conviction modifier becomes active during challenges to command or lead others.

**Road Virtues:** *Conviction, Self-Control*

### Hierarchy of Sins Against Kingship

| Score | Minimum Wrongdoing |
|---|---|
| 5 | Neglecting your duty; treating a peer with disrespect |
| 4 | Treating an inferior as an equal; breaking your word to a peer |
| 3 | Behaving shamefully before your peers; showing weakness in front of inferiors |
| 2 | Failing to answer a challenge to your honor; treating a superior with disrespect |
| 1 | Breaking your word to your superiors; breaking a sworn oath |

## Road of Sin

Followers of *Via Peccati* are a demented lot, angered that God has cursed them. Denouncing God, they break all rules and indulge in any desire that strikes their fancy. Vampires are creatures of the Devil, and wickedness and corruption is Satan's domain. In this belief, and in pursuing the infinite vices of pleasure, there exists some protection against the Beast. By following every indulgence down its dark path, by gratifying every base desire, you feed your own selfishness and strengthen you will, resulting in ego that is so strong it will not bow before anything, including the Beast. At the same time, such actions sate the hunger of the Beast, allowing it to remain contented. Sin and transgression holds no fear of eternal damnation because Cainites are already damned. *Via Peccati* is a primal and dark hunger, but in the darkness of the soul, protection from the Beast still exists.

Contrary to popular belief, Sinners are not always agents of Satan. Those who truck with infernalism do so for power and to gain the Devil's favor. Cainites are already damned, so they already belong to the Devil. Selfishness is the core of this road. These Cainites do as they please, and to hell with anyone who stands in their way.

Sinners' interests are as diverse as the followers of the road. Some indulge in pleasures of the senses, such as perfumes, music or fine clothes (food and drink are denied them). They may serve as muses or become obsessive collectors. Others practice seduction, gathering beautiful mortals around them like flowers in a garden. Some enjoy corrupting others, using them as tests for the depths that mortals or vampires will sink to. They explore the limits of pain and degradation that others (mortal or Cainite) can suffer. Nothing is forbidden — they are damned, after all. The only thing they avoid is denial. Denying the Beast awakens it and makes it seek its pleasures by the bloodiest means possible. Sinners have no wish to become slaves, which is what happens when the Beast must take control.

Many Cainites are drawn to *Via Peccati*, each seeking a particular desire. Those of the High Clans are said to practice sublime pleasures, but they are just as likely to devolve into the study of pain (the bloodbaths of the Toreador and the flesh-crafting excesses of the Tzimisce are often found here). The Low Clans are said to be more debauched and savage in their pleasures, but this is more a matter of social stereotyping than practice. Generally, Cainites are willing to let Sinners be, provided they do not violate the Traditions or princely laws.

**The Ethics of Sin:**

- You are already damned, so nothing is forbidden to you.
- Claim the Beast and make it yours. Do not let it claim you.
- The night is yours. Take what you want and do what you will.
- Act where others hesitate. The laws of neither man nor God bind you.
- In the dark depths of your heart lies pleasure, if you have the courage to free it.

### Hierarchy of Sins Against Infamy

| Score | Minimum Wrongdoing |
|---|---|
| 5 | Acknowledging any moral restraint; failing to indulge a new desire |
| 4 | Failing to ride the wave of a frenzy; refusing to tempt the virtuous |
| 3 | Avoiding injury to others at the cost of your own pleasure; turning down a chance for material gain |
| 2 | Acting against your own best interests; refusing to kill when it is in your best interest |
| 1 | Refusing to feed when the opportunity arises; encouraging virtue or aiding agents of virtue |

**Aura of Conviction:** *Seduction*. Knowing how liberating the power of self-satisfaction is on any scale leads to an understanding of what others desire and need. Temptation and seduction attempts allow the followers of this road to coerce their aura modifier upon others.

**Road Virtues:** *Conviction, Instinct*

## Attributes (Bidding Traits)

Once you have chosen a clan and a road, it's time to bang out your Attributes, the meat and bones of your character. Attributes signify how strong your character is, whether she is beautiful or callous, smart or naïve.

The first step is to prioritize the categories — Physical, Social and Mental — in order of relevance to your character. It is best to refer to your character concept when prioritizing, so that you don't end up with a dense philosopher or a frail warrior. Prioritize among your most significant category (primary), above-average category (secondary) and your average or least significant category (tertiary). For example, a Cappadocian scholar would have Mental Traits primary, while a Gangrel bandit would more likely have Physical Traits as primary.

When you enter into a situation in which something important occurs, you must bid Traits applicable to the circumstances. If you are trying to kick someone in the head, you can bid the Physical Trait *Quick* as you use speed to snap your leg. You and your opponent can agree to disregard these limits and bid any Trait, regardless of applicability, but it looks odd, for example, bidding the Physical Trait *Lithe* when attempting to lift a heavy object.

When you bid a Trait, you risk losing the Trait during a challenge. Should you lose a challenge, you temporarily lose access to that Trait without some means of refreshing it back into your pool. Some situations require that you bid an additional Trait. When you are considered "bids down," you are required to bid an additional Trait.

## Physical Traits

Strength-related: *Brawny, Ferocious, Stalwart, Tough, Wiry*

Dexterity-related: *Dexterous, Graceful, Lithe, Nimble, Quick*

Stamina-related: *Enduring, Resilient, Robust, Rugged, Tireless*

Miscellaneous Physical: *Agile, Brutal, Energetic, Steady, Tenacious, Vigorous*

**Agile**: You are quite flexible and capable of deft movements such as dodging, jumping, running and turning.

Uses: Acrobatics. *Athletics*. Competitive events. Dodging.

**Brawny**: Strong, bulky muscle-strength.

Uses: Punching, kicking or grappling in combat when your goal is to inflict damage. Power-lifting. All feats of strength.

**Brutal**: You are capable of acting bestial and ruthless.

Uses: Fighting an obviously superior enemy.

**Dexterous**: You possess a natural competency and skill with your hands or body.

Uses: Weapon-oriented combat (*Melee, Archery*). Pickpocketing. Punching.

**Enduring**: A persistent hardiness against physical opposition.



Uses: When your survival is at stake, this Trait is a good one to risk as a second or successive bid.

**Energetic**: A powerful force of spirit. A strong internal drive propels you and, in physical situations, you can draw on a deep reservoir of enthusiasm and zeal.

Uses: Combat.

**Ferocious**: Possession of brutal intensity and extreme physical determination.

Uses: Any time that you intend to do serious harm. When in frenzy.

**Graceful**: Control and balance in the motion and use of the entire body.

Uses: Combat defense. Dancing. Whenever you might lose your balance.

**Lithe**: Characterized by flexibility and suppleness.

Uses: Acrobatics, gymnastics, dodging and dancing.

**Nimble**: Light and skillful.

Uses: Dodging, jumping, rolling, acrobatics. Hand-to-hand combat.

**Quick**: Possessed of a fast reaction time.

Uses: Defending against a surprise attack. Running, dodging, attacking.

**Resilient**: Characterized by strength of health; able to recover quickly from bodily harm.

Uses: Resisting adverse environments. Defending against damage in an attack.

**Robust**: Resistant to physical harm and damage.

Uses: Defending against damage in an attack. Endurance-related actions that could take place over a period of time.

**Rugged**: Hardy, tough and brutally healthy. Able to shrug off wounds and pain to continue exertion.

Uses: When resisting damage, any challenge that you enter while injured.

**Stalwart**: Physically strong and uncompromising against opposition.

Uses: Resisting damage, or when standing your ground against overwhelming odds or a superior foe.

**Steady**: More than simply physically dependable — controlled, unfaltering and balanced. You have firm mastery over your efforts.

Uses: Weapon attacks. Fighting in exotic locations.

**Tenacious**: Physically determined through force of will.

Uses: Second or subsequent Physical Challenge.

**Tireless**: You have the stamina of a marathon runner — you are less taxed by physical efforts than ordinary people.

Uses: Any endurance-related challenge, second or subsequent Physical Challenge with the same foe or foes.

**Tough**: An abrasive, aggressive attitude and a reluctance to submit.

Uses: Whenever you're wounded.

**Vigorous**: Possessing robust, vital strength.

Uses: Combat and athletic challenges when you're on the defensive.

**Wiry**: Corded, muscular strength.

Uses: Punching, kicking or grappling in combat. Acrobatic movements.

## Negative Physical Traits

**Clumsy**: Lacking physical coordination, balance and grace. You are prone to stumbling and dropping objects.

**Cowardly**: In threatening situations, saving your own neck is all that is important. You might even flee when you have the upper hand, just out of habit.

**Decrepit**: You move and act as if you are old and infirm. You recover from physical damage slowly, and unable to apply full muscular strength. Most efforts make you tire easily.

**Delicate**: Frail and weak in structure; you are damaged easily by physical harm.

**Docile**: The opposite of the *Ferocious* and *Tenacious* Traits. You lack physical persistence, and you tend to submit rather than fighting long battles.

**Flabby**: Your muscles are underdeveloped. You cannot apply your strength well against resistance.

**Lame**: You are disabled in one or more limbs. The handicap can be as obvious as a missing leg or as subtle as a dysfunctional arm.

**Lethargic**: Slow and drowsy. You suffer from a serious lack of energy or motivation.

**Puny**: You are inferior in strength. This Trait could refer to diminutive size.

**Sickly**: Weak and feeble. Your body responds to physical stress as if it were in the throes of a debilitating illness.

## Social Traits

Charisma-related: *Charismatic, Charming, Dignified, Eloquent, Expressive, Genial*

Manipulation-related: *Beguiling, Commanding, Ingratiating, Persuasive*

Appearance-related: *Alluring, Elegant, Gorgeous, Magnetic, Seductive*

Miscellaneous Social: *Diplomatic, Empathetic, Intimidating, Friendly, Witty*

**Alluring**: An attractive and appealing presence that inspires desire in others.

Uses: Seduction. Convincing others.

**Beguiling**: The skill of deception and illusion. You can twist the perceptions of others and lead them to your beck and call.

Uses: Tricking others. Lying under duress.

**Charismatic**: The talent of inspiration and motivation, the sign of a strong leader.

Uses: In a situation involving leadership or the achievement of leadership.

**Charming**: Your speech and actions make you attractive and appealing to others.

Uses: Convincing. Persuading.

**Commanding**: Impressive delivery of orders and suggestions. This Trait implies skill in the control and direction of others.

Uses: When you are seen as a leader.

**Dignified**: Something about your posture and body carriage appears honorable and aesthetically pleasing. You carry yourself well.

Uses: Defending against Social Challenges.



**Diplomatic**: Tactful, careful and thoughtful in speech and deed. Few are displeased with what you say or do.

Uses: Very important in intrigue. Leadership situations.

**Elegant**: Refined tastefulness. Even though you don't need money to be elegant, you exude an air of richness and high society.

Uses: High society or High Clan gatherings. Defending against Social Challenges.

**Eloquent**: The ability to speak in an interesting and convincing manner.

Uses: Convincing others. Swaying emotions. Public speaking.

**Empathetic**: Able to identify and understand the emotions and moods of people with whom you come in contact.

Uses: Gauging the feelings of others.

**Expressive**: Able to articulate your thoughts in interesting, meaningful ways.

Uses: Producing art of any kind. Acting. Performing. Any social situation in which you want someone to understand your meaning.

**Friendly**: Able to fit in with everyone you meet. Even after a short conversation, most find it difficult to dislike you.

Uses: Convincing others.

**Genial**: Cordial, kindly, warm and pleasant. You are pleasing to be around.

Uses: Mingling at parties. Generally used in a second or later Social Challenge with someone.

**Gorgeous**: Beautiful or handsome. You were born with a face and body that is good-looking to most people you meet.

Uses: Seduction. Dealing with Toreador.

**Ingratiating**: Able to gain the favor of people who know you.

Uses: Dealing with elders in a social situation. Defending against Social Challenges.

**Intimidating**: A frightening or awesome presence that causes others to feel timid. This Trait is particularly useful when attempting to cow opponents.

Uses: Inspiring common fear. Ordering others around.

**Magnetic**: People feel drawn to you; those around you are interested in your speech and actions.

Uses: Seduction. First impressions.

**Persuasive**: Able to propose believable, convincing and correct arguments and requests. Very useful when someone else is undecided on an issue.

Uses: Persuading or convincing others.

**Seductive**: Able to entice and tempt. You can use your good looks and your body to get what you want from others.

Uses: Subterfuge, seduction.

**Witty**: Cleverly humorous. Jokes and jests come easily to you, and you are perceived as a funny person when you want to be.

Uses: At parties. Entertaining someone. Goading or insulting someone.

## Negative Social Traits

**Bestial**: You have started to resemble the Beast of your vampiric nature. Maybe you have clawlike nails, heavy body odor or a feral gleam in your eye. However your Beast manifests, you definitely seem inhuman.

**Callous**: You are unfeeling, uncaring and insensitive to the suffering of others.

**Condescending**: Whether you mean it or not, others perceive in you a contempt that is impossible to hide.

**Dull**: Those with whom you speak usually find you boring and uninteresting. Conversation with you is a chore. You do not present yourself well to others.

**Feral**: The animalistic predator is evident in you. You scratch yourself, circle a chair before you sit and otherwise behave in primitive fashion.

**Naïve**: You lack the air of worldliness, sophistication or maturity that most carry.

**Obnoxious**: You are annoying or unappealing in speech, action or appearance.

**Repugnant**: Your appearance disgusts everyone around you. You make a terrible first impression with strangers, as medieval thought believes that outer ugliness reflects spiritual deformity.

**Shy**: You are timid, bashful, reserved and socially hesitant.

**Tactless**: You are unable to do or say things that others find appropriate to the social situation.

**Untrustworthy**: You are rumored or perceived to be unreliable, whether or not you really are.

## Mental Traits

Perception-related: *Attentive, Discerning, Insightful, Observant, Vigilant*

Intelligence-related: *Cunning, Disciplined, Knowledgeable, Rational, Reflective*

Wits-related: *Alert, Clever, Intuitive, Shrewd, Wily*

Miscellaneous Mental: *Creative, Dedicated, Determined, Patient, Wise*

**Alert**: Mentally prepared for danger and able to react quickly when it occurs.

Uses: Preventing surprise attacks.

**Attentive**: You pay attention to everyday occurrences around you. When something extraordinary happens, you are usually ready for it.

Uses: Preventing surprise attacks. Seeing through *Obfuscate* or *Chimerstry* when you don't expect it.

**Clever**: Quick-witted resourcefulness. You think well on your feet.

Uses: Using a Mental Challenge against another character.

**Creative**: Your ideas are original and imaginative, which implies an ability to produce unusual solutions to your difficulties. You can create artistic pieces. A requirement for any true artist.

Uses: Anything creative.

**Cunning**: Crafty and sly, possessing a great deal of ingenuity.

Uses: Tricking other characters.

**Dedicated**: You give yourself over totally to your beliefs. When one of your causes is at stake, you stop at nothing to succeed.

Uses: Useful in any Mental Challenge when your beliefs are at stake.



**Determined**: When it comes to mental endeavors, you are fully committed. Nothing can divert your intentions to succeed once you have made up your mind.

Uses: Staredowns. Useful in normal Mental Challenges.

**Discerning**: Discriminating, able to pick out details, subtleties and idiosyncrasies. You have clarity of vision.

Uses: Investigating and tracking.

**Disciplined**: Your mind is structured and controlled. This rigidity gives you an edge in battles of will.

Uses: Staredowns. Useful in Mental Challenges.

**Insightful**: The power of looking at a situation and gaining an understanding of it.

Uses: *Investigation* (though not a defense against it).

**Intuitive**: Knowledge and understanding somehow come to you without conscious reasoning, as if by instinct.

Uses: Spontaneous deduction.

**Knowledgeable**: You know copious and detailed information about a wide variety of topics. This Trait represents "book-learning."

Uses: Remembering information your character might know. Employing *Thaumaturgy*.

**Observant**: Depth of vision, the power to look at something and notice the important aspects of it.

Uses: Picking up on subtleties that others might overlook.

**Patient**: Tolerant, persevering and steadfast. You can wait out extended delays with composure.

Uses: Staredowns or other mental battles after another Trait has been bid.

**Rational**: You believe in logic, reason, sanity and sobriety. Your ability to reduce concepts to a mathematical level helps you analyze the world.

Uses: Defending against emotion-oriented mental attacks. Defending against an aura reading. Not used as an initial bid.

**Reflective**: Meditative self-recollection and deep thought. The Trait of the serious thinker, *Reflective* enables you to consider all aspects of the conundrum.

Uses: Meditation. Remembering information. Defending against most Mental Challenges.

**Shrewd**: Astute and artful, able to keep your wits about you and accomplish mental feats with efficiency and finesse.

Uses: Defending against Mental Challenges.

**Vigilant**: Watchful. You have the disposition of a guard dog; your attention misses little.

Uses: Defending against investigation. Seeing through *Obfuscate* and *Chimerstry*. More appropriate for mental defense than for attack.

**Wily**: Sly and full of guile. Because you are wily, you can trick and deceive easily.

Uses: Deceiving other characters. Lying under duress. Confusing mental situations.

**Wise**: An overall understanding of the workings of the world.

Uses: Giving advice. Dispensing snippets of wisdom.

### Negative Mental Traits

**Forgetful**: You have trouble remembering even important things.

**Gullible**: Easily deceived, duped or fooled.

**Ignorant**: Uneducated or misinformed, never seeming to know anything.

**Impatient**: Restless, anxious and generally intolerant of delays. You want everything to go your way — *now*.

**Oblivious**: Unaware and unmindful. You'd be lucky if you noticed an elephant flying through your bedroom.

**Predictable**: Because you lack originality or intelligence, even strangers can figure out what you intend to do next.

**Shortsighted**: Lacking foresight. You rarely look beyond the superficial. Details of perception are usually lost on you.

**Submissive**: You relent and surrender at any cost rather than stand up for yourself.

**Violent**: An extreme lack of self-control. You fly into rages at the slightest provocation, and frenzy is always close to the surface. This Trait is a Mental one because it represents mental instability.

**Witless**: Lacking the ability to process information quickly. Foolish and slow to act when threatened.

## Abilities

Abilities represent particular bits of knowledge gained over the years of study and experience — the tricks of the trade and the wisdom from many, many mistakes. A character's Ability Traits represent special training or talent, and as such, they often allow him to perform tasks that would be impossible otherwise. Even with more mundane situations, Abilities allow for a much-improved chance of success.

When a character performs a risky or uncertain action, Abilities aid the outcome. If you attempt a task and fail, you can temporarily expend one of your appropriate Ability Traits to gain an immediate retest. You temporarily lose the risked Ability and the initial Trait(s) bid for the task (if any) because you lost the initial test, but you can still overcome the challenge. Abilities used thus are recovered at the next game session.

A character with multiple levels in a given Ability is certainly more experienced and proficient than an individual with just one Trait. Most characters fall into one of three levels of Ability; greater amounts are very rare, limited to elders. The total level of Ability in a given field corresponds roughly to the character's professional capabilities:

**Competent** (Able to earn a living)

**Professional** (Licensed, capable of supervision)

**Journeyman** (Bachelor's degree or instructor)

**Expert** (Master's degree or researcher)

**Master** (Doctorate or true innovator)

Some tasks are simply too difficult, or they require too much skill, to be attempted by a character without the requisite Abilities. The Storyteller may require the possession or use of an Ability Trait to perform a specific task. In this case, characters without the Ability, or who have already used all of their levels of the Ability, cannot attempt the task at all.

When an Ability is used against a set scenario or object (such as using Investigation to uncover information), the feat usually has a difficulty assigned by the Storyteller. In such a Static Challenge, you might be required to risk a Trait for a trivial task, or even be asked to bid two or more Traits for a difficult, risky or tedious task.

Some Abilities can be used against an opponent instead of facilitating a regular undertaking. In this case, the Ability is expended to gain a retest in a challenge with the opponent.

### Focusing Abilities

A few Abilities specifically require a concentrated area of study. One cannot simply study all *Crafts* at once, after all. These Abilities are specifically noted in the descriptions. When you take such an Ability, you must choose an area of study, a specific topic that you have concentrated on. Each area is considered a separate Ability, so *Linguistics: Latin* is completely separate from *Linguistics: Gaelic*, or instance.

### Ability Specializations

Within a given area of expertise, some practitioners further hone their knowledge to a razor's edge. By choosing a specialization in an Ability, you fine-tune your skills with a particular facet of that talent.

Ability specializations are a wholly optional rule. Remember to ask your Storyteller before taking a specialization. Sometimes they can add even more color to your character, however keeping track of players special Abilities can be tedious for Storytellers and records-keepers.

Taking a specialization requires that you spend one Free or Experience Trait on an Ability that you already possess. Whenever you perform a task with that specialization — even if you do not expend the Ability — you gain a one-Trait bonus on resolving challenges as long as you have at least one level of the main Ability left to spend. You may only have one specialization in any given Ability. You cannot take *Melee: Greatsword* and *Melee: Sword and Shield* and expect an amazing amalgamate feat. Furthermore, you can never gain more than one Bonus Trait from specializations, even if more than one would be appropriate to a given challenge. Even if you possess *Law: Common Law* and *Investigation: Research* you only get the one-Trait bonus on a test for trial preparation, despite your multiple specializations.

A specialization is a concentrated area of expertise or practice. You cannot, for example, take a *Melee* specialization in "swords," or a *Medicine* specialization of "healing." Appropriate specializations refer to one focus of expertise or to one type of excellent knowledge within the Ability, such as *Academics: Antiquity* or *Occult: Kindred Lore*.

You may take a specialization within an area of study. As such, you concentrate your research in one particular facet of that sub-specialized Ability and thus, you could have *Crafts: Blacksmithing* with a specialization in *Farrier*.

Note that the Bonus Traits from a specialization is not bid or used like other Traits. You simply are "one Trait up" on challenges within that specialization.

**Example**: *Frederic is a proficient bard who excels in pocket-picking. He has the Ability* Legerdemain *x 4 with a specialization:* Pickpocket. *When Frederic is in the middle of a fantastic tale on the street, he makes sure to bump into people and, with nimble fingers, swipe a coin from their pockets without a hint of malice from his audience. Frederic normally uses his eight Physical Traits, but when he flexes his* Legerdemain *skills to pick pockets, he has nine Physical Traits due to his expertise. As long as Frederic retains at least one* Legerdemain *Trait he may add the one-Trait bonus to his remaining Physical Traits when initiating challenges of his chosen specialization.*

## Academics

Academics covers the standard curriculum of the Middle Ages: the trivium of grammar, rhetoric and logic, and the quadrivium of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music. Anyone attending university learns the lore of the world divided into these two categories. Any character acquiring *Academics* within the last 300 years must choose the *Trivium* or *Quadrivium* as an initial field of expertise (and can acquire the other one later). Only vampires created before the rise of medieval universities or thoroughly self-taught individuals escape this requirement. Any other categories seem strange at best and actively suspicious at worst to conventionally educated people.

Your character must know Latin, requiring *Linguistics* x 1, to acquire the second dot in *Academics*.

## Alertness

*Alertness* is the ability to notice things going on in one's vicinity, with or without actively searching for them. Most *Alertness* retests pair it with Perception-related Traits, and it generally applies to physical stimuli rather than matters of mood, the soul and so on.

## Animal Ken

You understand the nature of the beast and the temperament of animals. You admire and respect their wild and untamed ways, allowing you to empathize and communicate with them. It's not so much a cut-and-dried language, but rather, you can sometimes deal with them more equitably. Though they may retain a healthy fear of the Beast lurking within you, you know what drives them and how to assuage their fears.

With *Animal Ken*, you can train an animal (especially with *Animalism*) into specific behaviors or attempt to deduce an animal's state of being with a Mental Challenge. If you work with an animal for at least a month or so, you may be able to teach it a simple trick, up to a limit of one trick for each Mental Trait the animal possess.

## Archery

*Archery* is the ability to use bows, the most common ranged weapon of the era. Experienced archers also know how to maintain and repair these weapons, and in some cases how to make them as well. *Archery* covers crossbows and other related weapons. It does not cover spears or other thrown weapons, which require *Athletics*.

Once you possess the *Archery* Ability, you may opt to bid Mental Traits instead of Physical Traits in the event of ties.



## Athletics

*Athletics* is aptitude for physical exertion, be it during relatively formal sports or simply in the course of an active life. Athletic feats directly related to combat are covered by *Brawl*, *Dodge*, *Melee* and other combat abilities, except in the case of thrown weapons. These require *Athletics*.

Your *Athletics* Ability is used for retests on most forms of raw physical activity, such as acrobatics, running, climbing, jumping, swimming and throwing. You may also choose to focus on something you do especially well.

## Brawl

You roughed up your squire brothers, wrestled men in tavern brawls and maybe even killed a lion with your bare hands. You might have some military training, or maybe you just grew up with a sibling who beat the snot out of you and taught you how to defend yourself. Whatever the case, you know how to dish out damage with your fists and feet.

Use the *Brawl* Ability for retests in combat when you are using your natural weapons (teeth, claws or fists). This Ability is also the province of the martial arts, although you should specify which art when taking this Ability.

## Commerce

*Commerce* is the Ability to successfully bring goods to market, and all that entails. It includes the ability to evaluate various goods how to best market them to the populace, knowledge of trade routes and fairs, and skill at negotiating prices. Your character should specify one class of goods as a field of expertise when you first purchase it. You can buy additional fields of expertise with Experience or Free Traits just as with *Linguistics* and knowledge of various languages. You can apply *Commerce* outside your field of expertise to identify potential markets and experts in the field, and to negotiate and haggle over just about anything. Evaluating an item or a trade route that you have no experience with is beyond your grasp, and it counts as acting without the required Ability.

In the Dark Medieval, the line between legitimate and illegitimate trade is fuzzy to non-existent, as *Commerce* comes into play just as much when buying cheese as when hiring a mercenary, soliciting a courtesan or selling black-market goods. As such, *Commerce* conveys a general sense of the shadier side of life — what modern folk will call "streetwise."

## Crafts

*Crafts* is an Ability covering skills of making and fixing things with your hands and evaluating such work by others. Skilled craftsmen produce works known for their beauty as well as their utility. You must choose a field of expertise when you first purchase *Crafts*, and you may buy additional ones with experience or Free Traits. You can use *Crafts* outside your field(s) of expertise to undertake basic repairs and evaluate the craftsmanship and condition of an object, but not to build anything from scratch.

In the Dark Medieval, *Crafts* also covers what will in later centuries become applied sciences like engineering. *Architecture*, *Metallurgy* and so on are all fields of expertise under *Crafts*.

### Dodge

You know how to duck a punch when its aimed your way. You possess enough fighting savvy to avoid physical harm by manipulating your body away from directed attacks and, to a lesser degree, missile attacks, however you can only use *Dodge* against any attack that you're consciously aware of. *Dodge* is used to retest challenges where you attempt to avoid physical harm.

### Empathy

You are sensitive to the moods and emotions of people around you. When you listen to someone, you understand her feelings. You can identify with others and tell when people are lying or holding back while talking to you.

With a Social Challenge you can determine if the last thing that someone said was a lie (although *Subterfuge* can defend against this expenditure). Alternatively, you can attempt to determine the subject's current Demeanor.

### Etiquette

You know when to bow or kneel in the presence of an elder and how to address them in a polite inoffensive manner. You can hold a toast with the best of them, and you keep your cool in any social scenario, from a lord's banquet to a peasant's wedding feast.

The *Etiquette* Ability can be used with Social Tests to impress or blend in at parties. If you make a social *faux pas*, you may expend an *Etiquette* Ability immediately to negate the blunder. (Your character knows better than to make the mistake.)

### Expression

Words and feelings flow freely from you. When the muse strikes, you put pen to paper and pour out a torrent of emotion and stirring imagery. You can convey message and meaning in your art, from symphonies to poetry, and whatever you write is both clear and moving.

When writing or composing, you can sink true *Expression* into the work. Works created with *Expression* x 3 or more have the potential to entrance Toreador, as per their clan weakness.

### Hearth Wisdom

This Ability compiles old wives tales, as opposed to the established fact. It's unsystematic, but in its haphazard way, it covers the body of knowledge accumulated by peasants, traders and other people who do not benefit from servants or live in isolation. It includes mundane matters such as which plants and animals are safe to eat in the area, which herbs are good for cooking and relieving minor aches and pains, signs of impending bad (or good) weather, rules of thumb for resolving domestic disputes, as well as the folk wisdom regarding the dangers of the night.

### Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability

In a certain area of expertise not covered by another Ability, you have achieved some level of skill. You may have a small grasp of a trade due to some work on the side, or perhaps you've specifically studied a topic.

*Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability* is a catchall category for such highly unusual Abilities as *Cainite Lore*, *Thanatology* and so on. Any Ability of this type must be specifically approved by the Storyteller, and it has its capabilities defined by the Storyteller.



### Intimidation

*Intimidation* represents any of a broad variety of techniques for terrifying people into compliance. Such tools include anything from physical size, to a particularly frightening, toothy grin, or perhaps an impressive show of supernatural strength.

You can use *Intimidation* when trying to taunt someone with a Social Challenge, or with certain Discipline powers.

### Investigation

You know how to pick up clues and put together disparate pieces of information. By habit, training and a scrutinizing eye, you can set a jumbled mass of data into order, discovering identities, motives and patterns in an otherwise chaotic scene. You can use *Investigation* with a Mental Challenge when trying to puzzle out meaning to a seemingly random scene.

### Law

*Law* is the body of knowledge about justice and its applications to practical affairs. In the Dark Medieval, *Law* covers two wildly different subjects: the organic — not to mention chaotic and contradictory — accumulation of common law based on case-by-case rulings, and the rigorous, academic tradition grounded in Roman law and guided by logic and theology. The higher a character's social rank is, the more the latter dominates. Canon law — the religious laws of the Church — draws primarily on Roman law for its assumptions and principles of development, and scholars in canon law have a significant advantage in familiarity when issues of Roman-based secular law arise. The same applies to secular legalists trying to deal with canon law.

Use the *Law* Ability in court situations or with Social Challenges involving legal matters. Because the legal body is so vast, your Storyteller might require you to select a particular area of study.

### Leadership

When you speak, people listen. A good speaking voice and self-confidence lend a powerful presence to a leader. The *Leadership* Ability represents your ability to motivate people and to get them to follow your guidance. Even among those who do not know or respect you, you can demand attention.

You can use *Leadership* with a Social Challenge to try to win a minor favor or task from a character.

### Legerdemain

*Legerdemain* is facility with feats of manual dexterity, ranging from picking a purse from a belt, to juggling and feats of trickery like palming objects. It encompasses the stealth and concealment involved in using that dexterity without being noticed, such as when palming an object or performing a conjuring trick.

You can use *Legerdemain* in both Physical Challenges (such as picking a pocket), and Social Challenge (such as performing to captivate an audience).

### Linguistics

*Linguistics* is the knowledge of languages other than the one most common in a character's childhood. Every character begins having one language mastered for

free. Growing mastery of *Linguistics* covers the principles underlying languages, their relations and evolution as well as the contents of specific tongues.

### Medicine

*Medicine* is the lore of the human body. Depending on a character's particular inclination, it might cover both practical relief of trauma and injury and the academic tradition based in Greek and Roman scholarship, which is often greatly mistaken about the realities of anatomy and physiology. *Medicine* also covers the knowledge of which herbs and plants are useful for remedying ills.

You can use the *Medicine* Ability to speed a mortal's healing by one category: A Wounded mortal would heal as if Bruised, for instance. *Medicine* may be used for other sorts of research and lab work with a Mental Challenge. As *Medicine* represents such a vast field, you Storyteller may require you to specify your field of expertise: *Leechcraft*, *Midwifery*, *Herbal Medicine*, etc.

### Melee

If you've got something in your hands, you're a deadly fighter. Be it a sword, a stick or a pair of sheep-shears, you can use it to damaging effect. Expend *Melee* for retests in hand-to-hand combat when you are using a close combat weapon like a knife or cooking cauldron. Certain weapons function best when wielded by a character with *Melee*. This Ability also includes the knowledge for the upkeep of *Melee* weapons.

### Occult

The hidden world teems with mysterious secrets. By unlocking universal keys and studying the basics of spirituality, you can learn the shadowy paths of the cosmos. Your *Occult* Ability serves as a general knowledge of the supernatural, alerting you to the existence of many varied sorts of inhuman creatures and paranormal events.

Some Disciplines rely on the *Occult* Ability. *Occult* grants some basic (and sometimes erroneous) knowledge of the various denizens of the supernatural world; for more detailed information, study *Expert Ability: Lore* in a particular subject of interest.

### Performance

You are a true virtuoso. Whatever your chosen medium is, you have a gift for artistic endeavors. Be it playing an instrument or bardic entertainment your skill allows you to amuse and even earn money.

Your *Performance* Ability can be used to earn a modest income, just like other artistic trade skills. You must also choose a specific art form when you take *Performance*, such as playing an instrument, singing, acting or dramatic readings. Note that *Performance* is generally anything done before an audience, while *Expression* most often focuses on literary or musical composition, and *Crafts* concentrates on the creation of physical objects (such as paintings or sculptures).

### Politics

The world of influence trading and favors is extensive enough among mortals, and only prevalent among the High Clans. Through observation, intrigue and a bit of fast-talk, you've learned how to handle appearances, what a speech really means and where the deal-making is going on. In short, it's *Politics* as usual.



The *Politics* Ability is useful primarily in dealing with mortal society or Influence. You might be able to manipulate the outcome of baronial activities with the proper Influence and some well-timed Social Challenges. *Politics* is also used to discern hidden motives and broker deals. It could even be possible, with enough political clout, to have a conversation with royalty.

Knowledge of *Politics* includes, by extension, an understanding of the bureaucratic levels of power. You know who to bribe and how to get your word across to important players of government, or how to obstruct others with it. By determining who's important in a given strata, you can usually avoid wasting time and simply go straight to the person with the power to do what you want.

### Repair

You possess a working understanding of what makes things tick. With time, tools and parts, you can fix or slightly alter most of the trappings of medieval society. This knowledge also allows you to excel at sabotage. The *Repair* Ability is widespread among inventors and handymen. Using this Ability usually calls for a Mental Challenge, the difficulty of which depends on such factors as the item's complexity, tools and parts available, extent of damage and time spent on the repairs.

You can also get a basic sense for spatial symmetry and alignment. You'll be the hero of the day by saving a rich noble a king's ransom by explaining, in simple terms, that building a stone keep on marshland is a bad idea.

### Ride

*Ride* is the ability to travel astride a horse or other riding animal, keeping it under control in varying circumstances. Experienced riders can fight from horseback, tend horses' common ailments and evaluate the quality of their mounts and related gear.

### Seneschal

*Seneschal* is the ability to administer holdings, from households to kingdoms. It covers the knowledge of physical assets and their needs, from harvesting crops to the maintenance of buildings, management of various taxes and the social skills to coordinate others' labor, and resolve disputes. A skilled seneschal can evaluate the state of others' holdings based on personal experience and theoretical knowledge, too.

### Scrounge

You're exceptionally good at finding stuff. Whether it's a misplaced shield, the best deals on salt pork or the best places to strip clothes and goods from the dead, you're a wiz at knowing where to go, who to talk to and how to get what you need. Granted, the things you find are rarely brand new or exactly right, and they do take time and favors to acquire. Still such ability is useful when your finances are less than sparkling or theft is out of the question. *Scrounge* is very often employed by the Nosferatu and some of the Low Clans, who tend to make a life out of other people's second-hand wares.

*Scrounge* is typically used in conjunction with Mental Traits (although the Storyteller may occasionally require a Social Challenge for haggling), and can be useful when looking for particular items or searching a place that is in shambles.

### Stealth

By blending into cover, blurring your lines and moving carefully and quietly, you can evade notice or sneak past people. You know how best to take advantage of surrounding cover and how to use light and shadow. Opportunities for unnoticed movement are not lost on you, as you understand the uses of timing and diversion.

With an appropriate Physical Challenge, you can sometimes sneak past the notice of guards and searchers (who contest your Ability with their Mental Traits and *Investigation* Ability). You also use *Stealth* to augment Disciplines such as *Obfuscate* and *Obtenebration*.

### Subterfuge

There are many ways to talk about subjects, and equally many ways to uncover the truth of the matter. Even in idle conversation, people use little white lies, slip hints about their true motives, try to guide the course of discussion and give away their secrets indirectly. The art of *Subterfuge* is the art of reading these tricks and using them effortlessly.

When someone confronts you with one of your lies, you can use the *Subterfuge* Ability in your own defense (if someone uses the *Empathy* Ability, for instance). By guiding a conversation, you can also unearth someone's Negative Traits; if you manage to steer conversation to a particular topic in play, you can expend a *Subterfuge* Ability and make a Social Challenge to determine one of the subject's Negative Traits related to the topic.

### Survival

*Survival* represents a knowledge of terrain, how to find shelter, where to find water, techniques in hunting, edible and poisonous plants and fungi and so on. This might also represent your will to live, your need to do anything and everything to come out on top. It also provides some assurances of a safer existence for those who travel outside the cities.

Hunting and avoiding danger in the wilderness usually relies on a Physical Challenge. With *Survival*, you can substitute your Mental Traits if you so desire.

### Theology

*Theology* is the lore of the queen of the sciences, the study of God's will in all things. It combines historical scholarship with logic and a measure of artistic expression. *Theology* by itself does not make a character articulate, but it can provide the information necessary for effective persuasion, and it's crucial in evaluating many social matters. Nothing mortal or physical lies outside the scope of God's commandments, heretics and the orthodox agree, and there is a theological dimension to political, economic and other disagreements. Keep in mind that this is not, for medieval people, a matter of unfounded supposition and personal conviction, but of knowable truths susceptible to reasoned analysis.

## Backgrounds

Your Backgrounds help to flesh out ties with mortal agencies, role in kindred society and beneficial resources available. Each Background is used differently. In general, having multiple Traits in a given Background allows for better or more common use of that benefit. Some Backgrounds directly affect your character's creation and development, while others are called into play later during the game.

### Allies

A few friends or family, either kept from the days before your Embrace or possibly all through your lifetime, help you out in your nightly endeavors. You can send a missive or two and cut a few deals to get assistance in a wide range of activities. Your Storyteller will probably require you to define how you keep your allies and their relations to you.

Each *Allies* Trait possessed represents one person that you can call on for aid. Unlike Influence, your allies have special talents that make them better than the average person in town. Although your allies might not be aware of your Cainite nature, they can be quite useful if directed properly.

In general, your allies do not show up in play directly. Instead, you can use them for certain services during downtimes by notifying your Storyteller.

• An ally can be directed to follow up on research or activities that you have started. If you undertook a specific task previously, like tailing someone, researching a project or building a device, your allies can continue the work, doing so with one Ability Trait's worth of expertise. As long as they work on the project, your *Allies* Trait for the individual is tied up.

• If you need a particularly competent ally, you can expend multiple Traits to gain access to a mortal with multiple levels of an Ability or Influence. Each *Allies* Trait you spend after the first Trait gives an extra level of expertise to your allies. They may use this expertise on your behalf, though rarely with your own skill, and they only help as long as you tie up your *Allies* Background Traits in this manner.

Be wary of calling on your allies too often. An ally might call on you for mutual aid or refuse to help if pressed into dangerous or illegal activities.

### Contacts

With the right contacts in all walks of life, you can get a line on all sorts of useful information. Although having an ear to the ground doesn't necessarily provide you with good help or loyal servants, it does mean that you know who to ask when looking for the movers and shakers behind the scenes.

In game terms, your rating in *Contacts* represents the mortals who are willing to share rumors and information. When you call on your contacts, you check with your favorite gossips and grease a few palms. In return, you get rumors and information as if possessed of a certain amount of *Influence*. Doing so lets you find out exactly what's going on within a particular area of Influence. You can get information of a level equal to however many contacts you use. If you use *Contacts* x 3 on *Church*, for instance, you get information as if digging up dirt with *Church Influence* x 3. The advantage of the *Contacts* Background is that contacts can be switched from place to place each game, getting information in different areas at your demand.

Using *Contacts* for especially dangerous or secret information might require you to spend some money or perform a few favors, at the discretion of a Storyteller. On occasion, accidents can cause contacts in one area to dry up, such as a plague that affects your *Health* contacts, or a particularly devious noble beheads all of your *Political* contacts.

(**Note:** Your contacts will not generally function as aides or lackeys that would otherwise encompass the *Allies* and *Retainers* Backgrounds.)

## Domain

*Domain* is the physical territory, almost always within a town or city, to which you control access for the purpose of feeding. You can't keep the living inhabitants from going about their business, but you can keep watch yourself. You can also have allies or servants specifically look for unfamiliar vampires and alert you when they find some. *Domain* refers specifically to the land and properties on it, as opposed to the people who might dwell there (which is the emphasis of *Herd*). *Domain* plays an important part in Cainite society. Vampires who lack significant domain seldom earn respect, but it isn't an automatic entitlement to status among Cainites.

Each level of *Domain* size reduces the difficulty of feeding checks by one Trait for you and those you allow in. It also adds to your starting (not maximum) blood pool. If you use the *Domain* security option described here, each Trait of *Domain* security raises the difficulty of feeding checks by one Trait for uninvited vampires.

Characters in a coterie can share their *Domain* resources for better results. Six to eight pooled Traits secure all of a small town as a domain. Ten to 15 pooled Traits secure an important but not huge trading destination or center of pilgrimage. A city like Rome (let alone Cairo or Baghdad) would require many hundreds of pooled *Domain* Traits.

**Storyteller's Option:** Your Storyteller may allow you to designate one or more Traits in *Domain* to increase the security of your character's territory rather than its size. If this option applies in your chronicle, each Trait assigned to *Domain* security provides a one-Trait penalty on efforts to intrude into the domain by anyone your character hasn't specifically allowed in and a one-Trait bonus to efforts by your character to identify and track intruders in the domain. A domain of one Trait's size and two Traits' security, for instance, is small but quite resistant to intrusion, as opposed the domain of three traits' size but no extraordinary security. *Domain* security can be used with pooled *Domain* Traits as well, at the Storyteller's discretion.

## Generation

Generation measures the number of vampires in a direct line between the character and Caine, the First Vampire. Most new vampires in the Dark Medieval are of the Twelfth Generation, and having a lower generation means that an elder (or a successful diablerist) chose the character as childe for reasons of her own.

## Herd

*Herd* is the deliberately derogatory term among Cainites for mortals who readily submit their blood to you (and vampires you allow to join in). Motives for this submission range widely, from believers convinced that the Cainite is a dark angel granted divine authority over them to ambitious schemers who regard the humiliation and fatigue as the price of admission to the vampire's favor for negotiation and power over rivals. It's hard to give one's herd detailed orders: they're addicts to the experience of feeding, not much use as allies or contacts (unless you also buy those Backgrounds to refer to the same individuals). They don't automatically share all their territory and goods, either. Those require separate purchases of *Domain* and *Resources*.



| Generation | Trait Max. | Ability Max. | Blood (total/per turn) | Willpower (start/max) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Generation | | |
| Twelve | 10 | 5 | 11/1 | 2/8 |
| Eleven | 11 | 5 | 12/1 | 4/8 |
| Ten | 12 | 5 | 13/1 | 4/10 |
| Nine | 13 | 5 | 14/2 | 6/10 |
| Eight | 14 | 5 | 15/3 | 6/12 |
| Seven | 16 | 6 | 20/5 | 7/14 |
| Six | 18 | 7 | 30/6 | 8/16 |
| Five | 20 | 8 | 40/8 | 9/18 |
| Four | 25 | 9 | 50/10 | 10/20 |
| Three | 30 | ? | ? | ? |

Some common factor ties the herd together, whether it's shared membership in a monastery or chivalric order, being members of one or a few extended families, residence along a particular street, the practitioners of a certain trade or something else. Work the details out with your Storyteller, since threats to and the fortunes of your herd are great sources for stories once play begins.

Each Trait of *Herd* provides an automatic Blood Trait per night your character chooses to feed, in addition to the vagaries of regular hunting.

(**Note:** Should a Cainite drain more than five Blood Traits in a single feeding session, the submitting *Herd* will fall unconscious and, depending on the Storyteller, will die without proper care. No more than three Blood Traits may be safely taken from a vessel per night.)

## Influence

Influence measures the degree to which you can make your wishes count in mortal society. In most cases, you acquire Influence through multiple means, including persuasion, bribery, intimidation, direct manipulation of minds and emotions, and passing herself off as mortal when necessary. It takes time to accumulate more than a dot or two of Influence in a community of any size, and high Influence is the realm of Cainites who spend years or even decades cultivating their positions or who do a lot of dangerous wheeling and dealing. Influence is not license to do whatever strikes your fancy. It's always easiest to get institutions to do what they're already inclined to. Constables need little prodding to arrest suspicious strangers or break up illicit operations whose owners haven't been paying bribes, but require more incentive to go out killing apparently innocent bystanders or trying to arrest the most important civic leaders. Roleplaying therefore supports straightforward declarations of Influence use, and more so as the vampire twists the institution's purpose and outlook.

Each level of Influence reduces the difficulty of relevant social endeavors by one Trait. Keep in mind that this applies to the field and area in which you have Influence: Influence among the clergy of Provence matters not at all when dealing with the beer brewers of Vienna.

## Church

In the Middle Ages, the Church has considerable control over temporal society, and its policies exert considerable influence over the direction of politics and communities. Knowing the appropriate people allows insight into the mainstream faiths of Christianity (Catholicism), Judaism and Islam. When you exercise *Church Influence*, you can change religious policy, affect the assignment of clergy and access a variety of lore and resources. Contacts and allies affected by *Church Influence* would include ministers, priests, bishops, Church-sponsored witch-hunters, holy orders and various attendees and assistants.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Identify most secular members of a given faith in the local area |
| | Pass as a member of the clergy |
| | Peruse general church records (baptism, marriage, burial, etc.) |
| 2 | Identify higher church members |
| | Track regular church members |
| | Suspend lay members |
| 3 | Open or close a single church |
| | Find the average church-associated hunter |
| | Dip into the collection plate (250 coins) |
| | Access private information and archives of a church |
| 4 | Discredit or suspend high-level church members |
| | Hire a small group of well-trained hunters |
| 5 | Borrow or access church relics or sacred items |
| | Access ancient church lore and knowledge |

## Court

Your mortal ties lead one way or another, by blood, marriage, coercion, wealth or talent to the elite over the unwashed masses. You don't necessarily have a direct link to nobility, but with the *Court* Influence you might find yourself invited to revels where such nobility can be present.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Learn what is fashionable (e.g., Far eastern drugs, spices) |
| | Learn about celebrations far in advance |
| 2 | Be known on sight by the local elite |
| | Borrow 150 coins as idle cash from rich contacts |
| 3 | Crush promising arranged marriages, spread damning gossip |
| 4 | Hobnob well above your station surrounding cities |
| 5 | Obtain invitations to important and royal celebrations |

## Health

Healthcare in the Medieval Ages is primitive at best. Depending on your religious or personal medical preference, you might end up with the black plague, legless from gangrene or dead with leeches draining cold blood out of your body. Common types of healers include herb doctors, witches, midwives and wise men/women. In Western Europe, healthcare is largely regulated by the Church. Monks and nuns regularly treat the sick and injured, and some treatments or practices (such as autopsy) are outlawed by Church doctrine. In the Levant, northern Africa and some spots of Moorish Iberia, Jewish and Muslim physicians study and practice techniques created by the Greeks and Romans, by doctors of the ancient world and occasionally those brought from the Far East by travelers.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Easily access the services of midwives and village healers |
| | Access to a single Blood Trait |
| 2 | Access to healers with a limited capacity to treat mundane ailments |
| | Access to two Blood Traits |
| 3 | Access to a supply of non-fatal poisons |
| | Access to healers with a descent capacity to treat mundane ailments |
| | Access to three Blood Traits |
| 4 | Access to a limited supply of fatal poisons |
| | Abuse noble funding (250 coins) |
| | Access to four Blood Traits |
| 5 | Access to healers with a great capacity to treat mundane ailments |
| | Have bodies exhumed without religious condemnation |
| | Have people quarantined as lepers or plague carriers |
| | Access to five Blood Traits |

## Learning

In an age where the quest for learning and knowledge is taking on a new significance, those who have access to knowledge are powerful indeed. Someone with this Influence can control the amount of knowledge dispensed to the peasantry — and the percentage of truth dispensed. Within this sphere of Influence, one finds the tutors, scholars, monks, minstrels, archivists, clergy, and many young and impressionable minds.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Access to a limited variety of books |
| | Control information dispensed to a small audience |
| 2 | Know a contact or two with useful knowledge or skills |
| | Quote the classics extemporaneously |
| 3 | Obtain access to the historical archives of minor nobility |
| 4 | Get certain literary works banned |
| | Control knowledge of an individual institution |
| 5 | Obtain access to a large variety of books and tomes |

## Occult

The hidden world of the supernatural teems with secrets, conspiracies and unusual factions. By using *Occult* Influence, you can dig up information to improve your knowledge, get inside the occult community and find rare components for magical rituals. Cult leaders, charlatans, Gypsies, witches, would-be occultists and a few more dangerous elements can be found here.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Contact a make use of common occult groups and their practices |
| | Know some of the more visible occult figures |
| 2 | Know and contact some of the more obscure occult figures |
| | Access resources for most rituals and rites |
| 3 | Know the general vicinity of certain supernatural entities and (possibly) contact them |
| | Access vital or rare material components |
| | Milk impressionable peasants for 250 coins |
| | Access some occult tomes and writings |
| | Research a Basic ritual |
| 4 | Research an Intermediate ritual |
| 5 | Unearth Advanced rituals |

### Political

Bribing influential nobles and attracting "favorable" merchants are just a few of the antics that falls under the purview of *Political* Influence. Well-timed blackmail, bribery or any sundry tricks are stock in trade on both sides of this fence. Some of the likely contacts and allies include nobles, sages, landowners and merchants.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Be in the know as to the policies of state |
| | Identify real platforms of politicians and parties |
| 2 | Have contacts among those in power (e.g., bailiffs, members of the court of the city) |
| | Garner inside information on process, laws and the like |
| | Gain the prince's ear on a minor issue |
| 3 | Gain information on and from secret meetings |
| | Spend a warrant reward (1000 coins) |
| 4 | Gain the prince's ear on a major issue |
| | Sabotage the reputation of another through political intrigues |
| 5 | Suspend minor laws temporarily (e.g., tax on every third animal brought into town) |

### Street

Ignored and often spat upon on by their "betters," those in the dark alleys and slums, where plague and pestilence scurries along by the gutter, have created their own culture to deal with life and any outsiders who might come calling. When calling on *Street* Influence, you use your connections on the underside of the city to find the lepers, thieves of all sorts, ruffians, petty criminals, prostitutes, residents of the cheap side of towns, actors and fringe elements of so-called "deviant" cultures.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Open an ear for the word on the street |
| | Identify most cutthroats and know their turfs and habits |
| 2 | Live mostly without fear on the underside of the city |
| | Keep a contact or two in most aspects of street life |
| | Access small-time weaponry |
| 3 | Get insight into other areas of Influence |
| | Arrange some services from street people ruffians |
| | Get knives or other uncommon melee weapons |
| 4 | Mobilize groups of peasants |
| | Beg or hold a "collection" (50 coins) |
| | Get hold of a greatsword, broadsword and shield or crossbow |
| 5 | Control a single medium-sized gang of thieves and ruffians |
| | Arrange impressive protests by peasant people |

### Transportation

*Transportation* Influence can mean the difference between a major skirmish and riding through town unmolested. Getting access to special supplies and services can also take a measure of *Transportation*. Most all of these things can be controlled with a bit of sway over horses, ports, elephants, as well as more mundane aspects like shipping and travel arrangements. For many Cainites, *Transportation* can mean the difference between arriving safely at one's destination or arriving at all. Travel is dangerous and difficult in the Dark Medieval, and this Background can help a Cainite avoid most of the worst perils, such as Lupines.

| Cost | Effect |
|---|---|
| 1 | Know what goes where, when and why |
| | Travel locally, quickly and freely |
| 2 | Track an unwary target if he uses public transportation |
| | Arrange passage safe (or at least concealed) from mundane threats (robbery, witch-hunters, etc.) |
| 3 | Seriously hamper an individual's ability to travel |
| | Avoid most supernatural dangers when traveling |
| 4 | Shut down one form of transportation temporarily |
| | Route money your way (200 coins) |
| 5 | Reroute major modes of travel |
| | Smuggle with impunity |

### Mentor

Most Cainites are pretty well left to their own devices after release by their sires. *Mentor* reflects the continuing presence of an older vampire who takes an interest in your character: providing advice, aid and influence, depending on the mentor's interests. The mentor is not a cure-all for your character's problems, nor is the mentor at your beck and call, since she presumably has matters of her own to attend to. She is a good source for letters of introduction, historical perspectives on current problems and other relatively discreet, specific assistance.

The mentor is often your character's sire, retaining social ties after release. It can be any other elder you encounter along the way, however, or even a group of like-minded vampires such as the members of a local Tremere chantry or the vampiric denizens of a nearby warren.

The level of aid that your mentor can give depends on the number of Traits in this Background (and Storyteller approval, of course):

• For one Trait, your mentor is privy to a single piece of specialized information at a level above your own. If you have *Expert Ability: Cainite Lore* x 2, for instance, your mentor can be called on to gift you with one piece of information from *Expert Ability: Cainite Lore* x 3.

• For two Traits, you can borrow one level of *Contacts*, *Influence* or *Resources* from your mentor for the duration of the game. If your mentor is very powerful (four or five Traits), you can borrow two levels.

• Two Traits allow your mentor to instruct you in a Basic Discipline (non-specific) that you do not know.

• For three Traits, your mentor can instruct you in an Intermediate Discipline (non-specific) that you do not know.

• Also at a cost of three Traits, your mentor can train you in the ways of a special occult knowledge that is outside your normal ken, such as *Expert Ability: Ghost Lore*.

• For four Traits, your mentor can train you in an Advanced Discipline (non-specific) beyond your grasp.

• For five Traits, your mentor can train you in the phenomenal powers of the elders, if your deeds and reputation are worthy enough to merit such secrets.

Since mentors can prove unbalancing by providing too many different powers over the course of a long game, the Storyteller may lower your total *Mentor* Traits as you call on his knowledge. This decrease represents the fact that as your character learns the mentor's secrets, the mentor has less left to teach.

## Resources

You have access to ready coffers. You also have some solid resources that you can use when times are tight. These resources are always readily available, and they come to you automatically due to your investments, trade and holdings.

Your number of *Resources* Traits determines the amount of wealth that you can secure. By expending temporary *Resources* Traits (which return at the next game session), you can draw on your regular income, as shown in the accompanying table. If you expend permanent *Resources*, you can divest yourself of holdings, allowing access to 10 times the amount shown on the table. The Storyteller always adjudicates the limits of what you can buy, though. Truly powerful uses of *Resources* are best left to downtimes and moderation between game sessions.

## Retainer

Retainers are servants and companions with personal bonds of loyalty to your character. They may be actual servants, fellow veterans of a crusade, fellow members of a monastic sect, childhood friends and the like. They may be ghouls, bound to you by the ties of blood. Work out a description of these retainers and the nature of their commitment to you so that you and your Storyteller know what to expect in play (and what might make interesting surprises).

Keep in mind when designing retainers that feudalism evolved in large measure to limit the power of those in authority. Feudal lords do not have absolute authority: They take oaths committing them to defend their vassals and to attend



### Resource Allocation

| | |
|---|---|
| **No Traits:** | Poverty; yearly income two coins. You have a leaky straw hut on the cheap side of town. Going abroad is too rich for your daydreams. |
| **One Trait:** | Small savings and holdings; yearly income 50 coins. You can maintain a typical residence in the style of the social class you choose and seem unmiserly, even if it all becomes a pumpkin and some rats at midnight. You can maintain a servant or hire specific help as necessary. Though you may entertain thoughts of travel, you do not possess enough wealth to maintain your home from abroad. |
| **Two Traits:** | Modest savings and holdings; yearly income 250 coins. You can display yourself as a member in good standing of your chosen community, with the occasional gift and indulgence becoming a person of quality. You can maintain a small staff of servants. A fraction of your resources are available in letters of credit, readily portable jewelry and other forms that let you maintain a standard of life. Not yet capable of portable wealth to travel. |
| **Three Traits:** | Significant savings and holdings; yearly income 500 coins. You are a prominent and established member of your community, with land and property, and the reputation that lets you draw on credit at very generous terms. Trust is as much a key resource as any particular valuable commodity at this level. When you travel, you can maintain a one-Trait *Resources* lifestyle for six months. |
| **Four Traits:** | Large savings and holdings; yearly income 5,000 coins. Troubadours spin tales about the richness of your clothes, the health of your livestock and the beauty of your home. You hold more wealth than many of the local authorities (and need to deal with their jealousy from time to time). When you travel, you can maintain a three-Trait *Resource* lifestyle for a year and a two-Trait lifestyle indefinitely. |
| **Five Traits:** | Rich; yearly income 10,000 coins. You have vast and widely distributed assets, with large staffs, huge tracts of land and connections to every level of society through out a region. You travel with a minimum of three-Trait *Resources* comforts and more, with a little effort. Kings and cardinals sometimes come to you for loans. |

to their vassals' needs. Retainers ought to matter to the characters, and if characters abuse their retainers, the Storyteller can and should make this a matter for scandal or even legal action by the characters' own lords. Untrammeled power is a nightmare of the medieval past, something feared as the source of both physical and spiritual suffering, and it would be greatly out of character for most medieval masters to feel at liberty to treat their retainers any way they might want.

Most retainers are of average ability and competence: In game terms, they have two Traits in most Attribute categories, perhaps three in one or two and relevant Abilities at no more than three Traits. Approach your Storyteller if you entertain ideas of increasing the capacities of your retainers with Experience Traits.

- A retainer can be assigned to watch over a particular location. Generally, if someone attempts to break into your home, the retainer there will attempt to stop the intruder.

- A retainer can be used to manage your assets and perform tasks. Retainers tied up in this fashion allow you to manage more Influence than normal. They add to the number of Attribute Traits that you possess for purposes of counting your total Influences. Each retainer directed in this fashion adds one to your maximum Influence Traits. If retainers are later lost or killed, the excess Influence Traits are lost, starting with the highest levels of Influence held.

- Retainers can do most menial tasks, as long as they are not abused. They can physically come to your aid in time of need, unlike allies or contacts, yet they require a similar give-and-take relationship in order to secure a good performance.

You may choose to declare that any one of your retainers is a ghoul, if you so desire. For each ghoul that you have in your holdings, however, you begin each session's play one Blood Trait down from usual, as you must feed and maintain the servant. Ghouls have the usual benefits of Disciplines and an improved understanding of vampire society, so they make useful guards, but too many can be troublesome. Jealous ghouls (especially when many are blood bound to the same domitor) can cause no end of troubles.

## Pooling Backgrounds

Some Backgrounds lend themselves to joint ownership. Specifically, the members of a coterie may choose to pool their individual stores of *Allies*, *Contacts*, *Domain*, *Herd*, *Influence*, *Resources* and *Retainers*. *Generation* and *Mentor* are necessarily individual matters.

### The Anchor

You and the other players choose one Background as the anchor that holds the shared assets together. In most cases, this Background is *Domain*, with the physical place the characters claim for hunting, which also acts as a meeting ground for the mortals they deal with, a repository for their wealth and so on. Any of the pooled Backgrounds can serve in this role, however: *Herd* might be the key to absolute survival and so on.

No Background pool can have more Traits assigned to it than the anchor Background does. If it's damaged by events during play or between sessions, other assets drift away from the characters' control, and it takes effort to win them back.



Any character contributing to the pool may pull his stake out at any time. The dislocations guarantee some damage. The character gets back one Trait less than she put in. Making the transition more peaceably requires spending half the time it would take to develop a new Trait in the relevant Background for each Background involved.

**Example:** *The members of the coterie known as the Sons of the Vogelsang build their Background pool around* Herd. *They share the blood of all of the mortal vessels at their disposal. They put a total of five Traits into* Herd. *They also decide to share in the physical territory where these* Herd *mortals take residence, along with surrounding farmlands that border nobility holdings, so they pool a total of three Traits into* Domain.

In some instances, the pooled Backgrounds will come under attack, resulting in a loss of total Traits. As the anchor Background score rises again, so do the scores of those anchored to it, and it takes only half the usual maturation Traits to restore these lost associated Backgrounds.

The coterie can also change the anchor Background. Doing so requires double the usual maturation Traits to buy the next Trait worth in the new anchor, and the cap remains in effect: Any other Backgrounds rated higher than the anchor are lost. When the loss follows from a change of anchor Background, there's no cost break in rebuilding them to their earlier levels.

### Using Pooled Backgrounds

Pooled Backgrounds are shared resources, essentially the coterie's communal property. Anyone who contributes to the pool (no matter how much she contributes) has equal access to it. Even if the character donates to only one of the pool's associated Backgrounds, she still has equal access to it. Not everyone can use the pool simultaneously, though. A *Herd* pool of seven Traits can grant a total of only seven automatic Blood Traits a night to the entire coterie. Just how those Traits are split up depends on the circumstances and agreements between the characters.

### Upper Limits

By pooling Traits, a coterie can achieve Backgrounds that surpass the normal five-trait limit. This arrangement is normal, and it reflects the advantages of cooperation. A group can secure a larger domain or maintain a larger network of allies and contacts than a single Cainite can. There is no absolute upper limit on the level to which a pooled Background can rise, but things can get downright ludicrous if you aren't careful. It's usually best for the Storyteller to impose a 10-Trait limit on the anchor Background (and thus on all others). This limit represents domain over a important trading port or center of pilgrimage or a herd that consists of much of that same center's population.

## Blood

All Cainites have Blood Traits, which fuels almost every aspect of their being. Every vampire has a reserve of vitae, which is human blood transformed by the Curse of Caine into the eldritch substance that sustains vampiric existence. A Blood Trait corresponds to about one 10th of the blood in an average mortal adult, though human capacity varies. (In addition, the process of feeding is not as traumatic as the loss of a 10th of a person's blood through open wounds would be. The Curse is efficient in more ways than is evident.)

A vampire's generation determines her maximum blood pool. Vampires further removed from Caine have reduced capacity for blood. They can't retain as much, and they can't burn it off as quickly as their elders can. Cainite sages foresee a time when high-generation vampires become nearly indistinguishable from mortals in their strengths, while perhaps just as susceptible to all vampires' shared weaknesses. The small but growing ranks of the despised Thirteenth Generation, with such diminished capacities, provide fodder for such speculations. In the meantime, the advantages that are available to low-generation vampires make diablerie perennially attractive to younger, higher-generation rivals looking for improvements that are otherwise denied to them.

Your starting Blood Trait total is determined by your generation. When you come into play, make a test with a Narrator as you pick up your character sheet. If you win, you come into play with all of your Blood Traits, as determined by generation. If you tie, you have half your generational limit of Blood Traits, rounded up. If you lose, you come into play with only four Blood Traits. Certain Merits, Flaws, clan disadvantages or other circumstances might alter your number of Blood Traits at the beginning of play, and possession of the *Herd* Background allows you to come into play with more Blood Traits, up to your generation limit.

When you have expended a great deal of blood, you become hungry. A hungry vampire is susceptible to the Beast and to frenzy due to the ravenous lust for vitae. You are considered hungry if at five or fewer Blood Traits, and you might be susceptible to frenzy at the sight, smell or taste of blood. If you have two or fewer Blood Traits, you are ravenous, and your difficulty to resist frenzy due to hunger goes up by one Trait, making it likely that you'll frenzy at the first opportunity to feed.

Feeding is the only way to replenish blood. You can take Blood Traits from mortals, other vampires or other creatures with blood, such as animals or Lupines. When you bite someone to drain blood, you invoke the Kiss, in which your bite causes a rapturous helplessness in normal mortals, and it is pleasurable even to other creatures. Each Blood Trait drained inflicts a level of lethal damage on the victim, however. Up to three Blood Traits may be drained each turn. You can close the wound by licking it to seal up traces of your feeding. You may only heal such wounds that were made by your fangs.

You can expend Blood Traits for a variety of functions:

• **Waking:** Spend one Blood Trait when your character awakens each night. It takes a modicum of effort just to animate cold, dead flesh.

• **Healing:** Spend one Blood Trait to heal a level of bashing or lethal damage. Your character usually must rest while this takes place. A slow walk or horseback ride is usually acceptable (though particularly serious injuries might require total relaxation), but running and fighting are out. If you want your character to heal while taking other actions, make a *Survival* challenge after spending the blood. If you fail, that blood is wasted. Note that this is the only way in which vampires heal wounds. If your character doesn't spend blood to cure damage, she'll remain damaged indefinitely, with the accompanying penalties.

• **Physical Augmentation:** One Blood Trait can be spent to gain an extra Physical Trait for the duration of a conflict. You can bid this Trait like any other ("by the power of my blood"), and you can count this Trait in ties and overbids. You can spend blood thus as a reflexive action at any time, not counting as your turn, though you still obey the limits of blood expenditure according to generation. You can raise your Physical Traits up to the limit of your generation for one conflict. Any additional Traits added with blood beyond that point remain only for the duration of a single challenge.

Blood-boosted Attributes produce peculiar manifestations, depending largely on your character's self-conception. Someone who's normally weak but suddenly strong for supernatural reasons is more likely to develop distended bulging muscles. There may be noticeable changes when the character suffers damage, with tissues leaping closed after cuts and fountains of vitae coating burns and scars. Storytellers should use this sort of complication as opportunities for roleplaying, not as more ways to make characters and players regret ever drawing on the benefits vampirism provides to offset its liabilities.

• **Feeding Others:** You can drain out one or more Blood Traits from cuts made for the purpose of giving vitae to other creatures. Vampires can drink them in and add them to their own blood pools.

• One Blood Trait is sufficient to turn a mortal into a ghoul. This state lasts for a month, and after that time, the ghoul must be fed more blood, lest he revert back to mortality. A Trait of blood measures approximately one pint, which makes it difficult to secretly ghoul someone by slipping into a drink.

• **Masquerading:** Spend a variable number of Blood Traits to hide the consequences of vampirism in a blood-borne fervor of activity: warmed skin and breath, softened complexion, sneezing, coughing and so on. A vampire in this flush of health may pass as human in all physical ways for the duration of the scene. Doing so requires six minus *Self-Control* Traits' worth of blood for characters on the Road of Humanity. Characters on other roads must spend an additional two blood traits (for a total of eight minus *Self-Control* Traits), since they're further removed from humanity and have made a deliberate effort to suppress many traces of mortality in themselves. Vampires who have no *Self-Control* rating at all, following roads that cultivate *Instinct* instead, have a very difficult time impersonating living people. (They must spend eight Traits to invoke this effect.)

• Three Blood Traits can be spent to heal one level of aggravated damage. This damage heals over the day, as the vampire sleeps. Blood Traits spent this way can be accumulated. That is, you need not spend the three Traits all at once, or even all in the same day. You should note that Traits expended in this fashion with marks next to your level of aggravated damage. Once you have spent three Blood Traits on the injury, it heals the next time the sun sets. You can heal only one level of aggravated damage per day in this fashion, though, unless you also spend a Willpower Trait for each extra wound healed in the same rest period.

• **Using Disciplines:** Spend one or more Blood Traits to fuel some vampiric Disciplines, as described in Chapter Four. Although Discipline use normally constitutes an action, that does include spending the required blood.

## Willpower

Willpower Traits measure the strength of your character's resolve and sense of self. By exerting your Willpower, you can withstand otherwise untenable conditions, renew your commitment to a course of action.

Willpower Traits are not described with adjectives. You simply have permanent Willpower — your normal limit of Willpower Traits — and temporary Willpower, your expendable Traits. When you expend temporary Willpower Traits or raise your permanent Willpower, you regain temporary Traits at a rate of one per game session (though your Storyteller may vary this pace to suit the needs of her game or to simplify bookkeeping).

Expending a Willpower Trait allows for one of any number of effects, generally to keep self-determination and to empower difficult or complex actions. Using Willpower is almost always a reflective action, which does not count as your turn.

- A Willpower Trait can be spent to refresh all of your lost Traits in on Attribute category — Physical, Social or Mental. You may do so once per category per game session.
- Expenditure of a Willpower Trait allows you to gain a *single* retest when defending against a Mental or Social Challenge. Trait loss works as normal for such retests.
- Spending one Willpower Trait enables you to enter a challenge for which you lack an appropriate Ability. Therefore, you can make a test even if you would normally require a specific Ability that you don't have or have used up.
- You can spend a Willpower Trait to try to control yourself briefly while in frenzy. You are able to act normally for one turn when you spend a Willpower in this fashion, though you otherwise keep all the other stipulations of frenzy — ignoring wound penalties and so on. You do not actually regain control so much as you fight mightily to direct yourself for a few moments in the face of overwhelming rage or terror; roleplay your actions appropriately.
- You can expend a Willpower Trait to ignore all wound penalties, up to and including Incapacitated, for the duration of a full turn.
- Spending a Willpower Trait lets you suppress a derangement temporarily. If you spend enough Willpower Traits on suppressing a derangement, you may overcome it eventually. Malkavians cannot overcome their primary derangement this way. (See "Derangements" on p. 249-254.)
- Certain Disciplines or powers require the expenditure of Willpower.

## Virtues

Virtues are the foundations of your character's moral viewpoints. The road you choose lays out your character's overall sense of sin and redemption — what's wrong with the world, what is considered proper conduct and so on. The Virtues are the foundations of the roads, and they govern how your character views particularly challenging or threatening situations, as well as how she's likely to respond.

Keep in mind that there are very few actual paragons of virtue among Cainites, certainly not as most human beings would see it if they understood the situation. Even a vampire who engages in holy works and charitable deeds does so through rigid self-denial, and even such a hard-working soul still feeds on the blood of the living and necessarily flees from living men and women whose faith is strong. The question is not whether your character is a nice person, but how your character deals with the challenges of existence with a ravening ancient curse working inside her, poisoning hopes and dreams into eternal depression and chaos.



It's much easier for a vampire to hew to a standard that deals with outward conduct than some kind of inward conviction. Stoic nobility is within the grasp of many vampires; overflowing love untainted by blood hunger escapes almost all of them. The central struggle in **Faith and Fire** is to hold on to one's inner self in the face of constant challenge, to achieve good in all of its forms despite all rather than to bask in the satisfaction of being a good person already and reforming the world on that basis.

You have three categories of Virtue Traits. Each type of Trait is used for a specific sort of Virtue Test. *Conscience/ Conviction* is used to hold to your moral path, even if you have a lapse of behavior. *Self-Control/ Instinct* allows you to deny or direct the terrible urges of your hungry and destructive Beast. *Courage* stands against the primal fear of the forces that can destroy you. Your road determines the sort of Virtues that you have; you cannot have both *Conscience* and *Conviction* or *Self-Control* and *Instinct* — you have only one from each category. Each Virtue Trait rating goes from zero to five Traits, though you do not use adjectives to describe the Traits.

## Virtue Tests

When you suffer from an ethical dilemma, overpowering rage or great fear, you may use a Virtue Test to resist succumbing to the Beast. Such a test is a Static Challenge. The difficulty varies with the stimulus, as described for each sort of Virtue. Note that you are never required to make a Virtue Test; you may relent and lose automatically if you so desire.

If you win a Virtue Test, your morals overcome the Beast, and you hold fast against the predator. When you lose a Virtue Test, you suffer a lapse of virtue. You suffer from a debilitating Negative Trait or problem, as described under the appropriate Virtue.

You may make one retest on a failed Virtue Test by risking an appropriate Virtue Trait; if you succeed in the retest, you only lose a Virtue Trait temporarily (for the rest of the session, making you more likely to succumb to further failings if you are not careful). If you lose the retest, you gain a temporary derangement related to your failure in addition to suffering the normal results of a Virtue Test loss. Note specifically that you may not overbid on a Virtue Test.

Regaining Virtue Traits requires the expenditure of Experience, as well as consistent roleplaying for the particular strength that you wish to cultivate.

See the specific Virtue descriptions for examples of Virtue Tests.

### Conscience/Conviction

*Conscience* measures the character's commitment to the moral standards his society espouses. He accepts the tenets he grew up with, or ones he's heard preached along the way, and he feels shame and guilt when he deviates from those standards. The inner voice of *Conscience* helps him resist temptations. When he commits questionable acts, his *Conscience* rating affects how much remorse he feels. Depending on the particular outlook your character holds, "remorse" may not be the actual response. The numerical rating applies to a wide range of possible outlooks, not just to ones whose attitudes suit these labels.

*Conviction* measures the character's commitment to moral standards as part of a reasoned, deliberate choice taken after rejecting the proffered social norms. He defines his duty himself, and he cares little what others think. Sin is a matter of failing to meet one's chosen goals, with higher *Conviction* scores making the character more acutely aware both of implications in his code and of his own fallibility in holding to it. High *Conviction* makes a vampire obviously inhuman and disconnected from the views of the people he moves among and preys upon.

A Virtue Test of *Conscience/ Conviction* is appropriate whenever you violate your road, as described on the Hierarchies of Sin. Whenever you commit a violation that is at or below your current road rating total on the Hierarchy of Sin, you must make a *Conscience/ Conviction* Virtue Test. If you have only two Road Traits, breaches of higher road ratings are too trivial to cost you any further ground, but if you have four or five Road Traits, you must be careful to uphold your ethics with every action. The difficulty of the challenge is the level of the sin on the Hierarchy table; if you commit a sin at level four on the Hierarchy of Sins table, you have a four-Trait difficulty to your *Conscience/ Conviction* challenge.

Losing a *Conscience/ Conviction* Virtue Test causes you to immediately lose a Road Trait.

**Example:** *Chance, a Gangrel on the Road of Humanity and a rating of three, kills a mortal who threatened to expose him and his pack (including a Salubri) to the local Tremere chantry. The Narrator decides that this act is worthy of a two-Trait sin, so Chance's player makes a* Conscience *test against four Traits. If he wins or ties, Chance feels shame for his actions and does not lose a Road Trait. If he loses, he suffers the loss of a Road Trait, dropping to three. Chance's player makes the test and wins — Chance feels some shame for killing the man (maybe he could have simply tied him up while the pack made its escape).*

*Later, Chance steals some documents from the local church. Since that is a four-Trait sin and he has only three Road Traits, it is too minor a crime to cause him further risk of degradation. The player need not make a test of* Conscience *for that action.*

## Self-Control/Instinct

According to some Cainite scholars, *Self-Control* is a particularly "civilized" response to the Beast. The character uses her will, backed by observation of warning signs of growing power on the Beast's part and rules of internal discipline, to fight down the urge to frenzy. She learns to sacrifice some of her emotions and even some of her otherwise reasonable plans for cool, restrained conduct to deny the Beast its spiritual sustenance. (Note that physical hunger limits this virtuous aim. When your character's blood pool is lower than her *Self-Control* rating, you are one Trait down on all tests involving blood. Feeding is a very practical matter.)

*Instinct* is the "barbaric" alternative to *Self-Control*. The character accepts frenzy and complete surrender to passion as part of her nature. Instead of aiming to hold the frenzy back, she aims to retain a core of controlled awareness even as the frenzy unfolds, so that she can choose her course of action moment by moment. Whenever the threat of frenzy arises, she embraces it automatically, unless the difficulty of the frenzy test is less than her *Instinct* score, in which case she can choose whether or not to succumb. Thereafter, each time the character wishes to choose a particular action rather than follow the imperatives of frenzy, you must make a frenzy test, against a difficulty of eight Traits. Success allows you to specify one single action that the character takes. She then resumes her unity with the moment (i.e., suffers the usual penalties of frenzy) until the frenzy exhausts itself. Among Cainites, this act is called "riding" frenzy.

You can never use more *Self-Control/ Instinct* Traits on Virtue Test resolution than your current number of Blood Traits. If you are hungry, it is hard to resist the call of frenzy. Note that you do not frenzy automatically if you run out of blood. You're very likely to frenzy if you are exposed to a stimulus, however, since you won't be able to use any *Self-Control/ Instinct* Traits in the event of a tie.

If you attempt to make a test of *Self-Control/ Instinct* and fail, you automatically gain the permanent Negative Social Trait: *Callous* or *Condescending* (your choice), though it can be bought off normally.

### Self-Control/Instinct Difficulties

| Traits | Stimulus |
|---|---|
| One | Smell of blood when hungry |
| Two | Sight of blood when hungry; harassed; life-threatening situation |
| Three | Physical provocation or attacks; taste of blood when hungry |
| Four | Loved one in danger; humiliated |
| Five | Outright humiliation; mortal insults |

**Example:** *Susannah, a starved Malkavian on the Road of Heaven, catches sight of a mortal meal. Although she is out of blood, she does not frenzy immediately, since she is not yet agitated and has not scented blood. As she closes in on her target, the merchant turns and suggests that she's a prostitute. Now that she's been harassed, Susannah must make a* Self-Control *Virtue Test, with a difficulty of two Traits. Since she is out of blood, she effectively has no* Self-Control. *She tests against another player (since it's just a Static Challenge) and ties. With her lack of blood leaving her with no* Self-Control *Traits, Susannah enters a frenzy, attempting to drain the mortal. She also gains a new permanent Negative Trait. Realizing that she can't win on ties and that the mortal is unlikely to pose a problem, Susannah's player decides not to risk any further Traits on a retest.*

*Later, full of blood, Susannah is at a tavern when she is accosted by a Setite. The Setite attacks her from surprise — a three-Trait provocation. Susannah's player makes a Static Challenge. If she wins, she manages to control herself, and does not frenzy as the Setite attacks her. If she ties, her* Self-Control *of two Traits is insufficient to best the frenzy stimulus. If she loses, she frenzies automatically.*

## Courage

*Courage* measures the intellectual, moral and spiritual reserves that allow your character to stand fast when his impulse is to flee. (See the section on "Rötschreck", p. 245) Characters with high *Courage* ratings still feel fear, but they're able to block the immediate translation of that fear into unthinking action. Some vampires

genuinely don't feel fear on the emotional, instinctual level in the face of fire, holiness and other threats. They possess only a reasoned awareness of the dangers. Others discipline the fear through military training, monastic practice or some other systematic code. Still others subdue it with as much instinct as in the fear itself. They may not really know why they keep control or be able to explain it to others.

*Courage* Traits measure self-possession and the ability to resist the terror inflicted by fire, sunlight and True Faith. You must make a *Courage* challenge when confronted with such attacks. If you succeed, you manage to resist the urge to flee for the duration of the conflict (or for 10 minutes). If you fail, though, you enter Rötschreck, a form of terrified frenzy in which you attempt to escape by any means possible. Losing a *Courage* Test also causes you to suffer from the Negative Physical Trait: *Cowardly* or the Negative Mental Trait: *Submissive*, permanently, although such Traits can be removed later with Experience.

Note that you generally do not need to make a *Courage* Virtue Test against fire under your control. If you are lighting your own candle, for instance, or using the *Thaumaturgy* path *Creo Ignem*, you are in control of the fire and unaffected by fear of it. If someone uses fire against you as a weapon, however, (a hunter threatening to light your hair with that same candle, facing someone brandishing a torch) you might need to make a *Courage* Test.

Courage Difficulties

| Traits | Stimulus |
|---|---|
| One | Being bullied; sunrise |
| Two | Torch; obscured sunlight |
| Three | Bonfire; uncovered window during daylight |
| Four | House fire; being burned |
| Five | Trapped in a burning building; direct sunlight |

**Example:** *While the coterie is plotting at the haven of Melissande d'Anjou, someone shoots two flaming arrows into the thatched roof, setting the place ablaze. Melissande, Kurt and Peter are all startled by the flames. The Storyteller calls for a Virtue Test of* Courage *with all the vampires present, to see who succumbs to Rötschreck. The Storyteller throws Scissors. Melissande's player throws Rock, and thus Melissande remains unaffected. Kurt and Peter's players both throw Paper, so they're in trouble. Both players risk a* Courage *Trait for a retest, and test against the Storyteller again. This time, Kurt's player wins, so Kurt manages to control himself, but he loses a* Courage *Trait for the evening — he's shaken by the experience and more likely to flee from later threats. Peter's player, on the other hand, ties on his retest, but Peter only has two* Courage *Traits. He loses the test, gains a Negative Trait, gains a temporary derangement and goes into Rötschreck.*

## Morality Traits

As described previously, your road is the particular code that you try to uphold. Your Road Traits measure your distance from the Beast and your success in adhering to that moral code. Ranging from zero to five Traits, these Traits simply serve as an indicator of your ethical strength. You do not expend or use Road Traits in any fashion. Your total Road Traits do affect your condition, though. A vampire who is close to being overtaken by the Beast is more likely to succumb to vampiric instincts like slumber during the day or the long torpor of ages. The amount of Road Traits is determined by the average of your *Conscience/Conviction* and your *Self-Control/Instinct* scores.

Road Traits are lost when you suffer a lapse in *Conscience* or *Conviction*. See the tables on p. 95-99 for the Hierarchies of Sin, which determine what constitutes a moral violation for your beliefs. You can only gain Road Traits through consistent adherence to your ethics, good roleplaying and the expenditure of Experience with your Storyteller's approval.

- When sleeping during the day, your total Road Traits determine how deeply you slumber. You can never bid more than triple your Road Traits for any action during the day (so even a mighty elder is susceptible to mortals due to such sluggishness).
- The length of time that you spend in torpor varies with the strength of your road. Certain circumstances (such as magical healing or imbibing a Trait of blood from a vampire three generations lower than you) can rescue you from torpor prematurely. This imposed length of time applies only if you are sent to torpor involuntarily — if you choose to take the long sleep, you can rise at any time that you wish. (See the section on torpor on p. 238.)
- Your Road rating determines your Aura of Conviction. The aura indicates something of the road you follow and how you appear to mortals. It also grants you bonus Traits (or penalties) when you attempt an action related to your aura and road (such as commanding someone if you are on the Road of Kings).
- If you ever run completely out of Road Traits, your character falls to the Wassail, the final frenzy. Your character enters a totally uncontrolled state of berserk rage and instinctive survival. Such a character cannot be coaxed from frenzy, cannot control himself and is no longer suitable for play. Cainites generally put down such unfortunates very quickly.

## Merits and Flaws

As optional Traits to help flesh out your character, Merits and Flaws aid in specifying certain benefits and hindrances that add depth that is not readily covered by Attributes, Abilities and Backgrounds. All Merits and Flaws are organized into specific categories: Physical, Social, Mental and Supernatural. In order to purchase Merits, you must spend Free Traits. Taking a Flaw, conversely, adds burden to your beast but offers extra Traits to spend elsewhere. You may take as many as seven Traits each in Merits and Flaws.

Normally you may only purchase Merits and Flaws during character creation, but with an appropriate explanation you may purchase a new Merit (with Experience at double the cost) to overcome an existing Flaw (again, with Experience at double the cost).

## Physical Merits and Flaws

### Ambidextrous (1-Trait Merit)

You have a high degree of off-hand dexterity, and you can perform tasks with the "wrong" hand at no penalty. You must still use the rules for taking multiple

actions, but you do not suffer a difficulty penalty if, say, you use two weapons or are forced to use your off hand.

### Acute Senses (1-Trait Merit)

One or more of your senses are particularly sharp (must specify one of your five senses). You are two Traits up on all challenges involving this particular sense. You may have multiple acute senses, but you must purchase this Merit once for each sense.

### Catlike Balance (1-Trait Merit)

You are sure-footed and almost never slip or get dizzy. Your sense of balance is so keen that you can traverse even the narrowest ledges or wires. You are two Traits up in tests where your balance is a factor.

### Eat Food (1-Trait Merit)

You have the capacity to eat food and even savor its taste. While you cannot derive any nourishment from eating regular foods, this ability is useful for passing as mortal. Of course, you can't digest what you eat, and there will be some point during the evening when you must force yourself to heave it back up.

### Blush of Health (2-Trait Merit)

You look more hale and healthy in appearance than other vampires, allowing you to blend with human society much more easily. You still retain the color of a living mortal, and your skin feels only slightly cool to the touch. This Merit is unavailable to Cappadocians and Nosferatu.

### Daredevil (3-Trait Merit)

There is no danger too great, no challenge to difficult for you to conquer, but you scared your mother and sire out of their wits regularly. Whenever you take a risky course of action — one with a difficulty of at least eight Traits or a potentially harmful outcome — you gain one bonus Trait on the attempt. This bonus only applies to combats in which you are greatly outnumbered or painfully outclassed, at Narrator's discretion.

### Efficient Digestion (3-Trait Merit)

You are able to draw more than the usual amount of nourishment from blood. When feeding, you gain an additional Trait to your blood pool for every two Traits of blood you consume. This Merit does not allow you to exceed your blood pool maximum.

### Huge Size (4-Trait Merit)

You are abnormally large, possibly over seven feet tall and weighing over 300 pounds. You gain an extra Bruised health level. If you don't fit this description, try to wear bulky clothes to simulate your build.

### Hard of Hearing (1-Trait Flaw)

Anything below a loud conversation is difficult for you to hear. You are two Traits down in challenges involving hearing.

### Short (1-Trait Flaw)

You are well below average height — four feet tall or less. You have difficulty reaching or manipulating objects designed for normal adult size, and your running speed is one-half that of a normally proportioned human.



### Smell of the Grave (1-Trait Flaw)

You exude an odor of dampness and newly turned earth, which no amount of scents or perfumes will cover. Mortals in your immediate presence become uncomfortable, so the difficulties of most Social rolls to affect mortals increase by one. Characters on the Road of Humanity with this Flaw subtract one Trait from their aura.

### Bad Sight (3-Trait Flaw)

Large objects are still visible albeit fuzzy but smaller things are too out of focus for you to clearly identify. You are two Traits down on all challenges where careful eyesight is required.

### Diseased (1- to 5-Trait Flaw)

You have contracted some disease that affects your nightly unlife. You might well spread it when you feed, or it might affect how much blood you can drink. Storytellers should decide the specific effects and circumstances of the disease.

### Disfigured (2-Trait Flaw)

Either a birth defect or an injury during your lifetime has left you disfigured in some way. Storytellers should work with you to create an appropriate disfigurement. You are down two Traits in any Social Challenges save for *Intimidation*. Disfigurements are seen as a divine punishment in the Dark Medieval world.

### One Eye (2-Trait Flaw)

Whether you were born with the defect or injured somehow, you have only one functional eye, missing from your head or a dead-white orb. You are two Traits down on all challenges involving depth perception, including ranged combat. Depending on the nature of your handicap, you may choose to wear an eye patch, or you may simply have one blind eye.

### Ragged Bite (2-Trait Flaw)

Unlike most other Cainites, you lack the ability to lick the wounds of your feeding closed. Instead, you leave raw puncture wounds in the flesh of your prey. These wounds also have a one-in-five chance of becoming diseased. The Storyteller determines the precise nature of the infection.

### Leper (2- or 3-Trait Flaw)

Before you were Embraced, you suffered from leprosy or a skin disease that might be easily confused with leprosy. Your Appearance may be no higher than two Traits, and rashes, pale patches, festering sores, scars and the like mar your flesh. Your skin disease, whatever it actually is, is obvious to any who look upon you. Mortal authorities refuse you entry to any city, and you are treated with fear and revulsion. You might be compelled to dress in a specific manner and even carry bells, clappers or other devices to announce your coming.

For three Traits, your condition is still contagious. Although it cannot have any further effects on your unliving form, you might still transmit it to those you feed from. This Flaw is worth only one Trait to Nosferatu, and then only if their disease is contagious.

### Addiction (3-Trait Flaw)

You suffer from a biological or chemical addiction to drugs (such as opium or hashish) or alcohol. It is up to the Storyteller to decide the specific effects of this addiction, but you must satiate it at least once a night.

### Monstrous (3-Trait Flaw)

You are hideous and physically displeasing. As a result, you may not initiate any Social Challenges other than those concerning *Intimidation*, and you may not take any Appearance-related Social Traits, such as *Alluring* or *Gorgeous*. In the Dark Medieval world, you are usually treated with scorn or terror, as physical deformity is believed to indicate spiritual quality.

### Permanent Wound (3-Trait Flaw)

You suffered injuries during your Embrace that your transformation somehow failed to repair. At the beginning of each night, you rise from sleep at the Wounded health level, although you may heal this nagging damage by spending Blood Traits.

### Slow Healing (3-Trait Flaw)

You have difficulty healing wounds. It requires two Blood Traits to heal one health level of bashing or lethal damage, and you may heal one health level of aggravated damage every five nights (plus the usual five Blood Traits and Willpower expenditure).

### Child (4-Trait Flaw)

You were a small child (between five and 10 years old) at the time of your Embrace, leaving your Physical Attributes underdeveloped and making it difficult to interact with some aspects of mortal society. You may not have more than four Traits in your Physical Attribute category, except when raising Physical Attributes with Blood Traits, and you suffer a two-Trait penalty when attempting to direct or lead mortal adults. This Flaw also includes the effects of the *Short* Flaw, so no character can have both.

### Deaf (4-Trait Flaw)

You cannot hear. While you may ignore some applications of *Dominate*, you may not hear warnings, and you have great difficulty in normal communication. You suffer a three-Trait penalty on all *Alertness* challenges and are considered to be always surprised during the first round of combat or attacks from behind.

### Flesh of the Corpse (5-Trait Flaw)

Your flesh does not fully regenerate itself once it is damaged. While you are able to heal yourself to the point of regaining full functionality, your skin puckers and scars where you were wounded. Depending on the nature of the damage, this Flaw makes social dealings exceedingly difficult.

### Mute (5-Trait Flaw)

You cannot speak at all. You must sign or write to indicate your feelings, although both of these are highly difficult in the Dark Medieval. Sign language does not exist in this time; there is only a form of finger-spelling used by monks under vows of silence or deaf nobility. Many people are illiterate in this time, so writing might not help. This is a very difficult Flaw to play out and should be discussed with the Storyteller before choosing it.

### Blind (6-Trait Flaw)

You are robbed of the blessing of vision. You lose all ties where sight is involved (such as manual dexterity), and you also automatically lose all challenges where sight is required.

## Mental Merits and Flaws

### Celestial Attunement (1-Trait Merit)

You have an innate link to the passage of time and the movement of celestial bodies. You can estimate the time until sunrise or sunset within a minute or two, and you can follow the phases of the moon in your head. Those with some training in astrology and this Merit can even foretell certain astrological conjunctions without access to charts. You can accomplish any of these feats with only a minimum of concentration.

### Common Sense (1-Trait Merit)

You have a significant amount of practical, everyday wisdom. Whenever the character is about to act in a way contrary to common sense, the Storyteller can make suggestions or warnings about the implications of said action. This is a very useful Merit for novice players who are unfamiliar with the game.

### Concentration (1-Trait Merit)

You have the ability to focus your mind and shut out any distractions or annoyances. Characters with this Merit are unaffected by any penalties stemming from distracting circumstances (e.g., loud noises, hanging upside down).

### Code of Honor (2-Trait Merit)

A specific code of honor or chivalry guides your actions, separate from your road ethics. This code is very personal, shaped by your experiences. You should work with your Storyteller to create an appropriate code (one with hindrances and restricted activities along with beliefs and passions). You gain a free retest in Mental and Social Challenges where you would be forced to violate your code, regardless as to supernatural means or to resist frenzy.

### Eidetic Memory (2-Trait Merit)

You remember what you see and hear with perfect detail. Documents, events and conversations, can be committed to memory with only minor concentration.

### Light Sleeper (2-Trait Merit)

You can awaken instantly at any sign of trouble or danger, and you can do so without any sleepiness or hesitation. You may ignore rules regarding how Road rating restricts the number of dice available during the day.

### Berserker (3-Trait Merit)

You are in total control of your Beast, a master of your primal self. You may enter frenzy at will, during which time you do not suffer any wound penalties, but you must still make frenzy tests when the need arises.

### Calm Heart (3-Trait Merit)

Although many vampires have difficulty resisting frenzy, you find it easier to stay your anger. You are one Trait up to resist frenzy.

### Iron Will (3-Trait Merit)

You are indomitable of will and a rock of stubborn resolve. No matter how charismatic a leader is or intimidating an elder seems, your determination never falters. You may resist mind-altering effects by spending a Willpower Trait. This has no effect on emotion-based attacks (such as *Presence*).

### Deep Sleeper (1-Trait Flaw)

You are difficult to rouse from your slumber. You are likely to sleep through times of danger, or, if roused, too sluggish to act with conviction. The difficulty increases by two for any test to awaken during the day.

### Nightmares (1-Trait Flaw)

Twisted dreams plague you in your sleep, bleeding over into your night life. Perhaps you see your clanmates roast in the sun, or you fall from grace in the court in very humiliating fashion. For one reason or another, these nightmares cause you such unrest that you aren't sleeping, and you cannot get these images out of your head during the waking hours. Make a test every game session. If you fail, you are down two Traits on every challenge due to lack of sleep.

### Prey Exclusion (1-Trait Flaw)

You refuse to hunt a certain class of prey. You might refuse to feed upon peasants, women, priests or poets. If you accidentally feed upon such an individual, you automatically frenzy and must make a test to prevent Road loss. Witnessing other Cainites feeding on the object of your exclusion might also provoke a frenzy, at the Storyteller's discretion. Ventrue may take this Flaw to represent an additional, self-imposed prey limitation beyond that imposed by their clan weakness.

### Soft-Hearted (1-Trait Flaw)

You cannot stand to watch the suffering of others nor directly cause suffering. If you are the cause of any sort of suffering, you must bid an extra Trait in all challenges.

### Amnesia (2-Trait Flaw)

Your mind is a blank slate, and you recall no memories of your past friends, family or foes. Storytellers should write up your character's history including the reasons for your amnesia, also keeping hidden the character sheet save for your Abilities, Disciplines and Merits and Flaws when you use them. This is different from the Amnesia derangement, and you may not have both.

### Hatred (2-Trait Flaw)

There is someone or something in this world that you just can't stand. In fact, you hate it, and nothing would make you happier than to see this object rubbed out of existence. Just the mention of this thing during conversation makes your hair rise on end. When in the presence of the object of your hatred you must spend a Willpower Trait or immediately enter Frenzy until either you have destroyed this object or it is out of your sight.



### Phobia (2-Trait Flaw)

You suffer from an irrational fear of an object, creature or circumstance, and you do everything in your power to avoid it. When confronted with the object of your fear, you are two Traits down to resist frenzy. If you do not win this test, you will remain in a frenzied state until you spend a Willpower Trait or the object of your phobia is dead or no longer in line of sight. Work with your Storyteller to create the object of your fear.

### Territorial (2-Trait Flaw)

You are extremely territorial, staking out a particular area as your domain and reacting aggressively to trespassers. If another vampire enters your territory uninvited, you must make a frenzy test. If you fail, you immediately attack the interloper and continue attacking until the intruder is dead or has left your hunting grounds. You are reluctant to leave your domain except in desperate circumstances. It is possible (but not common) to take this Flaw without taking the *Domain* Background, in which case other vampires not at all recognize your absolute claim to territory.

### Vengeful (2-Trait Flaw)

You will not rest well until you have revenged a loved one for the wrongs committed against them or against you. It is your life's quest to fulfill the dying wish of the departed. When the time presents itself to reap your vengeance, you must spend a Willpower Trait in order to take any other action for a scene.

### Religious Prohibition (2- or 4-Trait Flaw)

You have retained your faith through the Embrace, and you suffer because your beliefs prohibit drinking the blood you need to survive. You may have lived as a Muslim or Jew (both of which explicitly ban blood-drinking) or even as one of the strictly vegetarian Cathar *perfecti*. As even animal blood is a forbidden substance to you, your conscience pricks whenever you feed.

For two Traits, you voluntarily restrict your feeding to animals or blood that has been drained by a ritual butcher (very common among Jewish and Muslim vampires). At four Traits, you refuse to feed unless it is an immediate necessity (blood pool is three or less), and even then, you may fall victim to depression and self-loathing for several nights after the forbidden act. Most vampires with this Flaw are on a version of the Road of Heaven.

### Short-Fuse (3-Trait Flaw)

Its not your fault that everyone rouses your ire. It's their fault for making you angry, no matter how hot-blooded you know you are, and if they don't apologize for annoying you, then you are going to give them something to be sorry about. You are three Traits down to resist frenzy.

### Flesh Eater (4-Trait Flaw)

It is not enough for you to draw nourishment from the blood of mortals, you believe you must also consume your victim's heart, liver and other blood-rich tissue. Of course, this practice necessitates the deaths of all of your victims (unless you are extremely creative), which might lead to numerous problems with the herd

and with your own conscience (and road). Characters with this Flaw must additionally purchase the *Eat Food* Merit.

## Social Merits and Flaws

### Crusader (1-Trait Merit)

You once donned the crusader's cross and successfully returned from the Holy Land, having done your duty to God, and those around you know it. You may well have joined the forces of Richard the Lion-Hearted and Philip Augustus in the Third Crusade, those of Andrew of Hungary in the Fifth or those of Emperor Frederick in the Sixth. This accomplishment gives you special standing and repute among those knights, lords and ladies who never made the journey to Outremer. Jongleurs may request that you share stories that they may turn into fanciful tales, and others might ask your opinion about events in the Latin Kingdoms or Iberia.

### Natural Leader (1-Trait Merit)

You were born to lead. Had you been alive during Roman times, you could have led a legion. Your magnetism attracts people, and all they want to do is follow your example. You are two Bonus Traits up in challenges involving leadership. You must have at least six Social Traits in order to take this Merit.

### Prestigious Sire (1-Trait Merit)

Your sire has or had great status in her court or clan, and this has accorded you a certain amount of prestige. Although your sire may no longer have any dealings with you, the simple fact of your ancestry has marked you forever. This prestige might aid you greatly in dealings with your elders or other neonates, or it might engender jealousy or contempt.

### Debt of Gratitude (1- to 3-Trait Merit)

An elder owes you gratitude because of something either you or your sire did for her. The depth of gratitude the elder owes depends on how many points the player wishes to spend. One point might mean that the elder owes the character a favor; three points might mean that she owes the character her unlife.

### Enchanting Voice (2-Trait Merit)

You speak with a deep resonant voice or with the eloquent tongue of a bard. With an enchanting voice, you are two Bonus Traits up to seduce, cajole or intimidate with a few choice words or commands.

### Pitiable (2-Trait Merit)

Something about you causes people to pity you, perhaps because you look like a neonate or a child, or maybe you're just simple-minded. You may bid *Pitiable* instead of a Trait for one challenge per session. Storytellers must keep tabs of *Pitiable* players to make sure they continue to be pitiable.

### Dark Secret (1-Trait Flaw)

You have some sort of secret that, if uncovered, would be of immense embarrassment to you and would make you a pariah in the local Cainite community. This could be anything from having murdered an elder to being a secret member of the Cainite Heresy.

### Infamous Sire (1-Trait Flaw)

Your sire was, and perhaps still is, distrusted and disliked by many of the local Cainites. As a result, you are distrusted and disliked as well. The stigma follows you even if you repudiate your sire. One cannot escape one's blood.

### Mistaken Identity (1-Trait Flaw)

You look similar to descriptions of another vampire, which causes cases of mistaken identity. This can prompt numerous awkward or even dangerous situations, especially if your "twin" has a terrible reputation or is wanted for some crime.

### Shy (1-Trait Flaw)

You suffer a social stigma, and you just dislike the limelight. You do whatever you can do not be the focus of attention. When you are at the center of attention, you must bid an extra Trait to initiate challenges.

### Sire's Resentment (1-Trait Flaw)

Your sire dislikes you and wishes you ill. Given the smallest opportunity, she actively seeks to do you harm. Your sire's allies also work against you, and many elders may resent you.

### Enemy (1- to 5-Trait Flaw)

You have an enemy, or perhaps a group of enemies, who seek to harm you. The power of the enemy depends upon how many points the player wishes to spend. (Five points indicate the wrath of a Methuselah, arch-magus or other potent supernatural foe.) The Storyteller should work with you in order to bang out the details of your enemy. Although your enemy might not show up at every game session, their presence will always be brought up some how to keep it fresh in your mind.

### Hunted (4-Trait Flaw)

The Church is onto you and has sent a witch-hunter after you. He has the skills and resources enough to make your unlife "interesting" (and to snuff it out, if you aren't careful), and will keep you watching over your shoulder. Your friends, family, allies and associates are also in peril should this hunter decide to turn an eye their way. (Those who aid the Devil's minions may be in need of "salvation" to save their souls....)

### Inept (5-Trait Flaw)

You are incompetent and unskilled. Until you buy off this Flaw, you may not buy your Abilities or Influences above one Trait.

## Supernatural Merits and Flaws

### Magic Resistance (2-Trait Merit)

Certain Disciplines and other magical powers do not affect you as they do others. You gain two Bonus Traits when testing against any form of magic, though this bonus applies to both benevolent and harmful effects. You can never learn *Thaumaturgy* or *Mortis* with this Merit.

### Medium (2-Trait Merit)

You do, in fact, hear dead people from the spirit world. Ghosts follow you wherever you go and you can feel their presence at all times. As long as you are

willing to barter with them, the restless dead will communicate with you for favors and information.

### Faerie Affinity (2-Trait Merit)

You are attuned to the ways of the faeries, and you do not cause them to fear you while you are around. In fact, you attract their attentions and perhaps you are also more vulnerable to their enchantments.

### Danger Sense (3-Trait Merit)

You have a sixth sense for trouble, and you just know when something is about to happen. If there is a chance that you will be surprised by an ambush, you may make a Simple Test. On a win or tie, you may take an action without the hindrance of surprise. The Storyteller determines when this Merit reacts to danger.

### Lucky (3-Trait Merit)

You're just damned lucky. Maybe you sold your soul, or your patron saint didn't abandon you when you were Embraced. You get three retests per story for which you bid a *Lucky* Trait. ("Nope, I didn't just trip and fall onto a wood spike trap because I bid *Lucky*!") You may call for a second retest in any challenge, though.

### True Love (4-Trait Merit)

Even with all of the pain and suffering you see on a nightly basis, you have found a true love who gives you strength to persevere. When the need arises, you gain an extra Willpower Trait, known as a *True Love* Trait once per session. (These Traits are not cumulative, and they cannot be saved for use at a later date).

### Nine Lives (6-Trait Merit)

It's certainly not the Beast in you, but for some reason you have nine lives to live. Your Storyteller should keep a running tally of your lives. Any time that a lost challenge results in your demise, you get a retest. You can keep retesting, even on the same challenge, until you either pull through or finally die trying. Try not to spend them all in one place.

### Cursed (1- to 5-Trait Flaw)

You are afflicted by a powerful curse. The number of Traits determines the strength and tenacity of the curse. A one-Trait curse might cause you to never win at gambling; a three-Trait curse could cause anything mechanical or complex to malfunction; a five-Trait curse can be powerful enough to one night prove your undoing. The exact effects, as well as ways to overcome it, are up to the Storyteller.

### Cannot Embrace (2-Trait Flaw)

Either due to your high generation or because of some other factor, you cannot pass on the Curse of Caine to another. No matter how much of your vitae you feed to a freshly drained mortal, she will not rise as one of the undying. It's altogether possible for a character not to know that she can't Embrace until the moment of truth, when a potential childe lies dead at her feet. This Flaw is common among the Twelfth Generation. In fact, until recently, most thought no 12th-generation vampire could sire. You can still create ghouls and blood oaths as normal.



### 13th Generation (2-Trait Flaw)

Your sire was of the Twelfth Generation, long thought unable to sire. The fact that you rose from the dead may have even come as a shock to him, and it certainly concerns any elders who put stock in prophecy (in other words, most of them). You might be a clanless Caitiff or you may carry your sire's clan, but you are likely seen as something less than proper among the High Clans. Thirteenth-generation vampires must at least take the *Cannot Embrace* Flaw.

### Haunted (3-Trait Flaw)

A malicious spirit, possibly a felled foe from a life many years removed has decided to torment you from beyond the grave. Though it is usually limited to ghostly manifestations, chilling screams and the occasional shove, it does its best to make your life difficult. The Storyteller should create the spirit and have a Narrator follow you around to make sure you suffer your Flaw.

### Dark Fate (5-Trait Flaw)

Your unlife will end very badly, and your fate is sealed. Worse yet, you have dreams and premonitions of your future demise or eternal torment. The Storyteller determines a particular fate, which will inevitably strike you down, removing your character from play. Furthermore, in any particular game session where the Storyteller deems appropriate, you might receive a vision of your impending suffering. You must spend a Willpower Trait to shake off the experience, or else you are one Trait down on all challenges from the rest of the session. This Flaw should only be taken with Storyteller permission, as it is difficult to play.

## Experience

As sentient beings, we collate the information that is presented to us in our daily lives and hopefully become better people for our experiences. We learn from the mistakes of yesterday and prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

Experience in **Faith and Fire** is represented by awarding each character one to three Experience Traits at the end of each session. The number of Traits awarded is based on how well a character performed during the course of the story and how active the player was in the game. The Storyteller decides how many Traits each player receives on completion of the session. All players receive one Trait — this is standard. Exceptional roleplayers, those who played an exceptionally memorable part, should receive two. Three Traits should be awarded to those characters who performed acts of incredible insight and courage, making the game truly memorable for everyone involved. On a normal night, each player will receive one Experience Trait.

If you are a Storyteller, you should be consistent and fair in awarding Experience. Do it in the open, and be prepared to explain the rationale for your decisions in accordance with the rules. If the players disagree, hear them out, learn the whole story, then award Experience to those who have earned it.

Awarding too many Experience Traits can make characters too powerful too quickly and give players lax attitudes toward working for their goals. On the other hand, awarding too few disheartens the players and damages their sense of achievement. Awarding Experience Traits, therefore, requires a delicate balance between satisfying players and maintaining the integrity of the game. If you follow the guidelines listed here, you probably won't get into too much trouble.

• **Automatic** — Each character receives one Experience Trait per game, representing the acquisition of common, everyday knowledge.

• **Roleplaying** — Narrators should encourage roleplaying. The best way to do so is to reward it tangibly with Experience.

• **Leadership** — You should award one Trait to each of those few players who had starring parts in a story. Someone who got involved, and by her efforts propelled the plot, deserves a third Trait. It should be noted that if more than one of the players were integral to the progression of the story, each of the players who showed such leadership should be awarded a Trait.

## Using Experience

Experience Traits may be spent to purchase new Abilities, Traits and Disciplines, improving a character and giving the player a sense of satisfaction as he watches his character grow more potent. The following chart lists the costs for improving Traits, Abilities and Disciplines.

### Experience Costs

• **New Attribute Trait** — One Experience per Attribute Trait.

• **New Ability Trait** — One Experience per Ability Trait up to five Traits.

• **New Background Trait** — One Experience per Trait with Storyteller approval. Backgrounds may also rise or fall based on roleplaying.

• **New Disciplines** — Three Experience for Basic Disciplines, six for Intermediate Disciplines and nine for Advanced Disciplines. Remember to add an additional point to the cost to learn a Discipline outside a character's clan.

• **New Merit** — Double the listed cost of the Merit, with Storyteller or Narrator approval. This purchase should not occur instantaneously. Rather, it should be worked into a character's on-going story. Storytellers and Narrators should consider the unbalancing effects of buying new Merits during a chronicle.

• **New Ritual** — Two Experience for Basic, four Experience for Intermediate and six Experience for Advanced Rites. (**Note:** Rituals only cost Experience points if they are not readily available to a character during game play. In that case, they only require time.)

• **New Specialization** — One Experience point in an Ability already possessed by the character.

• **New Willpower Trait** — Three Experience per Trait.

• **New Virtue Trait** — Three Experience per Trait, and it should reflect as a major change in a character's personality.

• **Buy off Negative Trait** — Two Experience per Trait.

• **Buy off Flaw** — Double the cost of the Flaw, with Storyteller approval and worked into a character's ongoing story.



## Sample Character Creation

Chip is tired of tabletop games and decides that he wants to try out a local live-action venue. After picking up a copy of **Faith and Fire**, he searches online for live-action games in his area. He finally settles on a popular chronicle and emails an inquiry to the Storyteller. She informs Chip that he can make a character via the online character-generator located on their website. As he doesn't have a clear understanding of how to make a proper Cainite character, though, she tells him of the next game session where she can help him through the character-generation process, step by step.

### Step One: Concept

Juli sits Chip down, opens his copy of the rulebook and explains that the first step to creating a character is to think of a concept: a basic idea of who the character is and where he fit into Cainite society. Chip mulls over what the Storyteller has told him, and decides that he likes the strong, silent type. Someone who needn't flex his muscles in people's faces to show that he is a capable person. He is very interested in the intrigues of politics and technology of mortal society. Taking this a step further, he decides that his character is of Germanic descent. Juli accepts the character concept and approves it. She then has him choose a Nature and Demeanor. As a quiet individual, Chip decides to choose Survivor for a Nature and Dreamer as a Demeanor, in hopes that other characters will view him as a wise man. Next he must choose a clan, and he's quick to point at the Tzimisce. Nothing sounds more exciting to Chip than taking on the role as the master of an old manse, and steeped in age-old traditions of torture and cold-blooded acts. Finally, Chip chooses to follow the Road of the Beast. The character starts to take shape, and Chip names him Frederic von Aarlsburgh.

### Step Two: Attributes

Juli then explains to Chip that he has to prioritize Frederic's Attribute categories in order to determine his strengths and weaknesses. He chooses Mental as Frederic's Primary Trait category, Physical as his secondary and Social as tertiary. Chip reasons that Frederic has exercised his brain muscle in libraries, churches and other institutions of higher learning, and also in some occult education (Mental), he maintains a steady schedule of fighter practice and riding (Physical), but he suffers as the product of inbreeding between parents who were already too closely related (Social). Then Juli points out that Chip must allocate individual Traits for each Attribute category, beginning with seven Mental Traits. He chooses *Alert* x 2, *Creative*, *Determined*, *Knowledgeable*, *Rational* and *Wily*. This makes Frederic very capable of higher thought processes and an able student of the occult. Next is Physical with five Traits, and Chip picks *Brawny*, *Ferocious*, *Stalwart*, *Tough* and *Violent*, marking him as an able-bodied ruffian. Finally there is Social, with only three Traits. Chip takes *Friendly* and *Intimidating* x 2 — Frederic spent most of his time studying and fighting, leaving little time for etiquette lessons. Sometimes he grunts when at a loss for words, and he shies away from people when presented with a public feat.

### Step Three: Advantages

Now that Chip has Frederic's Attributes all banged out, Juli points him to the section on Abilities. Chip notices many things that he would like to take, but sticks with those most fitting to Frederic's studious and cold-blooded background:

*Academics* x 2 and *Linguistics: Latin*. Then he takes *Melee* and *Occult*, representing his average skill with hand-to-hand weapons and his mystical knowledge. Since his choices are not as diverse as Chip would hope for Frederic, Juli points out that this reflects his lack of wisdom and worldliness that will come with experience and age.

Disciplines are next, and Chip beams with anticipated glee. As a Tzimisce, he has access to *Animalism*, *Auspex* and *Vicissitude*. He decides to take the first level of *Auspex: Heightened Senses* and two levels of *Vicissitude: Malleable Visage* and *Transmogrify the Mortal Clay*. He reasons that these choices are indicative of an introverted social misfit and public recluse.

Juli and Chip note that Frederic's existence as a vampire grants him five Backgrounds to spend. He takes extra time to think on his decision. Chip believes that Frederic should boost his coffers to reflect his holdings, so he takes two Traits of *Domain*, one Trait of *Generation* and two Traits of *Resources*. Frederic has a comfortable unlife without too much responsibility, and with these choices, he can now back up any claims to the overindulgence of book study.

## Step Four: Finishing Touches

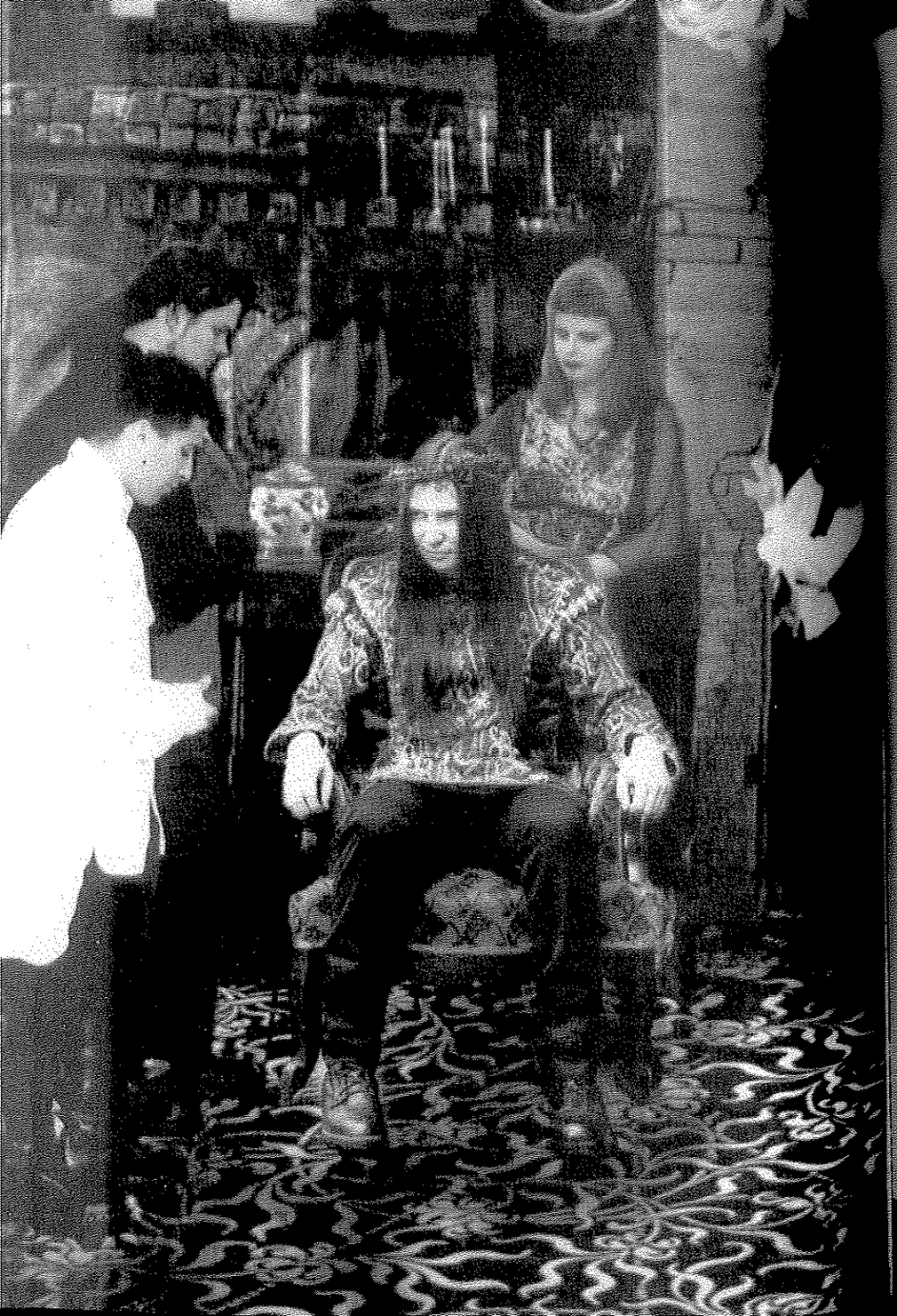
Chip must now record his Blood and Willpower. He checks the chart on page 117 and notices that an 11th-generation vampire begins the game with a blood pool of 12 and a minimum of four Willpower Traits. Chip must also allocate his seven Virtue Traits. He checks the Virtues of his road (*Conviction* and *Instinct* plus Courage, which belongs to every vampire) and considers what would best reflect Frederic's personality. He starts by throwing two Traits into each category, leaving him with one more. He thinks a bit about what sort of person Frederic is. Would he ride the Beast more easily? Would he run from danger? Chip finally decides that *Conviction* would be Frederic's strong suit, given that he is quite convinced of his own superiority. This done, he averages his Virtues for his road rating — a whopping 3. Not bad, but not necessarily the best, either. Frederic will have some interesting nights ahead as he deals with his Beast.

Chip now has the option to choose Flaws and Negative Traits for his character. Juli explains that for every Negative Trait he chooses, he can apply another Free Trait to any aspect of Frederic. With that in mind, Chip chooses *Callous* and *Condescending*. Frederic knows that he is smarter than most people, and coupled with a lack of social graces, he acts very blunt and snobby. He also chooses *Repugnant*, to reflect his inbred looks. Nothing else seems to suit him in this area, so Chip moves on to the Flaws next, selecting *Disfigured: Malformed Leg*. Chip reasons that, although his leg works just fine, his character would have many problems arising from his inbreeding. Juli quickly points out that Chip will have to find a way to pull the act off convincingly, either by limping on a cane or walking very slowly. Chip accepts the Storyteller's requirements, adding that he doesn't usually move very fast, anyhow. ("People should wait for me, anyway.") Now he has a total of 10 Free Traits to spend anywhere on his character (five Free Traits plus three Negative Traits and two Flaw Traits).

First, Chip adds three more Mental Traits: *Attentive*, *Cunning* and *Intuitive*, upping his total to 10 Traits; now Frederic is at the top of his game, by mortal standards. Then Chip decides to take the Merit: *Lucky* for three Traits. Finally with his last four free Traits he adds two more Physical Traits: *Brutal* and another *Brawny*, as well as two more Willpower Traits. Now Frederic has seven Physical Traits and six Willpower Traits. Juli checks over the character sheet and affirms the correct amount of Traits Chip has spent. It is now time for Chip to become Frederic von Aarlsburgh.

## Step Five: Spark of Life

Although Chip has completed the skeleton work of his character, all the Traits, Abilities, Disciplines and such, he still lacks the flesh and mushy stuff that will make Frederic von Aarlsburgh a complete persona. He has to test out the waters of the game, so to speak, to get a feel for where Frederic. fits socially and physically. Does he have what it takes to survive in these brutal medieval nights as a Fiend? Can the other Cainites overlook his physical disfigurements and atrocious social etiquette? Will his Tzimisce heritage prejudice other clans away from him? What type of master will he eventually become if he should create revenant families? What sort of clothes will Frederic wear in public? Will his haven have elaborate traps, or will he hire many henchmen to protect his resting corpse? These are all questions that Chip will have to answer before and during his time as Frederic. He can also ask help from Juli and the Narrators for certain basic and specific questions in order to help kick-start the background process. After all, more character background is always a good thing, helping to shape the clay that will soon mold Frederic. What of his parents, and their immoral love for one another? Will Frederic allow his Beast get the better of his judgment and ride the wave of frenzy out of spite? Will his memories of childhood, as that of a devil-child born of an unholy union, stay with Frederic for eternity, or will his path lead down a strict adherence to his road? Chip seems happy with his character. Juli comments that his ability to ask so many questions is a sure sign of a playable character.



Grigori awoke as the sun set after three days of lying silently in the hidden chamber beneath the pantry of the monastery where Brother Kristof had secreted him away. Soon, Paulo and Hauknefr would be busy below, though, and Grigori had yet to clear the way for them.

But a moment of meditation, first. He focused, ignoring the scratching of the insects that had found his clothing to their liking, and his vision returned. Currently the threads of webbing nearest him held the images of his two companions — the Toreador in his finery and the Brujah with his blade. He saw their threads fraying near his juncture. Grigori had plucked strand after strand from their supports as the two had become more and more involved in his plot. It was nearing time for their threads to be cut completely so that the spider could spin again.

He stirred finally from his repose and lifted the trapdoor on his hiding place. He checked the kitchen beyond through the warped wooden door, spotting only Brother Kristof stoking the great oven that baked the monastery's bread. He crept up behind the monk, kissing him softly on the back of the neck. Brother Kristof sprang around with alarm, his smoking poker held high, but he instantly relaxed when he recognized his lover. "You're awake!"

"Aye, and I have work to do, Brother. Have you the key I bade you gain?"

Kristof's gaze sank to the floor, giving Grigori his answer.

Grigori plucked a weevil from his hood and threw it into the oven, where it briefly danced, popped and sizzled. He glanced briefly at the now-cooling poker still in his thrall's hand and realized how close it had been to his face just now.

Threads thrummed. The spider's voice came to him, demanding that he get that key.

"I know!" he cried softly, his eyes rolling up in his head. "I know! I need it! It's here!"

Brother Kristof was used to these fits, these divine visions only his beloved could see. He placed a concerned hand on Grigori's shoulder. "My love?"

Grigori snapped out of his trance and into anger. "Your love? What of it? Your love has yet to gain me my key! Where is my key?" He pounced, driving Brother Kristof into the support beam behind him.

The monk began to panic, confused, hurt, betrayed... Grigori continued to beat him about the shoulders and chest as he struggled to regain his breath. "Father... Father Juan!" the degenerate monk finally gasped. "It's about his neck on a leather thong."

Grigori relaxed and smiled. He released his grip on his prey, fussed and smoothed the monk's cassock, purring, "Brother, forgive me. Gentle Brother. Honest, loyal Brother. You did your best. I am tired and hungry. May I sup at your side once more?"

The monk forgave him, and opened his arms. His eyes closed, and he shook gently as Grigori's fangs sent forbidden pleasure through his body.

Once sated, Grigori left to invisibly stalk Father Juan, then to deal with the guards at the winch.

# Chapter Four: Disciplines

While the scholarly and the pious debate the minutia of the Cainite condition, it is commonly believed by those who study such matters that Lilith, the first wife of Adam, taught Caine the secrets of the power within his cursed blood. Indeed, Disciplines are often felt to be special manifestations of God's Curse upon Caine and his progeny.

In these dark nights, there are almost a score of well-known Disciplines. Some are known by almost any vampire whose existence has spanned a century; others are closely kept secrets, hoarded by clans that perceive them as unique facets of Caine's Curse. There are also those powers whose mere existence is conjecture to the everyman Cainite, perhaps lost to antiquity, perhaps practiced by others so distant or secretive as to be beyond the boundaries of their common nightly existence.

## Learning Disciplines

Any vampire can learn the physical Disciplines — *Celerity*, *Fortitude* and *Potence* — and the three Disciplines favored by her clan using only blood-intuition and practice (and the expenditure of Experience Traits). It is always easier to learn Disciplines that are inherent to a vampire's clan. Even though a Toreador can develop skill at *Fortitude* with no outside assistance, he must spend extra Experience Traits since it is not a clan Discipline.

The more arcane Disciplines are not so easy to master. First, the would-be student must locate a willing and capable teacher. Since most clans take an extremely proprietary view of their clan Disciplines, providing such education can be quite risky. In addition to finding a teacher, the hopeful student must consume one Blood Trait from a vampire to whose clan the Discipline belongs. Only one such draught is necessary, but it is a step toward the blood oath, so the student would do well to be cautious. The blood need not come from the teacher, or even from a vampire who knows the specific Discipline, merely a Cainite for whom it is a clan Discipline. This means that a Nosferatu who has inveigled a Lasombra into teaching him *Obtenebration* could potentially teach it to another member of his warren if his friend could also obtain some Lasombra vitae. If Clan Lasombra discovered this little university, the Nosferatu involved — as well as the Lasombra who provided the original tutelage — would most certainly find the wrath of the clan visited upon them.



Certain Disciplines, most notably *Dementation* and *Daimoinon*, have additional, terrible costs associated with learning them. Those students who have taken up their study have discovered to their everlasting regret that these costs are demanded of *every* vampire who undertakes them, not just of the clans associated with them.

## Blood Sorcery

*Thaumaturgy* and *Mortis* are the most common forms of what is called blood sorcery. The study of such Disciplines possesses a different structure than ordinary Disciplines. Rather than consisting of a single linear progression of powers, increasing in might as the Cainite's skill improves, blood sorcery allows its disciples to channel their studies into different fields called paths, and also to learn special rituals, independent of their other studies.

### Path Magic

Each form of blood sorcery has its own set of paths, each of which concentrates on a specialized category of occult power. Whereas Cainites of lower generation can learn Disciplines to greater effect than their younger brethren, sorcerous paths only reach the Advanced level. Masters of blood sorcery can learn additional paths, but none have managed to extend a path beyond that level.

When a vampire commences study of blood sorcery, she picks a path from among those allowed by her clan to be her primary path. Once she has attained Intermediate expertise in her primary path, she may begin studying additional paths. As long as her skill in her primary path is Intermediate, she may only learn the Basic effects of her additional paths. Once she has raised her understanding of her primary path to the Advanced level, she has mastered that path and now has the understanding to pursue any other paths she studies to their fullest extent.

### Rituals

Rituals, as their name implies, are prolonged, formulaic occult ceremonies. Their effects tend toward greater power and duration, but that is only fair, for they take a good deal of time and effort to enact. With the proper research, discipline and effort, a blood sorcerer can achieve feats with a ritual that are well beyond her abilities with path magic or the more common Disciplines. Some rituals call for multiple knowledgeable participants and unusual paraphernalia, while others call for solitude and concentration. Each ritual is different. Learning one ritual never depends upon knowledge of another.

Blood sorcerers tend to pick up as many rituals as they can in the course of their studies as well as occasionally embarking on dangerous quests for particularly crucial rituals. Blood sorcerers learn one Basic ritual when they begin their studies. With each additional level learned, they learn another ritual of the same level. This means that if Yves has mastered *Rego Vitae* and just brought his training in *Rego Tempestas* to the Intermediate level, he would know eight rituals through these studies: two Basic, two Intermediate and one Advanced from his mastery of *Rego Vitae*, and two Basic and one Intermediate from his time spent learning *Rego Tempestas*.

Blood sorcerers can also learn rituals through study. *Influence* and *Mentor* Traits are useful for acquiring the information necessary to learn new rituals, but the Storyteller may always opt to craft a story-line that forces the student to do

some dirty work before he can learn the ritual he desires. A Cainite can never learn a ritual of a higher level than his understanding of his primary path.

Performing a ritual calls for a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty nine Traits). Unless otherwise noted, it takes 10 minutes to perform a Basic ritual, 20 minutes for an Intermediate ritual and 30 minutes for an Advanced ritual.

### Time

The duration of Disciplines is shaped by many variables. Some depend on celestial events like the sun's rising, others last but a moment. Most Disciplines last between half an hour and an hour. Unless otherwise indicated, any Discipline described as lasting for a scene ends at the end of the scene or after an hour, whichever is shorter.

## Abombwe

*Abombwe*, the secret Discipline of the African Laibon, addresses the needs of vampires who spend their nights in far closer communion with their Beasts than European Cainites. Because of this difference in temperament, the Storyteller may rule that only Cainites following the Road of the Beast can learn *Abombwe*, or he may assess an additional Experience Trait penalty per power learned for those more focused on sin and redemption than the ways of their Beast. (This penalty is in addition to the one imposed for learning a non-clan-related Discipline.)

Use *Survival* for retests of *Abombwe*. The blood costs for the powers below reflect the Laibon clan curse. Should a Cainite of another clan learn *Abombwe*, she would pay one less Blood Trait for those powers.

### Basic Abombwe

#### Predator's Communion

You are so attuned to your Beast that you can use its senses to discern others in your area with similar psyches. Doing so can be very helpful in both learning who likewise possesses a Beast, and who to avoid when necessary.

By expending two Blood Traits, you can tell who, within eyesight, possesses the feral nature of the Beast. This is usually automatic, but you need to win a Mental Challenge to recognize a Beast that is disguised by *Obfuscate* or similar powers. By expending a Mental Trait, you can determine if a person's Beast is stronger than yours (i.e., which of you has more Road Traits). *Predator's Communion* also detects the feral nature of Lupines, ghouls, ghosts, certain feral fae, and even some particularly brutish mortals.

#### Taming the Beast

Your closer relationship with your Beast allows you to call it forth in a controlled fashion, bringing its strength to bear in physical actions. It also brings a commensurate risk of frenzy.

You must concentrate for a turn and then perform a Static *Self-Control/Instinct* Test (difficulty five Traits). If you win, you can use your Road Traits as bonus Traits in Physical Challenges over the course of the current scene. You can divide the Traits as you wish, using none, any or all on a given challenge until you have used them up. If you fail the test, you may still use your Road Traits, but you also immediately enter frenzy.

### Intermediate Abombwe

#### Whistling up the Beast

You know the ancient songs that speak to the Beast, and you can commune with the Beasts of others so that they are less threatening to you.

You must whistle, sing or hum atonally for a full turn, then enter a Social Challenge with your target. If you succeed, your target must retreat from you. This is a wary, cautious retreat, not outright flight. Should your target not be able to retreat, he enters Rötschreck. If you lose the challenge, your target is left on edge. He is one Trait down on all challenges against you for the remainder of the scene, as well as any tests for frenzy or Rötschreck. This power only works on creatures with a notable Beast, as listed under *Predator's Communion*.

You can also use this power to voluntarily enter frenzy after one turn of singing or humming.

#### Beast-Channel

Your ability to channel the power of the Beast allows you to direct its influence into specific parts of your body.

Expend three Blood Traits and direct the Beast to manifest in a certain part of your body. That location becomes encrusted with dried, black vitae. Although the hands, body, throat and feet are the best-known foci for *Beast-Channel*, it is believed that elders know other, more potent forms.

**Hands:** Your punches now inflict aggravated damage.

**Body:** You gain six bonus Physical Traits of your choice.

**Throat:** You can emit an unearthly roar that terrifies all who hear it. Any who hear this roar must make a *Courage* Test against a difficulty of your Social Traits. If they lose, mortals must flee and supernatural beings are two Traits down on all challenges.

**Feet:** Your kicks now inflict aggravated damage. In addition, you can stomp on the ground, causing violent tremors. Everyone within 100 feet of you must win a Physical Challenge or be knocked to the ground. The tremors last as long as you stamp.

The effects of *Beast-Channel* last for one scene.

### Advanced Abombwe

#### Taking the Skin

You can steal the form of any predator, provided you kill it yourself and drench your body in its blood.

First, you must kill what you would imitate. You may have assistance, but you must be the one to actually kill it. Secondly, you must drench yourself in its fresh blood. This act requires that at least one Blood Trait remain, so this power cannot accommodate tiny predators like bats, spectral creatures like ghosts or spirits, or creatures completely drained of blood. You can maintain the skin of one you have slain for as long as you wish, but once you have shed it for your own form, you cannot regain it.

While you exist in someone else's form, you gain any Physical Traits that creature had that you do not. For example: If you had *Brawny* x 3, *Brutal* and *Rugged* x 2 and your victim had *Brawny*, *Brutal*, *Resilient* and *Rugged* x 3, you would have *Brawny* x 3, *Brutal*, *Resilient* and *Rugged* x 3 while you wore your victim's form. Moreover, exchange any *Gorgeous*, *Bestial* and *Repugnant* Traits for those your victim had. You keep the creature's shape and size, physical characteristics and appearance.

Although you can use this power against Lupines, Cainites and other supernatural creatures, it does not grant you any magical powers, shapechanging abilities, Disciplines or knowledge they had. You also gain any benefits of the creature whose skin you wear, such as wings, claws and non-magical senses.

## Elder Abombwe

### Predator's Mastery

Your command of your Beast enables you to extend dominion over the Beasts of others, forcing them to submit to you, much as wild animals submit to a stronger creature. This power only works on creatures with a notable Beast, as listed in *Predator's Communion*.

Engage your opponent in a Social Challenge. Mortals and ghouls must bid an additional Trait or relent. If you use this power against a creature of greater power (Storyteller's discretion), you must bid an additional Trait. Should you win, the target must obey your commands. There is no amity or loyalty in this — your subject is simply cowed into doing as you command. Similarly, this power grants no special communicative powers. Your target must be able to understand your commands either through shared language or obvious gestures. This command lasts as long as you keep your attention directly on your subject and do not let her out of your sight. Should the subject feel she has an opportunity to escape or attack you safely, she will likely do so.

# Animalism

Cainites are removed from God's decreed order of creation. With *Animalism*, the dominion granted by God to man is perverted into mastery based upon the kinship between the beasts and the Beast. Indeed those Cainites who call this Discipline theirs are renowned for abandoning civilization in favor of inhuman behavior. Perhaps, some scholars proffer, the humors favored by *Animalism* are antithetical to social propriety, and routine use removes the vampire even further from humanity.

Storytellers might wish to keep cards detailing the Traits of animals common to the story's setting. Use *Animal Ken* for retests with *Animalism*.

## Basic Animalism

### Feral Speech

By meeting an animal's gaze, you can communicate with it in whines, hisses and growls. Animals' capacity for observation and reason is lacking, but if you are clever, you can accomplish much. Animals greeted in this fashion tend to be amicable and may follow simple commands.



You need no test to simply communicate with an animal, but convincing an animal to follow your command requires a Social Challenge. Most animals react as if they have from six to eight Traits for the purpose of this challenge, but some, such as trained warhorses, can function as if they have as many as 12. Remember that animals are simple and ill suited for executing complex commands, but they are quite adept at less complex tasks.

### Noah's Call

With this ability, you can cry out, summoning a particular form of beast to your side. You must have spoken with that kind of animal at least once using *Feral Speech* so you have an idea of how to issue the call. You may be as specific as you want in your summons, addressing, for example, all dogs that can hear you, only wolfhounds, or even the reeve's favorite terrier. Summoned animals are at least favorably disposed toward you, but they are not under your thrall, unless you employ other *Animalism* powers upon them once they arrive.

Spend one Social Trait per animal summoned. Only animals that can actually hear your call will come, and they might take some time to arrive. Once they are present, they will stay until they feel threatened or the scene ends.

## Intermediate Animalism

### Cowing the Beast

The Beast within each Cainite overshadows the rage felt by the most furious natural creature. By revealing this rage, you can send others fleeing in terror. Another, more secret, technique allows you to drive away the rage of another creature, bringing to it a preternatural calm. This technique can be learned over a week's teaching, provided you have a tutor who has already learned it.

You must touch your target (with a successful Physical Challenge if he is unwilling) or meet his eyes, then make a Social Challenge. If you win, the target gains the Negative Trait *Submissive* x 2 and may not expend Willpower Traits for the rest of the night. Additionally, unless you have learned the pacifying technique, the target will attempt to flee for the duration of the scene. Multiple uses will not increase the number of *Submissive* Traits beyond two.

You must spend a Willpower Trait first if you wish to use this ability on another vampire. If you succeed, you may affect him as normal. If you know the pacifying technique, you can use *Cowing the Beast* to draw another Cainite out of frenzy. If you use it in this manner, the target does not suffer the negative effects.

### Ride the Wild Mind

You can possess an animal, directing its movements and perceiving what it perceives while your own body lies still. You must lock eyes with the animal and expend one or more Social Traits. The number of Traits you expend determines the degree of your connection to the animal. This connection affects the supernatural power you can use while controlling the animal.

You can will the animal body you occupy to do anything it would normally be able to do. You cannot augment its physical abilities with *Celerity*, *Fortitude* or *Potence*, nor can you speak. You may travel as far and long as you wish within the animal. Daylight no longer hinders you, though you must still fight to stay awake.

Should the animal you inhabit die, your soul returns to your body and you enter torpor. If you wish to return to your own body, you must declare your intent at the beginning of a turn. During that turn, you can still act as normal within the animal; at the end of that turn, you return to your own body, regardless of distance.

| | |
|---|---|
| One Trait | Simple Possession |
| Two Traits | Can use *Auspex* |
| Three Traits | Can also use *Animalism* and *Presence* |
| Four Traits | Can also use *Dementation* and *Dominate* |
| Five Traits | Can also use *Chimerstry*, *Mortis* and *Thaumaturgy* |

When your mind moves into the animal, you lose track of your own body. Any wounds you take as an animal are sympathetically reflected on your own body. If you are wounded during the turn you return to your body, you must make a Simple Test. If you fail, you enter frenzy upon returning to your body. Regardless, some of your animalistic behaviors return with you from the body. Specifically, you suffer one *Feral* Negative Trait for each Social Trait spent on possessing the animal. These *Feral* Traits can be bought off by expending Willpower on a one-per-one basis. While these Traits are in effect, you must roleplay behavior similar to that of the animal you were riding when you gained them.

If your body dies while you are riding an animal, you may stay in the animal's body so long as you win or tie a Simple Test each day at sunrise. When you lose the test, your soul is lost.

## Advanced Animalism

### Drawing Out the Beast

You can draw out your Beast and plant it in others, driving them to frenzy. You must be about to frenzy to employ this ability. Rather than performing a Virtue Test to resist frenzy, you can make a Social Challenge against any person you can see. This challenge does not cost an action; if you win, the victim suffers your frenzy. The target might also demonstrate some of your mannerisms, leading sharp observers to guess what happened.

The victim must work through your frenzy. You cannot frenzy while this power is in effect, but if the victim dies before the power is concluded, your Beast returns to you and you risk frenzy once again.

If the victim leaves your sight while under the effect of this power, you lose your Beast. You cannot spend Willpower Traits, and you gain the Negative Trait *Submissive* x 2 until you locate the victim and lure the Beast back by behaving monstrously. If the victim dies, your Beast returns to you.

## Elder Animalism

### Quell the Herd

The power of your Beast is such that entire gatherings of mortals can be driven away in terror or cowed into submission. Although this ability matches the effects of *Cowing the Beast*, it operates on groups of mortals. You must be able to see the people involved to affect them, but you do not need to lock eyes. You must spend one Social Trait per target you wish to affect. Each target must immediately flee. Additionally, each is prohibited from using Willpower Traits and receives the Negative Traits *Submissive* x 2 for the rest of the night. This ability does not work on vampires.

## Auspex

By their very nature, Cainites possess uncanny senses. Certain Cainites have learned to develop these senses well beyond even the basic level of acuity. Though this Discipline is of obvious use, the pious argue that it encourages Cainites to dwell upon minutiae and the sensual world rather than focusing on God's plan as it unfolds around them.

*Auspex* can sometimes pierce supernatural illusions such as those generated by *Chimerstry* and *Obfuscate*. If a vampire has *Auspex* active, he may enter a Mental Challenge with the creator of the illusions. Cainites may add the number of levels they have in the appropriate Disciplines — one for Basic, two for Intermediate, three for Advanced and four for Elder — to this test for the purposes of overbids and ties.

Use *Investigation* for retests of *Auspex*.

## Basic Auspex

### Heightened Senses

You can improve any and all of your senses. Your range of sight and hearing doubles, and your other senses become remarkably acute. You can use your senses to perceive things ordinary folks cannot, as adjudicated by a Narrator. As a side effect, any sudden assault on your senses, such as a loud noise or strong odor, will numb the affected senses for the remainder of the scene and leave you stunned for a turn unless you expend a Willpower Trait. Additionally, you may receive visions of future or past events, but these are completely beyond your control.

### Soulsight

With concentration and focus, you can discern the halo that surrounds all creatures and gain insight into the state of their soul and emotions. This ability may also be used to perceive ghosts and other spiritual creatures.

You must look at your target and perform a Static Mental Challenge whose difficulty is the target's Mental Traits. If you succeed, you may ask the target any one of the following questions: "What manner of creature are you (mortal, vampire, ghoul, werewolf, etc.)?" "Are you affected by any sort of magic?" "Have you committed diablerie recently?" "What is your current emotional state?" "Was your last utterance a lie?" The target of this power must answer truthfully.

If you suspect that there may be ghosts or spirits in the area, you may expend a Mental Trait and perform a Mental Challenge. On a win or tie, you will see the ghosts as pale, indistinct auras — enough to follow, but not enough to identify a specific ghost.

## Intermediate Auspex

### The Spirit's Touch

If you are in physical contact with an object or location, you can perceive thoughts and emotions tied to it. You must maintain contact and concentration

for a turn and expend a Mental Trait. You may then ask a Narrator one of the following questions: "Who last touched this object?" "Has this object been involved in any stressful situations (such as murder, torture, passionate love, etc.)?" "What strong emotions drove the subject who used this object?" The Narrator will generally answer with descriptive images and phrases rather than offering simple information. This power may be used repeatedly to gain greater insight into the situation surrounding the object or place.

The Storyteller may decide that using this power on something that has particularly powerful emotional resonance, such as a stone table used for several human sacrifices, may force a derangement upon the Cainite using *The Spirit's Touch* for the remainder of the scene.

### Steal Secrets

You are capable of peering into the mind of other beings and listening to their private thoughts, or even delve into the secrets of their souls. Additionally, you may pronounce your thoughts in another's mind unheard by any others who may be nearby. You may use *Steal Secrets* upon only one person at a time, but any number may use it on you.

In order to spy upon a person's thoughts, you must be able to see her and initiate a Mental Challenge. If your target is a supernatural creature, you must expend a Mental Trait before the challenge; you need not do so for a mortal. If you succeed, or if the target relents, you can either send a brief mental message, relayed through a Narrator, or ask the target a question that she must answer truthfully. This question can be any of the questions included in *Soulsight*, or one of the following: "What is the name of that about which you are speaking?" "What is the appearance of that about which you are speaking?" "What element have you omitted from your answer to a certain question?" "What is the true answer to the question you just lied in answering?" "What memories do you have concerning a certain currently discussed topic?" If the target is unwilling, a Mental Challenge must accompany each question. If you are simply exchanging information, you need not expend any further effort.

If you have established a link with the target, you may expend a Mental Trait to peer more deeply into your target's mind. If you succeed, the target must truthfully answer one of the following questions: "What is one of your Flaws or Negative Traits?" "What is one of your derangements?" Each of these questions requires the expenditure of another Mental Trait and success at a Static Mental Challenge against the target's Mental Traits — the target cannot relent against this sort of intrusion. This level of examination may also reveal artificial thoughts, feelings and memories, such as those left by *Dementation* and *Dominate* if the Storyteller feels that such would be revealed.

## Advanced Auspex

### Anima Walk

You can free your mind and walk the world in spirit, connected to your body only by a silver cord. Unhampered by walls and the forces of nature, you may roam unseen, exploring all that lies beneath the moon.

Expend a Willpower Trait and leave your body behind in a torpid, state. Your spirit remains attached via a silver cord. Though you are unaware of your body, unless you stay where it is, you can move your senses anywhere at the speed of thought, even enhancing them with your other *Auspex* powers. You may stay in astral form as long as you desire and even travel to distant lands where sunlight shines, but will still pass into slumber when the sun shines where your body rests.

Certain powers, such as *Soulsight* may detect your presence, but you are otherwise intangible to the regular world. You may manifest as an idealized image of yourself by expending a Willpower Trait. While so manifested, you may use your Mental or Social Disciplines at the cost of an additional Mental Trait, but you are still invulnerable to conventional forms of damage — though your physical body has no such protection.

You may encounter and interact with other astral presences, in which case Mental and Social interaction is handled normally. If you wish to attack another astral presence, severing his silver cord, you must make a Mental Challenge with damage deducting from his Willpower Traits. An astral presence whose silver cord is severed will drift in the astral realm, possibly into stranger realms unless he manages to discover a way to reunite with his body.

The realms traveled by astral presences is not the same as the spirit-world of the werewolves or the Shadowlands of ghosts, though it is rumored that there are means to reach those places.

## Elder Auspex

### Farsight

You can project your senses to any place you have ever visited or any person you have ever met. Although *Farsight* does not have the freedom of *Anima Walk*, you stay aware of your body and its environment, so it is not as hazardous, either. Many Cainites prefer to use a scrying implement of some sort, but it is not necessary.

You must win a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty six Traits — nine Traits if you have only encountered your target through *Anima Walk*). If you succeed, you can perceive both your target and your current location. You may also bring any other *Auspex* powers to bear upon the location of your scrying. Only other Cainites with *Farsight* stand a chance of realizing they are being spied on in this fashion, and even then, they must succeed in a Static Mental Challenge against your Willpower.

Cainites who use a crystal ball or other scrying implement are two Traits up on any Mental Challenges that occur while using *Farsight*.

## Celerity

*Celerity*, one of the core physical Disciplines, allows those Cainites who have learned its secrets to move and react with amazing speed. Even those outside the clans that favor *Celerity* can learn it with little difficulty, suggesting that it is in some way natural — if such a word can be used — to Cainite existence. Scholars propose that *Celerity*'s curse derives from its focusing the Cainite on the role of predator, for it enables great feats of hunting and slaying, while engendering the hunger that makes such behavior necessary.

The use of *Celerity* at levels greater than *Alacrity* is immediately recognizable as inhuman, and it also renders the use of Social and Mental Disciplines useless as the effects transpire too quickly to be effectively processed.

Characters who are surprised cannot use *Celerity* on the first challenge. They must rely on their normal resources until they have had a chance to overcome their surprise.

Each use of *Celerity* lasts one turn. Although each level of *Celerity* costs one Blood Trait per turn, no vampire is required to use her strongest level in any given turn. In cases where more than one Cainite with *Celerity* are attempting to benefit from the same aspect of *Celerity* (such as *Alacrity*'s preempt ability), the vampire with the higher rating in *Celerity* acts first.

No Ability allows *Celerity* retests, but actions performed under the influence of *Celerity* may be retested as usual.

## Basic Celerity

### Alacrity

Your reflexes are so well developed that you can respond to another's actions even as he begins to move. With the expenditure of a Blood Trait, you can preempt any physical actions you are aware of that take place in a turn. Should a yeoman abruptly switch from parlaying with you to attempting to impale you with his spear, you may choose to attack him first. Should the same yeoman attempt to shoot you with his longbow with no warning, this ability will aid you not at all.

### Swiftness

You can move with speed greater than that of any mortal. With the expenditure of a Blood Trait, in addition to the benefits of *Alacrity*, you are allowed an additional physical action that takes place after all other actions are completed.

## Intermediate Celerity

### Rapidity

Your speed bewilders even other supernaturally fast creatures. With the expenditure of a Blood Trait, in addition to the benefits of *Swiftness*, you may use the Bomb in challenges that depend on speed or agility, but not on strength. You must warn your opponent that you can use the Bomb, and how it works before the challenge. You may — but are not required to — use the Bomb in any challenges throughout the turn.

### Legerity

You move faster than the eyes of mortals can follow. With the expenditure of a Blood Trait, in addition to the benefits of *Rapidity*, you can take a third action, which takes place after all actions of vampires using *Swiftness*.

## Advanced Celerity

### Fleetness

You are like the wind — and often, the wind your passing stirs is all that is detected of you. With the expenditure of a Blood Trait, in addition to the benefits of *Legerity*, you automatically win all ties involving your speed or agility, regardless of your relative Traits. Should you use this against a Cainite using a Discipline with a similar effect (such as *Potence's Puissance*), neither vampire has the advantage and ties are resolved as normal.

## Elder Celerity

### Quickness

Troubadours have claimed that you outpace lightning. With the expenditure of a Blood Trait, in addition to the benefits of *Fleetness*, you can take a fourth action, which takes place after the actions of all vampires using *Legerity*.

# Chimerstry

Only the Ravnos claim a native talent with *Chimerstry*, the Discipline of illusions, and its fabled origins are as sacrilegious as its users. Some claim that the clan founder stole the Devil's flair for deceit, while others whisper that he gained it by drinking the blood of a faerie. Since these fables originate with the Ravnos, few lend them any credence. Devout philosophers claim that *Chimerstry* leads Cainites further astray by entrapping them in their own illusions.

*Chimerstry* can add to something's appearance but not subtract from it. It can lay an illusion over certain features but not make it unnoticeable — such is the provenance of *Obfuscate*. Additionally, even tactile illusions cannot support weight or provide more than the sensation of resistance, so illusory bars over a dungeon window could feel solidly real, but one who threw herself at them would pass through.

Illusions created with *Chimerstry* are real to the fae, and even a longsword created with *Ignis Fatuus* that would not be felt by an ordinary mortal can cause injure faerie creatures.

Players might wish to work with Storytellers in advance to prepare item cards for the subjects of their illusions. Use *Subterfuge* for retests of *Chimerstry*.

## Basic Chimerstry

### Ignis Fatuus

You can create a brief, unmoving image that affects a single sense. You could make a person smell roses, feel the touch of a breeze, hear the sound of rats scurrying or see a coffer of jewels. These illusions lack substance, and cannot in and of themselves harm someone. If it is visible, you, and you alone, can pick up and move the illusion. Others merely pass through it, and it has no movement of its own. Expend a Willpower Trait and engage your targets in a Social Challenge. If you win, your illusion exists as you describe it until you dismiss it (which is instantaneous and requires no action on your part), you leave the area or the illusion is disproved (by having a hand pass through it, for example).

### Dweomer

You can craft illusions that affect all the senses you desire, however, they are still illusions. An illusory dagger may look sharp and feel sharp if someone tests its edge, but its slash will not even crease flesh. These illusions do not move under

their own power, but others can handle them. The illusory dagger could be tossed to a friend, and it would move as any real dagger. Expend a Willpower Trait and a Blood Trait, and engage your targets in a Social Challenge. If you win, the illusion exists under the same conditions as a creation of *Ignis Fatuus*.

## Intermediate Chimerstry

### Apparition

You can give motion to illusions created with *Ignis Fatuus* or *Dweomer*. The motion may be simple as a tree bending in the wind or complex as a knight in armor charging with his broadsword ready. It is a boon if you are familiar with that which your illusion imitates, for witnesses who find the motion to be unrealistic are more likely to pierce the illusion.

After crafting an illusion through *Ignis Fatuus* or *Dweomer*, spend a Blood Trait to grant the illusion a movement. As long as you concentrate on the illusion, it will move as you direct it. Should your attention be needed elsewhere, you may set it to repeat a certain motion. Afterward, if you return your attention to the illusion, you may direct it to some new action with no additional effort.

If the Storyteller feels you would not be familiar with the motion you have granted your illusion — if you are trying to craft the illusion of a master swordsman without the benefit of any sword training yourself, for example — the Storyteller may allow knowledgeable witnesses to retest the initial Social Challenge using the appropriate Ability. Should you command an illusion to pass out of your presence, it will cease to exist, just as if you departed from it.

### Permanency

Your presence is no longer necessary to maintain your illusions. Once you have crafted an illusion, you may grant it *Permanency* by expending a Blood Trait. The illusion will persist until you dismiss it or someone pierces it as described above. Illusions can have both *Apparition* and *Permanency* added to them, but each costs a Blood Trait. *Permanency* works only on illusions created by *Chimerstry*.

## Advanced Chimerstry

### Horrid Reality

Your illusions are no longer limited to the senses; they can now affect a person's mind directly. Illusory shackles will actually restrain someone; illusory damage received from an illusory cudgel will cause the victim to believe he is wounded. Additionally, because the effects are under your control, you can craft arrows that never miss, stakes that worm their way into the victim's heart, Rötschreck-inducing flames that cannot be doused and other terrors.

*Horrid Reality* works on only one victim at a time; others in the area perceive nothing. Expend a Willpower Trait and engage your target in a Social Challenge. If you win, the illusion takes full effect upon your victim. Wounds received remain until the victim can be convinced that they were created by an illusion or he convinces himself that he has healed. Cainites "killed" by this power enter torpor; mortals are driven into a coma.



## Elder Chimerstry

### Mass Horror

You may extend the powers of *Horrid Reality* over small groups. Expend two Willpower Traits and select a number of victims up to your permanent Willpower total. These people experience a shared *Horrid Reality*. Unlike *Horrid Reality*, other witnesses can perceive the illusion, but only to the same extent as a moving *Dweomer*. *Mass Horror* lasts until you no longer concentrate on it, whether by choice or not.

## Daimoinon

The Baali learned this hideous Discipline from their nameless founder, and it is still practiced only by the most degenerate and reprehensible of Cainites as they set to corrupting mortal and Cainite alike to the service of their dark masters. Regardless of the actual power served — Satan, some outer presence, an avatar of decay or something else altogether — when a Baali expends a Willpower or Blood Trait in using *Daimoinon*, he experiences a repugnantly rapturous communion with his lord as he channels her power. Though there is an element of bliss in this reverie, it is never entirely pleasant, and the Cainite is always reminded that his power comes at the behest of his master.

Use *Occult* for retests of *Daimoinon*.

### Containing the Corruption

Though there are many mature themes in **MET**, those who work with *Daimoinon* need to stay even more cognizant of two of the most important rules of the game: *It is only a game* and *Be mindful of others*.

## Basic Daimoinon

### Sense the Sin

Through careful scrutiny, you can discern the weaknesses, foibles and fatal flaws that all worldly creatures have. Although this power does not require eye contact, you must gaze fixedly at your victim. Doing so may be viewed as suspicious or even offensive by the target or observers, even if they do not know of your powers.

To use this power, you must stare intently at your target for three turns, state the number of Traits you are willing to bid and engage your victim in a Mental Challenge. The risk of one Trait may reveal low Willpower, Virtues or perhaps a Negative Trait. Two Mental Traits may reveal a dangerous secret or perhaps some undetected crime the victim committed. Bidding three Mental Traits may reveal derangements, secret diablerie or other heinous sins the victim has managed to conceal.

The information gained is determined by the Storyteller, and should be presented in metaphorical terms, such as, "Justine rarely stands her ground when challenged," rather than simply stating "Justine has two Willpower Traits."

### Fear of the Void

You can evoke primordial fears that rest within all beings, be they mortal, undead or supernatural, fanning the instinctive terror of the unknown. You must speak to use this power, but you need not use words known to your victims. *Fear of the Void* transcends the comprehensible. In order to tailor your power, you must study your victim in advance. You may use this power against as many people as you want so long as you have prepared for them using *Sense the Sin*.

You must successfully use *Sense the Sin* earlier in the same scene on any person you wish to use this power on. You then speak in low syllables and engage all you wish in a mass Social Challenge. For each Trait after the first one bid in *Sense the Sin* earlier in this scene, the victim must bid an additional Trait.

Anyone who loses this challenge must bid one additional Trait per Trait bid in *Sense the Sin* on all challenges for the remainder of the scene.

## Intermediate Daimoinon

### Essence of the Netherworld

You can reach beyond what is and grasp the energies of the outer darkness to unleash upon Creation. These energies erode wood and stone, twist metal beyond recognition and melt flesh, living or undead. Although these energies usually manifest as an ebon flame, certain Baali hurl strange lightning, pulses of shimmering force, swarms of alien insects or other terrible forms of destruction. The servants of each master usually manifest only one form of power.

Begin crafting a mystic projectile in your hands. Each turn, you can expend one Blood Trait add power to the missile so that it inflicts one level of aggravated damage. Since this power comes from beyond, you can only increase it at a rate of one Blood Trait/ one level of aggravated damage per turn regardless of your generation. Releasing the missile is a standard ranged attack that can be dodged as usual. Armor and inanimate objects without any mystical power are easily destroyed by *Essence of the Netherworld*, and they provide only half their usual protection.

Cainites encountering this power for the first time rarely know enough to experience Rötschreck, but once they have suffered damage from a form of this power, they always risk Rötschreck when the same form is used on them in the future.

Should you be distracted or suffer wounds while building this missile, you must win a Simple Test or the missile explodes in your hands, inflicting its damage upon you.

### Psychomachia

This power draws its inspiration from the writings of Prudentius and other popular theologians who regularly discourse about personifications of virtues, vices and other religious forces and the battles they engage in. You are capable of crystallizing your victim's sins into an allegorical opponent that only he can perceive, and thus drawing him into a morality play all his own.

In order to use this power on someone, you must have successfully used *Sense the Sin* against him earlier in the scene. Then, after a full turn of concentration and the expenditure of a Willpower Trait, you must best your victim in a Mental Challenge. If you win, your victim immediately encounters an allegorical figure of his greatest vice — pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust are the most popular, but certainly not the only ones. This nemesis is played by a Narrator and takes the form of a significant person from the victim's past and is constructed of the same number of Traits as the victim minus one Trait for each Road Trait the victim possesses. No one other than the victim can perceive or affect this allegorical opponent, but the opponent can perceive the actions of the affected victim. Unfortunately, the nemesis is quite real to the victim, and it can injure him. Worse, while under the effects of *Psychomachia*, any derangements the victim may have automatically manifest.

The victim must defeat this opponent, either through arms or reasoning. This is not easy, for the nemesis is spawned from the victim's sins and knows all of his usual tactics. Should the victim attempt to act against the vampire who used *Psychomachia* upon him, the opponent immediately attacks. This power lasts until the opponent is defeated, the Cainite using the power cancels it or loses consciousness, or the victim is defeated. When *Psychomachia* ends, all damage fades away — if the victim was "slain," he is merely unconscious or in torpor. If the victim was defeated by this nemesis, he may be on his way to developing a new derangement at the Storyteller's discretion, but a single defeat should not be the sole cause of this development.

## Advanced Daimoinon

### Curse

*Curse* is perhaps the quintessential manifestation of the power of the Children of Ba'al. You have earned access to this power — no ritual or sacrifice is necessary. The nature of the curse depends solely upon your twisted imagination and the amount of effort you are willing to invest into it.

To curse someone, you need only speak the terms of the curse, best your victim in a Mental Challenge, and expend the Mental Traits to empower it. A simple curse, which lasts for a single scene and grants a single Negative Trait of your choice, costs no Mental Traits. For each Mental Trait spent, you can increase the duration by two sessions or increase the potency of the curse. Each Mental Trait that adds to the power can add another Negative Trait or one point of Flaw.

**Example:** *The Baali Devorah has decided that Garrik the Mapmaker's blindness to the power of her Lord is offensive, so she says, "If your eyes deny the truth, let them serve no other purpose!" Upon winning the challenge, she expends six Mental Traits to inflict the six-Trait Flaw* Blind *upon him, and two more Mental Traits so the curse lasts for four full sessions. Feeling a bit drained, Devorah retires to her abattoir while Garrik attempts to feel his way to safety.*

Those who know *Dominate* or *Vicissitude* may attempt to undo the effects of certain curses, but they can only succeed if they know the appropriate Discipline to the same level that the Baali knows *Daimoinon*. Finally, those who use curses too liberally or ineptly often find the dark power bending back and tormenting them, a detail Storytellers may want to keep in mind.

## Elder Daimoinon

### Hell-Born Investiture

You have improved upon the Curse of Caine by surrendering yourself to one of the Lords Beyond. In turn, your Lord has remade you in a form more pleasing to itself, twisting your form and granting you new powers. Those who have received

these investitures are often mistaken for demons, but those knowledgeable scholars who survive witnessing them know that they are something far worse.

Each investiture received requires that you also take two Negative Social Traits to represent the horror that you have become, and you should explicitly describe the physical appearance the investiture inflicts. No investiture can protect a Cainite from the power of the sun or assuage the need for blood. You may purchase this power multiple times, but also acquire additional Negative Social Traits.

### Sample Investitures

**Ignore the Searing Flames:** Easily the most popular of the investitures, *Ignore the Searing Flames* provides complete immunity to fire of any magnitude, and to the fear that it evokes. It does not protect from *Essence of the Netherworld*.

**Demonic Form:** You gain great batlike wings and your finger- and toenails erupt into venom-encrusted talons. This investiture grants you the equivalent of the Gargoyle power *Fly* (see p. 218), and you inflict two additional levels of lethal damage in unarmed attacks.

**Blood Hive:** You contain three swarms of vile insects that constantly fly about you, crawl about under your skin and enter and exit through your orifices. You can vomit forth one swarm per turn. The swarm cannot be harmed by physical means, but it can be driven away by strong winds or burned by fire. Each swarm can absorb three levels of lethal damage, and it takes three Blood Traits to reform. If you command a swarm to attack someone, it drains one Blood Trait per turn and can carry up to five Blood Traits back to you. It takes one turn to re-ingest a laden swarm, during which you can take no other actions.

**Tentacled Grasp:** You now possess powerful, sucker-laden tentacles, possibly two large ones where you used to have arms, possibly numerous smaller ones sprouting from your face, possibly some other hideous arrangement. You have three bonus Traits for use in any grappling- or climbing-related challenge, and can make one additional hand-to-"hand" attack per turn with no penalty.

## Dementation

Nowhere is the accursed nature of the Disciplines more plainly evident than in *Dementation*. Unlike other clans, Malkavians seem quite pleased to teach *Dementation* to others — at least to the extent that the Malkavians can agree on anything. There is a price, however. One cannot use *Dementation* without already being touched by madness. Any Cainite who was sane when he began studying the secrets of *Dementation* will have a derangement before he masters even the simplest power.

Use *Empathy* for retests of *Dementation*.



## Basic Dementation

### Incubus Passion

You can fan the flame of another's emotion, or you can douse the flames and leave her listless. If you win a Social Challenge against your victim, you can either augment or dampen her emotions. If you augment them, she gains the Negative Trait *Impatient* and has the difficulty of any frenzy or *Self-Control/ Instinct* Challenges increased by one Trait. If you dampen them, she gains the Negative Trait *Submissive* and has the difficulty of any frenzy or *Self-Control/ Instinct* Challenges decreased by one Trait. The victim should roleplay the Trait for the remainder of the scene. This power betrays no clue as to its instigator, but vampires familiar with Malkavians often become suspicious if someone's moods suddenly become more or less pronounced.

### Haunt the Soul

You can inflict distracting visions that hover at the edge of your victim's perception. You cannot choose the content of these images — they are drawn from the recesses of the victim's mind — but you can limit them to certain senses if you wish.

Expend a Blood Trait and engage your victim in a Social Challenge. If you win, your victim is afflicted with fleeting images spawned from her subconscious. For the rest of the night, the victim suffers from, and must roleplay, the derangement *Schizophrenia*.

## Intermediate Dementation

### Eyes of Chaos

You can see behind the façade of God's divine plan to the fractured, insane truth that hides behind it. *Eyes of Chaos* allow you to stretch your mind around what your conventional senses show you and assemble portents and understandings of events that no sane mind could. This ability also allows you to rip aside the false face people present to see who they really are inside.

There are two different uses for *Eyes of Chaos*. First, expenditure of a Mental Trait and a turn of concentration allow you to make a Mental Challenge. If you win, you can ask the Storyteller to predict the general result of a specific course of action for the scene. Secondly, after watching a person's actions for a full turn, you may engage him in a Mental Challenge. If you win, he must tell you his Nature.

If you lose any challenge while using *Eyes of Chaos*, you become entranced by the interplay of event and pattern, effectively suffering from the Toreador Clan Disadvantage for the rest of the scene.

### Silence the Sane Mind

By speaking, you are capable of drawing forth the inner demons of listeners' minds such that they temporarily submerge their sanity. Perhaps you recount forbidden scriptures, perhaps you prattle like a demon child, perhaps you have other revelations to offer, regardless, you can choose to affect any and all who can hear you. Expend a Blood Trait and speak to your victims for a full turn. You may then make a Social Challenge against any who can hear you. Mortals flee in terror, as if in the throes of Rötschreck. Supernatural creatures must make Static *Self-*

*Control/ Instinct* Tests (difficulty four Traits). Those who fail flee in terror and must also test for Rötschreck. Unless suppressed by Willpower or other calming powers, the effects of this power last a turn. Mortals remember nothing of this time.

## Advanced Dementation

### Howling Lunacy

You can bestow a panoply of delusions and dementia upon your victim. You have no control over the form of this madness, but you may rest assured that it will entertain. You must hold your victim's total attention for an entire turn, in whatever manner you feel is most conducive to insanity. Then you must expend a Blood Trait and enter a Social Challenge with your victim. If you win, the victim gains five derangements, chosen by the Storyteller. The derangements start out subtly, but they quickly build and remain in full force for the rest of the evening. *Howling Lunacy* may not be repeated in the same evening to grant the victim even more derangements.

## Elder Dementation

### Kiss of the Moon

Madness is the ultimate gift of *Dementation*, and with *Kiss of the Moon*, you can lead another away from the clutches of sanity permanently. This is one of the most feared powers of the Malkavians, for it twists the essence of its victim. It is also rumored that those who have learned this power can undo what they have done, but few Malkavians of this standing have any reason to do such a thing.

Converse with your victim for a turn, then expend a Willpower Trait and enter a Social Challenge with him. If you win, you may choose a derangement for your victim. This derangement is now a part of the victim's mind and will afflict him for the rest of his existence. As part of the cruel irony of *Dementation*, derangements granted by *Kiss of the Moon* do not allow a Cainite to learn *Dementation*; he must derive at least some of his madness from some other source.

Whether *Kiss of the Moon* can be used to remove the derangements it bestows is up to the Storyteller, but she is well within her rights to require a sufficiently mad reason for removing another's insanity.

# Dominate

Those who follow the Road of Kings claim, contrary to the Bible, that humanity was never intended to lord over Creation, that Cainites are the rightful rulers. If this is correct, then there can be no more fitting Discipline than *Dominate*. In addition to looking askance at the second-guessing of Scripture, theologians posit that *Dominate* subtly furthers the Curse of Caine by replacing the bonds of affection with simple control.

Unless otherwise noted, *Dominate* powers require eye contact and that the target can hear and understand the words of the vampire issuing the commands. If the target refuses to meet the Cainite's gaze, this power does not work. Commands can be issued by *Steal Secrets*, but eye contact is still required.

Cainites are immune to *Dominate*, when used upon them by vampires of higher generation.

Use *Intimidation* for retests of *Dominate*. The target may expend a Willpower Trait to attempt a single retest per challenge.

## Basic Dominate

### Observance of the Spoken Word

You can issue simple commands that demand obedience. You must focus your command into a single word, but that word can be embedded in an otherwise innocuous sentence if you so desire. The command word must be simple and easily understood, and if it is concealed within ordinary discussion, it must be stressed so that the target player knows what is happening. You must then best your target in a Mental Challenge. If you win, the target must carry out the command to the best of his abilities. Commands such as "Flee," "Stop," "Silence" and "Follow" are viable. The command cannot blatantly result in the injury of the target. Commands that involve a continuing action last 10 minutes.

### Murmur of the False Will

You can implant an order in the mind of another. It may be a direct command, instructions for an eventuality or even an idea that will color her behavior, but the target will act on it to the best of her ability. Though the command can be as precise and convoluted as you wish, its execution is dependent upon the comprehension of the target, so simplicity and clarity are important.

You must win a Mental Challenge against your target. You can then instruct her with any command, or even implant an idea. The command may be worded such that it takes place immediately ("Bring me the count's horse."), it can be set to occur on cue ("When the seneschal arrives, smile at his wife."), or it can be an idea that will rest in the subconscious ("English sailors are all liars."). If the command is immediately hazardous to the target, he need not obey it. Unless some subterfuge or additional powers are used, the target will remember the placement of the order. Finally, a person can hold only one *Murmur of the False Will* at a time. If he is given new instructions before he completes the first command, the first command is erased.

## Intermediate Dominate

### Reveler's Memory

You have the ability to devour and even reweave others' memories; you can also detect the signs of someone else having altered your target's memories. Additionally, you can prompt your target to relive her memories, telling them to you.

To edit or erase someone's memories, you must win a Mental Challenge against her. This success allows you to affect 15 minutes of memories. Erasing the memories can be done in a turn. Rewriting them takes time — the same time required to relate what the new memories are to the player. If you need to affect a larger segment of memory, you must use *Reveler's Memory* again. A Cainite using this power may attempt to detect, alter and even reverse prior manipulation of the target's memory by another. Doing so requires a Mental Challenge against the number of Mental Traits the vampire who initially worked with used *Reveler's Memory* possessed at the time he did the work. For this reason, it is important for

the Storyteller to note uses of this power and the number of Mental Traits future Cainites may have to beat. You may not use this power on yourself.

To force another to relive her memories and relate them to you, you must win a Mental Challenge and prompt her with gentle questions. As long as you maintain eye contact and the target is not threatened, you can keep drawing out memories.

### Lure of Subtle Whispers

You can sculpt the minds of others, stripping them of free will and crafting them into pliant servants. This power takes time — several full nights at the least — to fully mold a person. Each full night you spend working on your subject, you must win a Mental Challenge. If you manage to perform this hideous act over as many nights as your subject has *Self-Control/ Instinct* Traits (or Willpower Traits for beings that lack Virtue Traits), you have bent the subject to your will.

The subject lacks all creativity, drive or motivation. He cannot create artistic works, teach or expend Experience Traits. You need no longer engage in Mental Challenges to use *Dominate* powers upon the subject, nor do you need eye contact to command him. Other Cainites will have more difficulty using *Dominate* against him; he receives a free retest against any such attempts.

If the subject spends six full sessions without encountering his master (minus one session per Willpower Trait spent, to a minimum of one session), he can break free of the *Lure of Subtle Whispers* and return to his ordinary personality. Alternatively, another Cainite may use *Lure of Subtle Whispers* to try to break the first vampire's hold. This is harder than the initial conditioning since she needs the same number of successes, and the subject has the automatic retest.

## Advanced Dominate

### Vessel

You can force your soul into the body of a mortal, driving the native soul into dormancy while you do what you will. You must establish eye contact for this act, even if you have conditioned the vessel through *Lure of Subtle Whispers*, for the eyes are the gateway of the soul.

Expend a Willpower Trait and engage your subject in a Mental Challenge. If you win, you must expend one or more Mental Traits. The number of Traits you expend determines the degree of your connection to your subject and the supernatural powers you can use while controlling her.

| | |
|---|---|
| One Trait | Simple Possession |
| Two Traits | Can use *Auspex* |
| Three Traits | Can also use *Dominate* and *Presence* |
| Four Traits | Can also use *Chimerstry*, *Dementation* and *Animalism* |
| Five Traits | Can also use *Mortis* and *Thaumaturgy* |

You have complete control of the mortal body you occupy. It acts as you will, and you perceive what it perceives. You cannot augment its physical abilities with *Celerity*, *Fortitude* or *Potence*, nor can you speak. You may travel as far and long as you wish, and daylight no longer hinders you, though you must still fight to stay awake. The vessel is mortal, though should it die, your soul returns to your body and you enter torpor. If you wish to return to your own body, you must declare your intent at the beginning of a turn. During that turn, you can still act as normal as the mortal. At the end of that turn, you return to your own body, regardless of distance, and the mortal regains control of her body as if awakening from hideous nightmares.

While you are in possession of your subject's body, you lose track of your own body. Any wounds your vessel suffers are sympathetically reflected on your own body. If your real body dies while you possess a vessel, you may stay in the mortal's body as long as you continue to win or tie a Simple Test each day at sunrise. When you lose the test, your soul is lost.

Vessels cannot be Embraced — your own spirit blocks the transfer of the Curse. Instead, the body dies. Additionally, this power is ineffective against Cainites or other supernatural creatures.

## Elder Dominate

### Fealty

You can trust any oath voluntarily sworn to you, for this power guarantees that the giver will not break his word. Once someone has freely sworn an oath, vow of allegiance or similarly binding promise, gravely pronounce that you accept the oath, expend a Willpower Trait and engage your subject in a Mental Challenge. If you win, the subject automatically loses any challenges that would result in the breaking of that oath over the course of the next year. All who witness this exchange are aware that the oath is somehow supernaturally enforced.

This power only ensures that the word of the oath will be obeyed. The subject cannot work against the oath, but he may work against you or your interests in any fashion not covered by the oath.

Since the oath must be freely given, you cannot *Dominate* someone into swearing an oath to you.

# Fortitude

*Fortitude*, one of the core physical Disciplines, allows those Cainites who have learned its secrets to withstand incredible punishment, and even those outside the clans that call *Fortitude* their own have little trouble learning it. The scholarly suggest that *Fortitude's* curse derives from the arrogant overconfidence that swells those who have learned that they can shrug off the mightiest blows.

Use *Survival* for retests of *Fortitude*.

## Basic Fortitude

### Endurance

The blows of swords, arrows and even the sun may damage your body, but they no longer weaken it. You suffer no wound penalties for damage beyond the Bruised level, until you are driven to torpor or Final Death. No matter how injured you are, the worst penalty you receive is being one Trait down on tied challenges.

### Mettle

Wounds that would hinder others mean nothing to you. You gain an extra health level, which behaves as an extra Healthy line on your health level chart. This health level is lost and healed in the same manner as your others.

## Intermediate Fortitude

### Resilience

Fire and sunlight still burn you, but not with the hideous intensity with which they affect other Cainites. When you suffer aggravated damage, perform a Simple Test. If you win, one level of the damage taken is considered lethal rather than aggravated. If you wish, you may spend a Stamina-related Physical Trait before you make the test so that you win a tie.

Using *Resilience* is reflexive and does not count as an action. You may only use *Resilience* once for a given source of damage. If you suffer three levels of damage from a rake of the claws of a werewolf, only one level converts to lethal; the other two levels remain aggravated.

### Resistance

You can shrug off blows that would leave a mortal staggering. When you suffer lethal or bashing damage, make a Simple Test. If you win, you may remove one level of damage from that suffered. If you wish, you may spend a Stamina-related Physical Trait before you make the test so that you win on a tie.

Using *Resistance* is reflexive and does not count as an action. You may use *Resistance* on damage that was reduced to lethal from aggravated by *Resilience*. You may only use *Resistance* once for a given source of damage.

## Advanced Fortitude

### Aegis

Only the most persistent and destructive of forces can hope to vanquish you, for your body has the immutable power to resist any attack. At any point during a turn, even after you have been "killed," you may declare the use of *Aegis*. Expend either a permanent Willpower Trait or three permanent Physical Traits. Any damage you have taken in that turn is removed, and you do not take any damage for the rest of the turn. This power must be used before a new turn begins, for you cannot use it to undo previous damage.

The Traits spent to activate *Aegis* will not return at the end of the session, but they can be purchased again using Experience Traits.

## Elder Fortitude

### Imperviousness

The blows of swords and siege engines are almost as nothing to you. When you suffer lethal or bashing damage, make one Simple Test for each level of damage you have taken. If you win, you may ignore that level of damage. If you wish, you may spend a Stamina-related Physical Trait before you make the test so that you win on any ties.



Using *Imperviousness* is reflexive and does not count as an action. You may use *Imperviousness* on damage that was reduced to lethal from aggravated by *Resilience*.

# Mortis

Clan Cappadocian keeps a jealous guard on *Mortis*, and the secrets that that Discipline has unlocked. Lore within the clan suggests that the paths of *Mortis* were codified and handed down by Cappadocius himself. The scholarship from which *Mortis* derives teaches that upon death, the soul departs the body and goes to its reward, but that something remains behind. This mysterious something — a rotting body and the spiritual echo that lies within — is the primary focus of *Mortis*.

Those who practice *Mortis* — be they Cappadocian or one of the rare others who has managed to ferret out some of their lore — tend to develop an unnatural preoccupation with the states of death and undeath. These ponderings have led more than one Cappadocian into a state of contemplative despair and no few practitioners to suicide.

There are three established paths of *Mortis*, but there are rumored to be others. The Lamia bloodline possesses its own special lore (a path that the Gorgons keep even more secret), and it is also rumored that the elders have begun Embracing Venetian sorcerers who perform a form of magic they call *nigrimancy*, which allows them to summon and command the souls of those who have died.

A practitioner of *Mortis* may begin with any of the three common paths as her primary path.

## The Grave's Decay

This path stems from the observation of the effects of time upon all things mortal. Wood rots. Stone buildings crumble into ruin. Corpses decay to gruel, then to dust, then to nothing. Everything in the world is subject to the ravages of time save Cainites, and this path teaches how to channel that force.

Use *Medicine* for retests of *Grave's Decay*.

### Basic Grave's Decay

**Destroy the Husk**

You can reduce a dead body into no more than a pile of dust. Expend one Blood Trait, dripping it onto the corpse. Over the next five minutes, the corpse dissolves into a human-shaped pile of roughly 30 pounds of dust. Certain magics, including *The Spirit's Touch* may allow another to determine the origin of the remaining dust, but no mortal agency can do so.

**Rigor Mortis**

Your understanding of the processes the corpse undergoes allows you to freeze the muscles of another being in the same deathly paralysis. You must be able to see your target to use this power. Expend a Willpower Trait and engage your target in a Mental Challenge. Success paralyzes your target for three turns as if he had been staked through the heart.

After the three turns are over, the target can perform a Simple Test at the beginning of each turn. If he succeeds, he is free of the paralysis. The target may also attempt to free

himself on a turn through sheer force of will. To do so, he must expend a Willpower Trait and make a Simple Test. With success, he can move on that turn, although he is still held by this power and will be immobile again on the next turn. If he loses, he takes a single level of bashing damage from the strain on his muscles, and still cannot move.

### Intermediate Grave's Decay

**Wither**

You can cause the force of age to afflict a portion of your target's body. Limbs become shriveled and feeble; the face becomes ravaged by time; the eyes or ears lose sensitivity, or even fail altogether.

Spend a Willpower Trait and touch the part of the body you wish withered (you may need to win a Physical Challenge first). The target receives two aggravated wound levels, and whatever was touched is crippled and useless until both aggravated levels have healed. For mortals, this crippling damage is permanent. Each use of *Wither* can affect any single limb or sensory organ (it would take two uses to completely blind or deafen someone). Targets may be considered two Traits down in any challenges that would call for the appropriate limb or sense. Additionally, players should roleplay these infirmities.

This power cannot be used to wither vital organs, as these are too far inside the body.

**Corrupt the Undead Flesh**

You are capable of infecting a victim with a contagious mystical disease that merges the states of life, death and undeath. Those who suffer from the disease experience a wide range of symptoms, including lethargy, weakness, dizziness, loss of blood control and loss of coordination. Although mortals can contract this disease merely by being in the presence of a one already affected, Cainites must drink the blood of a victim to be infected.

You must be able to see your victim. Spend a Willpower Trait and perform a challenge of your Mental Traits against your Target's Physical Traits. If you win, your target is infected.

Infected Cainites lose one-quarter of their Mental and Physical Traits (round up) and must spend two Blood Traits instead of one at the beginning of each night. Additionally, Cainites must win a Static *Self-Control/ Instinct* Challenge (difficulty of three Traits) each time they feed or vomit back all the blood they just ingested without gaining any benefit from it. Infected mortals lose one-quarter of their Mental and Physical Traits (round up), take a level of lethal damage each night and cannot hold down any food.

At sunset each evening, the victim may attempt to throw off the disease by engaging in a Static Physical Challenge (difficulty seven Traits). With the acquisition of three successes, the disease has been conquered, and the character regains Traits at the rate of one per hour. Wounds recover at their usual rate.

### Advanced Grave's Decay

**Dissolve the Flesh**

You can enforce the effects of time and decay upon even the flesh of your fellow undying Cainites, turning all or part of your victims to dust. Moreover, some sorcerers have discovered uses for the dust this power produces.



You must extract two of your Blood Traits and spend a Willpower Trait charging them with the power of decay. Then you must bring that blood into contact with your target (which may call for a Physical Challenge). Once the blood touches your victim, whole portions of her body transform to dust, just as with *Destroy the Husk*. Each round thereafter, the victim must make a Static Physical Challenge against your Mental Traits or suffer one level of aggravated damage as part of her turns to dust and falls away. Once he has achieved as many successes as you have Willpower Traits, the power has run its course. While this dissolution is taking place, the victim is two Traits down on all challenges due to the agony of the experience.

The effects and location of this loss is left to the Storyteller to adjudicate. Individual limbs may disintegrate, or this effect may represent a general desiccation of the victim. Regeneration occurs at the usual rate for aggravated damage. One who has been reduced wholly to dust via this power meets the Final Death.

## The Corpse in the Monster

This path is an outgrowth of studies in the relationship between the dead body and the undead body. There are certain times when the traits of a corpse are useful for an undead body, and this path allows for the transfer of those traits in certain situations.

Use *Medicine* for retests of *Corpse in the Monster*.

### Basic Corpse in the Monster

**Masque of Death**

You can grant yourself or another the appearance of an aged corpse. Expend a Blood Trait. If you wish to place this effect upon another, you must touch him (which may call for a Physical Challenge). If the recipient is willing, that suffices. If not, you must defeat her in a Mental Challenge. Once the effect begins, flesh draws taut, and the body takes on an entirely corpselike appearance and texture.

Those wearing the *Masque of Death* are one Trait down on all Social Challenges except for intimidation purposes — for intimidation challenges, they are one Trait up. Additionally, the *Masque of Death* stiffens its targets, rendering them one Trait down on Physical Challenges involving flexibility and speed.

If one wearing the *Masque of Death* attempts to emulate a corpse, it takes a successful Social Challenge to see through the disguise.

The *Masque of Death* ordinarily lasts until the next sunset, but the caster may terminate it earlier.

**Cold of the Grave**

The dead feel no pain, and with this power, you can extend the same numbing chill to yourself. The *Cold of the Grave* turns one's skin cold to the touch and makes all matters seem unimportant, even personal injury.

Expend one Willpower Trait. Your body and mind become unnaturally cold. You are unaffected by wound penalties. You also gain a free retest against all attempts to manipulate your emotions — on the other hand, others receive a free retest on your attempts to manipulate their emotions. This chill does not reach the Beast, however — you still frenzy under the same provocation.

*Cold of the Grave* lasts for one scene.

### Intermediate Corpse in the Monster

**Curse of Life**

There are many ways in which the living are weaker than the undead, and even if you no longer remember the experiences freshly, your research has enabled you to inflict one of the many of the woeful aspects of life upon other Cainites. This may be as simple as mundane hunger or thirst, or a return to mortal senses or vulnerabilities.

You must be able to see your target to inflict the *Curse of* Life upon her. Expend a Willpower Trait and engage your target in a Mental Challenge. If you win, you may inflict any of the many frailties of the living upon her undead body until the next sunset. The details of this curse should be roleplayed, but for the duration, the character is distracted to the point she is three Traits down in all challenges and cannot expend Blood Traits to augment her Physical Traits. The victim may expend a Willpower Trait to ignore the distracting aspects of this power for a scene, but the blood limitation remains in effect for the duration of the curse.

**Gift of the Corpse**

By taking the aspects of the dead upon yourself, you are able to temporarily avoid some of the vulnerabilities to which Cainites are subject. Though some believe this power to be little more than an extension of *Cold of the Grave*, other scholars claim that the ability to circumvent the Curse, albeit temporarily, was part of a bargain between Cappadocius and an archangel.

Expend a Willpower Trait and perform a Static Mental Challenge (against a difficulty of seven Traits). If you succeed, your Cainite nature is submerged for two turns, and you are closer to being an animated corpse than a vampire. Holy artifacts and ground have no effect on you; you are immune to Rötschreck and frenzy. Sunlight causes at bashing damage at worst, fire only causes lethal damage, and a stake in the heart is no different from a stake in the liver. At the beginning of the third turn, make a Simple Test; if you win, the *Gift of the Corpse* stays with you for another turn. *Gift of the Corpse* does not interfere with the use of any vampiric abilities. Should the effect end while you are exposed to any of the circumstances it protects against, they immediately take effect.

Those who possess *Soulsight* or similar abilities may notice an alien appearance in your halo. Also, since this experience amounts to the rejection of any semblance of life, the Storyteller may rule that it interferes with certain roads.

### Advanced Corpse in the Monster

**Gift of Life**

You can approach the living state, experiencing the best that it has to offer — food, drink and the joys of the flesh are once again pleasures. The sun is not the enemy that it once was, the blood hunger abates, and the Beast is muted. But there is a terrible price — the *Gift of Life* almost always costs the life of a mortal, so great is its cost in blood, and when it ends, the Beast returns with a vengeance. Some fear that there may be a greater price than has yet been perceived, for flaunting God's curse on Caine cannot avoid having dire repercussions.

You must spend 12 Blood Traits as quickly as you can — you may drink while you burn them if you cannot hold enough Blood Traits on your own — and then make a Static Physical Challenge (difficulty six Traits). If you succeed, the *Gift of Life* takes hold until the next midnight.

With this transformation in effect, sunlight and fire cause only lethal damage, and your Virtue Traits are considered doubled for the purposes of resisting Rötschreck and frenzy. You can be active by day without any penalties, and experience the many finer points of being alive. You still have access to *Fortitude* and *Auspex*, and, in some cases, other Disciplines (Storyteller discretion). Finally, your blood is actually vitae, not mortal blood. On the downside, faith and the holy still affect you, being staked paralyzes you and the use of this power may interfere with your progress along certain roads.

Finally, when the *Gift of Life* fades, your Beast is ascendant. Halve your Virtue Traits (round down) for the purposes of resisting Rötschreck and frenzy for the next six nights.

## Cadaverous Animation

This path is less concerned with duplicating observed phenomena than the imbuing of dead flesh with alien properties. As such, this path is seen as less respectable than the others. The fact that the unsavory Venetian *nigrimancers* are rumored to have a clearer understanding of some of these powers further tarnishes it in some Cappadocian eyes.

Use *Occult* for retests of *Cadaverous Animation*.

### Basic Cadaverous Animation

**Trace of Life**

You can stimulate dead flesh to twitch or move slowly, thus simulating the effects of life — or horrifying mortal onlookers. Perform a Mental Challenge. Unless you fail, you can make the corpse move slightly, appear to breathe, have a pulse or even open its eyes. If the corpse is more than a handful of minutes dead, however, it is unlikely that the lifeless orbs will do more than scare witnesses.

You can also use this power on torpid Cainites of higher or equal generation, but you must bid two Traits in the challenge..

**Call the Homuncular Servant**

You can cause a small piece of a corpse to separate and move around under your blood's power. The hand is the most commonly animated piece, but rolling eyeballs are popular in certain circles, and it is rumored that some use other, more *outré* parts. This homunculus has mystic senses, a sort of intelligence — approximately on the order of a trained hound — and a rude telepathic link with you. It can interpret and carry out simple telepathic or spoken commands. Additionally, if you wish, you can perceive what it perceives.

Expend a Blood Trait, sprinkling it upon the body part you wish to animate, and perform a Mental Challenge. If you succeed, you have animated the homunculus. Since you are animating it, it is completely loyal, and will follow your orders to the exclusion of all else. It has no initiative, so it will keep acting on your most recent order until you countermand it. The range of your telepathic link is approximately one-quarter mile, and while it is within that range, you can perceive what it sees, but you cannot use any Disciplines through it. The servant stays

animated for one scene, but you can keep it active into the next scene by paying an additional Blood Trait and winning another Mental Challenge. The homunculus need not be in your presence to extend its life span this way, and this process may be repeated indefinitely.

The homunculus cannot carry anything, but small items, such as jewelry, may be attached to it.

## Intermediate Cadaverous Animation

**Raise the Corpse to Service**

You can animate a corpse to a shambling mockery of its previous life and use it as a servant. It matters not whether the corpse is freshly killed or has moldered away into a skeleton, it will carry out orders to the best of its ability. These servants are excellent (if noisome) majordomos, but they are only of nuisance value in a fight.

Expend a Blood Trait, dripping it into the body's mouth over the course of three turns, and perform a Static Physical Challenge against five Traits. Success means that you have created an animated corpse capable of performing the functions of a simple manservant. It cannot speak, but it can communicate through rudimentary gestures. Also, it continues to decay until all that is left is a skeleton. Corpses so prepared last three days, and they may be raised again after they cease to function.

**Call the *Athanatos***

You can convert a corpse into a monstrous, unliving killer. Though you control the *Athanatos* by the force of your will, its true motivation is never in question — slaying anything that is not dead. Legends claim that *Athanatoi* are not the pawns of their creators, but of Death itself, and a Cappadocian who lets her guard down may not survive to regret it. The name *Athanatos* derives from Herodotus's term for the immortal elite guards of the god-kings of ancient Persia. European Cappadocians sometimes refer to them as *ministerialis*, or serf-knights.

Creating an *Athanatos* takes five minutes and two Blood Traits, spread across the corpse in unholy glyphs. If you wish, you may also expend Mental Traits to grant the *Athanatos* greater combat prowess; for each Mental Trait spent, the *Athanatos* gains two *Brutal* Physical Traits. Additionally, if the corpse from which the *Athanatos* is prepared possessed greater *Archery*, *Brawl*, *Dodge* or *Melee* Traits than the default *Athanatos*, this killer will keep these Abilities. Once the Traits have been spent and the body prepared, you must win a Static Physical Challenge (difficulty seven Traits). If you succeed, the body animates and immediately attempts to kill the nearest thing — possibly yourself. To direct the *Athanatos*, you must defeat it in a Social Challenge. If you win, it will follow your orders, otherwise, it will attack the most opportune targets until it is controlled, defeated or destroyed. You may attempt to regain control once per turn, but this contest of wills does count as an activity. Furthermore, if the *Athanatos* passes more than 100 yards away from you, it becomes free, and reverts to indiscriminate killing until you reassert your will. You must maneuver to within a few yards of it to attempt to do so. Finally, you must succeed in a Social Challenge to end its rampage.

An *Athanatos* lasts until daylight, and is useless at performing any activity that would not be associated with combat. If enough of it survives, it can be animated again.



## Advanced Cadaverous Animation

**Muster the Corpse Army**

You can create an army of *Athanatoi*. You must spend 10 minutes anointing as many warriors as you wish with three of your Blood Traits. Animating and controlling the army use the same challenges as for a single *Athanatos*, but you are considered one Trait down for each body you are animating beyond the initial one. Therefore, if you were to animate five corpses with this power, you would be four Traits down for the initial challenge to animate them and for all challenges to control them. You cannot augment the abilities of these *Athanatoi*, but they gain the same benefits as individual *Athanatoi* from being created of warrior stock. Your control extends over the entire group, and if you lose control of one, you lose control of the entire group. In all other ways, these *Athanatoi* behave just like those created by *Call the Athanatos*.

This power may also be used to create multiple servants as per *Raise the Corpse to Service*. The procedure is the same as for an army of *Athanatoi*, but you need not assert your will to control them. Servants created in this fashion last until daybreak.

## The Four Humours

Though the Lamia bloodline shares the Cappadocian's focus on the processes of death, they possess a special body of lore all their own. This distinct understanding has led them to create the *Path of the Four Humours* — a separate *Mortis* path. The Four Humours represent both the fluids of the physiological body and philosophical characteristics that may be ascribed to people. Lamia claim that the four humours — phlegm, blood, black bile and yellow bile — are held in stasis in Cainite bodies, but that through this path, they can tap into the powers of each of the humours rather than just blood as do most vampires.

All Lamia must choose the *Path of the Four Humours* as their primary path. No Cappadocian can learn this path without tutoring from a Lamia who knows it, and since the Lamia believe that it might be their sole defense against their nominally parent clan, they are loath to pass on that knowledge.

Use *Occult* for retests of the *Path of Four Humours*.

## Basic Path of the Four Humours

**Whispers to the Soul**

You can release a wisp of your bilious humour into the ear of a victim where it will whisper nightmares to him as he sleeps and fearful imaginings when he is awake.

While speaking to your victim, whisper his name as you know it and engage him in a Social Challenge. If you succeed, he will be distracted and edgy and have the Negative Mental Trait *Impatient* for the remainder of the scene.

**Kiss of the Dark Mother**

By mixing your black bile with your blood and directing it to your mouth, you can concoct a toxic substitute for saliva that makes your bite even more deadly.

Once you have channeled the debased blood to your lips, all bites for the rest of the scene do an additional level of aggravated damage. This can be used with a biting attack, if you successfully bite your opponent. It takes one turn to clean the stuff from your mouth.

## Intermediate Path of the Four Humours

### Dark Humours

You are capable of directing each of the Four Humours much as regular Cainites direct blood. Once the humour is prepared, if you bring it into contact with a victim, he falls under the effect of that humour. As with blood, you can secrete it to your skin and then deliver it with a touch (which may or may not require a Physical Challenge, depending on the circumstances), coat a weapon with it or introduce it into food or drink. When you release a humour in this fashion, you alter your body's own balance, causing you to behave in a manner contrary to that humour. Thus, for example, should you secrete phlegm, you will feel energetic and active.

You must select a Humour, expend two Blood Traits to transform it and then deliver it to a victim. When a victim comes into contact with a *Dark Humour*, he must win a Static Physical Challenge against your Physical Traits or fall under the sway of the humour until the next sunrise. Should he win the challenge, the humour becomes inert.

**Phlegm:** The victim becomes lethargic and must bid an additional Trait on all Physical Challenges.

**Blood:** The victim becomes prone to excessive bleeding, and takes an additional level of damage every time he receives lethal or aggravated damage. Blood prepared in this fashion no longer functions as vitae. It cannot be used to nourish Cainites, create ghouls, Embrace childer or lead to the blood oath.

**Black Bile:** Black bile causes a level of aggravated damage to anyone other than yourself who comes into contact with it. The turn after contacting the black bile, the victim must win a Static Physical Challenge (difficulty five Traits), or take a second level of aggravated damage.

**Yellow Bile:** The victim is plagued with melancholy visions and loses a Willpower Trait. He may not spend Willpower while affected.

### Clutching the Shroud

By focusing on the transformation of living blood to dead blood to Cainite vitae, you can partake of certain of the benefits of being dead. You are more difficult to injure, you can see and speak with ghosts, and you can trace the patterns of death in the people around you, telling who is close to death — and who is already there.

You must drink five Blood Traits from a body that has been dead for at least one day, but less than three. As soon as you have drunk them, you must expend all five to activate this power. While this power is in effect, you gain one additional health level of armor with no Negative Traits, you can see and converse with ghosts who are in the area, and you can use the *Valeren* power *Sense Life*. An unfortunate side-effect of this power leaves you more vulnerable to the powers of ghosts — you are two Traits down in all challenges against them while using it. This power lasts for one scene.

## Advanced Path of the Four Humours

### Black Breath

You can awaken the melancholy black bile that festers in the core of your being and expel it with your breath as a miasmic black cloud that chokes everyone around you with malaise and depression.

Expend a Willpower Trait and a Blood Trait to prepare the bile and then exhale at your targets. The *Black Breath* affects everyone within five yards of you in the direction you are facing, though those caught within may attempt a Static Physical Challenge (difficulty of five Traits) to dodge out of the fetor unless they are completely hemmed in or otherwise trapped. Those who come into contact with the *Black Breath* must make a Mental Challenge against your Mental Traits. Those who fail this challenge are seized by an overwhelming depression for the remainder of the scene. Their Willpower Traits are considered halved — round down to a minimum of one — for Trait comparison purposes, and they cannot burn blood to increase Physical Traits. Some may contemplate or even attempt suicide should the opportunity present itself, and most will experience occasional, Storyteller-prompted recurrences over the next couple of nights. Mortals will generally attempt meaningful suicide (hanging, drowning, etc.), unless prevented. Cainites will slip into torpor and remain torpid as per their Road rating.

Cainites who use this power feel exhilarated, and almost cheerful for the remainder of the scene, having expelled their melancholy to their enemies.

# Mortis Rituals

Mortis Rituals are even more rare and more carefully hoarded than those of *Thaumaturgy*. Many Cappadocians know only one or two.

## Basic Mortis Rituals

### Final Sight

By removing and processing a corpse's eye, you can see the last static image the person saw before he died. The eye is consumed in this process, so it can be performed at most twice for a given corpse. Spend five minutes preparing the eyes and a Mental Challenge. If you succeed, you perceive the vision as depicted. If the person's eyes were closed when he died, you see the last thing he saw before he closed his eyes.

### Revivify the Cold Vitae

Blood stops being fit for Cainite consumption soon after the death of the vessel. You can prepare the blood of corpses so that it can provide sustenance. Most vampires find this revivified blood repugnant, but a few consider it a delicacy. If you succeed in a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty five Traits) you can convert up to half the blood in a corpse into vitae. The corpse must possess a goodly amount of flesh, and this ritual ruins thee corpses for any future use by *Mortis* powers. The cold blood stays fresh for one scene.

### Eyes of the Grave

You can visit visions and terrifying insights of preordained doom upon your target. These experiences are distracting and terrifying, seemingly foretelling the demise of the recipient. Those with the presence of mind to analyze such things note that the visions are often contradictory, perhaps bearing more relationship to the target's fears than the actual doings of fate.

You must possess some item that is sympathetically linked to the victim, and ritually destroy it over the course of two full hours while chanting incantations. If you wish the experience to be more terrifying, you may expend one or more Social

Traits during the incantation. Each night, over the course of the next week the target will experience one harrowing vision, and one more for each Trait spent during the casting. The Storyteller will determine the time and content of these visions, but each time a character receives such a vision, he must make a *Courage* Test (difficulty five Traits) or be incapacitated with terror for three turns.

### Advanced Mortis Ritual

**Walk Through the Shroud**

You can step beyond the world of mortals to the place where the souls of those who are still tied to the Earth and have not moved on to their final reward (or punishment) dwell. The ghosts you encounter may be able to provide information or some eldritch service, but many ghosts do not view Cainites kindly and may attempt to do you harm. This ritual was developed by the Venetian *nigrimancers*, so it is new to the clan and is viewed warily by many Cappadocians.

You must surround yourself with grave dust and perform chanting incantations from dusk to midnight, and then perform a Mental Challenge. Success frees your soul in a manner similar to *Anima Walk*, but sending it across the shroud that separates living souls from the dead and into the dismal world of lost souls. While you are there, you have access to Mental and Social Disciplines, and you can be affected by the ghostly inhabitants as if you were one of their own. As with *Anima Walk*, you are unaware of your corporeal body. Your stay lasts until dawn or until you decide to return. When you return, you can bring nothing back save your memories.

The Storyteller may wish to consult **Oblivion** for ideas about how to detail this world and its inhabitants, or she may resort to her own devices.

## Obfuscate

The Children of Caine are a blight on God's creation; this Discipline allows them to conceal their accursed selves from God's children. *Obfuscate* does not offer true invisibility, rather it encourages those around the vampire to see him as something else or ignore him altogether, thus its effects extend even to the blind or those relying on other senses. Some claim that *Obfuscate* points to the accursed nature of Cainites, for it fosters isolation from humanity. Others suggest that Caine taught it to the Nosferatu Antediluvian in hopes that he would conceal the visages of himself and his childer. The infidel Assamites contest both notions, claiming that *Obfuscate* represents a natural honing of their hunting prowess.

See *Auspex* (p. 157) for details on how that Discipline can penetrate *Obfuscate*'s concealment.

Use *Stealth* for retests of *Obfuscate*.

> In order to indicate your concealed status, cross your arms in front of your chest, displaying a number of fingers on each hand corresponding to your highest level of *Obfuscate* (one for Basic, two for Intermediate, three for Advanced and four for Elder).

### Basic Obfuscate

#### Cloak of Shadows

You can conceal yourself as long as you remain silent, immobile and out from underfoot. As long as you do not move or produce noise and stay in shadows or behind cover, you are immune to all but magical scrutiny, and you may use the crossed-arms pose.

#### Unseen Presence

You need no longer consign yourself to immobility in the shadows when you wish to be concealed. You may move about as long as you do nothing to attract the attention of others. You may use the crossed-arms pose so long as you do avoid interacting with your environment. You can look and walk, but talking, dropping a vase, touching another person or attacking someone ends your concealment. You may use most Disciplines, but the use of certain ones — such as *Presence* — automatically end your camouflage. You cannot activate this power while someone is observing you.

### Intermediate Obfuscate

#### Mask of a Thousand Faces

You can take on the appearance of someone else, taking the role of a forgettable everyman, impersonating a real individual or creating a new appearance from your imagination. Your body does not change, rather those who see you will perceive you according to your desires. You can automatically mute your features so that no one who sees you will recognize you (or even be able to identify you as Nosferatu, should that be of concern). If you expend a Mental Trait, you can take on any appearance you wish, and since this effect lies in the minds of your witnesses, this effect fools all senses.

*Mask of a Thousand Faces* does not automatically augment your Social Traits, so your imitation of the gorgeous and gracious marquise may seem strangely disturbing. You can expend Blood Traits to increase your Social Traits on a one-for-one basis. You cannot augment your Social Trait total beyond generational limits with this power.

#### Vanish from the Mind's Eye

You can disappear from plain sight and even speak to people without their being able to locate you. You have all the benefits of *Unseen Presence*, but you need not be out of sight to activate it. To vanish, declare your intent and engage all onlookers who wish to keep track of you in a mob-style Mental Challenge. You must bid one Mental Trait per person challenged, and throw one symbol against all of them. You fade from the sight of those you beat, and you may retry against those who still see you on subsequent turns. Using this Discipline does not count as an action, but its effects only take hold at the end of the turn. *Auspex* does not aid against the initial disappearance, but it may locate you afterward.

You can also speak aloud while using this *Vanish from the Mind's Eye*, and still remain hidden. Speak your piece and perform the mass Mental Challenge as for vanishing. Those you defeat hear your disembodied voice; the rest see through your *Obfuscate*.

Any more overt activity, such as attacking or using *Presence*, automatically reveals you, though you may always fade away again.

## Advanced Obfuscate

### Cloak the Gathering

With effort, you can extend your concealing powers to others, hiding them from observation or even granting them disguises.

Expend one Mental Trait for each person (other than yourself) you wish to affect. You can then manifest any single *Obfuscate* power upon them. You can grant each a different disguise, make them all vanish or simply convey them unseen through the hamlet. You use the mechanics of whatever power you intend to spread among your compatriots and perform any challenges once as if you were affecting only yourself, but the results apply to the whole group.

If one of the people you are shielding breaks the conditions of concealment or is detected by *Auspex*, only she becomes visible. If you break the conditions or are detected, the entire group becomes visible. The concealment does not affect members within the group, so if you have cloaked five people with *Unseen Presence*, you need not fear their bumping into each other. It is possible for one of those you concealed to use *Obfuscate* on herself, though, in which case, you would not necessarily be able to see her.

## Elder Obfuscate

### Soul Mask

Your deceptive powers are so great they can even alter your halo. Those who use *Soulsight* see what you want them to see. By expending Blood Traits, you can alter the appearance of your halo, telling a false story to creatures with *Soulsight* or similar abilities. One Trait allows you to lie about whether you are telling the truth and what your emotional state is. Two Traits allow you to claim to be a ghoul, a mortal or even a Lupine. Three Traits allow you to lie about whether you are under the influence of magic or have committed diableric; you can also hide your halo entirely. This power cannot conceal the Assamite clan weakness. This power lasts one scene.

Only Cainites who know Elder-level *Auspex* may even attempt to see through this deception. If you have no levels of *Auspex* yourself, you cannot change your halo's appearance; you lack the understanding to do anything more than suppress it.

# Obtenebration

*Obtenebration*, as a Discipline, belongs to the Lasombra, and any others who would learn it had best exercise great discretion. The Lasombra like to keep their shadowy power to themselves.

There are many theories concerning the source of the darkness that *Obtenebration* invokes. Some believe that it is the darkness upon the face of the deep that was spoken of in Genesis. Others feel it comes from the deepest corner of Hell. This darkness is most commonly referred to as Ahriman — the dark half of Zoroastrian dualism. Whatever it is, the darkness seems to have a will of its own, and it haunts and devours those who fail to master it.



Certain theologians propose that these shadows are God's Curse upon Caine made manifest, and that this Discipline pulls its users even further from the eyes of God.

Use *Occult* for most retests of *Obtenebration*, but *Brawl* or *Melee* may be used for more pugilistic applications of this Discipline.

## Basic Obtenebration

### Shadow Play

You can exert minor influence on shadows, darkening them or making them move unnaturally. Expend a Blood Trait and choose how you wish to deploy your shadows. By twisting them in your immediate area, you can use them to aid your concealment, granting one extra Trait for challenges of stealth and ranged combat. You can also use them to make yourself appear more menacing, granting you an additional Trait for intimidation-related challenges.

Alternatively, you can have the shadows dog and unnerve someone else. While under the shadows' influence, the target gains the Negative Trait *Clumsy*. Weak mortals may be overcome by these shadows. If a mortal has three or fewer current Physical Traits, he begins to suffocate, losing one Physical Trait per turn, then one health level per turn until the shadows smother him.

*Shadow Play* lasts for one scene.

### Nocturne

You can summon forth a great cloud of inky, smothering darkness that muffles sound and slows movement. Expend a Blood Trait, and an approximately 10-foot diameter cloud will form anywhere you wish within 50 feet. If you concentrate, you can force the cloud to move at a walking pace. *Nocturne* lasts for one scene or until you dispel it.

Anyone inside the cloud gains the Negative Trait *Clumsy*. Furthermore, anyone within the cloud — other than the caster, or someone with an ability to see through *Obtenebration* — is two Traits down in any challenges and must undergo automatic retests if they succeed at anything. *Heightened Senses* and *Witness of Darkness* are affected, but each removes one of the penalty Traits. The automatic retest is not removed.

Mortals with five or fewer current Physical Traits may be smothered as described in *Shadow Play*.

## Intermediate Obtenebration

### Arms of Ahriman

You can call forth tentacles of darkness from the shadows and bid them to grasp people, strike them or perform tasks of dexterity.

Expend a single Blood Trait to awaken the shadows, and one Social Trait per tentacle you wish to create. Tentacles issue from any nearby source of shadow and have a reach of six feet. Each tentacle possesses three Physical Traits and three health levels. For each additional Blood Trait you expend, you can increase the length of a single tentacle six feet or grant a single tentacle one extra Physical Trait. Tentacles

can be damaged normally, and are injured by fire and sunlight — the tentacles benefit from any *Fortitude* you have. Alternatively, you can add your *Potence* powers to any tentacles, but doing so removes their benefits from *Fortitude*. The *Arms of Ahriman* last for one scene, until you lose consciousness, or until you dispel them.

### Nightshades

You can craft illusions of inky shadow. Such illusions would be patently unrealistic by the light of day, but they can be quite convincing in dark settings. This power can also be used as a more potent version of *Shadow Play*.

You can create a human-sized illusion with little effort. If you wish to evoke something larger, you may expend one or more Social Traits, depending on your skill at *Obtenebration* — up to two for Intermediate, three for Advanced and four for Elder. Each Trait spent allows you to double the size of the illusion. Such illusions affect only sight, but the subtle inclusion of the *Arms of Ahriman* can add to the effect. In the darkness, witnesses may attempt a Mental Challenge to determine that what they are seeing is not real. By bright light, the effect is usually only convincing in the distance. If you want subtlety, you can use this ability to grant three extra Traits in situations involving dodging, intimidation or stealth.

Finally, you can create an area of whirling shadowy nightmare. Those who are affected gain the Negative Trait *Clumsy* and are three Traits down in any challenges. *Auspex* is of no assistance in this roiling chaos. Weak mortals may be overcome by these shadows. If a mortal has seven or fewer current Physical Traits, he begins to suffocate, losing one Physical Trait per turn, then one health level per turn until the shadows smother him.

The *Nightshades* last for one scene or until you dispel them.

## Advanced Obtenebration

### Tenebrous Avatar

You can become a creature of pure darkness — a humanoid formed of liquid shadow. Expend three Blood Traits and spend three full turns in concentration to complete the transformation. As a shadow, you are immune to physical attacks, though you still take damage from fire, magic and sunlight. You cannot interact with the world of mortals, for you have no substance, but you can attack people by enveloping them — as a challenge of your Mental Traits versus the victim's Physical Traits. If you succeed, the victim is affected as with *Nocturne*. You can glide along any surface or through any crack, see through total darkness, and even use most mental Disciplines (though not *Dominate* since you have no eyes). Your blood is transformed into the same shadow, so it is even immune to the effects of *Thaumaturgy*.

Unfortunately, sunlight and fire are extremely painful for you. You suffer a one-Trait penalty in *Courage* Tests when facing them.

## Elder Obtenebration

### Walk the Abyss

You can traverse that place where all is shadow, stepping into one shadow and emerging from another — or reach through a shadow to someone near another shadow. Expend two Mental Traits and step into a shadow large enough to hold you. You can now exit from any other shadow of the appropriate size within 50 feet. If necessary, this action can count as a Fair Escape.

You can also reach through a shadow and grab someone to bring her through to your side, or even attack her. Pulling someone through involves a Physical Challenge. Other forms of attack also count as Physical Challenges, but the target gets a free retest because you do not have the time to grapple and feel where your target is.

## Ogham

*Ogham* is only found among the fading Lhiannan bloodline, and they claim that one who does not share their curse cannot learn it. Since *Ogham* draws from the power of the dark forest spirit that touches each of them, it is quite possible that they are correct. The Lhiannan know that the spirit that empowers them is waning, growing weaker by the decade, but for now, at least, the power of the blood compensates.

Using *Ogham* is a very personal experience, for the spirit that shapes the magic lies at the core of the Lhiannan. No Lhiannan uses *Ogham* casually. Another limitation of this power is that a Lhiannan's use of it is linked to her home demesne. Those who pass more than 50 miles from their territory must bid an additional Trait on all *Ogham*-related challenges.

Use *Survival* for retests of *Ogham*.

## Basic Ogham

### Consecrate the Grove

You can use your blood to awaken the forests to defend you by piercing your skin and sprinkling the blood in a widdershins (counterclockwise) spiral. The foliage in the area you consecrate will act in your defense, flailing at and tripping intruders.

Expend from one to three Blood Traits, taking one turn per Trait to anoint the forest as described. One Trait covers an area 10 feet in diameter, and each subsequent Trait doubles the diameter. For the remainder of the scene, any person within the consecrated area who acts against you must bid an additional Trait in any challenge to counteract the thrashing vegetation. Additionally, should you use *Consecrate the Grove* in heavy woods, your enemies must win a Physical Challenge or take one level of bashing damage per turn.

### Crimson Woad

By tracing ancient runes in blood across your body, you can invite spirits to gird you physically and spiritually for battle. Bound by an ancient pact, these spirits guide your Beast and fortify your mind and guide your hand in battle.

Spend one scene painting the runes on your body with one Blood Trait, then expend from one to three Mental Traits. While under this power, you suffer no penalties for being Bruised, and for each Mental Trait expended, you gain one bonus Trait for all *Courage* Tests and Mental or Social Challenges. Once per use

of *Crimson Woad*, you can call upon the spirits to direct your attack, inflicting one additional level of damage per Mental Trait spent.

*Crimson Woad* lasts for one scene or until you take four levels of damage, in which case, the runes are considered wiped away and the spirits freed.

## Intermediate Ogham

### Inscribe the Curse

By painting the name of an enemy in ancient runes in blood on your body, you can bind spirits that will enact a curse upon your enemy when she sees it. You can shape the form of the curse by placing the name in different locations on your body.

Expend three Blood Traits, and write the name of your enemy upon the appropriate part of your body with them. The name must be painted in a visible location, but the enemy need not be able to comprehend it. As soon as she sees it, the enemy must win a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty seven Traits) or be affected by the curse. The curse lasts until the name is rubbed off or defaced if you suffer four or more levels of damage.

**Body:** Written on the arms, legs or torso, this is the curse of weakness. Mortals must bid an extra Trait in all Physical Challenges, and Cainites cannot use blood in any way other than the single Trait necessary to stay active.

**Mind:** Painted across the forehead, this curse disjoints the enemy's mind. In any Mental Challenge, the enemy must expend a Willpower Trait or automatically relent.

**Voice:** Painted on the throat, the enemy loses the power of speech. She may grunt, but she cannot form words.

**Soul:** Written directly above the heart, the enemy is overwhelmed by primal feelings. Mortals must flee your domain and Cainites are two Traits down on tests to resist frenzy.

### Moon and Sun

You can paint ancient glyphs of the celestial bodies upon yourself to invoke the aid of their spirits. Lunar spirits provide special gifts, while solar spirits ward off the worst effects of sunlight and fire.

It takes three Blood Traits and 15 minutes to inscribe one of these glyphs. The glyphs must be exposed, and they can be inscribed on any willing subject. A single person can benefit from both glyphs at the same time, but the power fades if the glyph is rubbed off or defaced by the bearer taking four or more levels of damage.

If you wear the sun glyph, you can expend a Willpower Trait any time you are exposed to fire or sunlight, converting one level of damage from aggravated to lethal.

If you wear the moon glyph, you are one Trait down in all tests to avoid frenzy, but you gain two bonus Traits on all other challenges.

## Advanced Ogham

### Drink Dry the Earth

You can identify sites of power — cromlechs, faerie rings, dragon tracks and the like — and draw spiritual energy from them. Doing so can be dangerous, for wizards, faeries and Lupines also use these sites. Additionally, taking too much energy from these sites can leave them barren and lifeless, as if you have drained the lifeblood from the earth.

You must win a Static Mental Challenge — difficulty to be determined by the Storyteller — to discern whether a location can provide power. Once a suitable location has been discovered, you must expend a Blood Trait to mark the site and attune yourself to it. Thereafter, unless someone interferes with your attunement, you can drain the site's mystical energy to yourself whenever you visit it, gaining two bonus Traits for every Road Trait you possess. These bonus Traits last until dawn, and they can be used in any challenges.

#### Draining the Earth

Mystic sites vary in power from one to five. Each site starts with 10 times its rating in bonus Traits, which may be slowly replenished at the Storyteller's discretion. Should the Lhiannan ever drain all the site's bonus Traits, it becomes a barren, lifeless place, devoid of mystic energy.

## Elder Ogham

### Inscribe the Forgotten Names

Through your relationship with the spirit shard, you can learn the names of ancient beings of power, thus gaining the ability to summon and commune with them. Dragons, demons, perhaps even the clan Methuselahs can be invoked with this power, but since no control is granted, you had best have something to offer them before you call.

You must expend three Blood Traits, allowing them to bleed into the ground over half an hour to appease the spirit shard's thirst. At the end, you must win a Static Mental Challenge, difficulty determined by the Storyteller based on what you wish to summon — perhaps reduced by a Trait if you have summoned it before. The mythic beast you have called will arrive before the end of the scene. The Storyteller may assign whatever statistics and needs she deems appropriate to the creature, and most will want to be satiated in some fashion before they are willing to listen to your concerns. Creatures summoned in this fashion remain until they are slain or deign to leave.

# Potence

Much as every Cainite has the instinctual ability to augment her strength through her blood, *Potence*, the Discipline of unearthly strength, is one of the Disciplines that comes easily to all Cainites (though it does come more easily to some than others). A Cainite skilled in *Potence* can lift a horse, crush bones with her bare hands or even break down a castle's heavy wooden door. The curse of *Potence* comes from its stripping of the vampire's ability to be gentle, for who needs tenderness when one can take by force?

The use of *Potence* beyond the Basic levels is clearly inhuman. No Ability allows *Potence* retests, but actions performed under the influence of *Potence* may be retested as usual.

## BASIC POTENCE

### PROWESS

Your strength is great even for a Cainite, and your blows stagger any opponent. You can choose to inflict lethal damage rather than bashing on any unarmed attacks or attacks using blunt weapons. Additionally, once per night, you can recover your strength — regain any expended *Brawny*, *Ferocious*, *Stalwart*, *Tough* and *Wiry* Traits. These Traits must all be restored at the same time. If you have unexpended Traits at the time you decide to recover your strength, you cannot restore them later in this fashion. Using *Prowess* does not require an action, and it may be done any time, even when unconscious.

### MIGHT

Your strength is obviously greater than any mere mortal's, and even other vampires consider it daunting. You may make a single retest on any challenge involving sheer physical strength, such as breaking statuary, grappling with peasants and lifting portcullises. Once you use *Might* for a retest, other retests are not allowed. This power works for situations where your opponent attempts to use finesse or stamina rather than strength. (Your strength allows even glancing blows to do damage.) *Might* does not help in situations where agility is more useful, such as throwing boulders.

## INTERMEDIATE POTENCE

### VIGOR

Your unnatural strength allows you to easily lift hundreds of pounds and crush bones with but a single blow. You may use the Bomb in challenges of strength. You do not *have* to use it, but you must warn your opponent that you can use it and how it works. Your opponent may use agility or finesse against your strength, but as long as your strategy depends upon personal might, you may use the Bomb.

### INTENSITY

Your might is unflagging, and under all but the most strenuous circumstances, you can use your phenomenal strength without rest. You can use *Potence* as your bid Trait in any challenges of strength. Even if you lose the challenge, you do not lose this Trait, so you may use it repeatedly. This *Potence* Trait does not count in any other way, though. It cannot help in ties or overbid situations. You may not bid *Potence* twice in the event that you must bid more than one Trait. In those cases, your other bid Traits are at risk. Should you lose all of your Physical Traits, you cannot use *Intensity*, or enter into any more Physical Challenges, for that matter.

## ADVANCED POTENCE

### PUISSANCE

The strength of your undead limbs is unmatched in nature. Your unarmed and melee attacks inflict an additional level of damage, though this punishment may be hard on weapons that are not designed to withstand your abuse. Furthermore, you automatically win all ties in tests of strength. Should you encounter a situation where your opponent has a similar ability (such as *Celerity's Fleetness*), ties are resolved normally by comparing Traits.

## ELDER POTENCE

### FORCE

Your strength is the stuff of legends; you are a walking siege engine. In any challenge involving strength, you must be defeated in two tests in order to lose. If you win either test, you win the challenge. Should you fight another creature with this level of power, and you each win one of the tests, you both take full damage.

# PRESENCE

*Presence* is the discipline of unnatural charisma. Its practitioners command the attention of those around them, draw prey to their sides with no more than a beckoning glance, and draw out all variety of passions from their subjects. Whereas *Dominate* bends the will of its victims to that of the Cainite, *Presence* sways their emotions. This can be a great boon if the vampire prefers having lackeys with initiative and wits, but it can also result in unpleasant surprises as each follower has his own vision of what the Cainite really wants. Also, unlike *Dominate*, *Presence* does not require eye contact. Philosophers hypothesize that *Presence's* curse manifests by replacing true communion with others with artificial intimacy, driving the Cainite into greater isolation.

Use *Leadership* for retests of *Presence*.

## BASIC PRESENCE

### AWE

Your words and actions command the regard of witnesses, and your arguments are heeded more often than not.

You may expend one Social Trait during any Social Challenge to demand an automatic retest. You may use this ability in mass Social Challenges, but you must expend one Social Trait per opponent.

### DREAD GAZE

With a hiss and baring of fangs, you can draw the emotional force of the Beast to the surface, instilling a preternatural terror in your victims.

Perform a Social Challenge upon your victim. If you win, she is overcome with terror and must flee from you and avoid you for the rest of the scene. Should you subsequently corner her, she can fight back herself, but will do her best to escape. In such cases, the victim defends normally, but must risk an extra Trait if she wishes to take an offensive action, just as if she were wounded.

## INTERMEDIATE PRESENCE

### ENTRANCEMENT

Those you focus your attention upon find your charm irresistible and their opinion of you improving. Perform a Social Challenge against a victim. If you

succeed, he becomes more favorably disposed to you. Hostile people are civil, and they refrain from attacking or abusing you. Neutral people seek to aid and befriend you. Should you perform a hostile action against an entranced person, the spell is broken, and it cannot be used on him again for the duration of the scene.

### Summon

You can draw people to your side. You need not see or know the location of the person whose attendance you demand. As long as she is known to you, she will make all efforts to come to you. Victims do not necessarily know the source of this compulsion, and they might not even recognize their destination until they arrive. This compulsion lasts until the victim reaches you and makes her presence known.

Summoning calls for the assistance of a Narrator. Inform the Narrator of your target, the number of Social Traits you have and whether you wish to use *Leadership* for a retest if necessary. The Narrator will then hunt down your victim and perform the challenge as your proxy. If the challenge succeeds, the victim must seek you out. Should it fail, the victim may go about her business. The Narrator does not inform you of the success or failure of the challenge, other than to let you know if you must mark *Leadership* as expended.

You can only use *Summon* upon someone with whom you have at least a passing acquaintance — a few minutes of conversation or being the subject of a prior use of *Presence* from you suffices. Should another Cainite attempt to use *Summon* on the same person, she goes first to the Cainite of the lowest generation. Should your opponent be of the same generation, she goes to whoever first summoned her. Should you have summoned her at the same time, you must perform a Social Challenge, and she goes to the winner. If you attempt to summon a false identity (perhaps crafted through *Mask of a Thousand Faces*) the person who wore the false identity is summoned. In the unlikely event that multiple people use this false identity, you summon whoever is currently closest, even if you have not actually met her.

## Advanced Presence

### Majesty

Your personality causes all to pay heed and bow before you. None can raise a sword in challenge to you or act to incur your ire.

Expend a Willpower Trait. For the duration of the scene, you are under the effects of *Majesty*. This effect may be indicated by holding your arms out from your side, or with a special ribbon or card. While *Majesty* is in effect, none may insult or attack you as long as they are within 10 feet of you and can see you.

Subjects must expend a Willpower Trait and win a Social Challenge against you if they wish to breach your aura of command and attack you. Should they fail, they may spend another Willpower Trait for a retest. Those who fail such attempts may not try again for the duration of the scene.

You may use Mental and Social Disciplines while using *Majesty*, but any overt attack or hostile action causes the effect to fade, possibly leaving you surrounded by enraged and shocked subjects.



## Elder Presence

### Passion

You can fill the hearts of your subjects with wild, violent emotion that drowns their minds in howling fervor. You can opt to be the object of this emotion or leave it unfocussed. You cannot designate something or someone else as the recipient of whatever passions you unleash. Since this power can only inflame overwhelming feelings, not numb or deaden feelings, the results are invariably stimulating.

You must first communicate with the victims in some manner, even if only through a shared glance. Expend one Social Trait for each person you wish to affect. You may opt to simply affect those closest to you, single out certain people or choose just one person. Perform a mass Social Challenge upon your victims. Those who lose are overwhelmed by the emotion you select for the remainder of the scene.

The effects of the emotions invoked can take myriad forms, but the most common ones are:

- **Love:** Subjects are madly in love. If this is not directed at you, then they will find someone else. This particular brand of love is very similar to the blood oath with romantic overtones.
- **Fear:** Subjects are gripped by Rötschreck if they are Cainites or overwhelming terror if they are mortal. The effects are the same as for *Dread Gaze*.
- **Rage:** Subjects feel the urge to strike out at whatever irks them — or at you, if you choose. Cainites are subject to frenzy as if they had been humiliated, and mortals must make *Self-Control* Tests (difficulty five Traits), or begin an all-out attack.

# Protean

For millennia, the secret of the barbarian Clan Gangrel, *Protean* is becoming known by civilized Cainites. Though it seems ideally suited to unlife away from the comforts of populous environs, its uses even in the crowded cities are obvious. The Curse is manifest in *Protean* as it leads the vampire away from the civilizing presence of her natural, human form.

Use *Survival* for retests of *Protean*.

## Basic Protean

### Witness of Darkness

You can see in pitch darkness as your eyes take on a dim red glow. Declare your use of *Witness of Darkness*. At the end of the turn, you can see without penalty in complete darkness. Though the supernatural shadow of *Obtenebration* can still interfere with your vision, its effects are lessened (see *Obtenebration* p. 184). Witnesses may believe that infernal forces are at work upon seeing your glowing eyes.

### Talons of the Beast

You can grow claws that cause devastating damage. Expend a Blood Trait; the claws grow forth at the end of the current turn. These claws inflict aggravated damage and offer the bonus Trait *Sharp* in combat and climbing challenges. They retract when you desire or lose consciousness.

## Intermediate Protean

### Interred in the Earth

You can call the earth to grant you refuge from the sun or your enemies in its shelter, leaving nothing behind but a patch of gently disturbed soil.

Expend a Blood Trait. It takes a full turn to sink into the ground. During this time, you can do nothing else. You take your clothes and small items — nothing larger than a dagger — with you. You must be touching earth to use this Discipline, so stone, wooden floors and the like block its use. While you are interred, you are fully protected from and unaware of sunlight and whatever else happens on the surface. You can stay conscious, though the usual penalties exist during the day, and you may use Disciplines that do not call for a physical presence, such as *Auspex*.

This power merges you with the earth, so you no longer possess a true corporeal form and cannot be dug up. You are aware should someone dig where you are interred, but you cannot discern anything about them. You may choose to arise when this happens, flinging dirt in all directions, or rise later, either from where you first descended or from some of the excavated dirt, depending upon the Storyteller's decision. You are able to act on the turn you arise.

### Form of the Beast

You can transform your body into that of a wolf or bat. It is rumored that vampires from distant lands can transform into different animals, but most are limited to these two forms. While you are in animal form, your mind stays your own, but you have the physical abilities and limitations of the animal.

Expend a Blood Trait. Over the next three turns, you transform into a bat or a wolf. You can reduce the time of the transformation by one turn for each additional Blood Trait you expend to a minimum of one turn. You can retain your form until the next dawn or end it when you will. Clothing and small personal items transform with you. You can use normal Disciplines other than *Serpentis*, *Vicissitude* and forms of blood sorcery.

The animal forms are physically identical to ordinary animals, but they are undead. As a wolf, you gain the bonus Traits *Alert* and *Attentive* as well as the effects of *Talons of the Beast* and running speed greater than that of anyone not using *Celerity*. As a bat, you can fly and possess the Merit: *Acute Senses (Hearing)*, but you are reduced to three Physical Traits (your choice) while in that form.

## Advanced Protean

### Body of Spirit

You can abandon your human form, dissolving into a cloud of mist. Your senses are unaffected, but you can go wherever a mist can enter, seeping along at a walking pace. You are immune to physical, danger but you could be driven out of your way by strong winds.

Expend a Blood Trait. Over the next three turns, you transform into a small cloud of mist. You can reduce the time of the transformation by one turn for each additional Blood Trait you expend to a minimum of one turn. In addition to physical immunity, you take one level less damage from sunlight and fire. You can still be affected by mystical attacks, but you have no vitae per se, defending you from certain forms of *Thaumaturgy*. You can use any Disciplines that do not require a physical presence. This power lasts until you dispel it or lose consciousness.

## Elder Protean

### Blissful Slumber

You can employ a more potent form of the *Body of Spirit* in which you rest above the ground rather than entombed beneath it. While you enjoy *Blissful Slumber*, you cannot be affected by any physical attacks, including sunlight and fire, but you could still be moved about by the wind. You might want to use this if you do not desire other Cainites to know where you will be when you awaken with the next sundown.

Expend a Blood Trait. Over the next five turns, you transform into a small cloud of mist (the effect is almost unnoticeable if you are already wearing the *Body of Spirit*) and immediately enter slumber until the next sunset. The Storyteller determines where the wind has moved you when you awaken, and, upon awakening, you take your normal form unless you expend another Blood Trait to move into *Body of Spirit*.

## Quietus

The *Banu Haqim*, known to European Cainites as Assamites or Saracens, are the custodians of this Discipline. Though the warrior caste's uses of this power is more familiar, the less familiar sorcerer and vizier castes use it as well in their pursuits. According to clan lore, Haqim himself developed *Quietus* after prolonged meditation and self-contemplation. Ironically, the blood poisoning this Discipline teaches may be in part to blame for the clan's susceptibility to blood curses. Though the individual Saracen is no more susceptible, it appears that such things pass through the clan as a whole far more readily than with other clans. Beyond this hypothesis, European scholarship does not have much to say about *Quietus*, for information about it is so rare.

*Quietus* powers are not opposed, so they do not receive retests, though the situations that deliver the power of *Quietus* may allow for *Athletics*, *Brawl* or *Melee* retests.

### Silence of Fiery Blood

You can create unnatural silence in a certain area. Warriors tend to use this ability to prevent any sound from emanating from near them. Sorcerers and viziers more often use it to keep all sound away from a room, whether originating within or without.

Expend one Blood Trait. For the scene, or until you cancel the effect, no sound can originate from within 10 feet of you, though you can hear sounds that originate outside the zone. Alternatively, expend two Blood Traits and concentrate for five turns to completely silence the room you occupy. This effect works for rooms up to 50 feet square. You can have only one instance of *Silence of Fiery Blood* active at any time. If you start another, the first one fades away.

### Scorpion's Touch

You can transmute your blood into a deadly weakening poison. You can deliver this poison by spitting it at your foes, coating some object they touch, bringing it to the surface of your skin and touching them or even mixing it with their food — or if someone attempts to diablerize you.

Transmuting your blood is instantaneous, and it converts one Blood Trait to poison. Anyone who comes into contact with this poison loses a Physical Trait (which returns next session as usual). Mortals who lose all Physical Traits to this poison become deathly ill.

You can spit this poison at anyone within 10 feet, bring it to the surface of a hand, foot or any other body part you bring into contact with an opponent, or coat a weapon or object with it. Spitting involves a Physical Challenge (rather than actually spitting on another player), as may any other form of physical contact, depending upon the circumstances. Since altering your blood does not require an action, you can perform an unarmed attack and then declare the use of *Scorpion's Touch*.

Although there is no limit to how many Traits can be lost in a turn, each attack can deliver only one Blood Trait of poison. Multiple attacks are required to deliver multiple Traits. Even if you coat a weapon with multiple Traits, only one comes off in any strike. The remaining Traits wait for future strikes. Blood poison prepared in this way lasts a number of nights equal to your Willpower Traits.

## Intermediate Quietus

### Dagon's Call

With a simple touch, you can infect another with your blood, later causing that blood to revolt within, attacking the victim from the inside.

You must touch your victim. At any point in the scene, you can expend one or more Willpower Traits and let a Narrator know you have issued *Dagon's Call*, letting him know the number of Physical Traits you have and how many Willpower Traits you have spent. Each Willpower Trait spent forces the target to undergo a Static Physical Challenge whose difficulty is your Physical Traits. Each failed test results in the target taking a level of lethal damage as his blood rebels against him. You cannot reuse this power on the same victim until you touch him again.

### Baal's Caress

You can transmute your blood into an ichor that is potent enough to eat through any living or undead flesh. This poison works only from the inside out, so you must apply it to some sort of edged weapon.

Spend a turn in concentration to transmute a Blood Trait into the caustic ichor, then place the ichor on your weapon. Each prepared Blood Trait placed on such a weapon converts the damage done by a strike with that weapon into aggravated damage. Thus placing two prepared Blood Traits upon a scimitar would make the next two successful strikes inflict aggravated damage. Blood poison prepared in this way lasts a number of nights equal to your Willpower Traits.

## Advanced Quietus

### Blood Essence

You can drain the vitae of a vampire such that his entire essence is contained within a heart-sized container. This heart's-blood has potent effects, both for blood sorcery and on its own. Not the least of these effects is that anyone who subsequently drinks the blood receives the benefits — and drawbacks — of having diablerized the Cainite from whom it was prepared. This heart's-blood is traditionally taken back to Alamut where it is a key component to many of the rites of the Road of Blood, but the rise of blood addiction among the warrior caste has begun to interfere with this tradition.

The process of preparing the *Blood Essence* is quite similar to diablerie. You must first drain all of your victim's blood and health levels by any means available. Then drain the heart's-blood, focusing the blood through *Quietus*, which requires a Willpower Challenge with the victim three Traits up. This act channels the victim's essence into a heart-sized mass of blood (usually kept in a ceremonial vessel). This blood stays liquid for a number of nights equal to your Willpower Traits.

## Elder Quietus

### Ripples of the Heart

You have learned how to infuse the blood of mortals from whom you have supped with concealed passions that affect the next Cainite to drink from them.

Drink a minimum of one Blood Trait from the mortal, then spend a minute in physical contact with the vessel concentrating on the emotion you wish to instill in his blood. Perform a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty five Traits). If you succeed, the emotion has been instilled into the blood of the mortal, where it will lie in wait for the next month. Attempts to instill additional emotions into a mortal's blood fail until the effect wears off. Mortals affected by this Discipline should roleplay being slightly predisposed to the emotion secreted in their blood, there is no mechanical effect on them.

Any Cainite drinking the blood of an affected vessel must make a *Self-Control/Instinct* Challenge against the mortal's Willpower Traits. If she fails, the effects of the latent emotion take hold as with the *Presence* power *Passion*. This effect lasts for twice as many hours as Blood Traits consumed by the Cainite.

## Serpentis

Despite arguments from European vampires, the Followers of Set see *Serpentis* as a gift of the god Set — not part of a curse at all. As such, their religion precludes the teaching of *Serpentis*'s abilities to other Cainites, unless those Cainites are initiates of the Setite cult.

Use *Subterfuge* for retests of *Serpentis*.

## Basic Serpentis

### The Eyes of the Serpent

Your eyes hold the hypnotic powers of the serpent, holding your prey immobile. Meet your victim's eyes and make a Social Challenge. If you win, your victim gazes into your eyes entranced until you no longer hold his gaze (or he is attacked or injured).

### Tongue of the Asp

You can transform your tongue into the split shape of a snake's and use it to attack and even drink. Changing your tongue requires no effort. Your tongue attacks for one level of aggravated damage, provided you win the necessary

Physical Challenge for any attack. Additionally, once you have attacked with it, you can use your tongue to drain blood from your victim. In this case, the tongue acts much like the Kiss of any vampire as soon as the Setite begins to drink.

Finally, you can use the tongue to augment your senses, reducing the penalties from darkness by one Trait.

## Intermediate Serpentis

### Skin of the Adder

You can take on a portion of the form of Set, transforming into a scaled snake-like humanoid monstrosity. Expend a Blood Trait and a Willpower Trait. At the end of the turn, your transformation takes place, covering you with mottled scales and adding serpentine agility to your limbs. While in this form, you gain the bonus Physical Traits *Lithe* and *Tough* and the Negative Social Traits *Bestial* and *Repugnant*. Your mouth also distends like a snake's, allowing you to cause an additional level of aggravated damage to bites if you win (not tie) a Simple Test after the bite. You can contort yourself to slither through any opening large enough to fit your head.

This form lasts until dawn or you decide to discard it.

### Form of the Cobra

You can complete the transformation begun by *Skin of the Adder*, becoming a giant black and gold cobra. Expend a Blood Trait — it takes three full turns to transform into a cobra. As a cobra, you have all of the advantages of the *Skin of the Adder*, you can fit through even tighter spaces, and you get a free retest in all grappling challenges. Finally, your bite is poisonous to mortals, causing seven levels of aggravated damage.

This form lasts until dawn or you decide to discard it. It takes three turns to return to human shape.

## Advanced Serpentis

### Cheat the Scale of Anubis

Upon the scale of Anubis, the hearts of the dead are weighed against a feather to judge the sin of the owner. You can remove your heart from your body to cheat the effects this withered organ still has upon your unlife.

By the dark of night — not even the moon may be visible in the sky — you must spend several hours ritually removing your heart from your body and placing it in a properly prepared canopic jar. From this time on, you are immune to being staked through the heart, and you gain an extra Trait in Virtue Tests to resist frenzy. On the negative side, the loss of the seat of emotion also removes all *Empathy* Ability Traits and any Social Traits that focus on warm interaction (such as *Friendly*, *Empathetic* or *Genial*).

Although your *body* is immune to being staked, should someone locate your heart and stake it, you are immediately paralyzed. Additionally, should your heart take even one level of damage from fire or sunlight, you erupt into flames and die. Therefore, wise Setites go to great effort to prevent their heart from being located and used against them. Using this Discipline on mortals or ghouls kills them.

## Elder Serpentis

### Breathe the Sandstorm

By calling upon Set's ancient mastery of sky and storm, you can exhale a scorching sandstorm, scarring and eroding anything in its path. Expend a Blood Trait and exhale in the direction you wish to direct the sandstorm. Anyone within six feet in that direction who cannot dodge out of the way (with a Physical Challenge) takes three aggravated levels of damage. The blast also erodes about an inch of stone and wood and pits metal. Smaller items are broken or destroyed.

# Thaumaturgy

Although it is the youngest Discipline, *Thaumaturgy* has one of the largest repertoires of powers. This is completely due to the assiduity — and desperation — of the mortal wizards who gave up their souls for immortality, only to discover that most of their old magics no longer functioned. Yet certain powers — those linked to ancient pagan blood sacrifice — did function, and through the study of those powers, this newest, most rigorous form of blood sorcery was born.

Most Tremere begin their studies with *Rego Vitae*, though there are always those whose scholarship leads in a different direction.

Each use of *Thaumaturgy* calls for the expenditure of a Blood Trait in addition to whatever other expenditures it may require.

Use *Occult* for retests of *Thaumaturgy*.

> The Tremere and Cappadocians are not the only clans with blood sorcery. Assamites, Setites and Tzimisce each have their own strain. For simplicity's sake, treat these magics as *Thaumaturgy*. Setite sorcerers must choose *Rego Tempestas* as their primary path, and Tzimisce *koldun* must choose *Rego Elementum*. Assamites may begin with any primary path.
>
> Sorcery from different cultures does not mix well. Attempts to learn sorcery from another clan's lore may require extensive Mental Challenges or be entirely impossible, depending on the plans of the Storyteller.

## Rego Vitae

This path was the first devised by the warlocks, and is, in fact, the keystone to their system of blood sorcery, for it points the way to unlocking the different powers hidden in vitae. The tools and implements of this path — vials of blood from myriad sources, as well as the tools for drawing and analyzing this blood — are to be found in almost any Tremere laboratory.

### Basic Rego Vitae

**A Taste for Blood**

Tasting a small sample reveals many secrets to you about the person from whom it came. By ingesting a single Blood Trait, you can uncover how much vitae the subject currently holds (in Blood Traits) and how recently she has fed. If the

subject is Cainite, you can also determine generation and whether the subject has committed diablerie (within the usual time limits).

Caution is advised with this power, for it can lead you closer to the blood oath and may expose you to infected blood.

**Blood Rage**

You can excite the blood of another vampire, forcing him to spend it in any fashion you wish. You must touch your subject (which may require a Physical Challenge). With this contact, you can force him to use his blood to augment Physical Traits, to heal damage, even to sweat blood from his pores.

### Intermediate Rego Vitae

**Blood of Potency**

You can concentrate the blood within your body, making it more potent than usual. For every two Mental Traits you expend, you artificially lower yourself one generation — to a maximum of three generations or six Traits — for purposes of storing and expending Blood Traits and increasing the power of *Dominate*. Should you be diablerized or Embrace childer, your true generation is used to determine effects. This artificial generation stays in effect for the scene, after which any Blood Traits in your system beyond your usual limit dilutes into uselessness, leaving you at your normal limit.

**Theft of Vitae**

You can pull blood from a victim, so that it bursts from her pores, flies through the air and mystically enters your body.

You must be able to see your victim, be within 50 feet of her and have no intervening barriers. Expend from one to three Mental Traits and perform a challenge of your Mental Traits against her Physical Traits. If you win, for each Mental Trait you originally expended, you ingest a Blood Trait from the victim. Blood stolen in this fashion has all the effects of blood drunk by normal means.

### Advanced Rego Vitae

**Cauldron of Blood**

You can bring the blood within any creature to boil with a simple touch. Red mist rises from the victim's body as the vitae boils from his skin. Touch your victim (which may require a Physical Challenge) and expend one to three Mental Traits. For each Mental Trait spent, one Blood Trait boils from the victim. For each Blood Trait lost in this fashion, the victim also receives one level of aggravated damage.

## Creo Ignem

Their ability to summon forth unholy supernatural fire is one of the more obvious reasons many Cainites fear the Tremere. Although the fires summoned are small and controllable at first, they follow their own course once they leave the summoner's hand.

As long as the flame still rests in the sorcerer's hand, it neither burns her nor incites Rötschreck. Once it leaves her hand, it is just like any other fire.

### Basic Creo Ignem

**Hand of Flame**

You can summon a flaming nimbus around your hand or hands. The flame does not harm you or your clothes, even if you are wearing gloves, until it is spread to some flammable substance. It takes one action's concentration to summon the flame, after which your punches inflict aggravated damage and can set inflammable objects alight. This flame lasts until you banish it.

**Flame Bolt**

You can cast a bolt of fire from your hand to any target you can see within 25 feet with a gesture and a few words of power. This bolt can wound people and set flammable objects (not clothing) on fire. To hit a person, you must win a challenge of your Mental Traits against your target's Physical Traits. A *Flame Bolt* causes one level of aggravated damage and takes an action to invoke.

### Intermediate Creo Ignem

**Wall of Fire**

At your command, a barrier of flame erupts at any location you can see within 50 feet, burning all that contact it with an unnatural energy.

Spend an action gesturing to the site you desire the wall to occupy and speaking words of power. The wall is approximately six feet wide and six feet tall, and it causes a level of aggravated damage to anyone who passes through or comes into contact with it. Flammable objects that come into contact with it might catch fire. The wall lasts until you dismiss it, lose consciousness or move more than 50 feet away from it.

If you wish to form the fire under someone, you must win a Challenge of your Mental Traits versus her Physical Traits.

**Engulf**

You can cause a target to burst into flames by staring intently at him and speaking words of power. Once started, these flames begin consuming the target until either he or the flames are extinguished. Invoking the power of this spell takes an action and requires winning a challenge of your Mental Traits against his Physical Traits. When a person is engulfed, he immediately suffers two levels of aggravated damage. At the end of each successive turn — or until the victim takes a full action to smother the flame — he suffers another level of aggravated damage. You may invoke *Engulf* on the same victim multiple times, and each time, he will suffer the initial two levels of aggravated damage, but he will still only suffer one level of damage at the end of subsequent turns.

Naturally, should the victim come into contact with flammable items, he may ignite them. Also, should the victim strike another person, he causes aggravated damage.

### Advanced Creo Ignem

**Firestorm**

At your command, a room-sized area becomes awash with a hail of flame, searing all within. It takes a complete action's worth of gestures and incendiary syllables to call down this doom. You can invoke *Firestorm* on any location you can see within 50 feet, and it affects a 20-foot diameter circle. Perform a mob challenge of your Mental Traits against the Physical Traits of anyone within the area. The Narrator may rule that certain people are incapable of dodging out of the area of effect, due to blocked escape routes, physical interference or other factors. Those who lose are trapped within the storm, enduring two levels of aggravated damage. Thereafter, each turn anyone spends within the storm, she takes a level of

aggravated damage. Flammables within and adjacent to the area of effect are set on fire, but mortals and vampires fleeing its clutches do not necessarily remain lit.

The firestorm lasts until you dispel it, move more than 50 feet from it or lose consciousness.

## Rego Motus

The ability to cause objects to move without actually touching them is of obvious utility to all warlocks. Not only does it allow for one to summon a talisman from across the room in an otherwise desperate situation, but it can be used to propel oneself from the duke's castle to the chantry without troubling the duke's retainers. None of the powers of *Rego Motus* allow the thaumaturge to feel the objects she manipulates. For example, the sword she summons to her hand could be searing hot, acid-coated or constructed of wax, and she would not know until she grasped it.

### Basic Rego Motus

**Force Bolt**

You can emit a sudden impulse of motion that can move or knock over objects or disorient people. Objects weighing 100 pounds or less can be shoved about five feet in any direction. Should you wish to jostle a person or knock something from his grasp, you must defeat him in a challenge of your Mental Traits against his Physical Traits. A person shoved by this power must move one step in any direction you choose and must spend his next action orienting himself.

**Manipulate**

By focusing your attention upon some object within eyesight, you can manipulate it as if you were holding it. Objects moved through this power display only the skill and speed of the thaumaturge. If you are skilled at playing the tabor or wielding a dagger, however, you can play or wield them from a distance, with only a slight increase in difficulty for doing it remotely. You can only manipulate objects that you could lift with one hand.

You must watch and concentrate on the object you are manipulating for the entire duration of your control. Should you be distracted or lose sight of the object — or should you decide to end your control — it immediately falls to the ground or ceases moving. You must bid an additional Trait in any challenge that involves remote manipulation.

### Intermediate Rego Motus

**Flight**

You can raise a whole person into the air or shove large objects around on the ground. You can use this power to slam doors, toss chests or sweep tapestries down the hall. Any object that weighs 200 pounds or less is fodder for this power, and although you can threaten people in this way, you cannot make the objects move faster than a brisk walk or perform quick maneuvers.

More dramatically, you can make yourself fly at a brisk walking speed as high as you dare, or merely skimming along the ground. You can hoist another person if you win a challenge of your Mental Traits against her Physical Traits. While this power cannot directly harm someone — it is too slow to properly slam such a victim into something — it can be used to place people in precarious situations.

This power lasts until you stop concentrating on whatever you are controlling or it passes out of your line of sight.

**Repulse**

With a quick gesture and a word of force, you can fling nearby objects or people away from you. Unlike *Flight* or *Manipulate*, this is an instantaneous power. Once you *Repulse* something, you cannot *Repulse* it again without another use of this power. To affect people, perform a mass challenge of your Mental Traits against their Physical Traits. Those who lose are flung back until they are 20 feet away from you, and they must spend their next action reorienting themselves. You can use *Repulse* on anyone within 10 feet of you, even if they are grappling or biting you.

Using this power on an object allows you to move it with enough force to inflict a level of lethal damage to whomever it hits. You must succeed in a challenge of your Mental Traits against your target's Physical Traits in order to hit your target. Otherwise, the projectile misses. You cannot use this power to move something toward you.

### Advanced Rego Motus

**Control**

Through a supreme act of concentration, you can control any object or person as if it were your puppet. You must gesture and chant, so witnesses may figure out what is going on.

You can move and manipulate any creature or thing weighing a ton or less with the same precision you could bring to bear with your own two hands. Striking someone with an object you control thus requires winning a challenge of your Mental Traits against his Physical Traits and inflicts one level of lethal damage. Should you wish to wield a weapon in this manner, you must bid an extra Trait for each challenge to accommodate the difficulty of remote manipulation.

Gaining control of a person requires the same challenge to hold them immobile. If you wish to do anything else with your victim on subsequent turns — such as make him dance or slam him into a pillar — you must win the same challenge. People held by *Control* can do nothing with their physical bodies, but they can speak, shout or use Disciplines.

Exercising *Control* over one creature or object calls for complete concentration. *Control* ends as soon as you turn your attention elsewhere or lose sight of your puppet.

## Rego Tempestas

The ability to bend the weather to one's will is phenomenally potent in any society that depends upon the earth for sustenance or must face exposure to the elements during travels from town to town. On smaller scales, the powers of weather can both aid and hinder the Cainite in her pursuits.

### Basic Rego Tempestas

**Cloak of Fog**

You can create a thick fogbank outdoors that reduces vision. Chant for a turn. Within 15 minutes, fog will rise from the ground and cover an outdoor area

approximately 100 feet in diameter. Visual challenges within the fog are one Trait down, but *Heightened Senses* removes that penalty. The fog lasts a scene or an hour, but it may be dispersed earlier by windy conditions.

**Downpour**

You can call forth rich rain-bearing clouds to drench an area near you. After three turns of chanting, clouds begin to appear and thicken until, approximately 15 minutes later, they release a torrential downpour on an outdoor area approximately 100 feet in diameter. Within the rain, all Physical Challenges require the risk of an additional Trait, and ranged attacks are limited to 20 feet or less. Natural fires within the rain are extinguished. The downpour lasts one hour, but you may extend it an additional hour by expending a Mental Trait.

### Intermediate Rego Tempestas

**Tempest**

The power of the storm arises at your command. By invoking the powers of wind and rain for one minute, you can initiate the process of calling in the storm of your choice. Gusting winds, torrential rain and clamorous thunder and lightning are all possible, but you cannot call for the winds to blow a certain direction or make lightning strike when and where you wish. The storm covers an area approximately half a mile in diameter and has effects similar to *Cloak of Fog* or *Downpour*. It takes 15 minutes to build and lasts for an hour, though you can extend its duration another hour by expending a Mental Trait.

**Hide the Burning Sun**

You can call forth clouds dark enough to partially protect you from the sun's wrath. You must chant for five minutes, during which time clouds form and thicken over an area approximately half a mile in diameter. At the end of an hour, or the beginning of the next scene, the clouds will be heavy enough that Cainites traveling abroad by day suffer only lethal damage from the sunlight. At the discretion of the Storyteller, particularly holy places may resist this shrouding, remaining bathed in sunlight.

These clouds last one hour and provide no protection from limitations on daytime action due to sluggishness.

### Advanced Rego Tempestas

**Call Lightning**

With a gesture pointing out your target and a word of command, you can bring fire from the sky in the form of a lightning bolt that strikes where you command. You and your target must be outdoors, and the weather must be at least overcast or rainy. Enter a challenge pitting your Mental Traits against your target's Physical Traits. If you win, your target suffers three levels of aggravated damage.

## Rego Elementum

Thaumaturgic command of the elements — earth air, fire and water — is a far cry from the potent and versatile wizardries of living hermetic magi, but they are still potent enough to evoke wonder and concern from Cainites who see this path in action. Tzimisce *koldun* begin with this as their primary path, a manifestation of their ancient ties to their homeland.

### Basic Rego Elementum

**Earth-Born Strength**

You can imbue yourself with the strength of the earth without depleting your store of blood. As long as you are at ground level or below, a quick gesture grants you three additional Strength-related Physical Traits of your choice. These Traits last for as many turns as you have powers in *Rego Elementum*, but you may expend a Willpower Trait to add one more turn to that. You cannot use this power again until the initial use has expired, but it can be activated the same turn you attack.

**Wooden Tongues**

You can compel inanimate objects to speak to you, imparting what information their limited understanding can offer. For each use, you may ask a Narrator, speaking as the object, one of the following questions: "Describe who last passed by or touched you." "What is the most interesting thing to happen to you recently?" "Where did you come from?" "What is your purpose?" The Narrator will answer with descriptive images reflecting the personality of the object. This power may be used repeatedly to gain greater insight into the situation surrounding the object or place.

### Intermediate Rego Elementum

**Animate the Unmoving**

You can awaken the spirit of an object to the point that it will move under your command. Such motion is limited to the nature of the object you animate. Doors are adept at slamming on intruders, and beds can carry their occupants down hallways, but not vice versa. You must expend a Willpower Trait in addition to the Blood Trait and speak the words of an ancient pact to the object you wish animated. Then, perform a Static Mental Challenge against a number of Traits dependent upon the size of the target — generally one Trait for every 50 pounds, though the Storyteller may declare that certain objects are more or less resistant to animation. Objects stay animated for the scene.

A thaumaturge can animate as many objects as his Willpower and blood allow, however the difficulty of the challenge to animate each object increases by one Trait for each other object that is currently animated.

**Elemental Form**

You can transform your body into any of the primary elements other than fire, from a patch of air or fog to a pool of water to a human-sized boulder or clod of earth. It takes but a quick gesture to invoke this power, but you must also expend a Willpower Trait if you wish to be able to use your senses and Disciplines in this form. This material is not shaped or processed at formation, and it is inanimate. It occupies approximately the same volume as your body, but it can weigh far more or less, depending upon the material you choose. Should the form undergo disruption (from heavy wind, in the case of a patch of fog, to chiseling in the case of a boulder), you take one level of unsoakable bashing damage per turn.

If you have mastered *Creo Ignem*, you can also take the form of a patch of cold fire, but you cast only wan light and cannot induce Rötschreck or ignite flammables.

This power lasts until sunrise or until you terminate it.

### Advanced Rego Elementum

**Summon Elemental**

You can summon and command any of the traditional elementals — sylph (air), salamander (fire), undine (water) and gnome (earth). You must be near a quantity of the element appropriate to the elemental you intend to summon, and the elemental will emerge from that location. Summoning calls for five minutes of conjuration and the expenditure of from one to five Mental Traits, depending upon the power of the elemental you summon. As a general rule, elementals have at least six Mental and six Physical Traits, though some may have far more. The Storyteller should decide what answers you based on the environment of the summoning.

Once you have summoned the elemental, you must assert control over it in a challenge of your Social Traits against its Rage Traits. If you include an appropriate offering, the Storyteller may grant you bonus Traits on this challenge. Should you win, it will perform one duty for you; should you lose, it will do as it wills, possibly attacking you. Elementals will not put their spiritual lives at risk for you, and they leave one day after they have been summoned.

## Other Paths

Despite *Thaumaturgy's* relative youth as a Discipline, there are many other paths — some completed and secreted away by paranoid warlocks, others carefully translated from other forms of blood sorcery, others still being developed. The quest for this hidden and lost lore has kept many Tremere busy in their unlife.

## Thaumaturgic Rituals

While the paths allow the educated thaumaturge to call upon a diverse array of quick magical powers, it has been suggested that there is a thaumaturgic ritual to accomplish almost anything a Cainite could desire. This versatility comes at a price, though, as even the simplest ritual takes a quarter of an hour to perform, and some are reported to take years. Another drawback is that these rituals may call for ingredients that are rare, expensive, difficult to obtain, and sometimes dangerous. While *Contacts* and *Influence* could suffice to obtain some of these ingredients, some might require great effort on the part of the aspiring thaumaturge. More thaumaturgic rituals are located on p. 219, in the section on Gargoyle powers.

### Basic Thaumaturgic Rituals

**Communicate with Sire**

You have but to meditate for half an hour with some object that belonged to your sire to enter into a mental conversation with her, wherever she may be. This conversation lasts for 10 minutes or until you or your sire terminates it.

**Defense of the Sacred Haven**

By devoting a Blood Trait and an hour to inscribe of mystic sigils over each door and window in a room, you can mystically prevent sunlight from entering it.

**Deflection of Wooden Doom**

By holding a tiny splinter of wood under your tongue, you can protect yourself from a stake being driven through your heart. The first stake to impale your heart crumbles to dust upon contact. The stake has to actually begin to penetrate your heart for this ritual to take effect. This ritual lasts until the next dawn or dusk.

**Devil's Touch**

By giving her a mystically prepared penny (pfennig, sou, etc.) at the conclusion of the ritual, you can mystically mark a mortal so that she receives the Negative Social Traits *Repugnant* and *Obnoxious* until the next dawn.

**Wake with Evening's Freshness**

By ritually spreading ashes of burnt feathers over your sleeping place, you can guarantee that should your slumber be interrupted during the day, you will not suffer any penalties from acting during the day. This ritual in no way protects from the damage of sunlight, though.

**Revelation of the Blood Lineage**

By scrying for an hour over a Cainite's Blood Trait, you can discover the Cainite's sire, learning her name and gaining an image of her visage. If you continue scrying on the same blood and win another Static Ritual Test, you can delve back one more generation. You may repeat this process, journeying up the Cainite's lineage until you fail the Static Challenge (or run out of night). At that point, you can get nothing more from the blood (including sustenance).

**Donning the Mask of Shadows**

You can render yourself translucent, smoky and the sounds you make become muffled. Though it does not confer true invisibility or silence, this ritual does make you harder to detect by sight or sound. You are one Trait up on any challenges involving stealth or hiding as long as sight and hearing are the primary senses.

**Principal Focus of Vitae Infusion**

By invoking the power of your blood, you can infuse your blood into a small object. Anything between the size of a coin and a pot helm can be infused with a Blood Trait. Objects containing blood in this fashion possess a reddish hue and feel slick to the touch. Later, by touching the object and issuing a mental command, you can draw the blood back out.

You can also craft this ritual so that another person can release the blood, provided he is present when it is first infused. Since this ritual only works with the caster's blood, anyone partaking of it risks moving toward the blood oath.

**Ward Versus Ghouls**

By repeating a warding invocation while ritually inscribing a glyph on an object using a Blood Trait, you can make it so that any ghoul touching the object is injured. Any ghoul that touches the object suffers one level of lethal damage, in addition to any other damage that may be involved, should the object cause damage in and of itself. This damage occurs each turn the ghoul touches the object and the warding effect lasts until dawn.

You can craft this ward to exclude certain ghouls, provided they are present at the casting and contribute a Blood Trait.

### Intermediate Thaumaturgic Rituals

**Flesh of Fiery Touch**

You can treat yourself so that any who touch you are burnt upon contact. You must spend an hour preparing a small lump of charcoal that you then ignite and

swallow (taking a level of aggravated damage in the process). Until the next sunset, anyone who intentionally touches you receives an automatic level of aggravated damage. Brushing against you by accident or getting struck by you does not activate this effect.

A side effect of this ritual is that your skin takes on a dark, coppery hue, similar to the tan of one who works in the sun, but subtly different.

**Incorporeal Passage**

You can render yourself incorporeal by looking into a fragment of a mirror and chanting. Physical attacks and barriers do not affect you in any way. You can only move forward or stand in place while this ritual is in effect, though. You cannot turn or back up. This ritual lasts for the scene, or until you turn aside or stop chanting.

**Shaft of Belated Quiescence**

You can prepare a stake with a simple elemental spirit so that it becomes a vicious weapon against Cainites. When the stake strikes someone, the tip breaks off and begins working its way to the heart of the victim. It takes four hours to perform this ritual, which calls for a stake (or spear or arrow, etc.) crafted from rowan wood, coated in three Traits of the caster's blood and blackened in an oak-wood fire.

Once the stake is prepared, the first time it strikes a person to do at least one level of damage, the tip breaks off and begins wending its way to the Cainite's heart. At the middle of every scene (or hour) thereafter, the Storyteller performs a Simple Test against the victim. Should he lose, the splinter manages to inch closer to his heart. When the splinter has accumulated as many successes as the victim has Physical Traits, the tip has reached his heart, and he is paralyzed. Should the victim be a mortal or a ghoul, he dies.

It is possible to try to intercept the splinter by carving it out, but the splinter will try to evade these attempts. This attempt may be made once per hour. Each attempt to intercept the splinter causes an unsoakable level of lethal damage to the target and calls for a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty of seven Traits). The person attempting to carve the tip out may bid up to three extra Traits on any challenge. These Traits count as extra successes should she win the challenge. If the person attempting to carve out the tip can accumulate as many successes as the tip has achieved, she extracts the tip, and the enchantment fades.

This is also the only way to remove the splinter once it has reached the heart, though attempts at that point are easier since the tip is no longer moving. The challenge's difficulty is only three Traits at that point.

**Heart of Stone**

You can harden your heart to stone, rendering yourself immune to staking, but losing touch with your emotions. You must place a candle on your bare chest and allow it to burn all the way down, inflicting one level of aggravated damage. With the extinguishing of the flame, your heart turns to stone, and you are immune to staking (including from the *Shaft of Belated Quiescence*). At the same time, while under the effects of this ritual, you lose all but one *Conscience* (or *Conviction*) Trait and your opponents gain an automatic free retest on any Social Challenges except those involving intimidation. *Heart of Stone* lasts until you dispel it.



**Ward Versus Cainites**

You can enchant an object so that it injures Cainites who touch it. This ritual is identical in effect to *Ward Versus Ghouls*, except it affects Cainites and requires one of your Blood Traits. You are immune to your own ward unless you specify otherwise.

### Advanced Thaumaturgic Rituals

**Enact the Blood Contract**

You can craft a contract in your own blood that mystically binds yourself and one other signatory to the letter of its conditions. It takes three nights and one Blood Trait to write the contract and one more Blood Trait for both signatures. Once the contract is signed, should either party break it, she will immediately suffer sufficient aggravated damage levels to fall into torpor — this damage cannot be resisted in any way.

There are only two ways of terminating the contract: by fulfilling the terms or physically burning it. Both parties immediately know should the contract be terminated.

**Escape to a True Friend**

You can burn a three-foot mystic circle on the floor that will transport you near a highly trusted friend, or at least the closest thing you have to one. It takes six hours a night for three consecutive nights to create the circle, and each night you must dedicate three Blood Traits to this ritual. With the completion of the ritual, you must dedicate the circle to a friend. Thereafter, you need but step into the circle and speak your friend's name, and you will be transported near your friend — within a few minutes' walk, out of sight. This ritual only works to bring you to one you feel no ill will toward, and you must speak this friend's name. Thaumaturges who attempt to use this ritual to reach an enemy or do not use a real name find themselves somewhere else (Storyteller's discretion). You may bring one other person or your own weight in gear when you use the circle. Furthermore, this circle may be used indefinitely as long as it is not damaged.

**Ward Versus Spirits**

You can enchant an object so that it injures spirits who touch it, whether in the natural world or the spirit world. This ritual is identical in effect to *Ward Versus Ghouls*, except it affects elementals, nature spirits and the like. *Ward Versus Spirits* uses sea salt rather than blood.

There are similar Advanced rituals for protection against demons and protection against ghosts. *Ward Versus Ghosts* uses crushed limestone from a tombstone, and *Ward Versus Demons* requires holy water. None of these wards can be attuned to accept certain spirits, demons or ghosts.

## Valeren

Cainite scholarship suggests that some creature other than Saulot, the Salubri Antediluvian, originally created the Salubri Discipline. There are even apocryphal fragments of the *Book of Nod* detailing Saulot's quest to find it.

*Valeren* is divided into two paths, that of the Warrior and that of the Healer. Though it is possible to learn powers from both paths, it is not easy. When a

vampire first studies *Valeren*, she must declare which path she intends to pursue. Experience costs for learning powers on this path are normal. Experience costs for powers from the other path, however, are treated as if the power being purchased was one level higher. (Basic powers require the Experience Trait cost of Intermediate powers, and so on.) A Cainite's knowledge of her secondary path may never exceed her understanding of her primary path. The Salubri used to freely teach the *Path of the Healer*, but with the coming of the Usurpers, many use this power as a bargaining chip with local Cainites, offering their abilities in exchange for protection.

Although most Cainites believe the third eye is a part of the clan's curse, it is really a side effect of learning *Valeren*. The eye forms in the forehead of any Cainite who learns *Gift of Sleep* or *Morphean Blow*. Thereafter, it opens whenever the Cainite uses those or any higher *Valeren* powers. Vampires who wish to conceal the third eye while using their powers may do so, but they must bid an extra Trait in any challenges involving *Valeren* powers other than *Sense Life* and *Sense Death*.

Use *Medicine* for retests of *Valeren*.

## Path of the Healer

### Basic Path of the Healer

**Sense Life**

You can sense the ebb and slow of the vital forces, determining how much life someone has within them. You must touch your patient and expend a number of Mental Traits to use this power. For one Trait, you may determine whether the patient is mortal, ghoul, Cainite or something else. Two Traits reveal how much damage he has suffered. Three Traits allow you to determine how much blood is within the patient's system. Four Traits inform you of any diseases the patient carries. Each level of information includes all the information of the levels below it.

You can also use *Sense Life* to diagnose ailments and afflictions, discovering the source and nature of injuries and unnatural mental states. Each piece of information requires the expenditure of a Mental Trait, for example, learning that a wound was caused by a poisoned dagger would cost two Mental Traits — the first to identify the dagger, the second the poison.

If you know *Sense Death* as well, you need spend one less Mental Trait for each diagnosis.

**Gift of Sleep**

With a touch, you can free a living being from pain and lead mortals into a healing sleep. Freeing another from pain requires a touch and the expenditure of a Blood Trait. Your patient feels no pain and experiences no wound penalties for the next turn. If you also expend a Willpower Trait, the respite lasts for the scene. This power works only on willing subjects.

Alternatively, you may place your patient into a deep, healing sleep, free of nightmares and derangements. Though she can be wakened normally, the patient will rest for eight hours if left undisturbed, and find her Attribute Traits refreshed and one Willpower Trait restored upon awakening. This too costs a Blood Trait.



### Intermediate Path of the Healer

**Healing Touch**

You can channel the healing powers of your own vitae to others. You must touch the area near the wound, which may require a Physical Challenge, should the patient be unwilling. Expending one Blood Trait can heal each level of lethal damage. Expending two Blood Traits can heal each level of aggravated damage. You need not heal entire wounds in a single turn, but you may spread the healing time to allow for the speed at which you can use vitae. Similarly, you are not required to heal a patient completely, and you may, at a later time, continue work on someone you have partially healed.

**Shepherd's Watch**

You can erect a mystical barrier between those under your care and those who would harm them. Erecting the barrier requires a full action and the expenditure of two Willpower Traits. This barrier extends around you at a range of 10 feet and moves with you. Those inside the barrier when you erect it may come and go as they wish, but those outside must wait one turn and best you in a Mental Challenge to enter. Of course, if you trust them, you can relent and grant them the protection of the barrier as well. This barrier only stops people and what they carry. It provides no protection from arrows or other missile weapons.

### Advanced Path of the Healer

**The Ailing Spirit**

You can bring the tranquility of your focus to the minds of those afflicted with delirium and the demons of madness. Spend 10 minutes in quiet conversation with your patient, expend two Blood Traits and perform a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty of his Mental Traits — more complex minds are more difficult to cure. With success, you can remove one of your patient's derangements. For most creatures, this blessing is permanent, but Malkavians — and other practitioners of *Dementation* — can never be cured of their core derangement. For those unfortunates, the respite lasts but the scene.

You cannot cure your own derangements with this power.

### Elder Path of the Healer

**Warding the Beast**

Your empathic powers are so great that you can draw the very soul of a Cainite into your own self for ministration, and though you cannot alleviate the Curse entirely, you can heal the most damaging spiritual trauma.

This power works only on a willing patient, and you must maintain eye contact while you draw her soul into yours. To draw the soul in, make a Static Physical Challenge with a difficulty of two Traits per Road Trait that the patient lies below six. (For example, if the patient has two Road Traits, the difficulty is eight Traits.) This power cannot help those who are on the Road of Sin or have lost all of their Road Traits. While you have the soul in your care, you can expend permanent Willpower Traits to restore Road Traits on a one-for-one basis. You can restore up to the normal maximum of five Traits. Should the soul wish to return to her body at any point, she may initiate a Mental Challenge against you to try to break free. Confining a soul

against her will is a vile act, and most Salubri will relent in this case. Should you decide to prevent her release, she may try again once a night.

While you have possession of a soul, the soul's original body is an empty shell, devoid of consciousness. This means that the body is immune to Mental and Social Disciplines, but it also means that it is an appealing host for ghosts, spirits and demons. Unless possessed in this manner, the body follows your simple verbal commands like an automaton for as long as you hold its soul. Unless commanded, the body rests passively.

Should you fail to properly care for the body of the soul in your care or attempt to hold the soul longer than it wishes, you risk regressing on your road — make a *Conscience/ Conviction* Test (difficulty four Traits) to avoid losing the appropriate Trait. You cannot use *Warding the Beast* to restore your own Road Traits.

## Path of the Warrior

### Basic Path of the Warrior

**Sense Death**

You can trace the flow of death and determine how closely and in what manner a person approaches that terminus. In practice, this power acts exactly like *Sense Life*, expending the same number of Mental Traits for the same questions, but it is the philosophical antithesis, for its practitioners trace cancer and weakness rather than the bright pulses of life. As with *Sense Life*, those who know both powers pay one less Mental Trait to ask their questions.

**Morphean Blow**

You can send a mortal to sleep. Though this sleep is not as restful as that granted by *Gift of Sleep*, you can use this power on an unwilling subject. All you need to do is touch him (which may require a Physical Challenge) and expend a Blood Trait. The subject will fall into a deep slumber and will not awaken until disturbed or a full eight hours have passed.

### Intermediate Path of the Warrior

**Burning Touch**

Your understanding of the secrets of the body allow you to generate intense pain with but a touch. Expend one Blood Trait and touch your opponent (which may require a Physical Challenge). While using this power, your eyes flicker with a dull reddish glow. Though the pain may take on any flavor you wish, this power does no actual damage. Instead, the victim experiences penalties as if she were in the Wounded state for the next full turn. If she is already Wounded, she must defeat you in a Mental Challenge or be affected as if in the Incapacitated state for the next full turn.

When used in interrogation- and torture-related challenges, this power allows for one free retest per use.

**Armor of Caine's Fury**

You can use the power of your blood to create armor that protects you from physical harm and the terror of battle. While wearing this armor, you appear to be wreathed in a halo that resembles crimson mail.

Expend a Blood Trait and from one to five Mental Traits. Each Mental Trait expended grants you one additional health level of armor with no Negative Traits. Furthermore, for every two Mental Traits expended (round down), the difficulty of all *Courage* Tests to resist Rötschreck on the battlefield decreases by one. This power has no effect on Rötschreck from fire or sunlight.

### Advanced Path of the Warrior

**Vengeance of Samiel**

Your blood calls back to the spirit of the mightiest warrior of the Salubri, focusing your attention and power into one supremely potent attack. Your third eye opens, emitting a blood-red glare and guiding your hand such that you need not keep your regular eyes open.

For the attack, expend three Blood Traits and use both your Mental and Physical Traits added together for the attack challenge (including bidding, overbidding and tie resolution). Your opponent may not use the *Dodge* Ability to call for a retest. If the attack succeeds, you inflict two additional levels of whatever type of damage your attack inflicts. *Vengeance of Samiel* may be used only when you have devoted an entire turn to making an attack with your bare hands or a melee weapon. You may not use this attack to as a vehicle for another Discipline's power, such as *Dagon's Call*, but you may augment it with any other Discipline, such as *Talons of the Beast*, so long as that power does not generate an attack in and of itself.

### Elder Path of the Warrior

**Fiery Agony**

Your touch can deliver agony so potent that the *Burning Touch's* pain pales in comparison — pain so excruciating that Cainites may frenzy and mortals may perish. Expend one Blood Trait and touch your opponent (which may require a Physical Challenge). You must then engage your victim in a Mental Challenge. If you succeed, the sufferer experiences penalties as if he were Wounded for the duration of the scene. If he is already Wounded or becomes so, he is considered Incapacitated for that duration.

You can make the pain so intense that it inflicts lethal damage upon the victim at the rate of one level per turn. You must maintain contact with the victim and expend one additional Blood Trait per turn. A Cainite may make a Simple Test for each level of damage inflicted in this fashion. If he succeeds, he negates that level of damage. Should the Cainite take more levels of damage than he has Willpower Traits, he must make a *Courage* Test against a difficulty of your Mental Traits to avoid Rötschreck. For Cainites, damage received from this power vanishes with the next sunset. For mortals, this damage heals normally.

## Vicissitude

Of the vampiric Disciplines, only *Vicissitude* competes with *Dementation* for instilling fear among Cainites, for as *Dementation* warps the mind, *Vicissitude* reshapes the body, be it living or unliving. Christian scholars see in *Vicissitude* a perversion of God's ability to create, wherein the user futilely twists life to no lasting purpose.

All uses of *Vicissitude* require physical contact as the user tears and rearranges his subject's flesh. In cases where the victim may flee or resist, using this Discipline requires a Physical Challenge. For mortals, ghouls and Cainites of higher generation, the changes wrought by *Vicissitude* can only be undone by another practitioner. Vampires of equal or lower generation may heal back each scar as if it were an aggravated wound. Sadly, attempts to improve the appearance of Nosferatu and other such cursed bloodlines invariably vanish whenever the beautified Cainite must heal his own wounds.

Use *Crafts: Body Crafts* for retests of *Vicissitude*. *Crafts: Body Crafts* is a special Ability available to Cainites who have learned at least *Malleable Visage*. This Ability also covers less drastic alterations of the flesh, such as piercing, tattooing and scarification.

## Basic Vicissitude

### Malleable Visage

You can sculpt your own flesh either to imitate another form or to reshape yourself toward some personal aesthetic ideal. You must expend a Blood Trait and physically mold your features into the form you desire. If you wish to duplicate another's appearance, you must win a Static Mental Challenge whose difficulty is the subject's Social Traits. Yet even though this power may grant you your subject's appearance, you still operate with your own Social Traits in any challenges. Alternatively, you can give yourself a hideous countenance, taking on up to three *Repugnant* Negative Traits.

### Transmogrify the Mortal Clay

You can reshape the flesh and organs of any creature you can touch, stretching and sculpting it as you will. By expending a Blood Trait and plying another's flesh, you can perform alterations similar to the *Malleable Visage* upon them. Additionally, by rearranging tissue and viscera, you can exchange one (and only one) Physical Trait for an extra Healthy health level or vice versa.

## Intermediate Vicissitude

### Rend the Osseous Frame

Bone is now as malleable as flesh under your ministrations, and you can completely reshape any being, yourself included, into whatever form you desire, adding height, bone spurs and other fancies. You must expend a Blood Trait and twist your victim as you desire. If you do so without simultaneously exercising *Transmogrify the Mortal Clay*, each use causes one level of lethal damage. Used in conjunction with *Transmogrify the Mortal Clay*, you can rebuild your victims as you will.

Should you craft protruding bone spurs into someone's form, he can use them to inflict lethal damage on unarmed attacks.

### Awaken the Zulo Shape

You can adopt the traditional war-form of the Tzimisce *voivodes*, the *zulo*: eight feet tall with a gray-green slime-exuding scaly carapace, long black talons and spines protruding from the vertebra. This transformation requires the expenditure of two Blood Traits and inflicts the Negative Social Traits *Bestial*, *Feral* and *Repugnant* upon you. In return, you gain the additional Physical Traits *Brawny*, *Dexterous*, *Enduring*, *Ferocious*, *Quick* and *Stalwart*. You inflict lethal damage in unarmed combat and one extra level of damage in all unarmed attacks. You may only initiate Social Challenges for intimidation purposes, and all who are unaccustomed to seeing such creatures must win a *Courage* Test or flee.

You may maintain the *zulo* form for as long as you desire.

## Advanced Vicissitude

### Ascendancy of the Sanguine Humour

With a moment's concentration, you can transform any limbs, or your entire body into a mass of vitae under your control. Each limb (two arms, two legs and a head) transforms into a single Blood Trait; your torso transforms into your remaining Blood Traits. This blood can move under your control at the speed of a slow walk, ooze over objects and through cracks. Blood in this form can also do whatever your blood can normally do (sustain Cainites, create ghouls, etc.). It cannot be physically injured, but it can be hurt by fire or sunlight. If you have transformed entirely into blood, you can use mental Disciplines, provided they do not require eye contact.

Should a part of you that was transformed into blood be drunk or destroyed, you can reform that part by expending a Blood Trait. Similarly, should such blood return to you, you can reform it into the part it was before. Should you reform the part before regaining the blood in question, the blood becomes inert. Should all of you be drunk or destroyed while in this form, you meet Final Death.

## Elder Vicissitude

### Chiropteran Marauder

You can transform into a horror even more terrifying than the *zulo*. The *Chiropteran Marauder* is an enormous bipedal bat with veined, leathery wings and an enormous, fanged maw. Assuming the *Chiropteran Marauder* form requires three Blood Traits. This form offers all of the features and drawbacks of the *zulo* form, but allows flight at the speed of a sprint, inflicts two extra levels of damage in unarmed attacks and allows an automatic retest in any hearing-based challenges.

## Gargoyles

Gargoyles have supernatural powers quite unlike other Cainites because they themselves are quite unlike other Cainites. In fact, it has been posited that they are more magical constructs than the cursed Children of Caine. Rather than acquiring Disciplines by study and learning from other vampires, they derive their powers from the arcane constitution of their blood and special rituals performed by their Tremere masters.

Naturally, the powers granted to Gargoyles are well suited to the purposes for which the Warlocks have brewed them, particularly in their battle against the Tzimisce. As is appropriate to their servile lot in unlife, Gargoyle powers are built mostly around Physical Traits and occasionally perception, for their role as watchdogs. Whereas most Disciplines do not leave physical traces upon those who practice them, Gargoyles are usually physically altered by their powers.

### Purchasing Gargoyle Powers

In addition to their clan Disciplines — *Flight*, *Fortitude* and *Potence* — Gargoyles may possess or grow certain other special characteristics. These characteristics are purchased as Disciplines, but do not allow for a progression. They are simply changes in the body of the Gargoyle. In time, this set of powers will become the Discipline of *Visceratika*, but that is a different century.

Use *Survival* for retests of all Gargoyle powers except *Fortitude* and *Flight*.

**Gargoyle Power Costs**

| Power | Discipline Cost | Free Trait Cost | Experience Trait Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Embrace | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| Extra Arms | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Foulness | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Gargoyle Rituals (Basic) | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Gargoyle Rituals (Intermediate) | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Gargoyle Rituals (Advanced) | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| Heightened Senses | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Horror | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| Huge Size | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Talons or Claws | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Terrifying Visage | 1 | 3 | 3 |

## Gargoyle Powers

### Embrace

Unlike most Gargoyles, you can sire childer. Your childe experiences the same stress of any other Gargoyle at creation and is one generation higher than you. This power may be taken only at character creation.

### Extra Arms

You possess two additional arms, jutting out just below your regular arms. These arms do everything your regular arms do and grant you a free retest in all challenges involving unarmed and melee combat.

### Foulness

Your visage and stench are so vile that everyone within five feet of you must bid an extra Trait for each challenge they enter.

### Gargoyle Rituals

You have been the subject of one of the Gargoyle rituals listed on p. 219. You may have the benefit of multiple rituals, but each must be purchased separately. Additionally, you must know a Tremere who is able and willing to perform these rituals.



### Heightened Senses

Your senses are keener than any mortal's. This power functions as the *Auspex* power *Heightened Senses* (p. 157).

### Horror

Your appearance is so frightful that mortals and Cainites alike are driven back in terror unless you conceal it. No person with less than five Willpower Traits can even approach you. Those with six or more Willpower Traits must make a Static *Courage* Test (difficulty three Traits) to approach. Should someone possess the courage to approach you, the *Horror* of your appearance does not trouble her for the remainder of the night.

### Huge Size

You are a behemoth, standing over 10 feet tall. You gain three Bruised health levels and a free retest on any intimidation-based challenges, but you must bid two extra Traits any time you attempt to dodge.

### Talons

You possess long, sharp, non-retractable claws on each of your extremities. These claws inflict aggravated damage and offer the Bonus Trait *Sharp* in combat and climbing challenges.

### Terrifying Visage

Your countenance is so terrifying that all who look upon you quail in shock. This power functions as the *Presence* power *Dread Gaze* (p. 191).

### Flight

All Gargoyles — save those created without them intentionally — possess rudimentary wings, but yours are larger and strong enough to allow you limited flight. As you improve your proficiency at *Flight*, your wings continue to grow. This power can be developed like a Discipline, but, though no other clan can use it, you must pay Experience Traits as if it were an out-of-clan Discipline.

*Celerity* cannot be used to increase the speed of *Flight*, though it may be used to perform more complex maneuvers or get airborne in one turn when you need a running take-off.

Use *Flying* for retests of *Flight*. *Flying* is a special Ability that is only available to Gargoyles who have learned at least *Glide* or other creatures that possess functioning wings.

To indicate that you are flying, hold your arms straight out at the side. If this proves too tiring, speak with your Storyteller about adopting a different protocol.

#### Basic Flight

**Glide**

Though you cannot actually gain altitude, you can control your fall, and if you can locate an updraft, you can maintain level flight. Since you can manage no more than 15 miles per hour, you are at the mercy of strong winds. You can carry only clothes and personal effects, but you need never worry about taking damage from falling.

**Fly**

You are no longer limited to leaping from parapets to get airborne. With a running start — one action's worth — you can take to the air from the ground. You can carry 20 pounds or so, and fly at 30 miles per hour. Strong or magically controlled winds and complex maneuvers may call for a Static Physical Challenge.

### Intermediate Flight

**Swoop**

You can now take off without a running start if you are carrying nothing or from a running start carrying up to 50 pounds. Your maximum speed is now 45 miles per hour. Strong or magically controlled winds and complex maneuvers may call for a Static Physical Challenge. You can declare Fair Escape whenever you are outdoors or near an open window.

**Soar**

You can take off while carrying 50 pounds or from a run with up to 100 pounds. Your maximum speed is 60 miles per hour.

### Advanced Flight

**Flight of the Eagle**

You can take off vertically while carrying up to 200 pounds — enough to carry most Cainites, or prey. Only the most potent storms can affect you, and you fly at 75 miles per hour.

### Elder Flight

**One with the Wind**

You can take off while carrying up to 500 pounds. You fly at 90 miles per hour and barely notice the weather. Anyone attempting to hit you while you are flying must bid an additional Physical Trait.

### Flight Maneuvers

There are certain combat maneuvers that flight allows, including the following:

**Pounce**

You leap a great distance onto your prey, using your wings to guide and power your flight. In areas with enough room for you to spread your wings, you can leap six feet per level of *Flight* you possess, reaching an opponent who would otherwise be out of your reach.

**Plunge**

You swoop down from the sky, adding your flying momentum to a strike upon an opponent and then flying out of his reach before he can attack. You cannot use this maneuver indoors (unless you are inside a cathedral or some similarly large space) or against targets who are under cover.

To *Plunge*, you must bid an extra Physical Trait — or two extra Traits if your target is actively trying to evade you — and perform your normal attack. If you win, your attack inflicts one additional level of damage.

Cainites with *Celerity* may attack you before you fly off again: once for Intermediate *Celerity*, twice for Advanced *Celerity* or better. Because of the speed of this attack, vampires do not gain the preemptive advantage of *Alacrity*. You must know *Fly* or better to perform a *Plunge*.

**Dive**

You swoop down from the sky and ram into your target, crushing them with your Gargoyle body. You cannot use this maneuver indoors (unless you are inside a cathedral or some similarly large space) or against targets who are under cover.

To *Dive*, you must bid an extra Physical Trait — or two extra Traits if your target is actively trying to evade you — and perform your normal attack. If you win, your attack inflicts three levels of bashing damage — or four levels if you know *Flight of the Eagle*. However, since you are using your body as a weapon, you also suffer a level of bashing damage unless you possess at least Basic *Fortitude* or have been protected by the ritual *Transform the Skin to Stone*. Because of the speed of this attack, vampires do not gain the preemptive advantage of *Alacrity*. You must know *Fly* or better to perform a *Dive*. You cannot use melee weapons with this attack.

After this attack, you are on the ground until you take off again. If you succeed in the attack, your target is knocked to the ground and must bid two extra Physical Traits on his next action if he wants to get upright.

## Gargoyle Thaumaturgic Rituals

The Tremere have developed various rituals to strengthen their Gargoyle servants. The Tremere employ these rituals to fit their needs, not the whims of their servants, and there is almost always a price associated with having a ritual cast on you, whether it's being assigned more strenuous working conditions or being sent on a dangerous mission.

Most of these rituals' effects are permanent, but they are based upon the magical process that creates Gargoyles, so they cannot be used on other creatures. Characters who start the game with one or more of them in place, should buy them as additional Disciplines.

Intermediate rituals can only be used on Gargoyles of 11th generation or lower. Advanced rituals can only be used on Gargoyles of eighth generation or lower.

### Basic Gargoyle Rituals

**Feather-Stone**

Sometimes Gargoyles may be called upon to land on weak or fragile places, which can be troublesome if the new perch collapses under their weight. This ritual, which involves the coating of a chunk of lightweight stone, such as pumice or talc, with one Blood Trait and then crushing it in the Gargoyle's jaws, allows a Gargoyle to reduce her weight to one quarter without reducing her Physical Traits. An additional benefit of this effect is that this weight can now be added to her carrying capacity while flying.

To activate the effects of this ritual, you must expend a Blood Trait. Your weight will be reduced for one scene.

**Know the Unnatural Beast**

As Gargoyles must often work against Gangrel, Nosferatu and Tzimisce, all of which can become animals, the Tremere have created this ritual to gift its subjects with the ability to recognize supernatural creatures in the guise of animals. Although this ritual is fairly simple, it calls for blood from a natural animal as well as from vampires of the three aforementioned clans.

Once this ritual is cast upon you, you can attempt to determine if an animal is a natural animal or under some mystical influence. Doing so calls for a Static Mental Test against the level of the power being used: one for Basic powers, three for Intermediate powers and five for Advanced or higher powers. Add two Traits to the difficulty if the animal has a natural body but a supernatural mind, and add another two Traits to the difficulty if the supernatural creature is not a Cainite.

**Skin of the Chameleon**

It is often desirable for guardian Gargoyles to be able to camouflage themselves as a part of the building that they are set to guard. This ritual calls for expensive rare pigments mixed with a Blood Trait from a Tremere to be painted upon the Gargoyle over the course of half an hour. Since the Gargoyle must be perfectly still for this ritual, some Tremere simply stake them to ensure they are not disturbed.

You need only stand still against a wall for three turns for it to activate. Once active, this power works like *Cloak of Shadows*: You can use the crossed arms pose until you move.

## Intermediate Gargoyle Rituals

**Defender of the Haven**

This ritual, also used on guardian Gargoyles, grants them the ability to attune themselves to a building. Once attuned to the building, a Gargoyle can track people moving within the building. This ritual calls for the Tremere to spend an hour preparing a glyph-laden brick that the Gargoyle then ritually destroys with his hands.

Once this is cast upon you, you can attune yourself to any building. Doing so takes one night and requires you to win a Simple Test. Once you are attuned to the building, whenever you are in physical contact with it, you can spend a Willpower Trait to determine who is inside and where they are for one scene. You can track as many people as you have Mental Traits, and can even use your senses against *Obfuscate* as if you had Intermediate *Auspex*, but these powers only work within the building you are attuned to.

**Rite of Sorcerous Shield**

Tremere often need their servants to do battle against other sorcerers. This ritual allows a Tremere to protect a Gargoyle from other forms of blood sorcery, and even mortal sorcery, until the next new moon. For this rite, the Warlock transfers mystical energy to a silver torc that he then places around the neck of the Gargoyle. A Tremere can only protect a single Gargoyle at a time using this ritual, and when the ritual wears off, the torc dissolves into an acrid mist.

While this ritual is in effect, you receive an automatic retest against all uses of *koldunic* sorcery, Assamite and Setite blood sorcery, mortal magic and the like. It does not protect you in any way from the secondary effects of magic, though. You might be protected from a sorcerous lightning strike, but you are not protected from the fire a sorcerous lightning strike may cause.

**Infusion of Earth**

At times, Gargoyles are sent more than a night's journey from their lair. Inasmuch as their appearance precludes seeking shelter among mortals, the Tremere have developed this ritual to grant Gargoyles a method for weathering the day outdoors. The Tremere must prepare a clay mask molded from the Gargoyle's own face, infuse it with her own blood, bake it over night and shatter it exactly at dawn. If the mask is damaged before the shattering, the ritual is ruined and must be started again on the next night.

Once this ritual is cast upon you, you can expend a Blood Trait and meld with rock or earth. Other than the ability to meld with stone, this power functions like *Interred in the Earth*.

## Advanced Gargoyle Rituals

**Transform the Skin to Stone**

The Tremere know that it never hurts to have soldiers who are unhurt by mortal weapons. This ritual hardens the already-tough Gargoyle skin to a rocky consistency, protecting the subject from physical damage. This rite requires 10 Blood Traits taken from three different Gangrel, none of who may share a sire, brewed over three days in an enchanted cauldron. At the end, the subject must drink the near-boiling mass in under a minute.

Your skin hardens into one additional health level of armor with no Negative Traits. Additionally, you suffer only half damage from fire. The negative side to this power is that you lose some sensitivity to your skin and must bid an additional Trait on any challenges that involve the sense of touch. It provides no protection from sunlight.

**Heart of Granite**

As it is good to have soldiers that are as impervious as possible, the Tremere have developed a method for using the *Heart of Stone* ritual on Gargoyles. Since the heart must be removed from the Gargoyle's body for this ritual, it is remarkably unpleasant for its subjects. Otherwise, it functions exactly like the *Heart of Stone* ritual. This ritual only works on Gargoyles of the Seventh Generation or lower.

**Gift of the Immobile Form**

A remarkable triumph of Tremere knowledge — or hubris — this ritual allows Gargoyles to temporarily circumvent the Curse of Caine and stay out in the sunlight as long as they do not move. The Tremere must inscribe a perfect circle of blood on the crown of the head of the Gargoyle and invoke the power of the skies. Afterward, the Gargoyle must stand perfectly still in the sunlight for a full hour, in the face of Rötschreck, to bind the vitae into him.

The Tremere must spend a Willpower Trait and a Blood Trait, along with making the usual Willpower Challenge to invoke this ritual. Unfortunately, it's not always evident when this part of the ritual has failed, until the Gargoyle attempts to stand in the sunlight. Then the failures are usually spectacular.

Standing perfectly still for a minute requires a Physical Challenge (retest with *Athletics*). After that, Willpower Challenges are needed, especially for standing still for long periods of time. Once the Gargoyle succeeds in standing out for an hour, he may thereafter stand in the sun and suffer neither damage nor Rötschreck so long as he keeps still. Should he move and suffer damage from sunlight, he becomes vulnerable to Rötschreck again. If *Fortitude* allows him to endure the damage, he may make a Physical Challenge to resume standing still. If he suffers from any sunlight damage, he may not use the blessing of this ritual until the following day. The ritual's effects are considered permanent.



After their visit to the monastery, the three had arrived without mishap at the portside location that Hauknefr had set aside. They dodged city guards and curious peasants with ease, mostly thanks to Grigori's concealing powers, until they had made it here to this run-down shed far removed from light and life. Paulo shook out his cloak and hung it off a nail near the door. "Make a light! Let's take a closer look at this wretch."

Hauknefr found the candles they had concealed earlier and set about illuminating the cramped room. Warped planks and rusted tools suggested the shack's use, many years past. Expansions near the port had seen the carpenter who once made his living here shift toward a more prosperous locale.

Grigori dragged the wrapped body up onto a bench, to which great metal rings held iron chains and manacles at the corners. He gently unwrapped the Cainite within, by turns securing its wrists and ankles. None of them had seen a vampire at this stage of degeneration. The bones were clearly delineated beneath the shrunken skin, the eye sockets hollow, the abdomen stretched nearly to the spine. Paulo shuddered.

They drip-fed it slowly over the next three nights, using a funnel to transport their commingled vitae to its lips. Doubly ensuring that the manacles were secure, they cautiously withdrew the stake from its heart on the fourth night. Hauknefr's hand made sure that it remained within a fraction of an inch of that vital organ, ready to slam it back into place at a sign that the creature would break loose.

They faced a ravening Beast when it first awoke, and were it not for Hauknefr's superior strength and speed it might have been upon and through them in moments. With cold metal cutting into its joints, it thrust itself at them, screeching in agony. Its sunken eyes blazed with hunger, hatred, desperation and desire.

Grigori had been holding the funnel, and he fell backward at this pitiable Cainite's convulsions. Paulo retreated before its red glare. Hauknefr simply curled his lip into a snarl and pounded the wretch flat with a punch like a hammer blow. The thing twitched and collapsed, yet still glared at them with palpable menace. "Try that again," Hauknefr hissed, "and I'll extract six colors of dung from your withered hide, even if I have to track down a leper to put it there first!"

Grigori pulled himself to his feet and softly applauded.

Now, Hauknefr stood steady as a rock, although Grigori could make out the traces of bloodsweat on his brow in the half-light. Grigori had toyed with the idea of venturing into the mind of this creature — this vampire that had once been called Gabriel — himself, but the spider's voice had forbidden such intrusion. While his hunger for the vital information that would advance his personal agenda strained against his loyalty to the spider, he was committed to the current plan. Patience.

So instead, Paulo cleared his mind and mentally reached toward the wretch across the room. Slivers of thought began to reveal themselves to his inner eye, predominantly hunger, pain, frustration, strong sparks of terror. Roiling beneath the husk's consciousness, Paulo could sense its Beast straining against its will. Flashes of strong emotion. Love? No... Something deeper... had their blood oath taken hold?

And what of the murder? There was no answer — even in this state, the wretch resisted somehow.

"Tell me," Paulo whispered. "Tell me what I want to know. We may yet spare your unlife if you cooperate."

At that, something in the wretch's mind uncoiled, and Paulo smiled.

# Chapter Five: Rules, Systems and Drama

Rules are an integral part of any game, as they define what characters can and cannot do. Rules are necessary only to govern the outcome of a confrontation, though, when one does occur. The primary focus of this game is to tell a good story — the rules just facilitate that focus. They give you a framework to make sure that everyone is treated fairly. The Storyteller and Narrators are responsible for making any final decisions in regards to disputes over the rules.

## Challenges

From time to time, two or more players will engage in a conflict that cannot be resolved through roleplaying alone. This sort of face-off is called a challenge, and the systems detailed in this chapter show the quick and efficient resolution of such conflicts. In most cases, a Narrator does not even need to be present when a challenge is played.

Roleplaying does not necessarily have to end when a challenge begins. In fact, roleplaying becomes more important than ever if players intend to enjoy a confrontation and avoid out-of-game disputes. Experienced players can integrate a challenge into their roleplaying so seamlessly that outsiders don't even know that anything unusual is going on.

In order for this system to work, players need to work together. They have to educate each other on the rules and agree what Traits can be used in a challenge. Compromise and cooperation are the bywords of this game. Arguments over whether or not a Trait is appropriate wreck both the momentum and the mood of the game.

## Using Traits

Before you can begin to learn how challenges work, you must first understand what defines a character's capabilities. Each character is created with a number of adjectives that describe and define that person as an individual. These adjectives are called Traits (Ability Traits, Attribute Traits, Blood Traits, etc.), and they are described fully in Chapter Three. Players use their Attribute Traits to declare challenges against other characters or against static forces represented by a Narrator. Occasionally the rules might call for other Trait areas to be used. These challenges still, in essence, work the same way as Attribute-based challenges.



### Initial Bid

A challenge begins with a player bidding one of her Attribute Traits against her opponent. At the same time, she must declare what the victory conditions of her challenge are, such as firing an arrow, diving for cover or persuading someone else of her point of view. The other player must then decide how his character will respond. He can either relent immediately (see below) or bid one of his own Traits in defense.

When players bid Traits against one another, they may only use those Traits that could sensibly be applied to that situation. A player can generally use only those Traits from the same category his opponent used. Most challenges are categorized as Physical, Social or Mental Challenges, as per the Attribute categories, and all Traits used in a challenge must come from the same category. Exceptions are noted when they arise in these rules. Experienced players may offer each other more creative leeway, but only by mutual agreement.

### Relenting

At any time before an actual test is performed, a player may choose to admit defeat. Characters who relent lose the challenge automatically, but do not lose any Traits, even if they bid one before relenting. Relenting to challenges also helps the game flow along more smoothly than extended Rock-Paper-Scissors matches do.

### Testing

Once both parties involved in a challenge have bid a Trait, they engage in a test immediately. The test itself is not what you may think — the outcome is random, but the players use no cards or dice. The two players face off against one another by playing Rock-Paper-Scissors. The test works like the moment in poker when you turn over your cards and declare a winner. The test produces one of two possible outcomes — either one player is the victor or the result is a tie.

**Example:** *Miguel, a Toreador musician, is attempting to impress the local prince with his latest composition. The Brujah prince, however, is known for his concern only with skill at arms. Luckily, Miguel's piece is martial in nature. He bids a Trait that hopefully will tug at the Brujah's emotions ("The* Empathetic *nature of my music should impress you of my strength."), and the Brujah responds in kind ("My* Intimidating *demeanor must surely weaken your performance."). The two perform the test — both shoot Paper, a tie. Now they have to declare their total number of Traits to resolve the tie. Miguel knows that this encounter is important, so he bids all nine Traits that he has available. The prince has only eight Traits currently, so he loses the challenge and the Intimidating Trait that he bid, and agrees that Miguel's stirring anthem is worthy of his respect. If the two had called the same number of Traits, then the prince would have remained unimpressed, although both lose their bid Traits.*

### Ties

In the case of a tie, the players must then reveal the number of Traits that they currently have available in the Attribute category from which their bid was made. The player with the most Traits wins the test, and thus the challenge. Note that the number of Traits you've lost in prior challenges, or lost or expended for any other reason, reduces the maximum number of Traits that you can claim in ties.

### Rock-Paper-Scissors

What we mean by Rock-Paper-Scissors is the following: You and another person face off and, on the count of three, you show one of three hand gestures. "Rock" is a basic fist. "Paper" is just a flat hand. Sticking out your middle and index fingers represents "Scissors." You then compare the two gestures to determine the winner. Rock crushes Scissors. Scissors cuts Paper. Paper covers Rock. Identical signs indicate a tie. Certain powers allow some characters to use gestures other than these three.

A fourth gesture, the Bomb, is allowed due to a character using certain supernatural powers. The Bomb is shown by a closed fist with an upright thumb (the "fuse"). The Bomb beats Rock and Paper, but is defeated by Scissors (which cuts the fuse). Before players can use this gesture in a test, however, they must declare that they have the option, and explain what the Bomb is, and how it is used. Experienced players may forgo need for the explanation as long as all involved agree.



You may lie about the number of Traits that you currently possess, but only by declaring fewer Traits than you actually have. Bluffing in this way allows you to keep the actual number of Traits you possess a secret, but doing so may be risky. The challenger is always the first to declare her number of Traits. If both players declare the same number of Traits in a tie, then the challenge is a draw.

## Bonus Traits and Trait Penalties

Certain weapons, specializations and special powers grant a character Bonus Traits during a challenge. You may add these extra Traits towards a character's total when determining a tie involving that weapon or special Ability.

Conversely, Trait penalties (from darkness or the speed of a ranged target, for example) reduce the Trait total that is calculated for ties, effectively increasing the difficulty of the challenge.

## Up Traits and Down Traits

In some circumstances, a character is said to be "down X Traits." In these cases, the player is required to bid X additional Traits in order to be able to initiate a challenge.

**Example:** *Corwin, under attack, is currently* Wounded, *rendering him one Trait down in any challenges. Attempting to dissuade his assailant, he cries, "Halt! How can you attack someone so* Friendly *as myself? Surely my* Ingratiating *manner should win your heart and stay your hand?" He has bid two Social Traits in order to initiate his Social Challenge.*



Conversely, a character that is "up X Traits" can add X to his total for the purpose of ties and overbids. In addition, if they are required to bid multiple Traits for some reason, they can count these Traits for the purposes of that total. They can be used to bid in defense of a challenge, but never to initiate one. These Traits cannot be used to require someone else to bid extra Traits when challenging you.

**Example:** *Despite his pleas, Corwin is about to become a victim of diablerie. His assailant has drained Corwin into torpor, and is now attempting to drain his soul. The final challenge for diablerie specifically places Corwin "three Traits up," meaning that although Corwin might have no remaining Physical Traits, he can still bid one of his "up" Traits in defense (and has two more left to counter Negative Trait bids if need be), and has at least three to call in the case of a tie.*

## Resolution

The loser of the test loses not only the challenge but the Trait he bid as well. He has essentially become tired or lost some confidence in the capability the Trait represented, and he can't call on it effectively until he regains some confidence and energy. The Trait is lost for the remainder of the game session unless the player refreshes it, with Willpower expenditure for example.

If the challenge is a draw, both players lose the Traits they bid. If both participants are attempting to affect each other, such as a contest of wills, the outcome is that both fail. If only one side is attempting to affect the other — say, a punch versus a dodge — then the defender wins, negating the effect the attacker desired.

## Adjudication

If you have a question or argument about the rules or the conditions of a challenge, you need to find a Narrator to make a judgment. Try to remain in character while you look for a Narrator. Any interruption in the progress of the story should be avoided if at all possible, so work problems out with other players if you can. If you do not know the correct application of a certain rule, it's usually better to wing it rather than interrupt the flow of the game, as long as all players involved are in agreement.

### The Five Minute Rule

It should be noted that a challenger who fails on a Social or Mental Challenge must wait at least five real-time minutes (and not spend them arguing over the results of the previous challenge — you can't protest a ruling with a Narrator for four minutes and 58 seconds, then drop your argument and say, "Oh, look, time's up.") before repeating the failed challenge. This rule includes supernatural powers that use Mental or Social Challenges unless they specify otherwise — a character cannot continue attempting one *Soulsight* after another until he finally succeeds. Retests and overbids occur before the five-minute time limit starts.

## Complications

A challenge can become more complicated in a number of ways. The preceding basic rules are enough to resolve most disputes, but the following section adds a few bells and whistles.

## Negative Traits

Many characters have Negative Traits that an opponent can use against them. During the initial bid of any challenge, after each player has bid one Trait but before the test is thrown, a player can call out a Negative Trait that he believes his opponent possesses. If the player does indeed possess that Negative Trait, he must bid an additional Trait in order to continue the challenge (although the player who guessed the Negative Trait does not have to increase his own bid). If the player does not possess the Negative Trait his opponent called out, his opponent must himself risk an additional Trait. You may call out as many Negative Traits as you wish during the initial bid phase of a challenge, as long as you can pay the price for being wrong. You should also have a valid, in-game reason to list an opponent's Negative Traits in the first place. It is lame to rattle off a long list of possible Negative Traits randomly just to see which guesses stick.

If you figure out more of your opponent's Negative Traits in a challenge than he has regular Traits to cover, then he loses the challenge automatically. The same works in reverse, however, if you do not have additional Traits remaining to match incorrect guesses.

**Example:** *Kharkas the Gangrel is attacking Anstruth, a Tremere. He begins with his initial bid ("I make a* Ferocious *attack with my claws!") while Anstruth attempts to dodge ("My* Lithe *frame is elsewhere than in your grasp."). Kharkas then suggests that Anstruth possesses the Negative Trait* Clumsy *("All those hours behind a desk have done little to hone your reflexes, oh* Clumsy *one.") If Anstruth did indeed have* Clumsy *on his sheet, he would have to bid an additional Trait to continue the challenge. The Tremere does not possess that Negative Trait, though ("Methinks you misjudge me,"), and now Kharkas — having underestimated his prey — is the one who must bid an extra Trait if he wishes to continue to maul his enemy.*

It can be risky to bid Negative Traits, but if you're sure about what you're doing, you can raise the stakes for your opponent, possibly to the point where he relents rather than risking additional Traits. Any Traits bid, whether initially or due to Negative Trait calls, are lost if the player loses the challenge.

## Retests

Certain Traits allow a character to retest a challenge he has lost. A retest allows a player to ignore the results of the first test (including the loss of Traits) and test again for a new result. Multiple retests are possible on a single challenge, but each retest must come from a different source — Abilities, Willpower, Merits or supernatural powers. A character who is trying to strike someone with a sword may retest his Physical Challenge once using a level of *Melee*, but he may not gain another retest using the *Melee* Ability on the same challenge, even if he has multiple levels of the Ability. He may, however, use a retest from the *Lucky* Merit.

A character who is capable of matching the conditions of the retest may "block" an opponent's retest. For example, if a player uses *Brawl* to retest a failed Physical Challenge to punch his foe, his foe may expend a level of *Dodge* to block the retest and force the attacker to accept the results of the original test. The exception to this rule is Willpower.

**Example:** *Baker, a Brujah, is attempting to wrestle Taylor, a Gangrel, into a submission hold. The rebel tries to bear-hug his opponent ("There is no escape from my* Wiry *embrace, Animal!") while the snarling Gangrel steps back, trying to gain distance ("I'm far too* Nimble *for your fumbling paws to reach me.") They perform a test, and Taylor wins. However, Baker is an experienced pit-fighter ("My skill gives me victory in this* Brawl."), *and he calls for a retest. Taylor states: "You are not the only one skilled in* Brawling," *and blocks the retest attempt. Taylor dances out of the reach of the fuming Brujah.*

*In desperation, Baker dives forward, attempting a tackle ("My* Stalwart *arms will crush the fight out of you,"). Taylor tries to resist with a classic move ("Pardon my* Brutal *knee to your groin,") and they perform another challenge. Baker loses and immediately calls for a retest ("I'll outlast you in any* Brawl.") *Taylor has run out of* Brawl *Traits, so he cannot block. They test again and Baker is successful. Taylor squirms in Baker's grip to no avail, and groans as his ribs creak painfully.*

## Overbidding

Overbidding is the system by which powerful elders may prevail in a challenge, even if they lose the initial test. Janos the elder with 13 Mental Traits should be able to outwit Darian the neonate who has only three. This system is designed to make that possible.

Once a test has been made, the loser has the option of calling for an "overbid." In order to call an overbid, you must risk a new Trait, as the original one has already been lost. The other player, as the current winner of the challenge, does not need to bid a Trait. At this point, the two players must reveal the number of applicable Traits they currently possess in the appropriate category, starting with the player who called for the overbid. If that player calls double (or more) the number of Traits his opponent has in that category, he may attempt another test, which is not subject to further retests. As in a tie, either player may state a number of Traits less than the actual number they have in order to keep their true power secret. Overbidding can be dangerous unless you are confident in your estimation of your opponent's abilities. You can call for only one overbid in a given challenge.

**Example:** *Pietro is attempting to seduce mortal prey. He begins with his looks ("Surely you would prefer to be seen with a* Gorgeous *man on your arm this evening?") but she resists ("One as* Elegant *as myself needs no man to support her."). They test, and the mortal wins, but Pietro is determined to feed. Gambling that his social aptitude is superior to the mortal's, he bids an additional Trait, relying now on his personality ("But one as* Magnetic *as I can only be a bonus to such a strong woman!") and calls for an overbid. The mortal, as the defender, does not need to risk an additional Trait. Pietro announces all 12 of his current Social Traits (having lost one in the initial test), while the mortal meekly notes her five. They test again, and this time Pietro is victorious. The mortal loses her* Elegant *Trait due to having lost the overall challenge, and Pietro has lost his* Gorgeous *Trait earlier in the challenge. He has won the challenge, however, as well as a potential late supper.*

## Static Challenges

Sometimes characters have to undergo challenges against a Narrator rather than another character. For example, a scholar may need to make a Static Mental Challenge with the *Occult* Ability to dig up an obscure bit of lore in a vast library. In such circumstances, the player bids an appropriate Trait and performs a test with the Narrator.

Sometimes Narrators leave notes on objects, such as books, doors or magical items that indicate the type of challenges that must be won to achieve a specific effect with that object (such as deciphering the tome or breaking down the door).

Before the test, the Narrator decides on the difficulty of the task in terms of a number of Traits that will need to be beaten in the case of a tie. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, a difficulty of six Traits is typical, and is a good starting point from which Narrators can extrapolate the final difficulty taking into account the modifiers they know of.

The test proceeds as with a normal challenge, and Ability retests and overbids may be called as usual. The Narrator may also opt to overbid using the difficulty of the challenge, which should represent the difficulty and danger inherent in the challenge.

### Simple Tests

Simple Tests determine whether you can do something successfully when you face no real opposition. Simple Tests are often used when using Disciplines. Most Simple Tests do not require you to bid Traits, though some may.

When a Simple Test is called, a test (Rock-Paper-Scissors) is performed against a Narrator. In most cases, the player succeeds on a win or a tie, although it might be necessary for an outright win to give the player a successful outcome in some cases.

## Order of Challenges

Typically, all challenges activate simultaneously in a turn. If you absolutely must have an order of precedence, the simplest method is for a Narrator to pick a character at random and then proceed clockwise around the group, arbitrating each successful challenge.

### Challenge Speeds (Optional Rule)

This rule works only if you trust your players not to misuse the information revealed from Trait totals for speed in the subsequent challenges of each turn.

Since multiple challenges can occur simultaneously during any given fight, the Narrator occasionally needs some means of determining who acts first and who acts last. Each person involved in a given turn should check the current number of Traits that are appropriate to the action he wishes to attempt. Whoever has the highest number of appropriate Traits gets to go first. A character punching someone would count his Physical Traits, while a character using *Dementation* would count her Social Traits.

Bonus Traits from weapons and any applicable penalties are not counted in this total, just the Traits in the character's Attribute category. Bonus Traits from Merits, blood, Disciplines and specializations may be permitted at the discretion of the Narrator. Adjustments may need to be made in the case of certain weapons that allow you to attack before slower weapons. Such cases are specified in the Combat section.

If an action does not require any sort of Trait challenge or Trait expenditure, it comes last in the challenge sequence. If the action requires a simple expenditure of Willpower or blood, it takes place according to the current Trait level of that category. Any Discipline effect that has specific Traits attributable to it (e.g., *Arms of Ahriman*) uses those specific Traits for their count in this order.



As with overbidding, you may declare fewer Traits than you possess if you wish. Characters with equal Trait numbers perform their actions simultaneously—the Narrator can simply choose one to act first for resolution purposes.

Sometimes a character with a high number of Traits will attack a character with fewer Traits, who will then decide to strike back. In this case, the character with fewer Traits resolves his action in the same challenge as the faster character, thus using his action for the turn.

This rule can occasionally cause as much confusion as it's trying to solve, and the Narrator may choose to apply it only when there is a debate or other critical need to establish who's going first.

### The Challenge Sequence

| | |
|---|---|
| Declaration | Challenger declares his action and bids a Trait. Defender either relents, or declares her response and bids a Trait |
| Test | Players resolve the challenge using Rock-Paper-Scissors. Compare Traits to resolve ties. |
| Retests | Resolve any retests drawn from Abilities, Merits, Willpower or supernatural powers |
| Lose Traits | The character currently in the losing position loses the Trait(s) they initially bid (in the case of a draw, both lose their bid Traits) |
| Overbid | The loser of the test can attempt to overbid, depending on the characters' relative Traits |
| Resolution | Determine the results of the challenge |

## The Mob Scene

It's a fact of life that a large group of characters will decide to mix it up sooner or later. Group challenges can seem intimidating even to experienced Narrators and Storytellers. These rules are designed to streamline the resolution process, rather than letting the situation devolve into endless matches of Rock-Paper-Scissors.

First of all, find out who is challenging whom. The easiest way to do this is to count to three and have everyone point to the person they wish to target that turn. If no one is being challenged by more than one person, then the challenges can be resolved normally.

If several characters challenge one target, resolve it in the following manner. First, deal with the groups in the order of largest to smallest, just for ease of play. Each attacker must bid an appropriate Trait as normal for the challenge. For the sake of logistics, no more than five characters can attack another character at once.

Next, the lone character must bid enough Traits to counter every opponent in the group. If he does not have enough Traits, he must relent to those opponents whose bids he cannot meet. He may choose which opponents he relents to. Resolve those relented challenges first, because the defender may succumb before the rest of the group can act.

After the bidding and relenting phase, the defender and his attackers engage in one simultaneous test. The defender compares his sign to each of the attackers' signs and applies the appropriate results. If the defender throws Scissors and his four attackers throw Rock, Scissors, Paper and Paper, the defender loses to the first challenger, ties with the second (which is resolved as with any other tie) and wins against the last two. The defenders and attackers lose any Traits they have bid in a lost test. If the defender in the previous example had bid one Trait against every attacker, he would have lost one Trait to the first attacker and another if he lost the tie as well.

Once the tests have been made, you resolve them in the standard order of actions and initiative (if using the optional rule). If none of the attackers lose, the defender simply suffers the results of their actions. It is possible for a defender to lose Traits to the first attackers and then lose a tie to an attacker later in the same mob challenge because of those Traits he lost.

Unless the defender has a special power that allows him to make multiple actions, however, he may attempt to injure only one of his attackers, and it must be one who lost the challenge against him. If the defender does have extra actions, he can sacrifice forthcoming actions from that turn to harm additional attackers on a one-for-one basis.

When the defender in a mob challenge uses Abilities or other powers to gain retests, treat each attacker's challenge as a separate test. Therefore, a defender would need to spend five *Melee* Traits in order to retest against five attackers in one melee combat challenge if he initially lost against all of them.

### Alone Against the World

If a character wishes to call a challenge against multiple targets, such as making a mass Social Challenge for performance art or attempting to obfuscate before a group of people, then he must still undertake a mob challenge. He bids Traits for each of the defenders, up to a maximum of five Traits, no matter the number of defenders. Each defender bids a Trait in defense, unless they relent to the challenge. Traits are lost as normal, but since the attacker has risked no more than five Traits, he can lose no more than five Traits, no matter how many tests he loses.

## Time

Time in **Mind's Eye Theatre** works as it does in real life. It moves forward inexorably, relentlessly.

For the most part, every action plays out in real time, and players are expected to stay "in character" unless they have a rules question. A player should never drop out of character when interacting with other players. Doing so ruins the atmosphere for everyone involved. Players may talk through challenges, but a character is always considered to be active in the game. If a player needs to take a break, he should inform a Narrator. That player should not interact with any of the other players while he is out of character.

The only other exception to this "in-character rule" is when a Narrator calls for a timeout. This call may be necessary to resolve a dispute or change the scene if the story calls for it. When "Timeout!" is called, all players within hearing distance must stop whatever they are doing until the Narrator calls out "Resume!" or "Lay on!" Timeouts should be kept to a minimum, since they interrupt the flow of the story.



### Chronicles, Stories, Sessions and Scenes

**Mind's Eye Theatre** time breaks down into five major allotments: chronicles, stories, sessions, scenes and turns. A chronicle is a series of smaller stories that are all connected somehow, and which might take months or even years to complete. Each complete plot line within the chronicle is called a story. A session is one actual night of play, although Storytellers may define a session as one night of game time if the action ends *in media res* at the end of the previous game. (Since many characters regain spent Traits between sessions, this distinction can be important.) Finally, a scene is the time it takes to resolve the action in one location. Once the characters shift locations, the scene is ended. If a session will be taking place entirely at one location, a scene can be defined as roughly one hour.

### Turns

Turns are the discrete blocks of time that make up conflicts and scenes. When players start throwing challenges around or attempting complex actions, it is time to start using turns to measure game time. Turns last approximately three seconds, but this measure may vary from challenge to challenge at the Storyteller's discretion. In any given turn a character may take one action (although some supernatural powers may allow extra actions in a turn). Some actions take place over multiple turns, such as picking a complex lock. Other actions, such as speaking a short sentence, do not take up a character's action at all. Once everyone involved in a turn has taken an action, that turn ends and the next turn begins.

In some instances, a character might be interrupted before he can take his action, or be forced to respond to events developing around him. In such instances, a character may always defend himself, although doing so uses up his available action for the next turn.

### Downtime

Many aspects of a character's unlife are critical to her continued existence, yet they do not make for dramatic roleplaying, or they are too intricate to take time during sessions to perform. Storytellers are encouraged to use "downtime" between sessions to allow characters to maintain their holdings, learn Disciplines and see to other facets of their existence. Other actions and interactions may take place during this time, with Storyteller supervision. As long as players don't abuse downtime privileges, the time between sessions can be a rewarding roleplaying experience in itself.

## Health

Each character, Cainite and otherwise, has different *health levels* that represent the amount of injury the character can endure. A normal character's health levels are: Healthy, Healthy, Bruised, Bruised, Bruised, Wounded, Wounded, Incapacitated, Torpor and/ or Final Death. Mortals replace Torpor with Mortally Wounded. If a fully uninjured character loses two health levels, she becomes Bruised. If she loses three more health levels, she becomes Wounded, and so on. Certain merits or supernatural powers may alter this typical health track.

As a character's condition worsens, it becomes harder to carry out various actions. Vampires are more resilient than mortals, but they can still be injured or

even killed with enough damage. The following penalties apply to the character depending on the level of health at which he currently sits. Note that the challenge penalties apply to all types of challenges.

**Healthy** — When a character is healthy, he is virtually or completely uninjured. He suffers no penalty aside from possibly being scraped or rumpled.

**Bruised** — A Bruised character is more seriously roughed up, and his injuries have started to impair his viability. He receives a one-Trait penalty on all tied challenges.

**Wounded** — When a character is Wounded, he is seriously injured in one or more locations. To reflect this level of injury, he is one Trait down on all challenges, and his opponent wins all ties, regardless of who has more Traits. If the injured character has a power that normally allows him to win ties appropriate to the challenge, ties are resolved through comparing Traits instead. Note: a character may always attempt to overbid.

**Incapacitated** — When a character is Incapacitated, he is completely out of play for at least 10 minutes. After that time, and again awake, the character is still effectively immobile, although he may whisper pained sentences. He cannot initiate any challenges until he has healed at least one health level. He is at the mercy of other characters, and he may do nothing more than heal himself. He will require assistance to move. Mortals injured beyond this point are Mortally Wounded.

**Torpor** — Cainites injured beyond Incapacitated by bashing or lethal damage fall into a deathlike sleep known as torpor.

**Mortally Wounded** — A mortal injured beyond incapacitation has little time left. He does not regain consciousness normally and loses a Physical Trait every 10 minutes. As soon as he runs out of Physical Traits, he dies. If he takes any damage, bashing or lethal, during this time, he dies instantly. Few things can rescue a mortal at this point.

**Final Death** — Cainites injured beyond Incapacitated by aggravated damage do not enter or remain in torpor — they are permanently destroyed. At the Storyteller's discretion, significant quantities of bashing or lethal damage (sufficient to dismember or destroy the corpse) may also cause Final Death.

## Damage Types

Characters can suffer injury from a broad range of sources. A character's physical nature determines his vulnerability to injury and the degree to which he is affected. A Cainite can shrug off injury that would cripple a mortal, yet sustain damage from sources that a human wouldn't consider a risk at all. The Narrator is the final arbiter of which category of damage a specific event causes.

### Bashing Damage

Bashing damage is unlikely to kill, and even mortals heal it swiftly. Bruises, sprains and minor injuries such as those from falls, punches or clubs are included. Cainites are largely unaffected by such minor injuries due to the lack of blood in their body tissues, so they suffer only half (round down, minimum of one level) the indicated damage from such causes.

While bashing damage is rarely fatal, it does soften the victim up for worse to come. If a Cainite is reduced to Incapacitated by bashing damage, subsequent aggravated damage will cause Final Death. Additional bashing or lethal damage will simply place them in torpor.



For Incapacitated mortals, any additional bashing damage converts current lost health levels from bashing into lethal damage as bones break and organs crush. If they take any level of actual lethal damage, they become Mortally Wounded, as they will die if subsequent bashing damage pushes them past Incapacitated again.

**Example:** *Joshua has been beaten senseless by thugs, and he lies Incapacitated in the street. Francis, his rival for the hand of a lady, takes the opportunity to plant a boot in Joshua's ribs. This act causes one level of bashing damage normally, but it converts Joshua's first lost Healthy level into a lethal loss. Joshua must now nurse a broken rib, rather than just tending to his bruises. If Francis had instead stabbed his rival with a dagger, Joshua would be dying....*

### Lethal Damage

As the name suggests, lethal damage is far more serious, and it has the potential to kill or maim, especially if the victim is mortal. Most bladed weapons inflict lethal damage, as might some blunt weapons (noted in their individual descriptions).

Unlike bashing damage, lethal damage has a much more immediate effect on mortals. Any mortal reduced below Incapacitated by lethal damage is dying. A Cainite in a similar position is simply driven into torpor, but he does not reach Final Death as a result. Such injuries still make the vampire vulnerable to Final Death through subsequent aggravated damage, though.

### Aggravated Damage

Although Cainites are far more resilient in general than mortals, some forms of injury are dire even to them. Largely elemental or supernatural in origin (e.g., fire, sunlight, the teeth and claws of other vampires, or any other source the Narrator deems sufficient due to circumstances), these sources of injury are hard to resist and equally hard to heal.

Mortals suffer lethal damage from those things that would cause a Cainite to take aggravated damage (except sunlight, of course). There are some specific instances in which a mortal may receive aggravated damage, however, and they typically require supernatural means to heal them. These are explained on a case-by-case basis.

#### Sunlight

Exposure to sunlight is extremely painful for vampires. Indirect sunlight, such as through thick curtains or heavy cloud cover causes one automatic aggravated wound per turn of exposure, while direct sunlight causes three levels per turn and probably causes the vampire to burst into flame. Even gazing into a sunlit area may cause temporary blindness as the reflected rays burn the vampire's eyes. Heavy clothing provides some protection, reducing damage or the rate at which it is suffered, at the Storyteller's discretion. Vampires confronted by sunlight must also make a *Courage* Test for Rötschreck.

#### Fire

Cainites fear and loathe fire, and its slightest touch causes them great agony. Most vampires are uncomfortable around open flame, since it can destroy them permanently. Sufficiently large sources of flame inevitably provoke *Courage* Tests in Cainites to avoid Rötschreck.

In game terms, all normal and supernatural fires cause aggravated damage to Cainites. Fire also circumvents protective armor. Fire will cause a level of damage relative to the vampire's exposure to it. A torch will typically cause one level of aggravated damage with

a successful strike, while immersion in a bonfire will cause three or more levels in a single turn. The Narrator will determine the base damage of any given fire. Continued exposure to fire over multiple turns causes the same base damage at the beginning of each turn.

A character whose clothes are on fire must spend one action dousing the flames and win a Simple Test. Failure means the fire continues and the character will take damage again next turn.

Fire tends to disfigure those who've felt its touch. At Storyteller discretion, the character could lose some or all of his Appearance-related Social Traits and suffer Trait penalties on Social Challenges where appearance counts. For vampires, this disfigurement lasts until the wounds are healed. For mortals, this is permanent, short of miraculous supernatural healing.

### By Candle and Torch

In an age without the convenience of electricity, Cainites find themselves surrounded by fire, if only to light their way. Candles, hearths and braziers are common methods of lighting and heating a room, and each holds pain or death for a careless vampire. Most vampires, however, are wary enough to handle fire carefully.

Cainites generally need only check for Rötschreck should the flame present a clear and present danger to them, such as if they are pushed toward a fireplace, a candelabra falls near them, or a torch is waved in their faces. Common sense should prevail in determining these circumstances.

## Applying Damage

The three types of damage (bashing, lethal and aggravated) are cumulative, and the gravest level at which the character finds herself indicates her health status and the penalties she suffers. Different wound types heal at different rates, so the direst types of damage are considered to sit at the top end of a character's health track. The worst wounds are healed last, as healing always takes place from the last level of the health track to the first until the character is completely Healthy again.

**Example:** *A lone hunter attacks Marie, a Malkavian. The fight is somewhat one-sided. During the scuffle, however, the hunter managed to inflict several blows on Marie, specifically two sword blows, three separate pommel strikes and a nasty burn from a nearby candle's flame, in that order. While normally this would seem to be recorded as two lethal levels, three bashing levels and one aggravated level, on Marie's sheet it should be recorded as her first Healthy being lost to aggravated damage, the second Healthy level and the first Bruised level as lethal, and the remaining Bruised levels and the first Wounded level as bashing.*

# Healing

## Cainite Healing

Vampires heal through the simple expenditure of blood. Such an action is reflexive and takes no actions to accomplish, although the Cainite is still restricted to the limits of his blood expenditure as per his generation. Healing a level of bashing or lethal damage takes the expenditure of one Blood Trait.

**Example:** *If Marie expends four Blood Traits over the next few turns to heal, she will be Bruised, but she is still suffering a lethal wound and an aggravated wound (taking the place of her two Healthy levels). Later that night, after feeding, she then heals the remaining lethal wound with one more Blood Trait.*

In order to heal one level of aggravated damage, the Cainite must spend three Blood Traits. The damage heals over the following day as the vampire sleeps. This blood can be expended over a period of several days of rest — simply keep a note on the character sheet of how much blood has been expended for the health level being healed. If the vampire wishes to attempt to heal more than one level of aggravated damage in one day, she must expend a Willpower Trait for each additional aggravated health level healed in the same rest period (in addition to the three Blood Traits per aggravated health level).

## Mortal Healing

Mortals are much more fragile and take longer to heal than vampires. The medical expertise of the Dark Medieval is also quite primitive compared to modern medicine, and the following rules take this into account. The following table indicates the length of time a mortal must spend recovering from injury. Each health level must be healed individually, so a mortal who has reached Incapacitated from bashing damage must spend one week recovering to the Wounded level, and a further three days recovering to Bruised.

### Mortal Health Level Recovery Time

| Health Level | Bashing | Lethal |
|---|---|---|
| Bruised | one hour/level | one day/level |
| Wounded | one day/level | one week/level |
| Incapacitated | one week | one month |
| Mortally Wounded | Two months (at least) | |

Bashing damage is largely superficial, and it will heal without treatment. The main factor is time, although medical attention may accelerate the process.

Lethal damage is far more serious, and it can result in complications such as infection. Scars are commonplace. Characters injured with lethal damage to the Bruised level who do not receive medical attention automatically lose an additional health level each day to reflect infection and blood loss. After initial medical attention, further treatment is not required, so long as the character is above Wounded. Incapacitated characters require constant medical attention and are probably delirious or unconscious.

Whenever a character attempts to heal a lethal health level, at the end of the time stated here, she must succeed in a Static Physical Challenge against a difficulty equal to the number of wound levels she has currently marked off her sheet. On a win, she heals the level. On a tie, no change is made and she must rest for the same amount of time again before testing for healing. On a loss, she makes an additional Simple Test. If this secondary test is lost, the character loses an additional lethal wound, possibly dying if this takes her below Incapacitated.

## Special Damage Conditions

Vampires have several physical advantages over mortals — they are often tougher, stronger or faster — but there are limitations to their "immortality." This section discusses damage and injury conditions specific to the vampiric condition.

### Torpor

The Cainite state of torpor is akin to a coma. A torpid vampire is in a deathlike sleep — apparently dead to non-Cainites — and she is oblivious to events in the outside world. Torpid vampires ignore the nightly need for blood; they are effectively in hibernation for the time they remain in that state.

There are three primary methods for entering torpor — voluntarily, due to injury and due to deterioration. Entering torpor voluntarily is simple. The Cainite simply wills it so, which takes but a few seconds, and no challenge is involved. Entering torpor through injury is self-explanatory. Cainites without access to blood gradually wither as their tissues become desiccated, growing more corpselike until they collapse into torpor. This process of deterioration is described in more detail later in this section.

The Cainite remains torpid for a period determined by her Road Traits, during which she is not required to spend Blood Traits each night. Characters with lower Road Traits sleep deeper and longer than those with higher ratings. Those who entered their torpor voluntarily may attempt to awaken after only half the indicated time.

Following this period of rest, the player may spend a Blood Trait and make a Static Mental Challenge against three Traits. If she fails, the character may not rise that night but may make another attempt the following night (expending another Blood Trait) until she succeeds or runs out of blood. If she has no blood, she may not rise until some is given to her.

A Cainite who enters torpor because of blood loss may not attempt to rise until she is fed at least one Blood Trait. Unless fed, she remains in this state indefinitely, but she may attempt to rise as soon as she consumes new vitae, irrespective of her Road Traits. Such "early revivification" only works for Cainites who enter torpor because of blood loss. Those who enter voluntarily or because of injury must sleep for the period indicated on the accompanying chart. Exceptional circumstances (at the Storyteller's discretion) may circumvent this limitation, such as consuming the vitae of a vampire of significantly lower generation, or due to magical intervention.

A vampire who entered torpor voluntarily retains her pre-torpor health levels unless she is injured by external forces. If she loses so many health levels that she would be placed in torpor due to injury, her torpor now falls under that category, although the time that she has rested does count for purposes of determining when she may rise. A character who entered torpor because of injury or blood loss is considered to be at her last Wounded level when she rises.

A vampire who awakens from torpor with less than three Blood Traits must check for frenzy. One who awakens from torpor after deterioration enters frenzy *automatically*.



**Duration of Torpor**

| Road Traits | Duration |
|---|---|
| 5 | Two days |
| 4 | One week |
| 3 | One year |
| 2 | One decade |
| 1 | One century |
| 0 | Millennium |

### Staking

A stake through the heart totally paralyzes a vampire, making it impossible for him to move, spend blood or activate Disciplines. He remains conscious and aware of her surroundings. His senses still work, but they might be impaired by his immobility, such as if his eyes were closed when he was staked. The Cainite is still required to spend blood to awaken each night, which might result in deterioration.

This forced immobility is one of the most feared positions in which a vampire might find himself, due to its inherent helplessness. Such is the terror inspired by being staked that the victim must make a *Self-Control/ Instinct* Challenge to avoid frenzy when the stake is removed. The difficulty of this challenge is typically two Traits, possibly higher for long periods of immobility or if events have threatened his unlife during that period.

Placing a stake directly through the heart is tricky. It requires two successful (win or tie) Simple Tests following a successful attack with the stake. As an optional rule, if the vampire is mobile and defending himself, the attacker may be required to win both tests outright, due to the difficulty in hitting such a small moving target accurately.

### Deterioration

Cainites require blood to maintain their very existence. While this requirement is obvious in the need to feed to power Disciplines and keep the Beast at bay, nowhere is it more clearly and visibly demonstrated than in the case of a vampire who is kept from blood for an extended period.

Deterioration most often occurs in staked vampires who cannot feed but must still expend blood to awaken each night. It can also occur if a Cainite is otherwise prevented from feeding. A vampire trapped in a chamber with no blood supply will eventually succumb to deterioration, and long journeys without hunting opportunities are not to be undertaken lightly.

In addition to the risks of hunger frenzies, a Cainite who is starved to the point at which she has no Blood Traits is subject to further deterioration of her physical condition. The Beast continues to crave blood, and it draws the remaining vestiges of vitae and moisture from her body. The vampire withers very uncomfortably while her own substance attempts to consume itself. The pain continues to grow, and the vampire must suffer in silence if staked.

For each situation in which a vampire must but cannot expend a Blood Trait (such as rising each night), she takes a level of lethal damage and loses one appearance-related Social Trait until she reaches torpor. If she has no more applicable Social Traits, she gains the Negative Social Trait *Withered* with each health level loss. When she reaches Incapacitated, she is little more than an agony-wracked husk. Further deterioration leads to torpor.

Once in torpor, she is freed from the pain. It is, however, much more difficult for her to rise again. Rising involves being fed blood in some manner. Any blood placed into her mouth is immediately consumed, and her body will use it as quickly as possible (depending on the vampire's generation) to heal lost health levels. Upon reaching Incapacitated, she instantly falls to the Beast, frenzying, attacking and drinking from the nearest source.

If a deteriorating Cainite can gain access to blood, she can heal these lost health levels as normal, shedding gained *Withered* Traits and recovering lost Social Traits as her health levels recover. It is possible to keep a staked Cainite hovering just above Incapacitated with judicious applications of blood, keeping her in silent agony indefinitely. Those suffering prolonged exposure to this torture often gain derangements.

## Other Sources of Injury

### Disease

Disease is a major factor in the lives of medieval mortals. Although Cainites are largely spared its direct effects, they can serve as a vector for contagion, spreading it among their herd. A vampire carrying a blood-borne disease passes it to his victims until he can purge the infected blood from his system. Mortals fed upon by an infected vampire must make a Static Physical Challenge against five Traits to avoid catching the disease. The difficulty increases by one Trait each subsequent time the vessel is fed upon by that vampire.

The following are sample diseases and their usual effects on mortals and vampires alike. Game effects on mortals are up to the discretion of the Narrator, although most will at the least grant Negative Physical Traits like *Delicate*, *Lethargic* and *Sickly*, and more serious diseases can result in the loss (possibly permanent) of health levels. A little historical research can help you expand on this list for your own game.

• **Dysentery (the flux)** — Contaminated water and poor hygiene can result in gastrointestinal problems, including bleeding, bowel pains, fever and dehydration. Often fatal to mortals, it has no direct effect on a Cainite. She can transmit it by the Kiss, however. Mortals affected gradually lose Physical Traits and are considered to have two fewer Blood Traits than normal.

• **Ergotism** — A result of fungal poisoning from bad rye, this illness causes agonizing muscle pain, convulsions and hallucinations. Mortals can eventually lose limbs from gangrene, but Cainites are largely unaffected. Drinking blood infected with ergot causes a sensation like pins and needles in the vampire's limbs. This will last until the infected blood is purged from his system.

• **Idropesie (dropsy)** — Weak hearts pump blood inefficiently, resulting in overall weariness and lethargy. While this disease has no effect on a Cainite, a vessel suffering from dropsy has two fewer Blood Traits than a normal mortal.



• **Leprosy** — One of the most significant diseases of the Dark Medieval, leprosy is a degeneration of the nerves, reducing feeling and exposing the victim to a host of secondary infections (often from unnoticed abrasions or bruises) that can harm the skin and damage bones, leading to disfigurement and death. While rarely fatal, this condition usually results in the afflicted being cast out of society, forced to wear distinctive clothing and made to carry a bell to warn others of their approach. Those suffering this disease will not normally notice damage taken until they are Wounded, and any bashing wounds can become lethal if unattended immediately. Healing times are typically doubled. Cainites are immune to this disease, but they can carry it.

• **Plague** — Various plagues (bubonic, pneumonic and septicemic) permeate the Dark Medieval, becoming mass epidemics in the 14th century, devastating the population of Europe. The mortality rate of plague is 50-80 percent, with the period of illness characterized by fever and delirium. Cainites are immune to bubonic and pneumonic plagues, but they can transmit it to their victims. Vampires, however, are susceptible to septicemic plague, which makes them feel sick and usually causes them to vomit blood. During an attack (as determine by the Narrator), the Cainite will vomit for one to three turns (Simple Challenge: win equals one turn, tie equals

### Starve a Cold, Feed a Fever

Purging infected vitae is not easy, since all the vampire's blood quickly becomes infected — within minutes in most cases. Subsequently consumed vitae will likewise become infected. Infected vitae is still usable for normal purposes such as healing and Discipline activation. Blood Traits can be purged through any normal method of blood expenditure (such as boosting Physical Traits) until the vampire has only five Traits remaining.

Expelling the remainder of the Traits requires formidable will. For each Trait to be expelled, the character must expend a Willpower Trait and make a *Self-Control/ Instinct* Test. The difficulty for this test is three Traits, and four Traits for the last two Blood Traits. The difficulty is reduced by one Trait each if the character has *Vicissitude*, *Quietus* or the *Thaumaturgy* path *Rego Vitae*. For example, a character with two of these Disciplines (at whatever level) would have the difficulty reduced by two Traits. The minimum difficulty is one Trait.

Each successful challenge means that the blood is purged from the vampire's system while allowing the vampire to maintain control. Failure means the vampire frenzies in hunger immediately. If the character manages to totally purge his blood pool, the disease is cleaned from his system. Of course, there is now a ravenous Beast to deal with.

**Optional Rule:** The Beast recognizes the difference between "using" and "wasting" vitae. This system can be used for any Cainite who wishes to expend any of his last five Blood Traits, should the Narrator deem that the expenditure of blood is unnecessary.

two turns, loss equals three turns) and will spew forth one to three Blood Traits each turn (same system). Such blood loss can lead to frenzy, deterioration or torpor. The vampire must make a Static Physical Challenge against six Traits to hold the blood down each time he feeds. Failure means that the blood is immediately thrown back up. After such a failure, losing a further Simple Test results in the vampire immediately suffering a night's worth of deterioration.

• **Syphilis** — Spread by sexual intercourse (or the transmission of blood), this disease initially surfaces as a fever and minor aches and pains. Eventually ulcers and bad skin form, although the worst damage is internal, wasting bones, muscle and the brain (the latter resulting in insanity). Vampires who contract syphilis suffer one level of bashing damage at the beginning of each game session.

• **Tuberculosis** — The greatest killer of the Dark Medieval, this disease can affect any part of the body, although the lungs are the most common organs so afflicted. Fever and sweating, followed by emaciation and tissue destruction, give the disease its alternate name — consumption. This disease has no effect on Cainites, but it reduces the blood capacity of affected vessels by two Traits.

### Drugs and Poisons

Mortals use a variety of substances and herbs to heal, harm or alter perceptions. Most cannot be used directly by Cainites, though they may be imbibed indirectly through the blood of unwitting or victims or willing vessels. Rather than detailing the effect of every drug and poison, the following are the most common and typical effects:

**Alcohol** — A vampire drinking blood that contains alcohol suffers some of the effects of being drunk. For every two drinks consumed by the victim, the Cainite gains the Negative Physical Trait *Clumsy* and the Negative Mental Trait *Oblivious*. This effect dissipates at the rate of one Negative Trait per hour or scene.

**Bloodroot (Sanguinaria)** — The rare and deadly bloodroot is one of the few poisons that is directly harmful to Cainites. Consuming it (for example, mixed with blood) causes three health levels of aggravated damage, while using it as a contact poison (such as on a blade) inflicts two health levels of aggravated damage in addition to any injury caused by the weapon. The poison attacks vampiric vitae, turning it into an ashlike black dust.

**Food Poisoning (Salmonella)** — Blood tainted with salmonella causes nausea and a level of bashing damage per Blood Trait consumed to the feeding vampire. Additionally, she has difficulty drinking blood until purged of the bad blood (as under "Diseases"), but she may force herself to drink (see the feeding rules under "Plague"). The effects of food poisoning wear off after about a day.

**Hashish** — In common use in the Middle East, hashish has a calming effect, but it also affects the imbiber's attentiveness. A vampire drinking hashish-tainted blood gains the Negative Mental Trait *Oblivious*. Hashish also reduces the difficulty of resisting frenzy by one Trait. These effects last for approximately one hour.

**Hallucinogens** — Hallucinogenic drugs such as cowbane, henbane and deadly nightshade (belladonna) are used as both painkillers and poisons in the Dark Medieval. A vampire drinking blood that contains small quantities of such herbs is considered one to three Traits down (depending on the amount consumed by the victim and vampire) in any challenges because of impaired concentration. The character also suffers effects equivalent to *Haunt the Soul*. Other effects occur at the Storyteller's discretion, but they may include gaining a temporary Basic level of *Auspex* or losing a Trait of *Courage*. The effects of hallucinogens last for a number of hours, possibly until the end of the game session, but they may clear if there is a significant time lapse between two scenes involving the character.

**Painkillers** — As with hallucinogens, herbs such as hemlock, mandrake and monkshood are used as both painkillers and poisons. In small doses, they reduce the disabling effects of injury, dropping the wound penalty for lost health levels. Bruised characters have no penalties, Wounded characters suffer Bruised penalties, Incapacitated characters suffer Wounded penalties. All other health levels are unaffected. The effects last as for hallucinogens.

**Poison** — Larger doses of hallucinogens or painkillers, or extracts such as arsenic, strychnine or cyanide, can prove fatal to mortals and harmful to Cainites. While a mortal might suffer an agonizing death, a Cainite is down one to three Traits in all challenges and takes between one and three health levels of lethal damage, depending on the strength of the poison and the amount of tainted blood he's drunk. Poisons cannot kill Cainites or drive them into torpor, but they can temporarily incapacitate them until the bad blood can be purged and the effects healed.

## States of Mind

A character's mental state is as important as her physical health, and it is much less controllable in many cases. A vampire can use blood points to heal a physical wound, but mental injuries and states are more difficult to deal with.

### Frenzy and Rötschreck

In many ways an ultimate illustration of the "fight-or-flight" reflex, the Beast lurks beneath the surface of all vampires and manifests as a vicious form of madness when brought forth. Most Cainites resist the Beast desperately, straining to keep it under control. When they fail, the resulting orgy of instinctual violence can level friends and foes alike — the Beast does not discriminate. The vampire feels no pain and acts on instinct, using his bare hands and fangs to rip apart anything around him. Usually the first target is the creature that triggered the frenzy, or anything and anyone between him and his target. Otherwise, the closest object or creature to hand will suffer.

The triggers of the Beast are often highly personalized, but triggers common to all vampires are blood hunger, extreme passion, frustration, defeat, humiliation at the hands of a rival or threats to a vampire's friends or loved ones. Players must be consistent with what causes a frenzy in their characters; a player cannot ignore something that would normally trigger a frenzy simply because it isn't convenient for him to frenzy at this time. The Beast doesn't care. Discretion is advised, however; a character in constant frenzy is no fun to be around and will likely be "put down" by other vampires.

Succumbing to the Beast is considered shameful and debased among many Cainites, and it might result in the character losing status. Vampires will be held responsible for their frenzied actions by other vampires. The social repercussions may be worse than the situation that brought forth the Beast in the first place.

## Frenzy

A character may expend a Willpower Trait to fend off frenzy for 10 minutes. If the trigger is still present at the end of that time, however, the vampire must check again for frenzy immediately or spend another Willpower Trait for another 10 minutes.

**Fighting the Beast**

To see if a character resists entering frenzy, the player performs a *Self-Control* Test. Essentially, this is a Static *Self-Control* Challenge versus a difficulty based on the stimulus, although the loss of such a test will still result in the character gaining Negative Traits. If the vampire succeeds in the test, he manages to push aside his feral instincts and is immune to further challenges against the same stimulus for the rest of that scene or conflict. Failure, or relenting to the test, indicates that the Beast takes hold. Once in frenzy, the character may expend a Willpower Trait to attempt an additional *Self-Control* Test to regain his sanity, ending the frenzy.

**Riding the Beast**

A character with the *Instinct* Virtue will *always* enter frenzy, unless she has more *Instinct* Traits than double the rating of the stimulus. In this case, she may choose whether or not to frenzy.

**Example:** *Catherine has an* Instinct *Virtue of four Traits. If someone effectively taunts her (a two-Trait trigger), stirring the Beast, she will frenzy. If she had five Traits in* Instinct, *she would have the option to hold her Beast in rein.*

Once in frenzy, she can opt to make an *Instinct* Test (as with *Self-Control*, above) to control her actions for one turn. If she wins this test, she manages to direct her frenzy for the turn, although she still suffers all the usual conditions of frenzy (see the box that follows). If she loses, her frenzy proceeds as normal. In the event of a tie, she compares her *Instinct* Traits to the provocation rating to determine the outcome.

**Example:** *Catherine, ripping into her tormenter, decides that she needs to have a word with the unfortunate. She makes a test with a Narrator to control her frenzy, with a difficulty of two Traits (the rating of the trigger). She ties, but compares her Traits with the difficulty, easily overcoming the challenge (four Traits to two). Her fist drawn back, she whispers carefully chosen words in his ear… and the Beast roars back on the next turn, spurring her hand forward….*

**Coming Down**

Once the trigger is removed (or destroyed or dead), the character gets one free *Self-Control/ Instinct* Test against the same provocation difficulty to come out of frenzy. Otherwise, the frenzy burns out on its own 10 minutes later, leaving the Cainite lucid at last to deal with the mess.

**Humiliation**

During the course of roleplaying, it should become clear if a Cainite is being humiliated to the point of frenzy. Deliberate taunts can stir the Beast quite quickly. If roleplaying cannot resolve the situation, then a player can call for a Social Challenge to resolve the matter. If the taunting player wins, then the defender must check for frenzy. If the defender wins, nothing happens. A successful defender is immune to further taunts from the same character for the remainder of the session.

## Rötschreck

Related to — but in many ways diametrically opposed to — frenzy, Rötschreck, the Red Fear, is a primitive terror response. It represents the need for the Beast to flee those elements most harmful to its continued existence. While Cainites are far hardier than mortals, there are elemental forces that test even their supernatural resilience, and the Beast loves to live. Fire and sunlight are the primary triggers, although other situations (for example, the presence of True Faith or the Cainite's personal fears) may likewise trigger the flight reflex at the Narrator's discretion. Rötschreck is as mindless as frenzy, but it pushes the Cainite to desperate attempts to flee from the trigger, utilizing violence and powers to speed his progress.

All vampires have some level of control over this response, and the trigger needs to present a clear and immediate danger to the vampire in order for it to trigger Rötschreck — useful, considering that the nights of the Dark Medieval

### Effects of Frenzy and Rötschreck

*When in frenzy, a Cainite has the following advantages and disadvantages:*

- He ignores all wound penalties until he reaches torpor or Final Death.
- He cannot initiate Social Challenges unless that challenge is related to intimidation.
- He does not need to risk any Social Traits if a Social Challenge is called against him.
- He is immune to further checks for frenzy or Rötschreck.

### Frenzy Difficulties

| Traits | Stimulus |
|---|---|
| One | Smell of blood when hungry |
| Two | Sight of blood when hungry; being harassed or taunted; life-threatening situation |
| Three | Physical provocation or attacks; taste of blood when hungry |
| Four | Loved one in danger; humiliated |
| Five | Outright humiliation; mortal insults |

### Rötschreck Difficulties

| Traits | Stimulus |
|---|---|
| One | Being bullied; candle; sunrise |
| Two | Torch; obscured sunlight |
| Three | Bonfire; uncovered window during daylight |
| Four | House fire; being burned |
| Five | Trapped in a burning building; direct sunlight |

world are lit with naked flames. While the presence of these light sources will definitely put the vampire on edge, they will only initiate Rötschreck if thrust towards the Cainite. Large fires nearby will always shake the confidence of a vampire, and any attempts to resist frenzy if there is a small campfire or greater sized source of flame nearby will make the test one Trait more difficult than usual.

To avoid Rötschreck, the vampire must make a Static *Courage* Challenge (*Courage* versus the Narrator's difficulty, no Traits risked). Systemically, Rötschreck is identical to frenzy for the purposes of determining duration, except that *Courage* is used rather than *Self-Control*. You cannot use the rules for riding the Beast in the case of Rötschreck, however. All vampires must fight the Beast or flee in frenzy.

A vampire entering Rötschreck flees the object of her fear as directly and rapidly as she can, blindly attacking any obstacles or people that get in her way. If flight proves impossible, she will attempt to destroy the object of her fear *then* flee. If such options are not available, she curls up in abject terror for the duration of the Rötschreck. Note that this fear does not override her self-preservation instincts — she will not leap from a tower's height to avoid a candle — but any path that is not obviously suicidal becomes an option.

Without hope, many Cainites would give themselves to the Beast and revel in their monstrous nature. Various paths of control are available to vampires to quell their Beast, and a number of philosophies have been suggested as to how to finally bind the Beast in a position of total submission. Cainite mythology espouses the state of Golconda, a legendary state of transcendence that reflects mastery over the Beast. Rumors exist of those who have achieved such a glorious goal, but they usually take the form of "a friend of a friend," with no direct witnesses.

Many vampires on the Road of Heaven have sought Golconda, following a loose process known as the Bitter Journey, but few, if any, have attained it. With the growth of the presence of devout Christian, Muslim and Jewish vampires, Golconda is becoming condemned as a pagan practice, at odds with the concept of God's redemption. Indeed, more fanatical Cainites have been known to hunt down and slay heretics rumored to be undertaking the Bitter Journey.

Whether Golconda exists and is achievable is up to individual Storytellers. There are no fixed systems for Golconda due to its inherently ephemeral nature. Each Cainite must discover her own path to enlightenment — and Storytellers are encouraged to be extremely demanding when it comes to Golconda quests. This journey can easily take up years of play and constant progress through multiple stories. The only solid rule is that the Cainite must maintain a Road rating and *Conscience* rating of at least four Traits to remain on the path to Golconda. Slipping below that level will generally cause mentors on the path to desert the Cainite until he atones for his degeneration.

The following philosophies offer guidelines for such a quest to be part of a chronicle. One or more of these effects may be granted to a character who has clearly indicated through excellence in roleplay over the course of his quest that he has achieved control in that area.

**Acceptance:** Those who have attained Golconda accept themselves for what they are. They do not rail on about their "damned" status, nor do they suffer jealousy of mortal life. They are simply part of existence.



**Calm:** Those who attain Golconda are reputed to have mastered their Beast and never fear succumbing to frenzy or Rötschreck, including immunity to Disciplines that cause such effects.

**Hunger:** Although they are still tied to the requirements of blood, a Cainite who has attained Golconda needs to feed much less often (perhaps only required to spend one blood point per week, rather than per day).

**Strength:** A Cainite who has attained Golconda is not fully bound by the shackles of generation, so she may learn Disciplines in excess of her usual limits. All other generational limits remains unaffected.

**Mortality:** Perhaps the most seductive of the legends associated with Golconda is that, through enlightenment, a vampire may throw off Caine's curse and return to mortality. How such a transformation might be effected is spoken of only in whispers, but self-sacrifice, true love and devotion are recurring themes. Even those who believe in Golconda usually regard these stories of transformation as fanciful, but as always, the truth of the matter is in the hands of the Storyteller.

## The Blood Oath

One of the strangest properties of Cainite vitae is its ability to forge a link between the vampire and the drinker. This power is used to create mortal servants, but it can also be used to bind other vampires to the Cainite's will. The strength of this bond depends on the number of times the victim has drunk the blood of the same Cainite, but after three such sips, the drinker is almost irrevocably bound. The person (living or unliving) who comes under this bond, called the *blood oath*, is known as the *thrall*, while the Cainite holding power over them is the *regnant*.

A fully bound thrall is utterly devoted to her regnant and cannot take action against her. In many cases, this feeling is like a mortal addiction or obsession. The thrall may not necessarily love his regnant (though many do), and he may even actively despise her, but he follows her orders nonetheless, even if he is dominated or otherwise manipulated by outside agencies. Many Cainites have described the oath as a compelling force, but it is not necessarily a compulsion to do exactly as the regnant says. Rather the thrall is honor-bound to demonstrate loyalty, to obey orders and the express wishes of the regnant. This distinction between compelled obedience and loyalty is a fine line, but it allows the thrall to demonstrate some flexibility. Invariably, however, the thrall follows his master's wishes, the way of oath-bound loyalty in the Dark Medieval for mortals and Cainites alike. Going against the master's wishes is simply unconscionable.

The power of the oath is not dependent on the regnant's generation. The blood of a 12th-generation neonate can bind an elder as readily as the elder binds others to her will. This is the only innate Cainite power that does not appear to degrade with generation. A Cainite may be fully oathbound to only one regnant, but she may have several thralls and lesser bonds (those involving one or two drinks) herself.

### Taking the Oath

The most common way to undergo the full oath or even the single drink is in a ceremony of outright fealty. This ceremony involves a gathering of a Cainite

court, at which point the thrall drinks from the regnant's slit wrist and swears loyalty to her lord. The lord also swears to protect his new vassal as if she were of his own blood. It is from this practice that the oath gets its name.

Most of the Damned are simply too willful to surrender themselves so permanently and utterly to another, so very few Cainites ever come under the full effect of the blood oath. Nevertheless, there are vampires who were ghouls before their Embrace (and thus carry on their blood oath), and the chains of Cainite feudalism can be strengthened by the power of the oath.

There are three steps in the process, corresponding to the three drinks (which must be at least a night apart) the victim has taken from another character.

**First Drink:** At this stage, the drinker finds herself drawn to the other Cainite and has strong flashes of emotion regarding her regnant. She might daydream about the vampire, or her subconscious might seek out "coincidental" encounters. There are no game effects at this point, but it should be roleplayed.

**Second Drink:** She now definitely considers the vampire to be a central figure in her existence, begins to take deliberate actions in her regnant's favor, and she actively seeks out further encounters. While not bound to the regnant, she finds it difficult to act against him (win or tie a Simple Test to take an action directly harmful to the regnant), and she may be commanded easily by the regnant (one Trait down to resist the regnant's Social Challenges against her).

**Third Drink:** The third drink concludes the oath, tying the thrall to the regnant. The intense passion of the weaker bonds fades, replaced by a strong sense of loyalty and belonging. She has a sense that she is in harmony with her own lord and vassals. Like and dislike is irrelevant; respect and loyalty are the heart of her existence. All others become secondary to her regnant. An oathbound thrall can be influenced with *Dominate* by her regnant without the need of eye contact — hearing her master's voice is enough, and the thrall is two Traits down to resist the challenge. (Generation still applies to *Dominate* attempts, however.)

### Oathbreaking

A thrall may resist the bond temporarily by spending a Willpower Trait. The bond may be resisted for one whole scene if the action taken is relatively indirect, while one Willpower Trait is required *per turn* if the thrall wishes to physically attack her regnant.

The blood oath may lapse or be broken with time, but doing so requires a long period of separation between regnant and thrall and considerable will power. As a rough guide, if the thrall abstains from *all contact* with her regnant for a period of months equal to 12 minus her permanent Willpower Traits, the binding power of the oath weakens by one level. If the thrall was grossly mistreated by the regnant, this time requirement may decrease at the Storyteller's discretion. During this time, the character must roleplay the painful process of separation as well as spending Willpower Traits to battle the "addiction" she has to her regnant (Narrator's discretion).

The blood oath also ends if the regnant dies, though the effect of this breaking varies from thrall to thrall. Some claim to feel a sense of great elation and joy when the bond breaks, while others feel psychosomatic pain. Such matters are solely at the discretion of the Storyteller. Regardless, the regnant feels no such effects if the thrall dies.



At the Storyteller's discretion, a character who possesses the Merit: *True Love* to someone other than her regnant may be able to break the bond with the power of her love, but doing so requires arduous, in-depth roleplaying and Storyteller approval.

## Derangements

Mental trauma, boredom due to centuries of tedium or continual loss — all these factors and many more can lead to the twisting of a Cainite's perception of reality. Madness is a very real part of the Dark Medieval, and those who suffer from it are variously seen as cursed or blessed. A Storyteller may decide that a derangement is in order after any experience that generates especially intense and unpleasant emotions, or which severely violates the character's beliefs or ethics.

While much of this section is written about Cainites, mortals can likewise suffer derangements, though the Storyteller may need to alter aspects of the rules provided. For example, mortals cannot enter frenzy, but they can attack wildly with complete disregard for their actions and the well-being of those around them.

All derangements carry "triggers" — circumstances that cause the effects of the derangement to surface. These triggers should be assigned appropriate to the experience that caused the derangement, or they might be dependant on the nature of the derangement itself. Once triggered, the derangement becomes active for the duration of the scene, and the player must modify her character's Traits, attitudes and behaviors in accordance with the derangement's description.

Derangements may be resisted by the expenditure of a Willpower Trait. Such a suspension lasts for only the duration of the scene, however, and if the trigger is still present at the end of that time, the character must expend another Willpower Trait or suffer the effects of the derangement. Narrators may rule that additional Willpower Traits or Willpower Challenges (treat as a normal challenge, risking Willpower Traits rather than Attributes) may be required to deal with particularly intense mental stresses.

The quest to cure derangements is fuel for long, intense stories, and the resolution of such stories rests solely in the hands of the Storyteller. Modern psychotherapeutic methods are hardly accessible in the Dark Medieval, and numerous bizarre and tortuous methods were conceived to rid the insane of their bedevilment. Indeed, many insane people were considered to be possessed by the supernatural, and overtly dangerous lunatics sometimes drew unwanted attention from the Church. Malkavians may never cure the original derangement(s) brought on by the clan disadvantage, but they may work at shedding others that have otherwise sprung from their experiences.

Here is a brief list of derangements and their effects on characters. Storytellers might wish to allow other derangements into play, but they are advised to develop rules such as these to avoid confusion over their in-game effects in the future. Often frenzy can be the result of actual reality jarring the deranged character, and a *Self-Control/ Instinct* Test is required, with a difficulty decided by the Narrator based on the circumstances.

**Note:** There is nothing funny or arbitrary about the way a "crazy" person acts. To *him*, his behavior is perfectly normal, and he is simply reacting to the stimuli that *he* perceives to be real. Players should never forget the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules of safety when roleplaying derangements. Playing derangements involves advanced roleplaying skill and is better suited to experienced players. Additionally, derangements are

normally disadvantageous in general to a character. If a player is "using" a derangement or failing to play the derangement appropriately, the Storyteller is well within her rights to ask the player to adjust his behavior back into line with the story and the character. This is one good reason to thoroughly discuss and document the effects of the derangement with the player prior to the character entering the game.

**Amnesia**

In highly traumatic situations, the character sometimes forgets who or even what he is. This typically occurs when he comes face-to-face with his vampiric condition. The character might simply forget the memory of a single situation, or he might forget everything about his identity, including his true nature. He may even forget Abilities or Disciplines and be surprised to discover that he can do things he thought were beyond his capabilities. When events and situations that might remind him of his lost memories present themselves, those memories may return, sometimes doing so violently and sending the character into a frenzy.

**Bulimia**

Bulimic characters salve their guilt and insecurity by over-indulging in activities that comfort them — in this instance, consuming food (or blood, for vampires). Characters with this affliction will gorge themselves as much as possible when under stress, then purge their system through drastic means (burning for Traits, Disciplines or regurgitating blood as described in "Starve a Cold") and consume more. Characters with this derangement must make a Static *Conscience/Conviction* Challenge when feeding. Failure means that the vampire feeds until his has reached his maximum Blood Trait capacity, whether or not he needs the blood. If forcibly kept from feeding, he must resist frenzy.

**Crimson Rage**

A character with this derangement is prone to experiencing fits of anger with little provocation. While the two bear a certain resemblance, this state is quite different from frenzy. Frenzy is the instincts of the vampiric Beast, while *Crimson Rage* is the vampire's own feelings of helplessness and inadequacy. He is not protected from being pushed over the edge into frenzy while in the grip of this derangement, however. Whenever this derangement is active, the character gains the Negative Mental Traits: *Violent* x 2 and *Impatient*.

**Fantasy/Delusion**

Some characters cannot accept the real world, so they transpose themselves into an illusory world instead. As this is something of a "catch-all" derangement, the scope and degree of this fantasy varies considerably, and details should be sorted out with the Storyteller. While the character interacts with people and institutions of the Dark Medieval in an almost normal manner, her perception of events is skewed by her fantasy. Something happening to shatter the illusions the character has crafted about herself can cast her into frenzy.

**Fugue**

Characters suffering this affliction react to stress by adopting a specific set of behaviors. In the process, they suffer "blackouts" or periods of memory loss. Whenever the character is confronted by extreme stress, the player must win a Static Willpower Challenge against a difficulty determined by the Narrator depending on the degree of stress. Failure means that the character blacks out and the player must roleplay the character's trancelike state. Otherwise, control of the character passes to a Narrator for the scene, who dictates the actions the character takes in order to remove the stress. At the end of the fugue, the character "regains consciousness" with no memory of his actions.

**Hysteria**

Hysterical characters are unable to control their emotions, and they suffer from severe mood swings and fits of intense violence. A hysterical Cainite will frenzy more easily than other vampires (increase the difficulty of his *Self-Control/Instinct* Test by one Trait), particularly when faced with great stress. In addition, any time the vampire fails in a particularly stressful or prominent situation (Narrator's call) the character will *automatically* enter frenzy, with no check.

**Immortal Terror**

This madness stems from the vampire's inability to deal with the true scope of his immortality. Terrified by the real implications of living *forever*, the vampire copes by developing a strong unconscious "death wish." Whenever he is confronted by direct evidence of his immortality — such as attending a funeral or watching a mortal ally die — the character must make a Static Willpower Challenge (against four Traits) to avoid immediately taking actions that might result in his destruction. Such actions can be as indirect as breaking the Silence of the Blood by confessing to a priest, as long as the act carries potentially deadly consequences. Note that the vampire is not consciously aware that he seeks his own destruction, and he resists attempts to persuade him otherwise.

**Lunacy**

This madness comes and goes, linked to the cycle of the moon. When the moon is full, the character is manic and delirious, while at the time of the new moon, he may be reserved and melancholic. At intervening times, he may appear normal and unaffected. While in the grip of this derangement, his ability to resist frenzy and Rötschreck varies accordingly, increasing or decreasing by a Trait to reflect his mood depending on his link to the lunar cycle.

**Manic-Depression**

A Cainite with this derangement experiences wild mood swings. She frequently slips into deep depression, losing interest in her normal activities and becoming withdrawn. Alternately, she is gripped by bursts of fervent energy. When suffering from depression, the vampire's Willpower Traits are greatly reduced (half, round up, the normal value — when the phase ends, Willpower Traits return to their previous level, minus any spent during that period). These depressive periods often follow failure of a particular action, though they may also result from hunger (a blood pool of one-quarter or less) or psychological factors. Hyperactivity will see the vampire working for hours or even into the day on her projects, resisting the need to sleep as she burns up blood and Willpower on her schemes. She is also one Trait down to resist frenzy during this manic time. Should someone attempt to stir a depressive or thwart a manic vampire, the vampire may frenzy.

**Megalomania**

Characters with this derangement believe that they are destined to lead, and they seek to accumulate power, irrespective of their skill and the attitude of others. They believe that those who dismiss their claims are jealous, seeking to hold onto power and deny them their dues. Megalomaniacs believe that these opponents

should be destroyed, politically or physically. Challenges to their clear superiority can trigger frenzy. Due to their supreme confidence, they are considered one Trait up on all Social Challenges while their derangement is active, but they must also make a Static Willpower Challenge against six Traits to resist any opportunity to commit diablerie during that time.

**Multiple Personalities**

Something traumatic in the character's past has caused his personality to fragment into a number of distinct selves, each with its own Traits, outlooks and agendas. Each personality is relevant to the trauma that caused its creation. The number and nature of these personalities should be agreed upon by the player and Storyteller, as should matters such as the trigger to switch personalities (often emotional stress) and the knowledge each possesses. In Cainites, these personalities may exhibit different Virtues, Traits and Disciplines, and they could even believe themselves to be of different clans. Only the Storyteller can decide if the skills exhibited by a personality are real or delusions, however, and all real Abilities and so forth need to be purchased normally. (The character may subconsciously expend Willpower to mimic an Ability that he does not have, though.) Once triggered, a personality remains dominant until it changes due to a further trigger, the initial trigger has been removed or the player expends a Willpower Trait to revert to the "base" persona.

**Obsession/Compulsion**

Obsessive characters become fixated on a particular activity, person or thing. They might seek to ensure that all objects in their possession are categorized and sorted by type, or they might strive to keep their hands sportlessly clean and thus be constantly washing them. They may become fixated on feeding from a particular group of mortals, or in a particular manner, or they may seek to visit all the shrines of a particular saint. Whatever the nature of that obsession is, the target is the center of the character's existence. Obsessive characters are one Trait up to resist any attempt to *Dominate* or coerce them to forgo their set behaviors, but they frenzy automatically if they are forcibly prevented from adhering to their derangement.

**Overcompensation**

An overcompensating character attempts to make up for a flaw in her character (real or perceived) by stressing another aspect of her personality. This limits her actions and skews her perceptions of the world. She may take a "holier than thou" attitude toward others, lecturing them about *their* shortcomings, constantly attempting to take the moral high ground. If the character's own flaws are revealed, the embarrassment would be acute and her reaction unpredictable (check for frenzy).

**Paranoia**

*They* are jealous or afraid of you. *They* want to do you in and end your unlife! Paranoid characters believe that they are the victims of persecution, either by an individual or a group. They are very wary of social interactions (one Trait down on all Social Challenges while the derangement is active) and fearful that others are in league with their tormenters. Even the slightest thing can trigger a paranoid episode, prompting the character to withdraw into himself, flee or even strike out in fear (check for frenzy or Rötschreck as decided by the Narrator). Of course, just because a character is paranoid doesn't mean there aren't people out to get him....



**Perfectionism**

Perfectionists seek to control every aspect of their unlives, often following a rigid set of rules intended to ensure that everything "runs to plan." All their efforts are directed to ensuring that things happen as intended, and if they don't, the perfectionists become agitated, possibly even entering frenzy.

**"Possession" (Sanguinary Animism)**

This uniquely Cainite derangement leads a sufferer to believe that she drinks the souls of her victims as well as their blood. She believes that her victims communicate with her as voices in her head or memories seeping into her consciousness. In some cases, the sufferer blames her actions on these voices, claiming that they are an effort to pacify her tormenters. Whenever the vampire feeds from a mortal, she must make a Static Willpower Challenge. Success means that she is distracted by voices and is one Trait down on all challenges for the remainder of the scene. Failure means that the character gains a second angry, reproachful personality bent on driving her to ruin. The character incurs a one-Trait penalty to all actions for the duration of the madness (which lasts until the next dawn), and the player must roleplay the inner conflict involved.

**Regression**

Characters suffering from regression also have difficulty accepting the real world. Rather than retreating into a fantasy environment, though, they retreat into a more simplistic mentality, often that of a child or young teenager. Such characters are usually heavily dependent on others, both for tasks and decision-making. They always seek to put a more powerful individual between them and whatever is plaguing them. They are frequently naïve, which may be a boon or a curse depending on the circumstances. This refuge of youth may be permanent, or it may kick in due to stress. Some characters retreat even further when placed under great pressure, their mental faculties completely shutting down and leaving them to operate on instinct alone. These episodes result in blackouts and periods of memory loss that may be roleplayed, with the characters acting on instinct subject to a predetermined set of guidelines, or abstracted, with the character coming to their senses with no recollection of the last few minutes/ hours/ days. Characters are two Traits down on all Mental Challenges while this derangement is active.

**Saint Vitus's Dance**

Technically a disease of the nervous system (known in the 21st century as Sydenham's chorea) rather than a derangement, the effects of *Saint Vitus's Dance* are considered a form of madness by the inhabitants of the Dark Medieval era. It causes involuntary spasms of the face and limbs, resulting in dancelike movements that persist for days or weeks and then disappear, sometimes permanently but often reappearing after months or years. Often a result of rheumatic fever, *Saint Vitus's Dance* can spread throughout a group, leading to mass outbreaks of the "madness." Unlike most mortal diseases, Cainites can suffer from *Saint Vitus's Dance*, which they contract via infected blood. Depending on the level of stress, the character suffering this madness is considered one to three Traits down in any challenges. The exact penalty is up to the Narrator depending on the circumstances and may apply to only one or two attributes, rather than all of them.

**Schizophrenia**

Individuals with this derangement have had their psyche fractured by terrible, irresolvable inner conflicts. Most people conceive of this type of disorder when they

envision insanity. Victims might imagine maimed animals floating around them or swear that their dead father is telling them to murder their uncle. This disorder is far from arbitrary — the player should work with the Storyteller to determine a general set of behaviors relevant to the original trauma. Cainites with this derangement are unpredictable and dangerous. In situations where their inner conflict flares up, they must automatically retest any successful challenge to resist frenzy, and they must expend double the amount of Willpower to achieve any normal result with that Trait.

**Visions**

This derangement leads sufferers to believe that they are granted an insight into the divine through visions, trances and other ecstatic states. During these spells, they may be catatonic, in a trancelike state or rave uncontrollably. Their ability to recall details of the visions is similarly varied, sometimes recalling precise details while having only vague recollections of others. Some details might not resurface until many nights after the revelation, emerging in response to some external stimulus. These visions could be products of an overactive imagination, or they could, at the Storyteller's discretion and very rarely, reflect a real insight into the unknown.

## The Amaranth (Diablerie)

The Curse of Caine is diluted through the thinning of vitae within the graduated generations from the progenitor, so the blood of elder vampires is more potent than that of their childer. This power can be stolen, though, by consuming the blood and soul of the elder. This act — the Amaranth (which vampires refer to as "diablerie") — is considered akin to cannibalism among mortals, and it is one of the most heinous crimes a vampire can commit. Although the Assamites of the Levant practice the ritual diablerie of their enemies or the Lasombra may sanction the Amaranth of sire by childe (with the approval of their elders), and some say the Tremere are predisposed to soul-drinking, most other vampires balk at the thought of committing such an unforgivable sin.

### Committing Amaranth

**Note:** *You* cannot *diablerize anything but another vampire. While you can drain almost any other creature of blood and even kill it, the Amaranth is strictly a Cainite delicacy.*

The process of Amaranth is divided into four distinct stages. *Celerity* cannot be used to hasten this foul deed after the first stage.

First, the diablerist must incapacitate his target. Only after the target is physically immobilized may diablerie commence.

The diablerist then drains his victim of vitae, automatically taking one Blood Trait per turn. Yes, this is slower than normal feeding. It's a different process, after all.

Now the true Amaranth begins. The diablerist then continues to drain the vitality of his target, in a similar manner to how the Beast degenerates the body of a hungry vampire, sucking the last of his juices and stripping away any remaining health levels — an action called "drinking the heart's blood." To do so, the target is engaged in a series of Physical Challenges, against which she may bid only Stamina-related Traits (and may not injure the diablerist as a result of the challenge), and the diablerist may bid only Strength-related Traits. Note: *Potence* does not apply for these challenges, nor are any Ability retests applicable. Negative Traits and overbids are always applicable.



Each successful challenge causes one level of aggravated damage, and that damage can not be reduced with *Fortitude*. The target is still mobile and conscious if he is above Incapacitated but locked into the Amaranth. If the diablerist ever loses a draining challenge, then he falls away from the body and fails the attempt. During this phase, no Mental or Social Challenges can target the diablerist, but he also cannot defend himself physically. Any external attempts to attack him or pull him away succeed automatically.

Once the victim is drained dry of blood and reduced to torpor, the final struggle begins, as the diablerist tries to ensnare the victim's soul before it escapes. This effort is a Physical Challenge, and the victim is up three Traits on each challenge (non-cumulative). The diablerist may continue trying until he can no longer match the victim's Physical Traits. Success means the diablerist has won. The victim's body immediately begins to decay as its essence merges with that of the diablerist. Failure means that the target's spirit flees into Final Death.

A character may have other characters assist him in incapacitating his target and even in draining the target of Blood Traits and health levels, but only one Cainite can gain the ultimate benefits of the Amaranth. The seduction of the process is very strong, though. A character who wishes to halt diablerie after entering the third stage must spend a Willpower Trait and succeed in a Static Mental Challenge against three Traits, or she will attempt to continue.

### Summary of Diablerie Stages

| Stage | Description | Method |
|---|---|---|
| Stage 1: | Incapacitate Target | Beat 'em, stake 'em, etc. |
| Stage 2: | Drain Blood | Automatic one Blood Trait drained/turn |
| Stage 3: | Drain Health Levels | Physical Challenge against victim; victim cannot harm diablerist, but diablerist cannot defend against outside attacks |
| Stage 4: | Drain Essence | Physical Challenge; victim is up three Traits. |

### Halting Diablerie

| | |
|---|---|
| Before Stage 3 | No challenge required |
| Stage 3 or 4 | Spend a Willpower Trait and succeed in Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty of three Traits. |

### The Flower

In the immediate aftermath of the Amaranth, the diablerist is filled with an orgasmic sense of joy and power, and he must make a *Self-Control/ Instinct* Test to avoid a frenzy of exultation in the experience of draining another's soul. When a Cainite diablerizes a vampire of equal or higher generation, this "rush" is the only effect of the Amaranth, a sensation to which some Cainites become addicted. The true power of the act comes from the diablerie of a Cainite of lower generation (for

example, an 11th-generation vampire drinking the blood and soul of a member of the Ninth Generation). In such a case, the diablerist effectively permanently lowers his generation by one (i.e., gain a Trait in the *Generation* Background).

If the victim was of much greater power (five or more generations), the diablerist may gain more than one generation, though this decision is ultimately up to the Storyteller. Alternatively or additionally, if the victim was sufficiently powerful, the diablerist may experience a brief surge in his Disciplines (one or two levels in one or two Disciplines, generally). Any Discipline surges are granted solely at the Storyteller's discretion, and in no event do these bonuses last for more than one scene.

### The Thorn

Many young vampires believe diablerie to be the perfect crime. The body is destroyed in the process, making it difficult to secure enough evidence to support an accusation of murder. Diablerists quickly learn, however, that there are ways of identifying those who have committed this heinous sin. Storytellers are encouraged to remember the horrific magnitude of the crime and ensure that diablerie never becomes a casual crime.

- First, and most importantly, a character on the *Via Humanitatis* always loses at least one Humanity Trait *permanently* for committing this act, and he might lose even more if the deed was especially foul — no test, no appeal. Even characters following another road stand to lose a Road Trait for such a horrible crime, unless their road specifically condones it.
- A Cainite using the *Auspex* power of *Soulsight* may detect diablerie in a vampire's aura for up to three months after the diablerie was committed. Evidence of this crime reveals itself as black veins running through the offender's aura.
- Likewise, a vampire using the *Thaumaturgy* power of *A Taste for Blood* may detect diablerie the character has committed, regardless of the centuries since the act.
- The Amaranth is usually a breach of the Tradition of Destruction, which prohibits the young from destroying the old. Evidence of diablerie might provoke reprisals from other Cainites, although the exact reaction will depend on the individual. Lextalionis may be called if the matter becomes too public, although craftier Cainites simply file the information for later use when they desire a boon from the soul-sucker. The only circumstance under which Amaranth is sometimes permitted is during a blood hunt.
- Certain legends speak of diablerists displaying some of the mannerisms of their victims, especially if their victim was especially strong-willed or of a significantly lower generation than the diablerist. Naturally, clever Storytellers will be quick to exploit this trait when dealing with habitual diablerists.

## True Faith

The best defense the mortal world has against the Cainites is not fire or steel, but rather faith. True Faith is a special power driven by the belief in a power, entity, consciousness — sometimes even a purpose — that is greater than the bearer, and as such, it is not limited to any particular religion. It is something that must be constantly fed by habit and practiced every day. True Faith is possessed by few, and most mortals who have it aren't very conscious of it because they focus on the good of others instead of the good in themselves. True Faith is selfless, hopeful, dedicated and above all, rare. Still, in a time when the Church is both a spiritual and a temporal power, there are enough true believers and holy people in the world to make True Faith a palpable threat to Cainites everywhere.

For most Europeans, this faith is in Jesus Christ, but other faiths are equally powerful. Jews, Muslims, pagans and even heretics can have as much faith (or more) than Christians. The truth of the belief is not as important as the strength of the faithful's conviction.

Most Cainites will only come across True Faith when they do battle with the Inquisition or other witch-hunters. Only mortals may possess True Faith — the Embrace strips a vampire of the purity required for it. Those vampires on the Road of Heaven who devoutly believe may occasionally touch what surrounds the blessed.

During the course of a story, a character may be able to develop True Faith, although this should be the basis for an ongoing major subplot for the character. Characters may improve their faith only with exceptional roleplaying and Storyteller approval. The game uses for True Faith are covered exhaustively in **Laws of the Hunt** (characters with the Merit: *True Faith* from that game are considered to have one Trait of Faith). Some basic rules for faith are included here, though.

By brandishing his holy symbol, the bearer gains the Social Trait: *Intimidating* when repelling the undead and warding off supernatural powers. If it is used to strike a supernatural creature, a holy symbol grants the extra Physical Traits *Burning* and *Searing*, and it inflicts one level of aggravated damage.

A character with True Faith may attempt to repel vampires by brandishing his holy symbol, invoking his belief (*"In the name of _____, I command you to be gone!"*) and calling for a Social Challenge. Success means that the vampire must make a test for Rötschreck or flee the area immediately. Failure means the vampire must still back off a few feet and cower before taking action, and the vampire may not initiate any attacks during the next turn, although she may still defend herself normally. A vampire may resist this use of Faith only by attempting to overbid with Willpower. If she currently possesses at least twice as many Willpower Traits as the opposing character, she remains unaffected. A character may attempt to repel multiple vampires with a group challenge.

It is much easier to lose Faith than gain it. Any time a character fails a test in which True Faith was involved, he has a crisis of faith. During such a time, he is one Trait down on all Social Challenges for the remainder of the scene and unable to invoke his Faith again until his Faith has been restored (Narrator's discretion).

### The Gifts of Faith

True Faith grants more than strength of spirit and the ability to repel the undead. The faithful are often revered for the touch of the holy upon them. What follows are a few potential effects — the Storyteller may decide to grant more as the characters' faith grows.

- A character's True Faith rating may strengthen him against attempts to influence his heart, mind or soul with supernatural powers, including *Dominate* and *Presence*. This rating may either be added to the difficulty of a Static Challenge or be considered Traits up for the character. He may also add his Faith rating to his *Conscience* rating when making a *Conscience* Challenge.

• Cainites cannot drink the blood of the faithful without great difficulty. A vampire must drink a number of additional Blood Traits equal to the character's Faith rating just to gain one Blood Trait (so a vampire drinking from a nun with *True Faith* x 2 must drink three Traits to gain one Blood Trait for his pool). Those of *True Faith* x 3 or greater have blood that is considered harmful to Cainites. A Cainite suffers a level of aggravated damage for each Blood Trait he drinks, and he gains no benefits from the blood.

• The faithful can cast out malign influences from a person or place, such as in cases of ghostly or demonic possession. The character makes a Static Social Challenge (adding his Faith rating) against a difficulty listed on the accompanying table. This assumes that the character has the necessary trappings (salt, crucifixes, holy water, etc.). Without them, he is one Trait down in his challenge.

| Task | Difficulty |
|---|---|
| Force a ghost to flee | Ghost's Willpower |
| Permanently expel a ghost | Ghost's Willpower + 2 |
| Force a minor demon to flee | Six Traits |
| Force a major demon to flee | Eight Traits |
| Permanently expel a demon | 10 Traits |
| Ward against *Dominate* and *Presence* (adding Faith rating to challenges) | Six Traits |
| Banish effects of *Dominate* or *Presence* | Vampire's Willpower |
| Sever a blood oath | 10 Traits |
| Inflict (Faith rating) levels of aggravated damage to a demon, ghost or vampire | Eight Traits |

• The faithful may cure injury and sickness simply by their touch. The blessing grants a number of health levels for healing purposes only. For example, a patient who has suffered lethal wounds to his first Wounded level and received the healing touch of a priest with *True Faith* x 3, the patient is granted health levels until he is considered Bruised for the purposes of healing time and making his Static Physical Challenge to recover. (In this case, the patient need only rest for a day, as if he were Bruised, and his difficulty is three Traits.) If the granted levels cause the patient's health levels to rise above Bruised, he heals in a few hours. Higher than that, and the patient heals instantly. These effects last only until the patient attempts to recover a health level (make the Static Physical Challenge). This power cannot raise the dead, but it can save the dying, and it works with illness or poison as well as physical injury.

• Some of the faithful are sensitive to the presence of evil. With a successful Mental Challenge, the character may sense the presence of a vampire, ghost or demon. This challenge is not affected by *Obfuscate*, *Obtenebration*, the *Stealth* Ability or other means of concealment. This effect is not conscious, so the faithful may sense evil any time he is at peace, such as praying, reading, meditating or even sleeping. He may not sense evil presences while he is distracted (in a crowded market or a feasting hall during a revel) or while occupied (in debate or combat). The character does not know exactly what is near him, beyond something unholy. At Storyteller discretion, another Mental Challenge may provide insight.

### Holy Items

The Faithful can bless items by undergoing religious ceremonies involving those items. These scenes should be roleplayed out, if a player's character is involved. One item can be blessed over half an hour. Only one blessing per session can occur from a given character, and any given item can hold only one blessing at a time. Blessed items have an additional Bonus Trait (*Burning*, *Searing*, *Blinding*, *Branding*, *Purging*, *Cleansing* or *Purifying*) which may be bid in a Physical Challenge involving the item and in opposition to a supernatural creature. If the challenge is lost, this Trait is gone, and the item loses its blessing. If the challenge is successful, the item touches the creature, causing one level of aggravated damage (rather than its normal damage). Bidding a normal Trait means that the item is being used as normal, and it causes normal damage (if any).

Holy water will likewise cause aggravated damage — one level for a brief splash, or one level per turn of immersion, although it does not gain any Bonus Traits. Supernatural creatures handling such objects for extended periods of time may cause them to lose their blessing.

This power is not completely limited to characters with True Faith. A devout, honest priest has a lesser version of this ability which allows him to bless holy water or the wine and wafers of communion.

### Relics

Special holy items, relics of antiquity, hold further special powers, such as healing or blessing. These items are extremely rare, imbued with the faith of the masses over the centuries, and *the Storyteller must approve their entry into the game*, as well as designate their special abilities. They are usually kept within special protective cases called reliquaries. Many medieval churches have at least one relic (sometimes of dubious origin). Their power level varies according to the Faith surrounding them. The finger bone of a little-known saint will hold less power than a splinter of the True Cross, for example. Some charlatans peddle fake relics, such as animal bones for saints' bones, rags for the mantle of the Virgin or splinters claimed to be fragments of the manger. Strangely enough, however, these false relics may develop their own Faith rating and some measure of holy power over time and with enough reverence of the faithful.

Not every relic is necessarily an ancient artifact. Holy water, the sacramental wine and bread and the badges of pilgrims can have Faith ratings and act as relics. Not every relic need be Christian — pagans, Jews and Muslims all have sacred objects that are precious to them and their faithful. The exact effects of their relics are up to the Storyteller.

The touch of a relic inflicts aggravated damage on supernatural creatures and causes them to flee if they fail a *Courage* Test against the level of damage they take. This level is determined by the Storyteller, although a maximum of four levels is recommended. Other powers that the faithful may call upon from the relic should

represent the attributes for which the item or saint was revered. A sip from the Holy Grail will cure all illnesses, while a feather from the wing of Archangel Gabriel might instill a great *Leadership* Ability on the owner. Unless desecrated, a relic will not lose its holy power.

### Holy Ground

Churches and other similar areas of faith (mosques, shrines, monasteries) may have a strong background of faithful resonance. Supernatural creatures are wary of such regions. Vampires must make a successful *Courage* check to enter such areas (the difficulty of which should be set by the Storyteller based on the level of Faith he deems the property to hold). While they are in the area, they are considered one Trait down on all challenges. Characters with True Faith are considered to have one Bonus Trait on any challenge they make while on holy ground that is consecrated based on their religious beliefs. All blood expenditures double while on holy ground, and perception-affecting Disciplines (such as *Auspex* and *Chimerstry*) suffer a two-Trait penalty.

The ashen priests of the Road of Heaven supposedly know rites that allow devout vampires to enter holy ground without discomfort, but they do not share these with the unfaithful.

## Status

Status is the central focus of many Cainites' existence. It represents the amount of power and social prestige a character has within vampire society. Those of lower status are expected to respect those of higher status. As one's status increases, one is granted more respect and deference by other Cainites — and one may become more of a target as well. Within a city, the prince typically (although not always) has the most status. Neonates generally have little status, while anarchs and most Caitiff have no status. In between are the power-hungry ancillæ and elders who continually jockey for positions in hopes of increasing their status.

The socio-political manipulation of vampires by other vampires is governed, in general, by a set of unwritten rules that have been developed over centuries. The weight of the ancients often holds the system in place as it is to their advantage to ensure their hold over others is secure. Censure against those who buck the system can be harsh, sometimes fatally so.

A character's status is represented by a list of Traits. These Status Traits are awarded to the vampire for meritorious deeds or are indications of the value placed on that vampire by the other Cainites of the city. Such awards (or the loss of regard) are typically a matter of public knowledge and the awarding or stripping of Status is usually quickly spread through rumor or via public announcement at a gathering of Cainites.

Sample Status Traits include: *Acknowledged*, *Admired*, *Adored*, *Cherished*, *Esteemed*, *Exalted*, *Famous*, *Faultless*, *Feared*, *Honorable*, *Influential*, *Just*, *Praised*, *Renowned*, *Respected*, *Revered* and *Trustworthy*.

While the structure of Status has a rather codified set of rules, the dynamics of the system should be roleplayed. Status is a social convention. Vampires don't actually keep a written list of which worthy holds such-and-such Status. Rather, a character's Status Traits hold roleplaying keys for how a character is perceived, spoken of, and, to some degree, expected to behave. A *Faultless* character should remain perceived as such, or no longer be worthy of the appellation. The gain and loss of Status is generally grist for the rumor mill, and any adjustment of someone's Status should be spread, along with rumors as to the reason for the change, so that all can share in their glory or humiliation. This is not to say that every little change or expenditure of temporary Traits needs to be broadcast, but any vampire with the *Politics* Ability can gauge the reputation (permanent Status Traits) of another Cainite based on observing the overall reaction of others around her and the rumors he may have heard of her. Consider it downtime small talk, if you will. A player can expect a truthful answer when inquiring about a Cainite's Status in such a manner.

### Gaining and Losing Status

In smaller games, the Storyteller is generally responsible for tracking the Status of Cainites and deciding who is worthy of reward or scorn. Larger games usually allow the Storyteller to step back and allow the players to supervise such matters, however, while maintaining an arbitration position in the case of debates.

Once released from the strict supervision of her sire and "accepted" by a prince, in accordance with the Tradition of Accounting, the new neonate acquires a single Status Trait (usually *Acknowledged*, although her behavior during the period of Accounting may merit a different Trait). Characters normally begin play with this single Status Trait. During the course of the chronicle, the vampire gains or loses Status according to her actions and the views of the other vampires around her.

Status is typically gained less frequently than it is lost. In order to gain status, the Cainite must demonstrate to the other local vampires that he is worthy of increased respect. In other words, it is often a matter of going beyond the "call of duty." Simply obeying the Traditions and laws of the local prince is not enough — every Cainite is expected to do as much. In addition to maintaining the reputation that he already has (for example, remaining faultless and just, if he is considered *Faultless* and *Just*), he must further demonstrate that he is worth additional regard. The character must go beyond *himself* in the eyes of everyone.

Status can be lost for a multitude of reasons, such as making an enemy of an elder, ignoring a boon or refusing to recognize another's status. Cainites can also lose it because of breaking any of the Traditions or committing diablerie — if they are caught and are still around, that is. Obviously, if you are going to commit any of these actions, it is best to do so sans witnesses.

Note that a character may never gain more than one permanent Status Trait per story. There is only one exception to this rule: if the prince awards or sanctions an additional Trait. A character can lose any amount of Status Traits at any time — the bigger they are, the harder they can fall.

### Using Status

There are two types of Status Trait: temporary and permanent.

Permanent Status is recorded on the character sheet, and a loss or gain of such is recorded directly on the sheet. It represents actual standing in Cainite society. No matter how much temporary Status has been used during the course of a story, it has no effect on the permanent total. A Cainite can use all of her temporary Status Traits and still be considered to hold all of her standing.

Permanent Status is a measure of a character's credibility. In any situation where there is an open debate between Cainites (one Cainite's word against another), Status is used as a determining factor. The same is true in the case of accusing another of a crime for which there is no concrete evidence. In all such cases, the character with the most Status is the one whose word is accepted. If there is a tie in this case, then the character holding the most temporary Status Traits holds the advantage.

Anyone of higher Status may remove permanent Status from those lower than herself at a cost of one permanent Status Trait per Trait removed.

A group of lower-Status Cainites may strip permanent Status from one of their clan that has higher Status by expending a group total of permanent Status equal to their target's permanent Status.

Temporary Status Traits are directly related to permanent Status Traits and carry the same Trait names. They may be represented by Status cards to keep track of them more easily. Each card should record the Status Trait and which character it belongs to. The loss or use of temporary Status Traits usually lasts only for the duration of the story, and the player can regain the use of all of his cards when the next story begins.

If the Cainite is stripped of permanent Status, then the temporary Status Trait directly related to it is removed from play, no matter who holds the Trait at present. If another vampire currently possesses that Trait, the borrower must approach the vampire for a replacement Trait.

**Example:** *Kharkas is considered by Cainite society to be* Acknowledged, Feared *and* Trustworthy. *These are his permanent Status Traits and are recorded as such on his sheet. At the beginning of the game, the player holds three temporary Status cards, each with the name of Kharkas and the name of the Trait. Even if Kharkas expends or loans away all of his cards, he is still considered to have three permanent Status Traits. If he is lowered in standing* (Trustworthy *is stripped for him breaking his word to the prince), then the corresponding temporary Status card is also lost.*

Following are examples of the use of Status Traits in the course of play. The expenditure or use of a temporary Status Trait means that the character can no longer use the card in play and should hand it to a Narrator.

A temporary Status Trait may be bid in a Social Challenge, in the place of a Social Trait, if the situation is applicable. Temporary Status Traits can also be expended to gain a Bonus Trait in a Social Challenge. If the Trait has been bid in the challenge, it cannot also be used as a Bonus Trait. Any number of temporary Traits can be expended in this way, as long as they are applicable to the challenge. (**Note:** Temporary Status Traits cannot normally be used in challenges related to Disciplines, unless all players are agreeable to such a use. If there is any doubt, the Narrator makes the call.)

Anyone with more temporary Status Traits than another may remove temporary Status from that vampire at a cost of one temporary Status Trait per temporary Trait removed.

If a character has more than double the amount of permanent Status Traits than another member of her clan, she may award a permanent Status Trait to her clanmate at the cost of one temporary Status Trait.



The prince of a city may award permanent Status Traits to any vampire at the cost of one temporary Status Trait per permanent Trait awarded. If he wishes to award more than three permanent Status Traits to a single Cainite in a single story, the fourth and subsequent Traits will cost the prince permanent Status Traits instead. He can also remove permanent Status from any other vampire for events that occurred in his domain for the same cost.

A Cainite can show her favor or support of another vampire by loaning him a temporary Status Trait, although the recipient must return the Trait immediately upon the asking. While he carries that Trait, he may use it as one of his own, after which it is gone for the duration of the story, returning to the benefactor at the beginning of the next story. A vampire may loan only one Trait to any given vampire in this fashion, although she can make one-Trait loans to multiple different vampires. This is the only way a character's temporary Status can rise above her permanent Status rating, barring Prestation.

A vampire must possess at least one Trait of Status (permanent *or* temporary, even if the temporary Trait has been loaned by someone else, or is due to holding a boon) to petition the prince for any reason, such as asking for feeding grounds or accusing someone of a crime.

## Ignoring Status

A vampire can choose to ignore another vampire's Status in general or a specific use of Status against her. For example, a player may refuse to accept the bid of a Status Trait in a challenge where Status would normally be acceptable as a bid, or he could refuse to allow Traits to be added from his opponent's temporary Status Traits in the case of a tie. By doing so, however, she risks the wrath of society.

The structure of Status has been followed for so long, it has become a precious social convention, and by ignoring the Status of a single vampire, she symbolically ignores the Status of all vampires. This can result in the loss of her own permanent standing if rumor of the offense spreads, especially if the offended Cainite is of higher Status than she. Should she be disrespecting the standing of a lesser Cainite, the loss of her standing may only be temporary (that is, the loss of a temporary Status Trait for the duration of the story).

## Outcasts and Status

It would seem, on the surface, that the Autarkis and Furores have little to worry about. Given that they do not follow the mainstream society and have little regard for these social systems, they have no Status to lose. Some outsider groups do have their own versions of Status, often variations on the mainstream, but equally likely to simply be a pecking order. Having no Status often hurts more than it helps, though.

Elders almost never grant favors to outsiders, rarely give them the benefit of the doubt and are much more likely to vent their full wrath on them. It is so much simpler (and more socially acceptable) to pick on those who have no political backing.

Additionally, it is not uncommon for a prince to turn a blind eye to the murder of a Cainite with no standing, even if such a murder is done in breach of the Second Tradition. A Cainite who has shunned the normal protections of social convention has clearly decided that he can survive without the benefits of civilization, whether

his removal from the respected citizenry was due to his own decision or the decision of the populace (i.e., the Cainite was stripped of all Status for his behavior). The more respectable vampires deserve priority attention over the rabble.

Although paying lip service to the elders has its price and binds young vampires into a twisted dynamic structure of debt and unpredictable social value, the benefits are usually worthwhile. Cainites can expect the peace of a prince's rule under the Traditions, can ask protection of their elders, gain the benefit of the doubt and be granted favors. Therefore, it is considered prudent to have at least one permanent Trait of Status and to respect the Status of other vampires.

## Prestation

Prestation is the art of cutting a deal, an invaluable resource for those who know how to use it. Consequently, those ignorant of its applications should beware. Technically, prestation is defined as the system through which one Cainite becomes officially indebted to another for services rendered. In actuality, it is something much more complicated — and deadly.

Respect is given to a vampire who can hold many others in his debt, and many princes rule by virtue of the number of Cainites that they have in their pockets. Such a Cainite has many favors to call upon, and is treated with some degree of social deference, which is reflected in the rules of this game by adept vampires gaining the ability to use the temporary Status of others as if it were their own. For those who are in debt, the social stigma attached to their admissions of weakness is reflected in how they have less temporary Status Traits with which they can manipulate others.

### At the Table

When striking a deal, the players should make clear who is doing the favor (the "bestower") and who is receiving it (the "receiver"). Except in the case of mutual favors, such is always the case. The receiver owes a boon to the bestower, and that boon must be categorized at a level of debt. The agreement must be amenable to all Cainites involved in the deal. Most deals are accompanied by the bestower's requirement: "You may not take any physical action against me for the duration of this boon." Wise Cainites get agreements in writing.

A deal does not have to be a formal, pre-arranged contract. Many Cainites gain prestation over other vampires by being in the right place at the right time and being able to pull the potential receiver out of the fire, even if they have set up the situation themselves. Underhanded? Perhaps, but vampires aren't sweetness and light, remember. As long as the rest of society recognizes that the bestower has gone out of his way to help another Cainite, that poor sod remains in his debt to some degree. Therefore, the level of debt is sorted out after the favor, rather than before.

### Boon Traits

Each level of boon has a corresponding Trait level, one through five Traits respectively. A favor is considered as valuable as the number of Traits assigned to it. A minor boon (two Traits) and a major boon (three Traits) are fair compensation for a life boon (five Traits), for example. To illustrate the relative value of these boons, refer to the following examples:



**Trivial** (one Trait) boons are one-time favors, such as protecting someone for the evening, aiding someone by using a Discipline or supporting another's political move.

**Minor** (two Trait) boons can cover more than an evening and usually entail some sort of inconvenience, such as allowing safe passage through a hostile city, revealing crucial information or disposing of a minor threat.

**Major** (three Trait) boons usually entail a great expenditure of time and resources on the bestower's part. The effects of the favor usually last for many game sessions. An example of such a boon is teaching the receiver a new Discipline or ritual, or purchasing a tavern or inn to serve as his new haven.

**Blood** (four Trait) boons occur when the bestower places herself in a potentially life-threatening situation in order to help the receiver. Hence the name "blood boon": The bestower is willing to shed her blood for her receiver.

**Life** (five Trait) boons involve the bestower actively risking her immortal existence for the receiver that the receiver may live.

It is always possible that a concrete deal can be cut between two vampires on specific terms, such as loaning a Trait of Status in return for loaning a Trait of *Influence*. In such cases, prestation need not be applied. If, however, there are discrepancies in the ability of one side to pay up part or all of such a deal, the prestation may be made applicable. An example might be a Cainite who can currently afford to lend only two Traits of *Influence*, but needs to borrow five Traits from another vampire. In this case, the debtor is going to be three Traits (the equivalent of a major boon) in the hole. Debating the relative merit of other types of favors is all a part of roleplaying prestation.

The player of the receiver then hands the player of the bestower a number of his character's temporary Status Traits equal to the level of the boon. Unlike a normal loan of temporary Status Traits, this number can exceed one Trait, and the "Boon Traits" remain with the bestower until some or all of the debt is repaid. The receiver may not ask that Traits be returned until the boon is settled.

The bestower may continue to use the Boon Traits just as she would any of his own temporary Status Traits, including using them as collateral for other boons or repaying boons of her own. A Boon Trait may change hands many times before it is returned to its owner, and it behooves a receiver to keep track of who currently holds his debt. While normal loaned Traits would return to the one who loaned them (at the beginning of the next story), however, Boon Traits return to the bestower who held them at the end of the current story, not the receiver.

If the receiver does not have enough temporary Status Traits to be able to back up his boon, he cannot expect the favor to be granted. Boons over other vampires grant social power and prestige and are treasured. The "empty" words of an overly indebted vampire, or an anarch of no standing are unlikely to persuade an elder to go out of her way to offer aid. Conversely, a vampire who deliberately places another in debt to a level that she cannot back with temporary Status is considered foolish by his peers. He might face a loss of Status himself (temporary or permanent, depending on how humiliating the situation was) and find the whole deal considered null and void by his peers. Choose your chumps wisely.

### Paying the Piper

The only normal way for a receiver to rid himself permanently of a boon is to repay or ignore the favor. Repayment is usually resolved through roleplaying. Typically, vampires repay their debts by performing equivalent favors. If the bestower is in sufficient trouble, however, the receiver may be able to bargain for a greater level of repayment, possibly even turning the tables. Everything depends on skill at bartering.

By ignoring a favor, the receiver not only loses Status (if anyone finds out about it), but also risks the bestower's ire. If the bestower is a minor Cainite, the receiver may only risk the loss of temporary Status. If the bestower has considerable social influence, however, word of the receiver's offense could spread, causing the loss of permanent Status. Ignoring a major (or greater) boon can result in the loss of more than one Trait. Breaking boons is considered a major slight among vampires.

It is possible that the receiver will attempt to rid the world of his bestower rather than repay the favor. The bestower can use her requirement of non-action as protection from harm — such a breach of convention is considered the height of rudeness and a serious challenge to the status system. Also, the receiver certainly faces the wrath of the prince if the bestower is killed in breach of the Second Tradition. Receivers are often the first vampires investigated in the case of the death of elders. If a bestower is killed, any Boon Traits she holds return to her receivers (at the beginning of the next story).

If a receiver is killed, any temporary Status Traits that come from that character are removed from play. Likewise, the removal of permanent Status from a receiver for bad behavior also results in the removal of temporary Status Traits from play. This can cause a cascade effect of credit and debt in some cases as Cainites scramble to ensure that their structure of social power remains intact. Those who held a murdered Cainite in debt will want to know who was responsible for their loss of power. If the receiver is still alive, a bestower will want to know if he can still uphold his debt (with another temporary Status Trait), and if not, just what does he intend to do about resolving the issue.

## Combat

Combat is the usual intent behind Physical Challenges. Essentially, combat involves two characters in physical conflict. The players agree what the outcome of the challenge will be should each win, each player bids an appropriate Trait, and a test is performed to determine the actual outcome.

The agreed outcome is often that of the loser being injured. This is not the only possible result, however. The two parties can agree to nearly anything, from tripping an opponent to throwing him from the parapet, or a mortal victim escaping from the frenzied Cainite attempting to feed on her.

### Movement — The Three-Step Rule

Anyone in or just entering combat is subject to the Three-Step Rule. You may take up to three steps during any combat action and still attack. Moving one step is considered walking cautiously, two steps is moving directly and three steps is running. A Discipline that allows for an additional action (as opposed to just an additional attack using that Discipline for resolution) allows you to take three additional steps in that action, and so on. If a character takes more than one step in a given turn, he is one Trait down in all Physical Challenges that turn.

### Required Abilities

In some sections hereafter, it is mentioned that in order to receive a bonus or use an ability, you need to have a certain level of an Ability. This simply means that your character needs to have that level of Ability on his sheet at the beginning of the session. For example, if you need to have three Traits of *Melee*, then as long as your character has three Traits of the *Melee* Ability before expending any of them, then he can use that effect regardless of his current level of that Ability.

### Contests of Will

Contests of will are an ancient tradition in Cainite society. They occur when two vampires lock eyes to intimidate each other, with the idea to force the other to back down before a conflict actually comes to blows. Success in a contest of wills is determined in one of two ways. First, it is highly recommended that this action be roleplayed out rather than resorting to rules. In this case, if one of the players relents while roleplaying this action, his opponent wins. If a quick result is needed, a Social Challenge is used to determine the victor instead, with the loser breaking eye contact and losing the contest. The outcome of this challenge, with one Cainite leaving with his tail between his legs, holds more weight in many vampires' eyes than actual physical combat.

### Surprise

If a player does not respond within three seconds of a Physical Challenge being declared to him, the character is considered to be surprised. Sometimes a player is busy with another activity or is playing a character who is not prepared for an attack. It's highly improper to sneak around whispering challenges in the hope of catching someone by surprise.

Surprise gives the challenger an initial advantage. If the surprised defender wins the challenge, the challenger cannot be harmed by the defender's action. Furthermore, if the challenger loses the test, he may risk an additional Trait to gain a second challenge in which he may not be harmed. After this second challenge, regular challenge rules resume. Overbidding is permitted for both challenger and challenged in surprise situations.

### Fair Escape

Fair Escape is a simple rule that allows characters to escape from potentially dangerous situations without their players actually having to bound over furniture or dive out windows. This rule also allows players to avoid combat without going through cumbersome challenges to see if they can get away.

When you use this rule, you can call "Fair Escape!" any time you see another player approaching with whom you do not wish to interact. Once you call "Fair Escape," you may leave the area without being pursued. Several guidelines must be followed when using this rule, however:

• You may not use the Fair Escape rule if the person approaching is nearby (within conversational distance). In such cases, you must initiate a challenge in order to flee. Use common sense in places where there is a great deal of noise and conversational distance is reduced to a minimum (e.g. a crowded marketplace).

• Situations that involve an ambush (all exits blocked or the target is surrounded) or ranged weapons can sometimes negate the use of Fair Escape. Again, use common sense.

• A character using *Unseen Presence* or similar powers may employ a Fair Escape at any time before a challenge has been initiated, unless someone with some form of *Heightened Senses* counters him.

• Characters with supernatural speed such as *Celerity* may gain a Fair Escape by activating their speed before a challenge is initiated. If several characters are using supernatural speed, whoever uses the highest level of speed wins (all ties go to the fleeing party). Therefore, a character using Basic *Celerity* cannot Fair Escape from a character using Advanced *Celerity*.

These rules are meant to hasten play, not complicate it. Always try to employ common sense when using Fair Escape. As a rule of thumb, if it takes several minutes to explain why a Fair Escape would be justified, it probably is not.

## Weapons

For obvious reasons, no real weapons are ever allowed in **Mind's Eye Theatre** games. Even non-functional props are forbidden if they can be mistaken for weapons. This system does not use props of any kind, nor are players required (or allowed) to strike one another.

Instead, players should use weapon cards, which contain the statistics of a particular weapon and allow other players to see that you actually possess a weapon. When you have a weapon card in your hand, you are considered to be holding the weapon.

A weapon gives its wielder extra Traits for combat or other appropriate challenges. Each weapon has one or more extra Traits that may be used in any challenge in which the weapon is employed. These Traits cannot be used as an initial bid. Instead, they add to the user's Traits in the case of a tie. In addition, some weapons have special abilities that may be used, such as causing extra levels of damage or affecting more than one target.

Some weapons have Negative Traits that can be used by the wielder's opponent in precisely the same way as regular Negative Traits. Additionally, any weapon with the Negative Trait of *Fragile* will usually break when used in conjunction with *Potence* above the Intermediate level.

### Concealability

Each weapon has a Concealability rating. If the weapon cannot be concealable or you do not have the proper costume to cover the weapon, it should be carried in your hand, or the card displayed on the outside of your costume, perhaps pinned near the hip to show that you have a sword slung at your waist.

Any character with the *Investigation* Ability may initiate a Mental Challenge to notice if someone is concealing a weapon or other items. The defender may retest with *Stealth* if he is aware of the scrutiny and is actively concealing the presence of the items. A physical search of the character normally reveals hidden weapons automatically without a test.

### Availability

Possession and ownership in the Dark Medieval are privileges, not rights, and ones reserved for those of status. The availability of weaponry is often restricted to those few who have either access to equipment through a mentor or belonging to a standing army, or those who have *Resources* of their own.

The Availability rating of a weapon shows the average minimums required to obtain a typical example of the weapon listed, as well as the comparative rarity of the item. Even if the character has the resources, it does not follow that the item is necessarily freely available to him.

As ever, the Storyteller is the final arbiter as to the cost and availability of any item in the game. The Storyteller may rule that sub-standard weaponry is available more readily and at a cheaper price, but this second-hand, battle-worn rubbish will typically have one or two fewer Bonus Traits and/or one or two more Negative Traits (e.g. *Fragile* or *Clumsy*). Ammunition for ranged weapons brought "on the cheap" is usually inaccurate, and it places the archer one to two Traits down for the challenge. Such should be noted on the item card for the specific weapon or ammunition.

### Bidding Different Traits

During a normal hand-to-hand fight, characters bid Physical Traits against their opponent's Physical Traits. If a character is using ranged weaponry, and she has the *Archery* Ability, however, she can opt to bid Mental Traits instead. If the opponent is attempting to dodge the ranged weapon, she bids Physical Traits. This instance is one of the few in which Traits from different Attribute categories may be used against one another.

## Special Weapon Capabilities

Some weapons have special abilities, allowing an attacker to inflict extra damage, ignore certain type of protection or strike multiple opponents. Such powers are indicated under the weapons' individual descriptions.

### Armor-Piercing

Although they do not inflict extra damage, armor-piercing weapons ignore any defense from armor.

### Destroy Shield

A weapon capable of destroying a shield penetrates it automatically and renders it useless after three successful blows, regardless of the size or strength of the shield.

### Incendiary

Some weapons burn the target, causing aggravated damage to Cainites and lethal damage to mortals when ignited. Incendiary devices may cause ongoing fires (Storyteller's discretion), but they typically extinguish after one successful strike and thus one turn of burning damage. Fire circumvents all protective armor. See the Health section for more details.

### Mounted

The weapon must be used from horseback in order to gain its full effects. Otherwise, treat the weapon as a spear.

**Speed**

In close combat with someone whose weapon has a Negative Trait of *Slow*, *Heavy* or *Clumsy*, you gain one additional Bonus Trait, provided you have at least one level of the *Melee* Ability.

**Spray**

The weapon can strike up to three closely grouped targets at once, as long as they are more than five feet from the attacker. Make one test against all targets simultaneously. Each target that fails the test takes the weapon's damage. The attacker risks one Trait for each target in the group, and loses one Trait for each target who avoided the damage.

**Staking**

Staking weapons paralyze vampires when a successful blow penetrates one's heart. The attacker must win or tie two Simple Tests to successfully stake the vampire. See "Staking" under the Health section for more details.

**Two-Hand Requirement**

Characters must employ two-handed weapons with both hands regardless of their strength, meaning that they cannot also make use of a shield or a second weapon.

## Melee Weapons

All melee weapons use the *Melee* Ability for retests. Unless you have at least one level of the *Melee* Ability, you cannot claim any Bonus Traits from the weapon, although all other Traits of the weapon are applicable.

**Broken Bottle**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 1 |
| Negative Traits: | *Fragile*, *Short* |
| Concealability: | Pocket |
| Damage: | One lethal health level |
| Availability: | Any |

**Knife/Dagger**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Short* |
| Concealability: | Sleeve |
| Damage: | One lethal health level |
| Availability: | *Resources* 2, Common |

**Wooden Stake**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Short* |
| Concealability: | Jacket |
| Damage: | One lethal health level |
| Availability: | Any |
| Special Abilities: | Staking |

**Club**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Clumsy* |
| Concealability: | Jacket |
| Damage: | One bashing health level |
| Availability: | Any |

**Torch**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Clumsy* |
| Concealability: | Cloak, until lit. |
| Damage: | One bashing health level |
| Availability: | Any |
| Special Ability: | Incendiary, when lit |

**Mace**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Clumsy* |
| Concealability: | Long cloak |
| Damage: | One bashing health level |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 3, Uncommon |

**Small Axe**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Clumsy* |
| Concealability: | Long cloak |
| Damage: | One lethal health level |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 2, Common |
| Special Abilities: | Destroy Shield |

**Shortsword**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Short* |
| Concealability: | Jacket |
| Damage: | One lethal health level |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 3, Uncommon |
| Special Ability: | Speed |

**Fencing Blade**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 3 |
| Negative Traits: | *Fragile* |
| Concealability: | Long cloak |
| Damage: | One lethal health level |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 3, Uncommon |
| Special Abilities: | Speed |

**Morning Star**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 3 |
| Negative Traits: | *Clumsy* |
| Concealability: | Long cloak |
| Damage: | Two bashing health levels |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 3, Uncommon |

Special Flaw: Any strike that misses requires the wielder to make a Simple Test. If this test fails, the weapon strikes the wielder, causing full damage.

**Spear/Staff/Pitchfork**

Bonus Traits: 3
Negative Traits: *Heavy*
Concealability: None
Damage: Two lethal health levels (bashing for a staff)
Availability: *Resources* x 1 (N/A if Staff), Common
Special Ability: Staking (if wooden-tipped and sharpened), Two-Hand Requirement

**Broadsword/Longsword**

Bonus Traits: 3
Negative Traits: *Heavy*
Concealability: Long cloak
Damage: Two lethal health levels
Availability: *Resources* x 3, Uncommon

**Battle-Axe**

Bonus Traits: 3
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*
Concealability: None
Damage: Two lethal health levels
Availability: *Resources* x 3, Uncommon
Special Ability: Destroy Shield, Two-Hand Requirement

**Lance**

Bonus Traits: 3
Negative Traits: *Heavy*, *Slow*
Concealability: None
Damage: Three lethal health levels (bashing if blunted)
Availability: *Resources* x 2, Uncommon
Special Ability: Mounted, Speed (if charging), Staking (if wooden-tipped and sharpened)

**Greatsword/Polearm/Scythe**

Bonus Traits: 4
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*
Concealability: None
Damage: Two lethal health levels
Availability: *Resources* x 4/3/1 respectively, Rare/Uncommon/Common respectively
Special Ability: Two-Hand Requirement

## Throwing Weapons

These weapons use the *Athletics* Ability for combat retests. Unless you have at least one level of the *Athletics* Ability, you cannot claim any Bonus Traits from the weapon, although all other Traits of the weapon are applicable.

**Thrown Rock**

Bonus Traits: 0
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*
Concealability: Pocket
Damage: One bashing health level (presuming a fist-sized rock)
Availability: Any

**Thrown Dagger/Knife/etc.**

Bonus Traits: 1
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*
Concealability: Pocket
Damage: One lethal health level
Availability: *Resources* x 2, Common

**Greek Fire Flask**

(includes any medieval variant of the Molotov Cocktail)

Bonus Traits: 2
Negative Traits: *Fragile*
Concealability: Jacket (until lit)
Damage: One aggravated health level
Availability: *Resources* x 4, Rare
Special Ability: Incendiary, Spray, Two-Hand Requirement

**Thrown Small Axe**

Bonus Traits: 2
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*
Concealability: Jacket
Damage: One lethal health level
Availability: *Resources* x 2, Common

**Thrown Spear**

Bonus Traits: 3
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*
Concealability: None
Damage: One lethal health level
Availability: *Resources* x 1, Common
Special Ability: Staking (if wooden-tipped)

## Ranged Weapons

This category covers non-thrown projectile weapons other than siege weaponry. They use the *Archery* Ability for retests in combat. Unless you have at least

one level of the *Archery* Ability, you cannot claim any Bonus Traits from the weapon, although all other Traits of the weapon are applicable.

**Crossbow**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Heavy, Slow* |
| Concealability: | None |
| Damage: | Two lethal health levels |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 3, Uncommon |
| Ammunition: | Bolts (dozen) — *Resources* x 3, Uncommon |
| Rate: | One shot per action, one action to reload. |
| Special Abilities: | Destroy Shield, Armor-Piercing, Staking (if wooden- tipped), Two-Hand Requirement |

**Shortbow**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Fragile* |
| Concealability: | Long cloak |
| Damage: | One lethal health level |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 2, Uncommon |
| Ammunition: | Arrows (dozen) — *Resources* x 2, Uncommon |
| Rate: | One shot per action |
| Special Ability: | Armor-Piercing, Staking (if wooden-tipped), Two-Hand Requirement |

**Longbow**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bonus Traits: | 3 |
| Negative Traits: | *Fragile, Heavy* |
| Concealability: | None |
| Damage: | Two lethal health levels |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 2, Uncommon |
| Ammunition: | Arrows (dozen) — *Resources* x 2, Uncommon |
| Rate: | One shot per action |
| Special Ability: | Destroy Shield, Armor-Piercing, Staking (if wooden-tipped), Two-Hand Requirement |

## ARMOR

Since it stops incoming damage, armor effectively grants a character additional health levels. These health levels are lost before the character himself suffers any damage in combat. Of course, armor does not soak all attacks. A suit of chain mail does little good for a character whose blood is being boiled by *Thaumaturgy*, for instance.

Different types of armor can absorb different amounts of punishment before being rendered effectively useless. It should be noted that armor that has lost all its health levels is not necessarily destroyed — it is more likely that it is just in pieces and requires repair. Of course, some attacks render armor beyond repair. Fixing armor requires the proper tools, time and a Static Physical Challenge with the *Crafts* Ability.



Armor has several different Traits for game purposes. Health levels indicate how many levels of damage the armor can absorb before needing repair. Negative Traits are the drawbacks a wearer gains for donning a particular type of armor. Availability and Concealability apply as for weaponry. Multiple armor types cannot be layered.

## ARMOR TYPES

The Dark Medieval world encompasses a vast range of armor and protective equipment. We have simplified these into three basic categories:

**Light Armor**

This is the most common armor, worn by city guards and the like. It typically comprises pieces of leather, sometimes hardened by boiling, at other times quilted. The padding under other armor types counts as Light Armor when worn alone.

| | |
|---|---|
| Health Levels: | 1 |
| Negative Traits: | None |
| Concealability: | Can be concealed if specifically made to look like normal clothing (requires *Resources* x 3), otherwise a long cloak is needed. |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 1, Common |

**Composite Armor**

This slightly heavier armor comprises piecemeal leather reinforced with metal rings and/ or studs, or perhaps light chain mail. Foot soldiers, brigands or soldiers of fortune most likely wear this armor.

| | |
|---|---|
| Health Levels: | 2 |
| Negative Traits: | *Heavy* |
| Concealability: | Long cloak |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 2, Uncommon |

**Heavy/Knight's Armor**

Seasoned troops may be privileged enough to be issued heavy armor, comprising metal (usually ring or chain mail, with occasional plate protection) over quilted padding. It also includes head protection, probably in the form of a chain coif. This is not the traditional "plate-mail" (which evolves several centuries later).

| | |
|---|---|
| Health Levels: | 3 |
| Negative Traits: | *Clumsy, Heavy* |
| Concealability: | Long cloak to None. |
| Availability: | *Resources* x 3, Rare |

## SHIELDS

Shields give their user one or more extra Bonus Traits in hand-to-hand combat, which can add to the Traits that come from a melee weapon. In order to receive these Bonus Traits, the wielder must have at least one level of the *Melee* Ability.

A shield cannot defend against an attack from the rear. Using a shield precludes the use of a second weapon or any weapon with the Two-Hand Requirement. If a shield is used to bash an opponent, it is considered to have one Bonus Trait, its normal Negative Traits and the ability to cause one bashing health level of damage.

Shields are not concealable.

**Small Shield**

Small shields (or bucklers) protect against melee and unarmed attacks only.

Bonus Traits: 1
Negative Traits: None
Availability: *Resources* x 1, Common

**Large Shield**

Large shields protect against melee and unarmed attacks, as well as ranged and thrown weapons.

Bonus Traits: 2
Negative Traits: *Heavy*
Availability: *Resources* x 3, Uncommon

**Body Shield**

Body shields protect against melee and unarmed attacks, as well as ranged and thrown weapons.

Bonus Traits: 3
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*
Availability: *Resources* x 3, Uncommon

**Cavalry Shields**

Cavalry shields, worn on horseback normally, protect against melee and unarmed attacks, as well as ranged and thrown weapons. They only count against attacks coming from the side of the shoulder over which they are slung (typically the left). If used dismounted, the following adjustments apply.

Bonus Traits: 3 (2 if used dismounted)
Negative Traits: *Clumsy* (x 2 if dismounted), *Heavy*
Availability: *Resources* x 3, Rare

### Etiquette of Arms and Armor

While a Cainite might wish to be as well-armed and armored as possible at all times, there are certain problems with tramping around covered in metal and waving pointy objects. For one thing, armor is heavy, uncomfortable, and, unless the kit is cleaned regularly, it can get rather smelly. For another, it is considered extremely rude to wear armor indoors, unless the character specifically needs to wear armor to fulfill his duties. Carrying large weapons into certain quarters is also considered insulting, and may well get you in more trouble than having your mace at hand could possibly be worth.

## Melee and Brawling

Melee fighting can only occur when two parties are within weapon's reach of each other. Characters using melee weapons often have access to special abilities if they also possess the *Melee* Ability. For example, a trained character using a fencing blade can take advantage of his weapon's speed when fighting a character using a battle-axe.



Brawling can only occur when two characters are within arm's length of each other. Characters engaged in brawling may use unarmed combat techniques on each other, including trips, kicks, punches, wrestling holds and throws. Regardless of the descriptions of the actions, however, all brawling tests result in one health level of bashing damage unless the character possesses some supernatural power or other ability that specifically allows for extra damage.

### Specialized Fighting Styles

Buying a specialized fighting style under the *Melee* or *Brawl* Abilities allows you to describe how your character moves to allow retests and permits a certain flair for your attacks and defenses, but it does not allow you to inflict extra damage or specific injuries. You do gain one Bonus Trait when using your specified style or weapon, as described in the Abilities section.

### Two-Weapon Combinations

It is possible to use more than one weapon at a time in combat, but doing so is quite tricky, and the character must have special training to achieve the benefits thereof. Just performing a task with the wrong hand is sufficient to penalize your chance of success; compounding matters by doing something else with the other hand doesn't help any. A character must have four levels in the *Melee* Ability to attempt two-weapon combat.

The paired-weapons combination is considered to aid in parrying and defense. Having a second active weapon in the character's off-hand adds one Bonus Trait to the character's Physical Trait total, in addition to the Bonus Traits from the weapon in his dominant hand.

The Negative Traits of *both* weapons are still applicable. The combatant may choose which of the two weapons causes damage in the case of a successful challenge to strike. If the Special Ability of a weapon is used (e.g., the Speed of a dagger), that weapon causes the damage. If both weapons have the Special Ability, then the option is again open.

**Example:** *Stanislav is using the classic longsword-dagger combination. A longsword grants three Bonus Traits, and a dagger normally grants two. Therefore, Stanislav has four Bonus Traits to his challenge (not five — he can only claim a maximum of one for the dagger). He may choose which of the two weapons strikes his opponent.*

If the character is specialized in the two-weapon combination being used (a specialization of the *Melee* Ability), an additional Bonus Trait is added as normal. Note that the specialization must be specific to the combination being used, e.g. "longsword and dagger," "two axes" or "axe and dagger." While the character may use other combinations, the specialization bonus applies only when the chosen combination is used.

For the purposes of simplicity, it is easiest to assume that a character's dominant hand is the same as the player's, unless the Merit *Ambidextrous* is taken. Furthermore, these rules do not apply to common uses of both hands, such as playing a musical instrument or working a craft.

## Supernatural Brawling

Cainite fangs are deadly weapons when used to rend and tear. To effectively use his fangs as weapons, the vampire must first make a successful grapple, wrap his victim into a bear hug or tackle him. He can then cause one level of aggravated damage on a successful attack in his next action. Werewolf fangs have a similar effect.

Note that this use of the fangs is different from normal feeding. The Kiss is enacted in a similar way, but it inflicts no health levels of damage initially. Instead, the Cainite may drain the victim's blood at a normal rate, during which time the victim is helpless to resist. A vampire may also instantly heal minor damage from her own feeding with a lick of her tongue. The combat bite does not cause the ecstasy of the Kiss, or more properly, the ecstasy vanishes when the pain kicks in. Licking the gash of the fang attack just leaves you with a red chin.

Vampires with *Talons of the Beast*, those who construct bone spurs with *Rend the Osseous Frame* or other supernatural creatures with comparable powers, may use a claw attack against their opponents. Such attacks inflict aggravated damage (*Talons of the Beast*, werewolf talons) or lethal damage (bone spurs).

## Ranged Combat

Many weapons allow a character to stand at a distance from a target and engage him in combat. In such situations, the player must still go over to his target (after shouting "Twang!" or whatever) and engage in a challenge. Surprise rules may apply, and if the defender has no ranged weapon or supernatural power with which to return fire, he could be in trouble. While he may still dodge, run for cover or close the distance between himself and his attacker, he cannot damage the attacker in the intervening challenges.

Characters using the *Athletics* Ability to throw projectiles like knives or axes fall under the rules for regular ranged combat, including cover. Questions of range should not be a problem, but if it becomes an issue use common sense, and do not forget to allow for factors such as the *Potence* Discipline.

### Cover

Fighting with ranged weapons allows combatants to stand some distance apart; participants can therefore dive for cover. This cover can take the form of whatever obstacles are around and within reach, just don't *actually* dive for them. A Narrator might be required to describe what cover is available. Typically, a covered combatant can claim one Trait of cover to add to his total number of Traits. These cover Traits cannot be used for bidding, but they do add to a player's total if Traits are compared.

If cover is extensive, it may be worth more than one Trait. The number of Traits available for cover is left for the challengers to agree on, or for a Narrator to decree. Hiding behind a boulder, for example, might be worth two Traits, while hiding behind a thin wooden fence should count as only one. If one combatant goes completely under cover (he cannot be seen at all *and* is thoroughly protected), he is considered impossible to hit. The attacker must change his position to get a clear shot.

## Mounted Combat

While mounted combat is unlikely to occur during a game, especially if the characters are indoors, the following rules cover the differences in combat when one or more combatants are on horseback.

### Controlling Steeds

Horses, like any other animal, are afraid of vampires. They are distinctly nervous and likely to shy. As such, any Physical Challenge for an action taken from horseback places the character down one Trait in the case of ties. If the Cainite has *Feral Speech* or two Traits in *Animal Ken*, this penalty is ignored. Alternatively, if the horse is ghouled to the Cainite, the penalty is ignored.

In combat, controlling the steed is more difficult. The penalty increases to two Traits, of which only one may be negated. The second penalty Trait may be ignored if the character has more than three Traits in *Ride*, or if the steed is ghouled. If the steed takes lethal damage from an attack, it will shy. The mounted character must make a Physical Challenge against the horse to bring it back under control, using *Ride* as a retest. Doing so takes an action to perform. Failure to control the animal results in it bolting or possibly throwing its rider, and further *Ride* challenges must be made to keep the character in the saddle and bring the horse back under control. Only one such attempt may be made per turn, and it is the only action available to the character, other than leaping from the saddle.

### Combat Effects

The height advantage granted by a mount gives any attacker on the ground using *Melee* or *Brawl* a two-Trait penalty when attempting to strike the rider, unless the attacker is using a long weapon such as a spear.

An effective knight or other mounted character must be both a skilled fighter and a skilled equestrian. Therefore, the number of Ability Traits that he can call upon from a single Ability in a single combat sequence is limited to the number of *Ride* Ability Traits he currently possesses.

**Example:** *A knight attempting to use a sword from horseback has* Melee x 4 *and* Ride x 1. *During the course of the combat, he may only use a maximum of one* Melee *Trait to retest. Should he dismount, he may use the rest of his* Melee *Traits in hand-to-hand combat.*

Characters who suffer damage while mounted must make a Simple Test to remain on horseback. Failure means they are knocked off and subject to two levels of bashing damage.

### Charging

A mounted charge adds two levels of damage to a successful strike, but the attacker takes a one-Trait penalty to strike his target. Charges should also be resolved first in a combat turn. A charge requires a reasonable distance to be covered at speed. The Narrator determines whether a charge is appropriate.

### Lances

A charge is required to use these weapons appropriately; resolve as if a spear was used, otherwise. A character must have a minimum of *Ride* x 3 and *Melee* x 3 in order to use these weapons, otherwise he will take a level of bashing damage for each level of lethal damage that he inflicts. Note that this damage may result in the character being unhorsed. If an unskilled rider attempts to use a lance, then to remain seated after each charging strike, he must make a Static Physical Challenge against the number of health levels of damage he caused.

### Horse Archery

Accuracy while moving is very difficult, and even the slightest error in timing results in arrows missing the target by yards. Unless the character has the *Archery* with the specialization *Mounted*, his shots are considered two Traits down in the

case of a tie, four if the horse is moving faster than a trot. Characters with this specialization must have a good reason to have learned this skill, as warriors from only a few nations (such as the Mongols or Persians) had any degree of skill in mounted archery.

### Trampling

A trained war-horse can be coaxed to trample an opponent in front of it or to kick an opponent behind it. Such attacks cause two levels of lethal damage. It takes a character one action to cause the horse to attack, and the attack takes place at the end of the combat turn. A normal challenge is performed between the horse and the defender, who may dodge if he is aware of the incoming attack. Shields will not block this form of attack. Should the horse's attack fail, both the horse and the rider are considered down two Traits for the following turn.

### Basic Modifiers

These modifiers reflect situations and maneuvers that can occur in various types of combat.

**Blind Fighting:** Darkness or fighting with impaired vision (blindness, dirt in eyes) imposes a two-Trait penalty on all attacks. Some Discipline powers, such as *Heightened Senses* or *Witness of Darkness* partly or fully negate this penalty. Ranged attacks (using thrown weapons or archery, for example) made while one is thus visually impaired will miss. Powers that require a clear line of sight are likewise impossible. In the case of absolute darkness or blindness, the character must retest any successful challenge (once per challenge) unless his opponent is likewise impaired.

**Immobilized Targets:** If a target is immobilized but still struggling, he must bid an additional Trait to enter a Physical Challenge. If the target is completely immobilized — staked, unconscious, etc. — attacks against him hit automatically and can cause an additional health level of damage if the attacker desires.

**Range:** Ranged weapons incur a two-Trait penalty for any shot taken at a target beyond about 100 yards. For thrown weapons, consider the penalty to count beyond the number of current Physical Traits of the character in yards.

**Weather:** Wind reduces the accuracy of all range or thrown weapons and may impose a one- or more Trait penalty. It will also limit the range of weapons to the strictures given in the Range paragraph above. Dim or foggy conditions will impose a two-Trait penalty and effectively half the range of the weapon.

**Target Speed:** If a target is running (moving three or more steps per turn), then ranged weapons incur a one-Trait penalty to hit them. If the target is mounted and moving at a trot (or Intermediate *Celerity*), the penalty rises to two Traits. At a gallop (or Advanced *Celerity*), the penalty reaches three Traits.



### The Step-by-Step Combat Turn

Combat is often fluid and confusing, occasionally involving multiple opponents performing multiple actions and overlapping with one another. For simplicity, the following list is provided to keep track of when actions occur.

**Spend Blood:** Cainites burn blood reflexively (up to their generation limit) to augment their Physical Traits or heal damage. Although this can be done at any stage of the turn, it is easier to deal with at the start.

**Activate *Celerity*:** Vampires with *Celerity* can burn blood to take additional actions this turn. Those with *Alacrity* who are reacting to incoming attacks will resolve their challenges first in the turn. Those with additional actions will deal with these later in the turn. Vampires may activate *Celerity* at any time during the turn, but again it is normally easier to deal with this at the start of the turn.

**Determine Initiatives:** If required, determine in which order characters will act during the turn. In general, this pattern will remain in place for the duration of the turn, although the loss of Traits may alter a character's position in the order of events. See also "Challenge Speeds" (Optional Rule).

**Movement:** Every character can take up to three steps (see "Movement — The Three-Step Rule").

**"Everyman" Actions**: All characters declare their actions and resolve their challenges in order.

***Swiftness* Actions:** Those Cainites who have activated *Celerity* before now take their speed-related *Swiftness* action and may move up to another three steps. Non-*Celerity* characters cannot harm their attacker as an outcome of the challenge.

***Legerity* Actions:** Those Cainites who have activated *Celerity* before now take their speed-related *Legerity* action and may move up to another three steps. Non-*Celerity* characters cannot harm their attacker as an outcome of the challenge.

**Other Actions:** All other actions that take place "at the end of the turn" are resolved now.

**End Turn:** Ensure that all expended or lost Traits are noted. Also tally up any damage taken by characters. The Narrator might take time at this point to briefly summarize the turn for those involved.



*Prince Salvatini was stunned. Shocked at himself, that he had let an enemy come so close — one who had killed his sire, no less — and never suspected! The darkness of the gazebo upon which he had chosen to hold this secret audience deepened.*

*It simply could not be that Madeline was involved as the Lunatic claimed. All his subjects had been questioned closely after the foul diablerie. Most had been suitably evasive — and it was certainly educational as to who could worm their way out of answering direct questions — but nothing had revealed any such conspiracy against his sire. Now Grigori, who had failed him so sorely once before, thought he finally had proof?*

*"The clan of seers has led me astray before, Grigori. You especially. What assurance do I have now of the truth in your words?"*

*"It tells me things, dear prince. They all tell me things. The spider's voices have yet to lead me astray on this journey. I notice the shadows as they dance.... It is not to be denied. After my long and painful silence, can you truly bear to ignore me now?"*

*The prince heaved a pain-wracked sigh and hung his head. "I cannot. Madeline must be a traitor, as you say. But tell me again how you found your proof."*

*"We tracked down the rogue Gabriel who left this court before your sire's murder. The others — Hauknefr and Paulo — bled for him, and the blood was given in measured doses, no doubt to bind him under the oath. They insisted on my blood also! I had no choice in the matter. Maligned! In time Gabriel regained consciousness, as we do, and they drew from him that which they will tell us all tomorrow night."*

*"And what more can you tell me of my enemy?"*

*"Nothing more, my prince."*

*"And where is Gabriel now? Where did you imprison him?"*

*"Ah, that is the most shameful part! The others — Hauknefr and Paulo — let him go! Against my every protestation, they promised to release him in exchange for his testimony against Madeline. He is at large, I have to admit, and he no doubt seeks your very person. That is why I insisted on speaking to you in private, my prince. I tried to stop them, but—"*

*Half blinded by a growing rage, Salvatini happened to notice two figures approaching, and he silenced Grigori with one swift gesture. "Hide yourself," he commanded. "Here come our conspirators now." Grigori melted into the shadows nearby as they approached.*

*"Good, sweet prince!" lilted Paulo. "A moment, if you will, perchance a momentous moment!" He quickened his stride, leaving Hauknefr a step behind. "Where's Grigori?" He then spotted the Malkavian emerging from another entrance, shuffling meekly toward them. "Ah! We never seem to know where you are. Hurry! We have the prince's ear. Let's not waste it." Paulo turned back to the prince, his face somber, yet his eyes dancing. "My lord, wonderful news. We have discovered the identity of the beast who so cruelly tasted the heartsblood of your sire!"*

*Salvatini expertly expressed surprise. "Is that so? Tell me more!"*

*"Aye, my lord. The vile serpent rests in your garden, señor! Her memories of the event have been hidden within her by an expert, but we are sure that she was responsible and acted with intent."*

*"Spare me your prattle, and tell me who!"*

*"It is with heavy heart that I reveal the murderer. It is Madeline, of my own clan."*

*"Aye, and her own mouth shall decide her fate," stated Hauknefr. "My prince, present our case, and we will prompt the skald to tell her own tale."*

*"Indeed," said the prince. "Her words shall be pivotal for us all."*

# Chapter Six: Storytelling

While the rest of this book deals with the systems required to run this game, this chapter explains the most complex aspect — *how* to run the game. All the rules knowledge in the world will avail you naught in your journey through the Dark Medieval without a competent Storyteller at the reins, and here we discover some of the secrets behind steering your chronicle in the right direction.

Many neophyte Storytellers are quickly overwhelmed with the amount of work required to run a game of this kind, especially if they have little foreknowledge of what is required behind the scenes. They might have watched previous Storytellers and Narrators in action at a game, decided to have a go at it and suddenly uncovered a plethora of other heretofore hidden tasks. Forewarned is forearmed, of course, and this chapter should give you all the basic weaponry you need. Experienced Storytellers might also benefit from discussions of alternative setting concepts and research, costuming, props and story ideas.

## You, the Storyteller

While the players flip through the rulebook, create characters and develop those characters' backgrounds, someone has to take up the mantle of leadership and supervise the game as a whole. That worthy is you, the Storyteller. You are responsible for the organization of the chronicle in terms of logistics, plots, setting and characters. You are in charge of all events occurring in the game. You keep track of the subplots of dozens of characters and the repercussions that the setting holds for those actions. It's the biggest job in the game. It's tough. It takes time, energy and enthusiasm. It's also very rewarding in the long run.

While players assemble once a month or so (depending on the scheduling of your game), you will likely need to deal with some aspect of the game on a far more regular basis. As the central authority figure in the chronicle, you are faced with questions from players during downtime, and you have to deal with ensuring that the logistics of the chronicle are handled well in advance of the hordes massing for their regular night of revelry and rivalry.

Your Storyteller duties can take up a fair portion of your time if you allow them to. Even without the downtime activities your job requires, you will find that, come the day of the game, you will be rushed with such preparatory tasks as preparing the game site, dealing with your players' questions, approving Experience Trait expenditures and polishing plot elements so that the players don't run roughshod over them in their enthusiasm.

Additionally, your mind will remain awake to the possibilities of your game. You'll discover the game intruding on your thoughts at any time. Plot element ideas might spring upon you at the least prompting, demanding to be recorded for future use. Dinner gets cold while you frantically log your latest brainstorm. You might find yourself inspired by films, books, museum exhibits or music, perhaps even potential props in a secondhand store. It could be handy to invest in a notebook or a PDA.

Is this a lot of work? Yes. It's tiring, it can be tedious, and it can be intrusive on your real life. Is it manageable? Yes. With time and experience, you will learn to juggle the elements of Storytelling, develop skills to cope with the unexpected and pace yourself so that the game does not dominate your every waking moment. Is it worth it? Hell, yeah! The positive feedback you'll get from the simple expression of joy and satisfaction on the players' faces after the game and their evident enthusiasm to continue to play in your game can be more rewarding in many ways than your regular paycheck.

## Story Construction

Every Storyteller has her own style when it comes to crafting stories. Some are comfortable with basic thumbnail-style plots that spur the characters into action, allowing the players to dictate the events of the game. Others prefer a more structured control over the game in terms of mood and theme, coming up with extensive plots and ensuring that characters are highly detailed. While either extreme is perfectly acceptable, there is no single definitive way to tell stories. You just have to find your own style and voice in time.

Storytellers who are more familiar with tabletop roleplaying will notice many significant differences between tabletop and live-action games. Apart from the obvious rules differences, the style of narration and the interaction with players is a marked departure from any of the tabletop Storyteller-system games. You no longer have the luxury of omnipresence. You do not have as much direct involvement in every aspect of the session. (Players are often holding scenes in another part of the building while you are overseeing a rules discrepancy on the porch.) Rather than describing detailed scenes and settings, you are forced to rely on simple props, a few well-chosen sentences and the imagination of the players. In larger live-action games, the focus of action decentralizes. Rather than a small group of protagonists, you have a town of citizens. The universe becomes a collective construction of you and your players, and you frantically hope that you can keep track of it all.

Fortunately, the players will take much of the onus of running the game upon themselves, using the key ingredients and creating their own stories. The intensity of acting out roles is often stronger than what might arise in a tabletop session by virtue of the action being live and immediate. The sum total of the experience is the game, and the aim of the game is to have fun.

### Piece by Piece

Every story has a few core properties, and you'll need to address each of them to some degree in order to structure a rewarding story for your players.

#### Theme

The theme is the organizing principle of your story. It is the unifying idea, the description of your tale at its most basic level. You convey your story and its messages

and morals through themes. Themes pervade the entirety of your story's structure, but they should remain subtle. Blatant revelation of the story's theme forces players into uncomfortable conformity and pushes stories toward predictability. The players will gradually recognize your stories' themes, but they should do so at their own pace, through their interaction with your story elements.

Themes can be as visceral as the struggle for freedom, as intellectual as the revelation of lost knowledge or as moral as the eternal war between good and evil. You don't have to restrict yourself to one theme either. Multiple themes can work well in larger games, as long as you can handle juggling the elements. Subplots might also demand different themes depending on the nature of the characters involved.

Some examples of themes that you might like to explore include:

**Hope:** Dark Medieval Europe is a place of war and misery, but that does not mean that all hope is dead. Whether it is the optimism of the Brujah for a new Carthage or the salvation that might be granted by Golconda, hope truly springs eternal.

**Salvation:** Are the Cainites truly separated from God by their curse? Many vampires believe many different things about religion and their undead state, leading to the creation of heresy or the hope for redemption.

**Corruption:** Vampires are unnatural creatures, and the Curse of Caine marks all of his descendants. Everything they touch becomes corrupted at some point. Perhaps the Cainite's influence corrupts the innocence of the mortals nearby, or the acts to which he is driven to survive corrupt the vampire's very soul along with those around him.

**Religion:** A core mortal struggle in this era is that between Christianity and Islam. Many Cainites still hold fast to the religious convictions of their mortal lives, and such beliefs drive their opinions and actions. The Crusades are fought on many levels — the battlefields, castle politics and theological debates just for starters — and all types of characters can be involved at any level.

Morality, exploration, love, hate, betrayal, revenge, rebellion, chaos, order — all of these words can inspire themes that you might wish to explore in your stories.

## Mood

Mood is the underlying emotional sentiment and general tone of a chronicle. It is one of the most difficult story elements to capture, yet it is all the more rewarding for its elusive nature. While players need not know the actual mood of the chronicle, they should *feel* it in every aspect of the story.

Is your story optimistic and upbeat or pessimistic and oppressive? Angry or calm? Confident or despairing? Roses or thorns? Contrast your theme with your mood, or choose one that complements it. Each combination has its own opportunities for dynamic storytelling. Again, different subplots might demand different moods, and it is likely that a long-running game will evolve through a sequence of multiple moods in its lifetime. You should be aware of the predominant mood that you wish to portray through the story and quietly direct the story elements in that direction, but be flexible enough to alter the mood should situations require it.

**Fear:** Clearly, the supernatural creatures of the Dark Medieval instill fear in mortals, but being one of those creatures is also scary. From jealous rivals, to witch-hunters or insane elders, the night is fraught with peril even for the undead.

**Paranoia:** Constant betrayal and reversal can overload a game, but when played gently, this mood can be very effective. When even one's allies are doubtful, a paranoid character is not so much afraid of his enemies, but certain that there are other enemies out there of which he is not yet aware.

**Isolation:** Despite surrounding themselves with retainers and allies, vampires are ultimately alone. They are pulled in one direction by their need for company and another by their fear of their fellows. And terrible repercussions (such as insanity, betrayal and death) befall those who withdraw from society or step outside its bounds.

**Violence:** Cainites are killers. Deriving from a tenuous grip on the Beast, a love of the hunt, the thrill of challenging death or residual emotions from a violent mortal life, this mood focuses on the truths of Cainite existence. Violence might arise frequently in your game, but make sure that its aftermath is illustrated. Grieving relatives, ruined plans and feuds that solve nothing should make the characters question whether violence is a valid solution to their problems.

## Setting

Outside your immediate story is the rest of the world, the greater stage on which your drama is set. Developing the setting is a sizeable challenge, especially when developing your Dark Medieval backdrop. Modern games allow familiarity to describe much of the setting to your players. Sending your players back into the dim and distant past involves considerably more imagination.

Setting describes the overall scheme of the game world, incorporating the many levels of vampiric existence, as well as the daily (and nightly) existence of the mortals nearby. Much of your setting can be drawn from the background information for the Dark Medieval world and the World of Darkness as given in this book and other related products from White Wolf. Where these products give you a framework in which to build your stories, there is nothing stopping you from exploring your stories in a world all your own creation. It's your "reality," so do with it as you will.

Choosing the locale, or the physical place in which to set your chronicle, is the next step toward completing your chronicle's creation. Obviously, your locale must be set in a location in the medieval world, and it is often easiest to choose a city of which you have some knowledge. Otherwise, you can choose a location in which you have some interest and which you would like to learn more about. Cities, towns, monastic communities and isolated castles are some possibilities, but there are many more. Check out bookstores and libraries and research historical information — we can't provide it all for you in the confines of this small a book. For many real locations, there exist actual maps or descriptions of their condition during the medieval era. Use your imagination to extrapolate these places into the Dark Medieval period. If you choose to create your own location, rely on books to guide you in the sorts of things that should be found there. This all takes a great degree of imagination, but the more time you spend developing the details of your location, the richer the chronicle will be.

At the very least, you need to have a good idea of the immediate locale's inhabitants and society. While you need not rush out and create a complete society from scratch, you will need to be able to present it in a realistic and consistent manner so that the players can believe in it. The setting needs to live and breathe, and it will likely change to some degree due to the actions of the characters in your game. Define the setting a little more with each story, but don't give away everything at once. As the chronicle progresses, add details of geography, custom and plot. Pick your own pace for this, and be prepared for any players' questions.

You can extrapolate much of the mortal world from your own research, pulling from books and films to create a Dark Medieval "feel." Add the Cainite part of the equation next, considering the history of your location and determining what types of Cainites are likely to reside in or pass through your locale. You need to consider where your prince resides, what sites (if any) of mystic power or faith may exist nearby, what other supernatural forces may be in the vicinity and so forth. Bear in mind the theme and mood of your chronicle, and ensure that they are reflected in the design of your setting.

## Plots

The central plot to your story is what brings your characters together and gives them a reason to interact. It should, therefore, be broad-based in its impact, affecting all characters in some way. While every character need not participate in the main plot, all of them should (at the very least) be aware of it and consider its potential to change their environment and circumstances.

Take, for example, a plot that concerns the slow awakening of an elder from torpor and her effect on the characters' locale. The main plot affects some characters as they discover and clash with the elder's minions who are scurrying about to complete preparations for her imminent return. Other characters aren't affected until the elder actually wakes from torpor and begins establishing her power base in the area. Some characters won't be directly affected, but they may find that the rising elder and the alteration of events, individuals and the environment has some influence over their own plans. Occasionally a player will deliberately remain ignorant of the main plot's existence, refusing to acknowledge it even if it bites him on the rear. This player deserves no special dispensation, and he should suffer the consequences of his intentional aloofness.

It can be difficult to come up with plots for a new, or even an existing, chronicle, so we've included a few story ideas for you later in this chapter. They're free to a good home and should inspire you to come up with your own variations.

### Subplots

Smaller chronicles need to be tightly focused, and, in general, small games will find most characters involved primarily in the resolution of the main plot. Larger games need complex plots that allow players to interact with each other without the aid of a Narrator at every elbow. Many of these smaller plots (subplots) that have little relevance to the main plot(s) spring from the minds of the players themselves as they bring their characters to life on the stage you have set, saving you a lot of work.

Subplots are nearly as vital to the success of your story as the main plot itself. They are tales of minor events and activities, triumphs and tragedies, that fill the vampires' nightly existence. They can be as small as one Cainite's search for sustenance and the events that spring forth from that search. They can be as large as the whole city scrambling to cover up an accidental breach of the Silence of the Blood. It's not necessary to write up subplots for all the characters in the game. Often the players will develop their own subplots based on their characters' histories or on events that occur during the course of the chronicle, particularly if they are enthusiastic and motivated about the game.

Some characters just won't be interested in the main plot, since their goals are too far removed from the main action or their motivations do not allow them to be sidetracked by what everyone else is doing. This single focus may seem like a problem, but it's actually an opportunity. Character goals and motivations can be the very essence of great subplots, and they can lead to broader, more encompassing stories. They are also prove effective means of dropping a new character into the chronicle. If you give the new character a connection with existing characters, he will gravitate toward the plots in which those characters are involved. Remember, conflict is your friend. It makes for the best subplots, and it is relatively easy to establish.

Be alert for subplots that threaten to dominate the chronicle, though. Sometimes a subplot will explode, engulfing many characters and dominating entire game sessions. An example may be the devolution of a Cainite into Wassail, becoming a creature of rage and destruction, requiring much of the resources of the other characters and causing them to be distracted from the main plot. While such plots may not derail your own story, they can distract from it. They can become great opportunities for you as a Storyteller, showing you openings to insert more plot devices, relieving you of some of the burden of feeding the plot. You can often delay your main plot while these subplots are resolved, but in some cases, such as plots with definite timelines, doing so can be tricky. In the end, you will need to bring the focus back. Hopefully, these explosive subplots will resolve quickly and add to your overall story rather than overwhelm it. If you're a clever Storyteller, you can make it look like you *meant* for the subplot to happen.

## Pacing

The value of pacing becomes clear when you accept the Storyteller's axiom that nothing goes exactly as planned. Characters will miss vital clues for no apparent reason and then spend the remainder of the evening scratching their heads as the session drags on. Characters will also cooperate with one another in a frighteningly efficient manner from time to time, solving all the puzzles that you thought would take them the entire night to unravel. More occasionally, the players will feel completely overwhelmed with information and so uncertain of what to do next that they will cease taking an active role in the story altogether.

You can minimize the impact of these eventualities by giving consideration to the pacing of your story. Before the game begins, determine the rate of the story's progression. Fast-paced games will throw new situations and information at the characters throughout the night, keeping them busy and concealing much of the bigger picture until the climax is reached. Slower games lend themselves to extended communications between characters, not to mention more subtle intrigue and plots. You might wish to vary the tempo of the game between, or even during, sessions.

Pacing becomes easier with experience and as you learn how to narrate on the fly. While you should be well prepared for the game session, that doesn't mean you can't be flexible during the game. You will often be called on to address a character's questions for which you have nothing prepared, but which nonetheless require answers to keep the action flowing. Try to give answers that satisfy these questions with information that will advance the plot. If you wish to slow the pace of the game, throwing red herrings into the matter may be appropriate, but they should also have their own internal consistency. An unexpected lull in the game could be the opportunity you need to introduce a new plot or further a plot that has been low profile thus far. Don't forget to note what you threw at the players, especially if you came up with something off the cuff. It can be embarrassing to have a player pursue a red herring you threw out months ago and you have no idea what you said about the thing in question.

While off-the-cuff storytelling is essential to a successful game, there is no substitute for preparation. Improvisation will keep you moving, but planning will keep you in the right direction. Planning will also help you recognize when the pace is

slipping and give you clues as to how to adjust it. If you are forced to choose between moving a story too fast and too slow, bend toward fast. Slowing the pace without reason will lead to player boredom and frustration. Keep a couple of plot threads in reserve to throw in when the pace slacks off unacceptably. If you're really in a pinch, ask the players what their characters want to do next. Listen to them and think about how this will work in your story. Doing so will give you a little breathing room, and (more importantly) it gives you a sense of why the action has fallen off.

### Scale

Scale is the relative size of your chronicle — the number of regular players. You can run stories for as few as two players or as many as 200, but stories for 20 to 30 players are more common. The scale of your story is usually determined by the number of players involved when the game begins, but that number will change as players bring others in or drop out for their own reasons. You can control the rate of change. Actively recruiting players will swell your numbers. Placing a player cap (the maximum number of players you're prepared to deal with) will halt growth at your comfortable level.

Scale can get out of hand if you are the only Storyteller and the number of players grows too rapidly or becomes too large. When you see such a thing coming, get some help. If you don't, your game and players will suffer as you overload with work. Ask for some volunteers from your players and make them your Narrators. Some very large groups have multiple Storytellers, each in charge of a different aspect of the game. Remember, the larger your game is, the more broad and encompassing your plots should be in order to allow every player to become involved.

If you are planning a long-term chronicle, you will have to give some thought as to how scale will affect the plots before you start them. Sudden or dramatic changes in scale can wreak havoc on long-term plots, requiring you to do some fancy storytelling footwork to keep everything on track. Stories for extended chronicles must be more flexible in order to withstand the changes in scale that are inherent in long-term chronicles. Planning a few escape routes for these plots will help you handle scale changes in stride.

### Scope

Your story's scope describes the range of possibility for character action and impact — essentially, it's what's at stake in your story. Whether it's a low-key chronicle dealing with the personal agendas of a handful of characters or a broad story encompassing an entire city, the stakes can be as big or small as you want. Your scale will modify your scope, naturally. It's easier to tell the story of a whole city if you have enough players to represent all the vampires present. Varying the scope of your game will give the stories you tell more variety, as well as a sense that the characters exist in an active setting. Subplots will likewise benefit from alterations in scope. Saving the castle every month becomes tiresome, as does a continual battle for the princedom, as does continued personal introspection, so changing the scope relieves stagnation.

### Player Input

One of the simplest steps you can take to prepare for a new story is to ask your players what they want. Do not underestimate the value that their input can add to your story! What seems interesting and exciting to you might not be what the players are looking for. Key questions include:



- What sort of story would you like to play in? Do you prefer political intrigue or combat and mayhem?
- What sort of plots would you like to see in the story?
- What power level should the story have? Should all the players be of roughly the same power level, or should the power levels vary?
- What should take precedence — the story, the characters or the rules?
- What sorts of characters would you like to see in the game?

### Characters

The characters inevitably shape the outcome of your story and give you additional story hooks to work with. All characters have backgrounds, and bringing elements of these backgrounds into the story not only ensures the characters' involvement in the plot, but allows the characters the chance to resolve past issues and take the center stage for a while. Not every character is going to be involved in such subplots, but many might join in. Background plots are useful for those moments when you have run dry on ideas for plot threads.

The relationships between characters can also create good stories. After all, the game can't happen if the characters don't interact with one another. It is useful to make sure that a character background ties the character into the story in some manner, even if that connection is something as loose as a casual acquaintance with another character or a reason to come to the place you're using as setting. Giving characters hints and rumors about some of the others also gives them some level of preconception about the arena into which they shall shortly stride. Whether those rumors are positive or negative, or even true in the first place, can be the basis for subplot. Another common tool is to give the characters a common cause or a common enemy. Characters should be at least mildly interdependent. A totally solitary character will eventually become boring for the player and for the game.

## Creating the Dark Medieval

A Storyteller running a Dark Medieval game faces different challenges than one supervising most of the other **Mind's Eye Theatre** games. While many similarities exist, possibly the biggest challenge lies in the setting of your chronicle. Your game is displaced in time and probably in space as well. Other **Mind's Eye Theatre** games are set in the modern era, but here you will be transposing your players into the 13th century. Let's address those special setting issues particular to this game.

### The Era

Much of this subject has been discussed in earlier chapters, but it is worth summarizing a few aspects of the setting. The Dark Medieval era spans a time from the end of the 12th century to the middle of the 13th, with chronicles typically commencing around AD 1230. This is a time of great change for mortals and Cainites alike. It is well worth your while to spend some time in the library doing some basic research on your locale as well as the lifestyle of people there. Of course, this is a fantasy game, so you can take some liberties with real-world history and culture if it will make your story more effective.

### Pride and Prejudice

*While it is in no way our intention to insult or belittle any person due to race, sex, creed, religion or color, this game contains many elements of such discrimination due to*

*the basis of its setting. The inclusion of such elements is based on the historical aspects of the setting. To deny their presence back in the 13th century is to deny the progress that we have made over the intervening centuries.*

In stark contrast to modern Western civilization's ideals of freedom and personal rights, the Dark Medieval is rife with prejudice. Much of the flavor of Dark Medieval, however, arises due to just such principles. The people of that era work under a lot of presumption, much of it passed down through religious doctrine as dictated by the Church, or through laws as mandated by the local lords. People simply accepted that it was right to be anti-Semitic or that the king ruled by Divine Right. Questioning such things made the individual a target of ridicule as well as punishment. It's also true that Cainites carry over many of their prejudices from their mortal lives.

It's probable that your players will have some difficulty dealing with such alternative philosophies. Sit down with your players outside of the game and discuss these issues, examining their feelings toward such things as misogyny, class systems and fixed stations in life. These ideas are all intrinsic facts of life in the time period that this game re-creates, and they are issues that you as a Storyteller can present in the course of the game. If problems are going to arise with these themes, then you may wish to warn concerned players, or even avoid those topics as overt themes. At the same time, this game is not all about making players comfortable. (Comfort denies conflict in most cases.) If you are going to bring such matters into the story, then you will also need to make sure that your players have the maturity to handle it.

If a character wishes to play a Muslim Cainite, then he will have to deal with the prejudice inherent against him in Dark Medieval Europe. Depending on where your chronicle is set, other Cainites may shun him as a "heathen," even if he is obedient to the Traditions. A female Cainite might find herself considered less than equal to her male counterparts by mortal lords, even if she is powerful and respected by her vampiric peers.

Such attitudes are inherently wrong to many of us today, and there is a strong temptation to avoid examining such topics in what is supposed to be a fun game. Such attitudes were strongly entrenched in the people of the Dark Medieval, however, and examining them through roleplay can enrich your chronicle and teach your players lessons in the contrasts between then and now. Pay the topics the respect they deserve and give your players the respect they deserve in turn.

## Mortals and the Supernatural

Medieval life revolves around the rising and setting of the sun. People are accustomed to rising at dawn and retiring at dusk. The onset of night is not just a signal that the day's work is done, though. It is the harbinger of a dark and hostile time. Today we humans are more inclined to disbelieve in the supernatural without proof of its existence or direct experience of it. In the Dark Medieval, the reverse is true. Unexplained events are arbitrarily attributed to the Devil, vampires, ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasties....

Cainites become active at dusk. Their exposure to normal mortal life is limited to their hours of operation, and this simple distancing, along with their basic habits of hunting and feeding, further alienates the undead from the living. While vampires may freely walk the night without much fear of danger, mortals feel otherwise. They are unlikely to be easily persuaded to leave the safety of their homes to face the denizens of the dark.

This basic fear of the dark collides with the Cainites, as mortals are more likely to be around places of light. In the Dark Medieval, this means fire. As a result, neither mortals nor vampires should feel comfortable in each others' environment.



## Mother Church

The Church holds considerable sway over the opinions of the average person in this era. Even those who reject the teachings of the Church have their opinions colored by those teachings, as they alter the environment. The social order is dictated by the Church, based on an evolution of authority from God down through His agents, from the pope to kings to barons to local lords to the peasants.

## Literacy

The average person cannot read or write. This is true also for most of the characters in your game. Literacy is a precious commodity reserved primarily for the nobility and the clergy. An illiterate peasant can make a useful messenger for secret documents, assuming he's not actually an educated spy. Having mortal pawns who can read and write is a huge asset for a Cainite.

## Knights and Crusades

Any threat to the faith of the people is a threat to the power of the Church, and thus religious intolerance has a strong influence on the politics of the Dark Medieval. Naturally, the Church has a desire to remove or eliminate such threats — hence the Crusades. And it's not just the living who exhibit such fervor. Many Cainites still hold beliefs from their mortal days that drive them to become part of the wars of the Church. Whether minding the mortals at home, ensuring the status quo of the feudal system or actively carrying the cross to lands distant, Cainites' involvement in such matters affects the environment. Due to the number of traveling vampires, the comparative stability of most domains has been shaken.

Although more tolerant of their fellow *ahl-al-kitab* ("People of the Book"), the Muslim world is similarly influenced by religious authorities, and these authorities move as quickly as the Church to crush challenges to their influence. A meeting between an Eastern and a Western Cainite will be colored more by their theosophical differences than by their undead commonality.

### Modern Medieval Mischief

Keep a weather eye out for players who attempt to bring aspects of modern politics or philosophies into the medieval setting, especially ideas like democracy or rebellion. A challenge to the feudal system is as likely to draw ire from the Cainites as it is from the mortals — such a thing is a challenge to God's order. Naturally, rebellion occurs, but it is more often directed at an individual (a heretic priest or bloodthirsty baron) than at the system itself.

Likewise, watch for those players who attempt to apply modern science to your setting. Monitor your "tech level" to ensure that the Tremere aren't mixing C-4 in their chantries or the like. While gunpowder technology may well exist in the Dark Medieval, for instance, it is a technology generally only found in the far Orient. In Europe, smoke powders and rockets would probably be considered tools of the Devil.

## Setting the Stage

Unlike a modern setting, this game is going to involve considerably more work to re-create the atmosphere that will transport your characters back in time. We are constantly surrounded with reminders of our time — cars driving past, a radio playing

in the distance or simply a jogger in trainers running by. Your powers of narration are going to be stretched to the utmost as you adjust your scenery to suit your story. You need to be flexible enough to deal with any number of different scenes and locations. Abbeys, castles, huts, streets and alleys, a military encampment — anywhere action may take place in your chronicle needs to be represented to the degree that it minimizes distraction from your story. Be prepared to put some work into doing so, and draft your players in to help as well!

## Venue

Perhaps the most difficult task will be finding an appropriate place to play. If you have access to a castle in the wilderness, then you can probably skip this section. If not, you'll want to start hunting for some place where the real world will stay away for a while. It's a given that some suspension of disbelief is required for this sort of game, but you want to maximize the suspension as best you can. It's nearly impossible to maintain an atmosphere of medieval (un)life in the middle of an apartment complex or in an industrial warehouse — even more so in a rented ballroom or hotel. Quiet parks or suburban homes are probably easier to work with. A farm is almost ideal, if you have access to the buildings and there aren't too many tractors in the shed. The more modern the venue is, the more you will have to work to foster the illusion of your setting.

## Setting Properties

There is a delicate balance between too much set-dressing and too little. Such things will come with experience. You don't need to completely deck out the garage in tapestries, weapons and standing suits of armor to suggest a castle atmosphere. Bear in mind also that you might have to use your one location to represent more than one locale in the game. If the action switches from a tavern to a dock, you will need to be able to quickly adjust the props you have at hand to suggest the new locale.

Simple props are the most effective. As long as they engender the mood of the locale, they don't have to be elaborate. Learn to be abstract in your illustration. Gray drop cloths painted with large stone patterns can make effective castle walls (interior or exterior). The other side of those cloths might show trees or hovels, so a quick reversal of the cloths can indicate a change of scene. They can even be hung from the ceiling to indicate walls or obstacles, depending on your need. Folding tables with various types of cloth and scattered with simple props could be indicative of a street-market or a feasting hall, depending on how you dress them. Cotton throws woven with Celtic symbols or medieval pictures can make fine tapestries for a noble's chamber. Cardboard boxes can be painted to represent chests, crates, building stones, rocks, statues, tree-stumps, whatever you need, and they can be folded down for ease of transport.

It's amazing the difference between plush, comfortable seating and hard, unyielding stools can make when varying the mood of a set. If you don't want the characters to be comfortable in your setting, don't let the players get comfortable. Crowding them with close walls will engender unease. Illustrate open land with subtly placed fans blowing breezes across the room.

With the right collection of basic props, you should be able to easily switch between a cottage interior and the street outside, or shift the action to the docks or a dungeon as needed. It just takes a little imagination.

Before you invest huge amounts of time into creating props, consider how you will deal with their storage at home and their transportation to your game site. You might be able to arrange to have them stored at your game site, if you use it regularly and you meet the site's safety and cleanliness requirements. Consider also dividing the responsibility for props among your players.

## Lighting

The Dark Medieval setting is cluttered with shadows and flickering flame, dark corners and unlit forests. Castles and hovels alike rely on fire for their warmth and lighting outside the daylight hours. Sure, the temptation is there to scatter candles and torches about the place, but if you're going to do so, do so with *extreme* caution. Your game site might not permit the use of fire, with good reason.

You can replicate firelight to some degree with electric candles or by masking regular light bulbs with colored plastic screens (called gels). If the bulbs are on a dimmer, you can lower them to a more appropriate level, or you could replace the bulbs with lower wattage ones (if you have permission to do so, naturally). Phosphorescent glow-sticks might make adequate props for torches. Avoid bright, direct lighting. See if you can drape dark cloths over direct lights to reduce their immediacy, making sure you don't create a fire hazard. You might coil a few strings of yellow and red Christmas lights in your fireplace (if you have one) to simulate the glow of firelight.

When thinking about your lighting and colors, consider the moods you wish to convey in your scene. Brighter, more garish colors bring immediacy and focus, while darker, cooler colors engender a slower pace and diffuse mood. Remember to have enough light so the players can read their character sheets!

## Music

Music can convey emotion as well as any setting or lighting. Scour your local CD stores or visit your library to find classical music or movie soundtracks that suit the moods that you wish to convey in your story. Some New Age music might be suitable, as well. Avoid the modern stuff — it will draw away from your ambiance. If you have access to a CD burner, you can mix your own CDs — perhaps one for the mood of the prince's audience chamber and another for the deep of the forests. Keep the volume at a background level (unless it is intrinsic to the scene, such a ball) so as not to compete with the characters' conversations. Don't let the music overpower your setting. Let it suggest, rather than insist. Vary the content, so that you're not listening to the same music all night. If someone wishes to sing or play an instrument, let her. Such a performance will add incredible atmosphere, since that sort of thing was often one of the only means of entertainment available. Just make sure that she won't be embarrassing herself when she opens her mouth or takes out her instrument.

Consider also the impact of special effects. There are a number of effects CDs available that you can cue up and use at the right time. The creaking of chains in the dungeon, the lapping of waves against the dock or the rumble of a storm overhead can all add to the ambiance of your scene.

## Costuming

At a bare minimum, it is recommended that players be appropriately garbed for their characters. While some modern vampires hark back to the time of their creation in terms of their preference for cloaks and torcs, no medieval Cainite would be caught dead in a two-piece denim outfit. A vinyl opera cape and jeans will no longer cut it. Getting the costumes right goes a long way toward creating the look of the era. Since

the characters are the things on which all the players will be focusing visually throughout most of the game, they deserve more attention in terms of dressing.

Simple medieval garb can be whipped up at home on the sewing machine for a few bucks and a few hours' work. There are innumerable sites on the Internet with information and patterns for historical clothing that can be drawn upon for reference. A basic costume can be put together with a simple tunic, a pair of sweatpants or an ankle-length skirt, a belt, plain leather shoes or boots and a few accessories like a pouch and a tankard. A very long tunic can become a lady's gown or a monk's robe. Varying the costume is a matter of adjusting the sleeves, trim or length of the tunic, and with the right variety, you can re-use many of your basic costume elements for a number of characters. If you don't have the time or skill to create your own medieval clothing, there are plenty of folks who can do the work for you, usually for a price. The local Renaissance faire is a fine place to start, but there are also many merchants on the Internet who specialize in medieval garb and can even customize your order.

Western European characters can be easily attired in the basic costume described thus far. (Sometimes, only the richness of the fabric and trim differentiated the poor from the rich.) For a character who comes from further abroad, such as the Holy Lands, the basic costume becomes a long robe, a long vest or loose coat over that, plain leather boots or tapestry bedroom slippers, a head-covering and a long sash, plus accessories like a goblet or scroll case. You might even investigate local ethnic clothing shops or Internet sites for extra touches like veils, jewelry, men's headscarves or embroidered shoes.

Personal props, such as cloaks, goblets, brooches, hats, staffs and jewelry can shape and accentuate the costume, personalizing the character further. Scan your local secondhand shops for suitable props to give your character a distinctive look. You might even drag your players out on a scavenger hunt around your local surplus stores every so often to build up their collections as well as your own. Remember to avoid any dangerous props — weapons of any kind are strictly forbidden. As cool and period-appropriate as that dagger would look on your hip, it doesn't belong at the game.

# Telling the Tale

You've got some players, a place to play, a plot and some wicked cool props — you're ready to play, right? Not yet. Here's some of the rest of the shebang you'll have deal with:

## Bookkeeping

Keep careful records throughout the course of your story. You'll be tempted to blow this off, but don't. You'll need to be able to look back on the progress of the chronicle to answer any player questions, deal with disputes over what may or may not have occurred several months in the past or simply check to see if someone has been cheating on his character sheet. You'll have issues if you don't have the records on hand. If you have access to a computer, take advantage of some of the wonderful record-keeping and contact-management software available today. There are utilities available (often for free!) that can help you organize your game and keep track of the progression of your characters and plots. Remember to keep a backup of your data, and print stuff out so that you'll have it if your hard drive ever goes belly-up!

### Character Sheets

Maintain a hard copy of every character sheet in the game, even if you are using a database for the information. Insist that players hand in their sheets at the end of every game so that you can update your own copy. Develop the habit of reviewing the sheets regularly, perhaps a day or two before the game, so that you are familiar with the characters and their current capabilities, and so you don't forget to note or add something you need to. No major sheet alterations should be taking place without your approval in any case. Establish that, despite what may be on the sheet held by the player, the Storyteller's copy takes precedence.

### Experience

Take a look over the Experience rules in Chapter Three, and decide how you will award Experience Traits before launching your story. Advise each player of his award as soon as possible, and be sure to note the award on his sheet. Be fair when awarding Experience. You want to satisfy your players while maintaining game balance. If you want slow growth for your chronicle, award less Experience or adjust the costs of character growth upward. Flip the equation for faster advancement.

Every player should earn at least one Experience Trait automatically for participating in a game session. Additional one-Trait awards can be made for exceptional roleplaying (raising the bar each time) and for character achievements. Have your players list character goals in their backgrounds or during play so you can measure their progress.

### Influence Traits

If you permit your players to use their *Influence* during downtime, you must keep very careful track of what each Trait is being used for. Otherwise it is inevitable that two characters' *Influence* Traits will clash as they attempt to complete opposing tasks, and you must arbitrate such collisions. Although they are aimed more at modern-day games, the systems outlined in **Dark Epics** (appropriately tweaked to reflect the time period) will give you some guidelines as to what characters may achieve beyond the basic systems described in Chapter Three.

### Story Events

Keep a log or journal of the progression of the story. After each game, find some time to jot down a few notes about what happened. Reviewing these notes will refresh your memory before the next game. Gathering similar journals and notes from players will give you more of the big picture, so you can maintain an overview and plan for possible plot development and growth.

## Character Creation

Work as closely as possible with your players during their character creation. The time you invest in this project will help the players create interesting, vivid characters that will interact well and enrich your story. Characters should have clear motivations, plans, hopes, dreams and goals, or else they are just a collection of Traits on a sheet.

Being able to meet with each player separately is valuable, but not always possible. You might like to plan a creation session, so that all the players can brainstorm concepts and intermingle histories for their creations. Be clear about what you will, and will not, allow to enter your story. If you intend to change any of the rules in this book, now is the time to announce those alterations so that the players are aware of them, and so that they can create their characters under your guidelines. If you have a Narrator team, they may well be able to shoulder some of the burden of assisting other players to create their characters. Just make sure that they are also aware of your changes.

Regardless of how you organize character creation, make time to review the sheets before they enter the game. Many Storytellers will not tolerate characters being made from scratch just before a game begins, as it may not be suitable for their story. Having the time to review the sheets ensures that a quality character enters the game.

As the story progresses, talk with the players from time to time to discuss the development of their characters in terms of the story and get a sense of their perceptions of the game, the story and their characters' roles in both. With such input, you can further fine-tune your game to everyone's mutual satisfaction.

## Showtime

Here we go — game time! Make sure you have time to sleep and eat before the game. You'll need all your energy.

### Pre-Game Preparation

Be prepared to write off most of your afternoon prior to the game. It'll be full of preparation and organization as you print out character sheets, dress the venue, tweak plots, et cetera. Make sure that you are one of the first to the site so that you have plenty of time to dress your set(s). Check all of your props for safety. Players can assist in this project as well.

You will need to have character sheets on hand, and as your players check in, deal with any last-minute issues they may have, such as Experience expenditure, *Influence* results and rumors. It's a hectic time, so look to hand off some of the work to your Narrators or other Storytellers, if you have a large game.

Once players have had a few minutes to mingle and change into costume, be ready to kick things into gear. Gather the players and make any announcements you might need to make prior to the commencement of play. Designate your "reality room," where players can relax out-of-character, if need be. When all questions are answered and you are ready, inform the players of the expected game duration, dim the lights and announce the start of the game.

### During the Game

If you aren't actively portraying a character or answering a player's questions, you might find yourself wandering. How you occupy yourself depends greatly on your style of storytelling. You could prefer to just stay in the background and wander from conversation to conversation, observing the flow of the story, or perhaps you prefer to remain in one place so players can find you easily. Be prepared to answer questions, adjudicate rules queries and resolve plot complications at any moment. You'll be kept busy enough.

### Wrapping It Up

Announce the end of the game quietly as you pass around the room — allow the players to finish the scene that they are in — and ask them all to gather together. They will likely still be hyped on the intensity of their roleplaying, and it's good to let them re-enter reality together. Have a chat with the players about the game in which you ask about favorite scenes and lowest moments. Did everyone have fun? If not, why not? Are there any questions about the night's events? (Be careful not to give away too much of the plot when answering this one.) Make any necessary wrap-up announcements at this point.

Pack and check your game venue. Get your players to help. Make sure it's clean and tidy, or you may find you don't have use of it next time. Be one of the last to leave and give the site a final once-over to ensure that nothing was left behind or is out of place.



Many players will like to gather for an after-game coffee or snack. Join them, if you can. Relax. The game is done. Don't feel obligated to carry on storytelling, but you might like to deal with a few minor points if everyone's happy with that. By the end of the night, the game is over, and everyone's happy, looking forward to the next session.

### Downtime

Even after the session, the game may continue (if you allow it). Downtime play includes any character activities, actions and exchanges that occur between the game sessions. The characters continue to exist in the limbo between sessions, and your players will remind you of that. If you don't want to allow downtime play, make sure that they are aware of it. If you do, be prepared to deal with the work involved.

The biggest inconvenience to downtime play is that you may not be able to supervise all of it. The best means of dealing with this is to require all your players to submit downtime reports to you well before the next game. Such reports will keep you abreast of any arising situations and yield a surprising number of story opportunities for you. Downtime information should at least include the following: hunting behavior, *Influence* manipulation, character meetings, training (for new Abilities or Disciplines), and any other major actions the character wishes to take.

If you have access to a computer and the Internet, consider creating a website and running an email system for your game so that players can submit downtime information directly to you (perhaps via a form on the site), and you can keep track of in-character exchanges.

## The Cast

While you may be able to handle the rest of the roles in your story, the story will ultimately revolve around the actions performed by your players' characters. Each game troupe will have its own distinct group dynamics, and dealing with all the challenges that arise from every group is well beyond the scope of this book. Suffice to say, as with any social group, you will need to have a common ground and treat each other with respect in order for your game to survive and remain fun. The structure of your group will change with time, and everyone involved will need to be flexible in order to accommodate those changes.

### New Players

Players who are new to the game will require special attention. They will need to learn the rules and how to roleplay (if they've never been involved in the hobby before). They need tutelage, and the easiest way to help them along their learning curve is to team them up with an experienced player (as a ghoul, childe or colleague, for example). Encourage new players to become involved, but don't push too hard too fast, lest you overload them and drive them away if they're naturally shy. The story will help guide them into the action. It's also likely that they will drop out of character more often than a regular player, but this should ease off with time.

Some older players might view newcomers as "fresh meat" and take advantage of their relative inexperience. Stop this before it starts. Some games encourage a "grace period," where the newbies have a chance to interact, but other characters are asked to refrain from doing anything drastic (forcing a blood oath, or simply rolling them) during that period. Doing so allows the players a chance to become familiar with the game, while still allowing them to be part of the action.

Experienced players who are new to your game will need to learn the written (and unwritten) rules of your troupe. It may be that you use different house rules than the ones they are used to. They might be used to a different style of game or Storyteller. Likewise, the troupe will learn about the new players, and hopefully new friendships will form.

Players who are new to an ongoing chronicle might find it difficult to become involved in plots that are already dominated by established characters. Be prepared with some minor subplots (preferably related to their characters' backgrounds and goals) for them to work with, or give them some rumors regarding the plots that other characters might be interested in uncovering.

As Storyteller, you will need to be attentive to the questions and comments of new players. If they have a complaint, treat it with appropriate gravity. If they have suggestions, take them on board. You will help to build their confidence, so that they feel more like a part of the troupe.

## Narrators

As your game's size grows, you will need to recruit help to keep track of everything that is happening. You can't be everywhere at once, and you can't always play every Storyteller character. Unless you have an exceptionally small game, you're going to need some Narrators. Narrators should be picked from your most experienced and fairest players. They will be called upon by the other players for rules calls, and they will need to be able to make unbiased decisions. They are also entrusted with the plot points you wish to share with them, and may well be playing characters for you to direct the story further.

There's no given ratio for Narrators in a game. Theoretically, all the players should be able to handle most of the rules issues among themselves. Appointing a number of penultimate arbitrators, however, will ease the burden on you to make the ultimate rules decisions when you're busy trying to portray a visiting elder. A rough ratio of one Narrator per 10 players will normally suffice. The more Narrators you have, the more work you can delegate out. Encourage the players to seek Narrators, rather than Storytellers, when there are rules issues to be discussed, and empower them to make final decisions if need be. Naturally, then, Narrators need to be fully familiar with the rules in this book and any house rules you may have in place.

## Troubleshooting

Sooner or later, you'll be faced with a number of common problems that seem to arise in this style of game. Let's discuss a few of them:

**Player Boredom: "There's nothing to do in this game!"**

If you have an active and busy story, you shouldn't hear this too often. It does arise now and then, however, so don't panic. The onus of entertainment does not fall on your shoulders alone. All players are responsible for the entertainment of each other and themselves. Try to help the player identify the source of the problem:

- Is the player pursuing her goals actively?
- Is the player hoarding information she should be sharing?
- Is the player refusing to interact with the other players during games?
- Did the player miss one or more vital clues?
- Did the player create a full character background?
- Is the pace of the game too slow for the player?
- Is the player achieving her character goals too easily?
- Is there something in particular the player dislikes or doesn't understand about the story?

Sometimes even this won't cure the problem. Make sure that you have a few subplot ideas hidden away that you can introduce to the story quickly and that won't interfere directly with the plots already in progress.

The more players you have, the more likely one or more of them will claim to be bored. Encourage players to create their own constructive subplots based on their characters' backgrounds and goals, and encourage them to interact with and involve other characters in such plots. While some players might naturally be shy or passive, ask that they interact with at least one other player. Otherwise they probably won't enjoy the game, and there's little more that you'll be able to do to relieve their boredom.

**Too Much Violence: "Not another mass combat!"**

Conflict is endemic in Cainite society, but not all conflict needs to devolve to the violent level. Combat is a part of the game, sure, but it shouldn't be the focus of each and every story. Contests of will are perfectly acceptable alternatives to combat in the eyes of other vampires. Every player should be asking himself whether or not combat is absolutely necessary before he calls the first Physical Challenge. Is this really part of his character's Nature, or is he just at the game to kick the snot out of the other characters? If every game is devolving into a sequence of mob combats and Physical Challenges, then you have a problem.

Try moving the locale to a place where the characters will think twice about going berserk, such as a gallery or museum. If characters continue to waste their way across the landscape, then let loose with the full repercussions of their actions. The Silence of the Blood might be endangered, and the prince and his entourage may make an appearance to put things right. Elders who have a vested interest in the peaceful nature of their locale will act quickly to quell violent resistance.

If it's a single player who appears to only enjoy the game if he's gutting other characters, don't let them ruin the game for everyone else. Deal with him quietly, but firmly, and state that if he can't rein in his behavior that he will be asked to leave. If he's still a problem, make good on your promise.

**Metagaming: "Hey, your character can't possibly know that!"**

If a player has a problem dealing with the difference between in-character and out-of-character information, advise her to adopt a means of determining whether a conversation or other communication is occurring outside the context of the game. Players should remain in character throughout the course of the session. If they need to drop out of their role, adjourn to the "reality room" or, if it's just for a quick query, they should make a "time out" symbol with their hands that can be clearly seen by those around them. A good guideline for players: If you're unsure whether you know something in character, presume that you *don't*.

**Argumentative Players: "You can't do that to my character! That's not how that system works. And besides, in 1257 the main export in this area was grain, not coal."**

Don't allow players to argue with you, particularly when doing so will spoil the flow of the game. Listen to the player's grievance, and if it really can't wait, then make a ruling and stick to it. Once you make your decision, it's final — otherwise you might as well stop making decisions right now. This includes dealing with "rules lawyers" and "genre buffs" who think that they know your game or setting better than you do.

If your rules lawyers are that good, perhaps they should be Narrators, and your genre buffs could certainly help you with cleaning up the details of your chronicle. Inviting them to contribute to the chronicle should reduce their need to interrupt the story, as long as they realize that you are the ultimate decision-maker.

Allow players to disagree politely, and address their complaints after the scene (or preferably, the session) is over. Discuss matters in a calm manner and give their issues serious consideration. Respect their right to disagree, and make fair rulings — the players will respect you in turn.

Character death is another issue that can bring similar conflict between you and a player. This can be a very emotional time for a player, particularly if he's been playing his character for quite a while. Help the player deal with the situation maturely and rationally. Don't give in to guilt or tantrums. Don't allow irrationality to spoil the game for other players. It may help the player to take a break from the game if they are having real issues dealing with the death of their character.

Inter-player disputes arise from time to time, even about non-game matters. If it's not related to your game, but is disrupting it in some form, politely ask the players to deal with the matter outside of the game environs, so that the rest of the players can enjoy their evening. If it's about game matters, then use your authority to resolve the matter as quickly and as finally as you can. Stop the situation before it rises to the shouting stage. If the players can't resolve the matter maturely, then ask them to leave and offer to help them sort it out later.

**Player Cheating: "Hey, you didn't have that Discipline a few minutes ago!"**

Of course, you have your own copies of everyone's character sheets, and any alterations to their sheet have been overseen by you, right? You can minimize the opportunities for cheating by insisting on Trait expenditures being marked on their sheet, or by relying on Blood and Willpower tokens that must be handed to a Narrator when expended.

If there are merely allegations of cheating, then try to get to the bottom of the problem as quickly as possible before the accusations fester. If someone has been wielding the "magic pencil," then take her aside and bring her back to reality. If you have an actual cheater on your hands, you have two options — give her another chance or remove her from the game.

Cheating spoils the game for everyone. Please don't encourage cheaters.

**Favoritism: "You're only letting him play an elder because he's your best friend/ significant other/ spouse!"**

The best way to avoid accusations of favoritism is to refuse to practice it. Strive to make your decisions as impartial and objective as you can without injuring the story. If you feel you can't make an impartial decision in a given situation, ask one of your Narrators to review the situation with you, making a joint decision. If you are going to place limitations on certain character types or powers, rotate these elements so that all the players get a fair shot at them.

Unfortunately, accusations will arise from time to time. Deal with accusations directly. Take the accuser aside and discuss why he feels he is the victim of favoritism or why he feels that favoritism was at work in the decision he has issues with. Don't overlook the possibility that he may actually be right. Sometimes it's possible to practice favoritism without consciously realizing we're doing so. If the accusation is deserved, amend your behavior appropriately. If it's wrong, explain, as best you can, the basis for your decision and lead them into understanding why you made that call.



**Failed Stories: "This game sucks."**

Keep an ear out for the rumblings of discontent from your players. None of us are perfect, and you are no exception. Don't dismiss all complaints as idle bitching, even if you're used to tuning out the regular whiners, since sometimes your players have a genuine beef. Encourage them to bring real issues to the fore so that you can deal with them and adjust the game (and your style) into something they will enjoy.

Eventually, you'll run a story that *does* suck. Maybe the players aren't enthusiastic about the plot, or you miscalculated the power level of the story and overbalanced the game. Don't panic. Learn from your failures and admit to them. Apply the knowledge to your future endeavors. You'll become a better Storyteller for it.

**Storyteller Burnout: "I can't think of any more stories."**

You have a life outside of the game. If the game becomes a burden or an unpleasant chore, get some help or arrange to hand the Storytelling role to another until you feel like returning to the role. Try playing for a while, or even switch games. Take a break — you deserve it! Recharge, and come back when you feel enthusiastic about it again. The game should be fun for you as well as for the players. If it's not, then don't drag the others down with you. Lack of focus from you will spoil the game for the players.

## Story Seeds

If you've never run a medieval game before, your first story ideas can be hard to develop. The traditional sword-and-sorcery plots from fantasy games don't quite work, but neither do many of the plots you might use in a modern **Masquerade** game. There are many possible Dark Medieval plots, though. You just have to let your imagination loose.

Start with history. Look to see what conflicts were going on in your game's setting in the year you choose for your game, then consider how Cainites were involved in what happened. Alternatively, come up with a story idea, choose a location for it and study the history of the land to decide how it might be changed by the events of your chronicle.

Here is a quick list of story ideas to spark your imagination. Some of these could be given to players as ideas for subplots for their characters. Take whatever elements or aspects of these concepts appeal to you, blend well and spread over the duration of your chronicle.

**Territorial Disputes** — While material possessions come and go, control over land is far more important, as it grants wealth and ease of feeding. Whether the dispute is due to the arrival of a new elder who seeks to take the current prince's position, the struggle between two lesser Cainites over a city district or the influence of a mortal land grab on the resources of the resident vampires, these stories can form the basis for many other subplots.

**Resources** — In the Dark Medieval, mineral or natural wealth is still relatively untapped. A newly discovered silver mine could send the local nobles, mortal and Cainite alike, scrabbling for control of the riches of the land. Alternatively, abuse of local resources could lead to an economic downturn that lowers the quality of life in the area, leading to inter-Cainite disputes over dwindling food supplies and luxuries.

**Have Fun Storming the Castle** — The peasants are revolting! The iron fist has been overly tightened, the taxes are too much, or the living conditions have become so bad that the rabble have had enough. The torch-carrying mob now prepares to strike back. Alternatively, the anarchists might turn against the resident elders, attempting to oust the current regime.

**Conquest!** — The wars of man can impact Cainite existence in a number of ways. Whether the vampires travel with a local army to expand their own territories or are

operating behind the scenes to fund and direct military campaigns in distant lands, there are many stories waiting to be told. Perhaps a Cainite hears of an enemy's supply train that will be passing near her town. That train could be plundered for resources, thus disrupting her opponent. Maybe the local mortal lord overextends his resources to assist his king and becomes open to assistance from the shadows. The dynamic nature of a chronicle with a military background is ripe with opportunity.

**Noblesse Oblige** — With power comes responsibility, and a vampire who has set himself up as the leader of a mortal community has many responsibilities. Fulfilling them during the day has its obvious problems. Even more difficult would be a call from the mortal ruler of the region for his barons to join him on crusade.

**Church versus Crown** — Examine medieval politics and you'll find the Church at many levels. The plays for control over the populace between mortals can jar heavily on the same plots by Cainites, with the added danger of the growing Inquisition. Overt manipulation of the Church *or* state may bring unwanted and deadly attention.

**Changing of the Guard** — Mortal politics can mire the best-laid plan of any vampire. A wedding between fiefdoms, the death of the local baron or the birth of an heir alters the dynamics of the mortal politics. It may even be as simple as a town guard (a ghoul) saying the wrong thing at the wrong time in front of the wrong noble, losing his position and thus reducing his value to his master.

**Epidemic** — Without the advances in medical science that we enjoy today, disease is more prevalent among mortals. The impact of disease on a population is devastating, and dealing with a diminishing feeding base is a challenge to even the most resourceful vampire. Additionally, mortal servants might be vulnerable to some of the illnesses that plague the Dark Medieval, and even some Cainites might fall victim to the invisible menace of disease. Watching your empire crumble, as you lie gripped by ague, cannot be encouraging to an immortal.

**Silent No Longer** — Revealing the actual presence of vampires brings the threat of hunters. Whether these hunters are mortals who seek revenge for lost family, dedicated witch-hunters, those who seek eternal life or members of the Church, each has her own methods of stalking, capturing and destroying her prey.

**Rampage** — The wanderings of wights, those vampires who have fallen to the Beast and are in Wassail, might bring them into contact with villages or cities. The threat such creatures pose to the Silence of the Blood can mobilize all Cainites in pursuit.

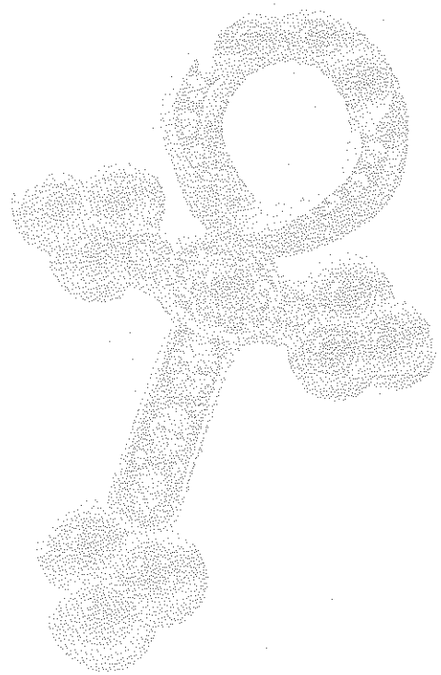
**Strangers** — Visitors always add an interesting twist away from the comfortable norm. A wandering bard or skald is in the area telling stories and seeking lore, traveling theater troupes, musicians — all offer story opportunities as they bring news of events in other places and sow seeds for more stories. A number of Cainites travel frequently, and their presence offers the opportunity for vampires to pass messages to allies in other cities. Wandering sorcerers or mages might influence the residents to their own ends, perhaps deciding to stay if it is to their advantage.

**The Eyes of a Child** — Children, the perpetual symbols of innocence, are often more in tune with the supernatural than adults. It may be that children can see through the careful deception that vampires spin to hide their presence or true nature. Children as story elements have innumerable possibilities. Tales such as "Beauty and the Beast" might have sprung from the bond between a child and a Nosferatu or Gangrel. Misplaced love in the purity of a child can make a beautiful counterpoint against the darkness of the Beast. And sometimes, a wish to keep the child "pure" or "innocent" can result in the most terrible deeds....



**Prophecies** — Some people are capable of foreseeing the future, and their cryptic visions can shape the behavior of those who believe in their ramblings. Are these prophecies real, or just nonsense brought on after someone overindulged with a hookah? Other sources for "prophecies" include spiritual entities manipulating mediums or mortal seers (who are usually dodging the Church) advising the local baron.

**A Discovery of the Lost** — Ancient lore, fragments of the *Book of Nod*, artifacts or relics — the discovery of such lost treasures can bring about a scramble for control of said objects. Knowledge is power, and exclusive access to knowledge places a Cainite in a powerful position indeed. Artifacts may be magical or mundane in nature, granting power and prestige. Relics bring with them the faith that they hold and the faith of those who believe in them. Such items can create drama even by the rumor of their presence.





*It has all fallen so nicely into place.*

*My lovely Angelina… now I walk the dark woods, anticipating her approving smile. With one move, I have taken proof of our intentions against Salvatini from beneath his nose and replaced it with an agent following our agenda, simultaneously lowering his list of allies.*

*Madeline's "memories" of murdering that bastard Damiano had been deeply buried. Angelina spent many hours formulating them, and I mixed her guidance with my own memories… my fangs locked to Damiano's throat… the crimson rush… as I planted them in her brain just last night. I locked them away and only Angelina — sweet Angelina! — and I knew the key words to release them. Of course, I gave the key to those two idiots in "exchange" for my freedom — an exchange I suggested to them myself. And that pompous Spaniard thought it was his own idea.*

*I was confident that Salvatini's passion and conflict in having to execute his Madeline and two puppets, and knowing that there is another loose out there, responsible for the death of his sire, would overcome his reason. Quick to ride the Beast, he'd dealt justice swiftly rather than surely.*

*It was indeed a pity to sacrifice the other two — potentials untapped — but I had no time to cultivate artificial loyalties in them also. Besides, I love them now, despite what they put me through. Their betrayal was an unpleasant necessity, but a necessity nonetheless. Two less loyal citizens to worry about, in any case. The Brujah would have stood and fought any foe an ally dubbed evil, and the Toreador… less than useless, although I will admit his taste in pottery was fair.*

*Grigori, of course, has no idea who his "spider" is. The voice to which he so avidly listens, he considers his guide, his muse. Where he gets such ideas, I care not, and the sources of some of the other voices I hear in his mind, I know not. His adherence to their wishes has proved of use, however. Once his mind was mine, it became a simple matter to guide him in his personal rush for power. Such limited aspirations make him a valuable tool, provided his dreams are catered to of an occasion. And it was that same spider that had Kristof feed him of my blood as he lay asleep.*

*Now again I walk free. Others carry my blame and are dead for it, and I can further war against the lineage that has brought my angel such pain over the centuries.*

*I can't help feeling that something is missing, however.*

*Whatever it might be, I'll deal with it when I return.*

*For now, to my love! Angelina, your loyal Gabriel comes at last!*

# Chapter Seven: Allies and Antagonists

In this dark time, many vampires consider themselves sole masters of the night. They could not be more wrong, for a host of supernatural creatures shares this fire-lit world with them. Only the foolish Cainite thinks he rules without challenge — and the foolish Cainite will not long survive.

This chapter deals with several of the most common allies, enemies and observers of the Cainites.

### Supernatural and *Auspex*

Many supernatural creatures conceal themselves as well as (or better than) vampires, ensuring that their natures are not visible to mortal eyes, when they themselves are visible at all. *Auspex* powers, however, have means of discerning these hidden ones.

• As the children of the Father of Lies, demons are crafty and subtle. *Soulsight* reveals a dark or smoky aura within a demon-possessed mortal. *Spirit's Touch* on objects tied to infernal activity might even reveal glimpses of Satan, in addition to the horrors such items are often involved in. The Cainite herself might need to make a Mental Challenge or possess at least *Occult* x 2 to realize that she is viewing the infernal.

• Lupines can be recognized with *Soulsight* in wolf or human form. Their halos are unusually bright compared to normal humans and wolves.

• Ghosts who possess mortals do not look exceptionally different to *Soulsight*. *Soulsight* used on materialized ghosts reveals a weak aura that is even paler than a vampire's. Those ghosts who have somehow returned to their bodies reveal an aura like that of a vampire, but with a strange muddy blot on it

• Those who are blessed by Faith do not look unusual to vampires, but using *Soulsight* when one of the faithful makes use of her abilities reveals a bright golden halo.

• The fae often conceal themselves with illusions, and they are quite good at it. Their auras tend to reveal brilliant, swirling colors, but they will not be happy with the one who sees through their illusions.

• Wizards look like ordinary mortals, but under *Soulsight*, their halos appear to sparkle, especially during active use of magic.



## Ghouls: Those Who Serve

In this day and age, ghouls are absolutely indispensable for a Cainite's survival. The medieval world shuts down almost completely during the night. Except for a few feasts and revels, most people lock their doors and go to bed at dusk. Business and travel is largely conducted during the daylight hours. A Cainite needs to have a mortal pair of hands and eyes in the world if he is going to interact with mortal society at all.

Long ago, Cainites discovered that when mortals ingested their blood, the mortals received a tiny measure of vampiric power. They gained dark appetites and unusual strength, but they continued to live and could endure sunlight. Vampires have created these ghouls for centuries, resulting in servants bound to their vampiric masters — or domitors — by the blood oath. The vitae in their systems wreaks strange changes in ghouls, however. They develop hot passions and powerful cravings for the vitae, sometimes to the point of violence, which is indicative of the touch of the Beast.

Considering how useful ghouls are to a Cainite, most vampires work hard to create and maintain their servitors. As human families are generally close-knit, it's not unusual for a vampire to ghoul an entire family into his service. The Tzimisce have taken this idea to its furthest extreme, enthralling generation upon generation of a few mortal families, until the curse becomes so ingrained into them that they are born with Cainite blood flowing through their veins. Other vampires choose to create "families" by ghouling groups such as the brethren of a monastery or a troupe of actors.

Many Cainites consider ghouling to be an intermediate step toward the Embrace. Princes rarely require permission for ghouling as they do for the Embrace, allowing a Cainite to preserve a worthy potential childe until he can gain the necessary permission. Some domitors dangle the promise of the Embrace before their ghouls to ensure their loyalty, but the likelihood might well be small. After all, many ghouls are worth far more as daylight servants than childer.

### Ghoul Abilities

All ghouls gain the following abilities:

• A mortal becomes a ghoul when he ingests one Trait of vitae. Mortals generally have 10 Blood Traits in their systems. Extremely old ghouls might be able to store an additional Trait per century of age. They may spend only one Blood Trait per turn.

• Ghouls do not age as long as they have Cainite blood in their bodies. Once a ghoul has passed his normal life span, he must always have at least one Blood Trait in his body, or he will quickly age unto death. For most, this process takes days, but very old ghouls can wither to dust in hours or even minutes. This is one of the surest means of keeping a ghoul at a domitor's side.

• Ghouls may also use the vitae to heal themselves and to boost their Physical Traits just like vampires. Those who do not use blood to heal will recover like normal mortals.

• Ghouls may regenerate lost or injured limbs by spending a Willpower Trait, Blood Traits (one for an eye or finger, two for a forearm or foot, three for a limb)

and making a Physical Challenge. If the challenge is failed, the ghoul makes two Simple Tests. If he fails one, the limb may never be re-grown.

• All ghouls gain the *Prowess* level of the *Potence* Discipline within minutes of their first taste of blood. Additional Disciplines may be learned, but at a steep cost. Each Basic Discipline costs six Experience Traits and can only be learned with the aid of a mentor (generally, the ghoul's domitor.) A ghoul created by a Cainite of the Tenth Generation or lower may learn Intermediate Disciplines at a cost of 12 Experience Traits, while a ghoul created by a domitor of the Ninth Generation may learn Advanced Disciplines at a cost of 18 Experience Traits.

• Vitae carries the touch of the Beast. Ghouls can frenzy like vampires, but they gain two Traits to resist because the curse is not as strong.

• Ghouls who drink five or more Traits of vampire blood gain their domitor's clan weakness, until they have less than five Blood Traits of vampire blood in their systems.

• Ghouls who go without feeding from their domitors for a month develop a raging hunger for the blood. Whenever they can acquire blood from *any* vampire, they must make a *Self-Control* Challenge to resist. After the first month without feeding, the ghoul must make a *Self-Control* Challenge to handle his cravings for *human* flesh and blood. The ghoul may spend a Willpower Trait to subsume these cravings, but if he fails his *Self-Control* Challenge, he is so overcome by them that he feels the need to satiate them immediately. Ghouls who last until they have purged all the vampiric blood from their systems are no longer ghouls, and they lose all supernatural advantages.

• Ghouls are bound by the blood oath, but they cannot give it to others. Ghouls are generally oathbound to their original domitors, but this bond can erode. While many Cainites tend to treat their ghouls as chattel, the regular feedings offset any erosion of loyalty.

If a vampire character creates and maintains a ghoul, her player must purchase the *Retainers* Background as soon as possible — one level of Background for every ghoul in service. In addition, characters with ghouls start each session one Blood Trait down for every ghoul they posses — servants must be fed, after all. Players are strongly encouraged to detail their thralls' names, Abilities, Natures and Demeanors. The exact number of Traits and Abilities a ghoul possesses should remain in the hands of the Storyteller. In general, they should not exceed the statistics of the ghoul templates given here. More powerful ghouls may be available for purchase through the use of multiple *Retainer* Background Traits, at the Storyteller's discretion.

## The Revenants

Clan Tzimisce maintains several ghoul "families," encouraging the creation of new servants by simple marriage and breeding. Revenants, as they are called, often have a long record of service to the clan, and their closeness with their masters results in changes to mind and body.

Perhaps the most powerful of these changes is the fact that revenants are so tightly bound to their vampiric masters that the children are born with vampire blood in their veins. Furthermore, they can generate their own vitae without needing to feed from a vampire, starting around the age of 13. Only the offspring of two revenants has the greatest chance of being born a revenant. Revenants regain one Blood Trait per day, so they rarely need to feed from a vampire. Their blood does not slow aging (for that they need true vitae), but it will power all other ghoul benefits. Each family has its own Disciplines but also possesses weaknesses similar to the clan disadvantages.

• The Bratovitches are the foot-solders and huntsmen for the Tzimisce. They are considered the lowest of the families, and their habits and manners tend to be coarse and crude. Still, their loyalty is unquestioned. Their family Disciplines are *Animalism*, *Potence* and *Vicissitude*, but they suffer from frenzy just as Brujah vampires do.

• The Grimaldi are the Tzimisce's eyes and ears in the mortal world. They are merchants, tinkers, traders and the like, working quietly to influence decisions or learn gossip. Their family Disciplines are *Celerity*, *Dominate* and *Fortitude* (they cannot use their *Dominate* on Cainites, but it will work on ghouls and mortals). They are fairly recent creations, and their blood is somewhat thinner. They have only eight Blood Traits instead of 10.

• The Krevcheski are scholars, always on the lookout for ancient lore or new inventions. They have created elaborate siege engines and clockworks for the Tzimisce, but the clan has good reason not to trust them. The family is fascinated with the Tremere, and it has begun to make secret overtures to the Usurpers, perhaps to switch sides. Their family Disciplines are *Auspex* and *Dominate* (again, they are not trusted), and they suffer a one-Trait penalty on Social Challenges in Tzimisce gatherings or where their reputations are known.

• The Obertus make up the revenant wing of a Tzimisce monastic order of the same name. They were originally monks and nuns who practiced ritual sex for reproduction, and they have spread from Constantinople to Western Europe and the Fiends' homelands over the last century. They are the scholars, clerical staff and librarians — the repositories of strange lore for the Tzimisce. Even if they don't know something offhand, they will know where to find it. Their family Disciplines are *Auspex*, *Obfuscate* and *Vicissitude*, and they all suffer either the *Obsession/Compulsion* or *Perfectionism* derangements (their focus may change over time).

• The Szantovich are beautiful spies and infiltrators who marry into noble society and set about pulling strings and reporting to their masters. They occasionally slide into hedonism and vice, however, and if one is not pulling her weight, the Fiends may choose to prune the family tree. Their family Disciplines are *Auspex*, *Presence* and *Vicissitude*. Should a Szantovich find a particularly pleasurable experience, the player must succeed in a Willpower Challenge or become addicted to the vice.

• The Vlaszy are the Fiends' cavaliers — descended from a long line of Magyar warriors and skilled as horsemen, soldiers and statesmen. Rumor has it that they willingly entered the Fiends' service to repay a debt. Their family Disciplines are *Animalism*, *Potence* and *Presence*. Every Vlaszy, upon reaching adolescence, must take the blood oath with a Tzimisce as a sign of obedience.

These are only the most well known revenants. Rumors persist that some Tzimisce lords make their own lines of monstrous others. Worse, there are whispers that the Baali breed their own ghoul families.

## Animal Ghouls

Any beast can be fed vitae and made a ghoul, gaining all the abilities of a ghoul and bound in loyalty to its master as long as it's fed. Hellhounds — ghouled dogs

or wolves — are among the most common, along with war-horses, who gain unnatural strength and speed as well as a tolerance for Cainite riders. Other clans ghoul rats, serpents or bats, while the Tzimisce have some animals ghouls that are so altered that their original species is lost.

Animal ghouls gain all the abilities of human ghouls. In addition, the domitor gains a bonus Trait when using *Animalism* with his animal ghouls.

Human-sized animals (such as war-horses) can hold up to 10 Traits of vitae. Smaller animals have proportional amounts of blood. A dog can have six Blood Traits, a cat can have four and a rat or bat can hold two.

## The Church: Mother of Faith

The Church is the most powerful organization in the Dark Medieval world, as well as the center of faith. Founded on the ministry of Jesus and his disciplines, it delivers messages of hope and brings the salvation of sacraments to the faithful. It also enjoys vast wealth and political power, granted to it by the faithful who entrust their fates and fortunes to it, sometimes unwillingly. The sacraments frame mortal life from baptism to marriage to last rites, and losing the sacraments means losing salvation — one of the greatest fears of medieval people. Without salvation, one falls prey to Satan. The Church's officers are not above wielding the threat of excommunication against recalcitrant nobles or even against a populace to goad a noble into better behavior. Mother Church takes no threat lightly, not even from a king.

Latin is the language of the Church. Its documents are scribed in it, its priests use it in Mass, and it is the official "court" language. The pope in Rome is the supreme head of the Church, with his cardinals and bishops ranked below him, along with monastic orders and priests. Monastic orders range from the contemplative Benedictines to more militant orders such as the Templars. Recent events have also conspired to bring about a new branch in the Church called the Inquisition.

No Cainite can ever fully escape the Church's influence on the Dark Medieval. It informs too much of mortal behavior, and even Cainites who might have disliked it in life might still feel the occasional twinge when faced with the loss of sacraments. Some use it for its temporal power, whether as princes who must barter with bishops or from the inside as bishops and abbots. To others, the Church is a storehouse of knowledge and perhaps the leading patron of the arts in the Dark Medieval. For some, it provides refuge from their less kindly brethren, or perhaps convenient hunting grounds. Cainite interaction with the Church is not always as simple or secret as they believe, though. Vampire arrogance and activities can and have roused suspicion among the more astute clergy, and those vampires who believed that they could make the Church dance to their tune may be the first to learn otherwise.

### The Templars

The Templars — more properly called the Poor Knights of Christ and the Holy Temple of Solomon — are the Church's greatest militant order, dedicated to reclaiming the Holy Land for Christianity. Founded in 1114 and officially recognized by the Church in 1128, they answer only to the pope. Their white surcoats decked with red crusader's crosses are instantly recognizable across the continent and into Outremer.



The upper ranks of the Templars are said to include wizards who took study in the Holy Land, seeking the wisdom of mighty King Solomon, who was said to have commanded spirits and had the ability to speak with animals. These men have very old magics at hand, and they supposedly summon spirits. Their chapter houses are said to be troves of occult lore, relics and treasures. Their focus in freeing the Holy Land prevents them from being too great a threat to Cainites. Their wealth, faith and occult knowledge would make them formidable enemies indeed. As it is, the Templars will deal with Cainites if it serves their purpose, and some Cainites even ride with them.

### The Inquisition

AD 1230 is a time of great confusion and fear for the Church. Heresy in manifest forms is spreading through the flock. The Scriptures are diluted or corrupted, and now the Cathari, the Bogomils and other groups threaten to lead innocent souls into temptation. In the past, the Church has reacted to threats of heresy — a bishop would deal with an accusation of heresy as it arose — but for the first time, the pope and cardinals are seeking to organize a response that stops heresy before it can spread further. They will seek out heresy at its roots, at the behest of the pope. This new branch, called the Holy Office of the Inquisition, has not yet fully formed, but already the Dominican leaders are field-testing the idea against the Cathar heresy in the Languedoc region of France.

Not everyone is solely interested in heresy, although it is the primary reason for the Inquisition's founding. Some believe that heresy is only a symptom of a larger disease in the Church body. They have discovered through anecdotal evidence or direct encounter that monsters and fiends stalk the night, preying on the helpless and corrupting the faithful. Some of these monsters have even dared to invade the Church and tempt her leaders. The Devil can quote Scripture for his purposes, and these wary churchmen wonder fearfully how high the corruption has gone. For the past few decades, a secret hunt has continued within the Church and among the flocks, carried on by priests and holy warriors — supposedly acting on papal authority. Most are educated, nearly all carry faith, and they burn with the righteous fury of the Lord.

## Other Faiths

While Christianity stands as the dominant faith of Europe, it is by no means the only one. Not a few vampires maintain the faith of their breathing days, at least in passing, and a community's dominant faith shapes its outlook and aspects.

Communities of Jews are scattered through Europe and Outremer. The *Reconquista* of Iberia has meant difficult times for them, as many are forcibly converted to Christianity, and those who refuse are executed as heretics. Christian authorities limit their freedom, their choices of occupation, their living space and what they may hold. In most large cities, Jews are confined to walled ghettoes, where they must observe a curfew and wear some identifying badge. Jews often make handy scapegoats for all sorts of misfortunes, and Christian authorities do nothing to protect them should a mob come looking for blood. Easter and Passover are particularly difficult times. Church doctrine proclaims that Jews are to blame for Christ's crucifixion, and urban legends claim that the blood of Christian babies is used to make Passover matzo bread. These stories often lead to riots, followed by

bloody rampages through the Jewish quarters. Jewish communities are traditionally insular, which fans mistrust (what could they be doing in there?), and many Jews are limited in their trades by orders of Christian authorities. As the Church considers usury a sin, money-lending and merchanting are two of the few trades open to Jews, and not a few riots have started because some Christian peasants believed they were being cheated by the Jews. Only in Outremer and the Holy Land do Jews find some measure of peace, provided a Crusade isn't roaring through.

The old pagan ways still live in many places. Peasant folk often mix celebrations of the old ways alongside saints' days and Christian holidays, such as Easter. The Church largely permits this, and has even borrowed a few pagan festivals and figures wholesale, the better to lead the country folk gently to Christianity. While Europe is largely Christian at this point, a few places remain staunchly pagan. Lithuania continues to remain a pagan kingdom, and parts of the British Isles keep the old ways alive. Still, it is practitioners of the old ways who are most often accused of witchcraft.

Islam is the dominant faith of the Holy Land, especially the Arabian peninsula. For many years, the Muslims controlled large parts of Iberia, living peacefully alongside Jewish and Christian neighbors until the *Reconquista* forced them back to the southern province of Granada. Muslims clashed with Christian armies during the Crusades. The Templars supposedly learned a great many occult secrets from Muslims in the Holy Land, and Muslim libraries are repositories of old wisdom from ancient times.

Rome is not the only center of Christian belief, just the most visible. Divergent sects of Christianity — which some call heresies — dot southern and southeastern Europe, as well as the Holy Land. The Languedoc region continues to host one of the most visible — the Cathars. In Eastern Europe and the ruins of the Byzantine Empire, the Orthodox Church continues to hold sway. Around the Fertile Crescent, sects of Armenian, Antiochan and Coptic Christian churches reign, each with their own rituals and ideals.

## The Infernal: Servitors of the Pit

Every Christian knows that Lucifer was once an angel who led a host of angels in rebellion against God. The war with Heaven ended with Lucifer (now Satan) and his crew being cast out of Heaven and into the burning pits of Hell, never to return. Every Christian knows that it was Satan in the form of the serpent who tempted Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, causing mankind's fall from grace. Even now, every Christian knows that Satan and his minions seek to corrupt and tempt men and women, eventually luring their souls to Hell. Demons and devils are quite real to the peasants of the Dark Medieval, who fear the presence of the unholy and blame it for illness, curses, madness and many other troubles.

Demons and devils are malevolent spirits that seek out human souls to corrupt. They do not usually work directly, as the children of the Father of Lies, their preferred means are more subtle. It is said that demons cannot force another to sin against his will, so they mislead, tempt and manipulate with honeyed words and empty promises, all leading their victim to sin and sin willingly. Some say that demons find the pure, the pious, the innocent particularly appealing, and should one of these fall, it means jubilation in Hell.



As Cainites are already damned by their very existence, they hold little interest for demons as victims. Their arrival may take time, but it will come. Instead, demons find vampires useful as servitors and agents, usually promising power in exchange for service. Most vampires wisely refuse the bargain, either not wishing to further damn themselves or because they prefer to be their own masters, not servants. Still, some do accept. Some are drawn by the lure of power (and demonic investments are said to be quite alluring) or by the opportunity to corrupt the virtuous. Most Cainite infernalists seek each other out, the better to share knowledge and protection, as vampire society rejects infernalists and will hunt them down on the slightest rumor. An entire bloodline, the Baali, serve the Lords of the Pit and have done so since their mortal days as a devil-cult in the river-valleys in the time of the Second City. Having been nearly driven to extinction once by the combined might of the clans, the Baali are not eager to give them a second chance.

The Church generally considers all spirit-beings to be "demons," although there are many spirits who have nothing to do with Hell. They are spirits of the wild places, of nature, of animals and plants, related to the faeries or the pagan folk who worship them. Most people see no such distinction when confronted with them, though.

Sorcerers and wizards are said to call up demons to do their bidding or to bargain with them in exchange for magical power (a charge the Church maintains). Such deals are not usually to the wizard's benefit, though. Demons are nothing if not patient, and they have plenty of time to give a wizard enough rope to hang himself with. The most powerful wizards are said to be able to bind demons into service, at which point the Cainite must ask himself who is the greater threat — the wizard who can do so, or the demon in thrall, who is likely to rip apart the arrogant wizard the minute he can slip his chain?

### Demonic Traits

Demons and spirits have many powers, and as spirit-beings, they have very different Traits and abilities. They appear in physical form rarely, and when they do, it is always memorable and terrible. Demons and spirits have four Traits: Willpower, Rage, Gnosis and Essence. Spirit Traits generally range from 1 to 10, although the mightiest dukes of the infernal host may have more.

- **Willpower**: This Trait allows a demon to take actions, such as moving through the spirit world or attacking, in the same way that physical things use Physical Attributes. When two spirits enter combat, they use Willpower Challenges.
- **Rage**: This is a spirit's passion and inner will to survive. Sprits use Rage to attack and wound others. Rage also measures a spirit's toughness.
- **Gnosis**: This Trait measures a spirit's awareness and thought, and it is used in Social or Mental Challenges, as well as performing Charms.
- **Essence**: This is the combined total of the other three Traits, giving the spirit a pool of power to draw upon to use Charms.

### Charms

Demons and spirits have a number of unique powers at their command called Charms. Here are some of the most commonly seen ones:

- **Corruption**: With this power, demons can lure and tempt mortals. It works like the *Dominate* power *Lure of Subtle Whispers*. The demon uses Gnosis to work this Charm.

• **Disciplines:** Demons may use powers similar to Cainite Disciplines. Essence fuels them rather than blood, and Gnosis is used for the challenge. Common Disciplines include *Animalism*, *Dementation*, *Mortis*, *Obfuscate*, *Obtenebration* and *Presence*.

• **Immunity to Fire**: Demons are creatures of the fiery pits of Hell and immune to fire.

• **Materialize**: When a demon chooses to physically materialize, it should be a rare and memorable event for all concerned. Assume that its Rage and Willpower determine its Physical Attributes and its Gnosis determines its Social and Mental Attributes. Most demons have as many health levels as vampires, but more powerful demons have more, and many can regenerate a one level of bashing or lethal damage per turn. Killing a demon's physical form temporarily banishes it back to Hell, where it has plenty of time to recover and brood and wait for its next opportunity.

• **Possession**: Some demons can possess mortals by making a Static Gnosis Challenge against the victim's Willpower. With success, the demon controls the victim for as long as it likes, or until it is exorcised. Demonic hosts usually gain immunity to fire, and the demon might be able to use other Charms through the host (at Storyteller discretion).

### Demonic Weaknesses

Though possessed of great power, demons still have their weak spots. As infernal creatures, they are vulnerable to True Faith and the powers of the holy, which have double the effect. As arrogant creatures who rebelled against their Creator, demons are also vain and incautious about their egos. A wise person can trick them by flattering their egos or looking for weak spots in their deals.

### Dealing With the Devil: Investments

One does not get something for nothing. Demons know that very few mortals or Cainites simply throw everything away for the mere chance to serve Hell. Hell's minions know that willing servitors are the best ones, and willing servitors are best made when they get paid. Good intentions only go so far. Most turn to the infernal when life (or unlife) has nothing more to offer them for desperate situations, or when neither can or will give them what they want most.

Magical power is a frequent investment. The *Thaumaturgy* or *Mortis* paths are all viable options for a demonically invested vampire to have, especially for one who has never studied magic. A crafty Storyteller might wish to make use of *Dark Thaumaturgy* paths, such as the *Path of Corruption* or the *Path of Dark Revelations*, without informing the player that his character is practicing such, merely giving the player the necessary instructions for each new level when he advances. After all, those magics had to come from somewhere.... *Dark Thaumaturgy* systems may be found in **The Sabbat Guide**.

Other investments might mimic Discipline powers, and any of the Disciplines (with the possible exception of the Healer's path of *Valeren*) would make excellent gifts. A vampire who suddenly displays a few new tricks at a critical moment might be just the surprise necessary to drive his target into a trap. If the Storyteller wishes to make it clear that these are not true Disciplines, he may demand that the player spend extra Blood or Traits to activate them, that the character must perform an extra step to invoke them or that something does not appear right about the effect. Generally, assume that most demons can grant the Basic levels of any Discipline, while the more powerful ones might grant up to Advanced levels.

Some investments are simpler in nature. A homely girl might wish to be beautiful and graceful (a matter of a few new Social Traits), or perhaps a lame youth wishes to be able to run and walk again (buying off a Flaw or Negative Traits). Not every such change is instantaneous. Some demons like to toy with their pawns, giving them just enough to encourage them along. Most demons can grant two Attribute Traits, and powerful demons can grant three or more.

As stated earlier, nothing comes for free. Demons expect something in return for their "gifts," be it service or a cup of blood at every full moon. Storytellers are encouraged to play rough with players whose characters make a few casual infernal bargains just to stock up on nifty powers. The infernal is not something to treat lightly, and demons don't like to find out they're being taken for a ride. Someone who does not keep up her end of the bargain may find her extra Social Traits starting to slip away or her powers failing her at a crucial moment. The character might need to work a little harder than usual to regain what she's lost, and even then, the demon might not let her forget about the slip, yanking the investment out from under her just to remind her who's really in charge.

## Lupines: The Hour of the Wolf

Just as the common folk believe that vampires are corpses cursed to rise and prey on the living for blood, they believe that some folk are cursed by unfortunate circumstances to change into wolves, preying on men and cattle by the full moon, only to return to their normal shape and senses with daylight. Some people are believed to willingly seek out this terrible transformation by making pacts with Satan, wearing a wolf skin or enacting terrible rites. Cainites, themselves the subject of myth, know full well that the peasant stories are not gossip. There are wolf shapeshifters out there, which Cainites call Lupines, and the Lupines are too dangerous to dismiss as fantasy.

The Lupines rule the dark and wild places, the woods that surround the villages and towns. Cainites hold sway in the cities, but most know better than to challenge a Lupine on his ground. The wolves protect their homes savagely, and wise vampires do not travel alone through wilderness; even the Gangrel walk warily through known Lupine territory. While some Lupines will parlay with vampires if it suits them, they do so with utter contempt for Cainites, and most would rather attack. The two sides are almost always opposed to each other, and they prefer to avoid dealing with each other.

Werewolves, though savage, appear to have a society of their own, which they keep as secret as the Cainites maintain theirs. They seem to organize themselves in tribes, much like vampires have clans. They do not seem to have princes, but each tribe governs itself and its territory as it sees fit. Cainites have managed to learn a little regarding werewolf society, at peril of their unlives:

• Lupine nobles are known as "Silver Fangs" or "Shadow Lords." Title is either granted or inherited. They rule the tribes and hand down laws. While proud and arrogant, these nobles are the most likely to negotiate with Cainites if necessary. Wise Cainites grant these wolf-lords the same respect of princes and mortal kings,

lest a Lupine's honor be offended and his rage stirred. Some Tzimisce *voivodes* speak of tense encounters dealing with the Shadow Lords regarding contested territory in Eastern Europe.

• The werewolves apparently have their own wizards, but they are nothing like the Tremere or other blood magicians. They commune with and command the natural world — animals, plants, the elements and spirits of these. They follow an older, pagan order (occasionally bringing them into conflict with the Lhiannan), and advise their nobles. Rumor has it they can make themselves invisible.

• The Lupines have a fighting order called the "Ahroun," which is known as the "Fenrir" in the Holy Roman Empire and places north and the "Fianna" in Britain. They can tear a man (or vampire) literally limb from limb, and when in battle, their savagery and joy of combat is unmatched, even by Cainite frenzy. Lupine warriors may carry weapons, but when in their great battle-form, they certainly have no need of them.

• The werewolves appear to have their own group of outcasts, much like the Nosferatu — deformed in wolf and human forms, and spat on by their kin. They are often desperately eager to prove themselves worthy, which can make them both reckless and very dangerous. Some vampires believe that, like the Nosferatu, they hide among lepers and beggars, the better to spy. Rumor has it the two groups occasionally share information.

## Lupine Abilities

**Laws of the Wild** is the definitive source for werewolves in a live-action setting. If that resource isn't available, Storytellers can use these rules to simulate the Lupines in a Cainite chronicle:

• Lupines can change shape between three forms — a normal human, a normal wolf and an enormous, nine-foot-tall wolf-headed shape they wear in battle. When a werewolf enters this hybrid form, her Physical Traits are doubled, she deals aggravated damage with her fangs and claws, and she is considered to have the equivalent of *Might* simply due to her raw strength. Any mortal who sees a werewolf in this form falls into a maddened state of panic. (Treat such mortals as having entered Rötschreck, with the added affect that they forget ever having seen the werewolf when they finally recover.) The Lupine cannot use her Social Attributes or Abilities except with beasts or other Lupines while in this form. Lupines may also take the shape of a true wolf at will. When they do so, they gain the same bonuses for being in wolf shape as Cainites do; refer to the *Protean* power *Form of the Beast*, for details.

• Many werewolves can detect Cainites with low road ratings, or if they have struck binding deals with the Infernal. Such Cainites are usually attacked on sight. Gangrel or those Cainites on the Road of Beast, however, are only rarely attacked.

• Lupines heal all normal damage at the rate of one level every turn. Fire, silver weapons and the teeth and claws of other supernatural creatures (including vampires) deal aggravated damage to Lupines, which they cannot heal in this fashion. All other damage is treated as normal.

• Every Lupine has a special Trait called Rage that may be used to heal damage or to gain extra actions. A werewolf may spend Rage to gain extra actions in a turn, just like *Celerity*, at a cost of one Rage Trait per action. Werewolves may also heal one health level instantly by spending a Rage Trait once they become Incapacitated. Aggravated damage may not be healed this way. Each werewolf has anywhere from two to four Rage Traits at minimum, and may regain a Trait whenever he is injured or humiliated.

• Many Lupines have powers available to them that resemble Disciplines. Most of their powers can be simulated with *Animalism*, *Auspex*, *Celerity*, *Obfuscate* and *Protean*. Some can even imitate the sundry powers of *Thaumaturgy*. Instead of Blood, Lupines may fuel their occult abilities with a unique spiritual energy called Gnosis. As a rule of thumb, most werewolves have anywhere from three to five Gnosis Traits at minimum available to them per game session. They regain their Gnosis through rest, meditation and communing with spirits.

• Werewolves are subject to frenzies as easily as the Brujah, and they suffer the same penalties when testing. They suffer no wound penalties during frenzy.

• Werewolves can enter the spirit world, becoming invisible and intangible to the physical world. Like the *Auspex* power *Anima Walk*, they can use this as a means of travel (especially for an attack), but they do not leave their bodies behind.

## Other Shapeshifters

Rumors persist of men and women who can shift shape into other forms besides wolves. The Laibon talk of great cats who stalk the sub-Saharan grasslands on two

### Exchange Rates

Sometimes a vampire will attempt to use a power on a target that calls for the target to spend a type of Trait he doesn't have (such as requiring a Lupine to spend Blood Traits), or enter into an alien mental state (such as putting a mortal in frenzy). The Storyteller's word is final on what powers are allowed across supernatural lines. Some powers are designed specifically against a certain supernatural type, and they will not work on another, while others are more flexible. If a crossover is needed, however, here are some general guidelines: If a Discipline calls for a non-Cainite to spend Blood Traits, the target may substitute Gnosis/ Pathos/ Glamour/ other Traits instead, or a Willpower Trait if no other Trait applies. Likewise, Kindred who are subjected to powers that call for them to spend foreign Traits may substitute Blood Traits instead. This rule applies only if the target would normally *spend* Blood Traits, such as the *Blood Rage* power of *Thaumaturgy*. Powers that cause a target damage by draining Blood Traits still function normally, since the target is not supposed to *use* the blood, only lose it.

If a vampire is using supernatural powers to instill frenzy or Rötschreck into a target that cannot normally enter such states, the Storyteller may rule that the target simply suffers from *Crimson Rage* or another appropriate derangement for the duration of the power. Those states are not as severe as what vampires would normally experience, but they are the closest the target's soul — fundamentally less savage than that of a Cainite — can come to such primal instincts.

legs, or of mighty crocodiles on the banks of the rivers that leave human tracks. Vampires from the north tell stories of Odin's ravens, Hugin and Munin, taking human shape, or of men donning bearskins and becoming bears. Occasionally, Nosferatu in very large cities come tearing into court, babbling about *very* large rats.

Most Cainites are not likely to encounter other shapeshifters. It would seem there has been some great shake-up in the world of the shifters, encouraging these rare specimens to avoid much notice. Those Lupines who deign to speak with vampires either maintain a sullen silence on the matter or show a curiously eager interest in the whereabouts of this unusual specimen.

## Wizards: The Shapers of the World

Of course magic is real, and many folk will be happy to tell you so. There are those people with knowledge of the secret arts, which they use for both good and ill. The Church takes a dim view of such things, claiming that all magic comes from the Devil, and those who hold such powers did so through bartering with him. Further, they point to scripture: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." That said, most peasants (and a few of higher standing) visit with village wise-women for remedies and charms, and scholars still seek out and practice the rites hidden in old tomes of Latin and Greek.

Vampires generally mistrust magic, and with very good reason. The Tremere were mortal wizards before they dragged the secret of immortal life from Cainites and used it to change themselves. Blood magic continues to remain a mystery, whether it is the Tremere's ever-evolving Thaumaturgy, or the secret, bloody rites ascribed to the Assamite sorcerers, Setite priests or Tzimisce *kolduns*.

Most Cainites and common folk know of three sorts of magic-users:

• Wise women and folk magicians are the most common sort, practicing simple craft — fortune-telling, herbalism, charm-crafting — which they learned at the knees of their elders. Most combine the ways of their ancestors with their own belief in Christianity, but not a few are devoutly pagan. Their communities come to them for assistance with domestic problems or advice, and some work as midwives. While they consider their crafts to be harmless and healing, the Church condemns them as Satan's followers. The Church claims that they cavort naked in the woods under the full moon, participating in carnal rites with their infernal master, and that they are attended by minor demons who take the form of animal familiars, such as cats. Such claims are only fueled by jealous neighbors who seek scapegoats for their own troubles. Most people thus accused are unlettered peasant women.

• Mages are most often (but not always) scholarly men, who study the secret arts, often for their entire lives. The greatest are said to command truly awesome abilities, but they do so rarely and guard their knowledge fiercely. They often gather in secret groups for protection and sharing knowledge, one of the largest being the Order of Hermes, a collection of small mystical houses. The Tremere supposedly belonged to this order, hiding their unliving state, until they were discovered and cast out to a man. The Order considers the Tremere to be abominations and fights them at every turn in a secret shadow war that not even many Cainites see.



• The Church believes quite firmly that those who harness any sort of magical power are servitors of the Devil who have exchanged their souls for their gifts. In fact, there are some, known as infernalists, who actually do so. Many other wizards and witches refuse to truck with them, but infernalists are quite used to fear in lieu of true respect. They perform tasks for their demonic masters, which range from corruption to murder to blasphemy, and they revel in their powers. Infernalists often find that Cainites make very useful pawns.

• Rumor has it that the Church, while it condemns magic and wizards, has both within its ranks. Most Cainites believe that such wizards are simply especially blessed by God.

### Sorcerous Abilities

Magic is the Art, according to those who practice it. More than simply mumbling a few incantations and waving a wand, it combines arcane knowledge, inner talent and iron will into spells and rituals to bring the magician's will into being.

Magic is divided into "paths" or "spheres of influence." Knowledge of a path and its assorted rituals determines how much power a wizard has. Storytellers who wish to include mortal magicians in their chronicles will find more regarding sorcerous paths in **Laws of the Hunt.** These rules offer a wide variety of powers for mortal men to wield without becoming truly unbalancing. If that resource is not available, most of the paths of *Thaumaturgy* or *Mortis* are readily adaptable to the cause. Wizards may also means of scrying (similar to *Auspex*), as well as rituals that duplicate other Discipline powers.

Magic requires time to conduct the ritual or spell (sometimes a few minutes, sometimes hours), special ingredients (herbs, candles, a lock of the target's hair), ritual books and scrolls, and other sorcerous implements. Very skilled wizards need fewer props and less time as they grow more powerful. To use powers in a game setting, the player spends a Willpower Trait and makes the same challenge for *Thaumaturgy*.

Some magi practice arcane arts that touch the very heart of God's creation. This "true magic" is only limited by the desires of it wielder and the risks she is willing to take when she imposes her will upon the world. Such practitioners tend to have their own goals and ambitions. They might gather in covens for protection, but they are just as likely to be an isolated rune-caster or witch who answers to no one but themselves and whatever powers they serve. Those Cainites who encounter these practitioners speak of seeing great wonders when the spell succeeds, but equally great horrors when the working goes awry. It would seem that occasionally God smites those who tamper too much with Creation or as a reminder that hubris is not tolerated.

**Laws of the Ascension** gives a guide to putting the will-workers in a live-action setting.

## Ghosts: The Unquiet Grave

It seems that some rare spirits do not receive their appointed reward upon death. Rather than moving on to Heaven or Hell, they wait in limbo, watching the living world with envious eyes. Some are tied by chains of passion — seeking vengeance on enemies, remaining close to loved ones — while others seek to finish

tasks left undone before death came. Even burial in consecrated ground or Final Rites by a priest does not guarantee a quiet grave, if the spirit is restless.

Few Cainites deal with ghosts, and most are happy to leave it at that. The Cappadocians have made a great study of death and its after-effects. Of all the Cainites, they know the most about these unquiet spirits, more from residual encounters, as their interests in death lie in this world. Despite their deep knowledge, the Cappadocians have had little luck in dealing with those Death has left behind. They occasionally curry ghostly favor by assisting them in the living world in exchange for other favors and knowledge. Some of their servants, especially a young family by the name of Giovanni, have made great progress in studying ghosts. The Tremere are said to truck with spirits, including ghosts.

Ghosts are not usually interested in vampires, unless their paths happen to conflict. Vampires tell of being haunted by former victims, or of a vengeful spirit who protected a loved one from a Cainite's predation.

For most Cainites, the restless dead are more of an annoyance than a true threat. Unquiet spirits can do very little affect the material world, and Cainites in turn can have little effect on the restless dead. Ghosts might not be able to act in the material world, but they can watch what happens, and share that information with those who will aid them. Indeed, an enslaved ghost would make the perfect spy — one of the reasons that the Giovanni's research has sparked such interest in certain quarters.

The unquiet dead gain the name for a reason. Those who want to torment the living (or unliving) for whatever reason can go on a rampage, causing blood to drip down walls, filling a room with a terrible stench, hurling knives, even sometimes striking one of the living, among other nightmarish deeds. An outraged haunt quickly loses momentum when he reaches into the mortal world, but the damage he can create in his brief time upon the world is immense.

Folk beliefs claim that a ghost can be laid to rest by helping it complete the task that keeps it from rest, such as giving a non-baptized infant a Christian name, saving something important to the ghost (a piece of jewelry, a map), or seeing a murderer brought to justice. Occasionally, if the ghost is particularly troublesome or violent, the Church may be called in to exorcise it.

### Ghost Abilities

Ghosts are invisible and intangible to the mortal world unless they choose to make themselves visible and tangible. Generally, they have little effect on the living world. Consider them to have the same Traits as demons and other spirits, but they have a few unique abilities:

• Ghosts tend to haunt places of death such as battlefields, the sites of murder, graveyards, old ruins and the like. Their powers are strongest here because the veil between the worlds of the living and the dead is very thin.

• Ghosts are tied to the mortal world through a series of anchors and their passions for these items. These items can be anything from a cherished toy to a beloved wife. If all of a ghost's anchors are destroyed, he will be condemned to everlasting torment and can never return to bother the living world. if they are somehow brought to resolution, the wraith has a chance for redemption and peace.

• Ghosts are almost completely undetectable in the mortal realms. A Cainite with *Soulsight* might be able to detect a ghost, but a ghost's aura is very faint and difficult to see. Detecting the ghost requires a successful Mental Challenge. The ghost receives a three-Trait bonus to this challenge for the purposes of breaking ties. Even if the ghost's aura is detected, the character must have at least three level of the *Occult* Ability, or one level of *Lore: Ghosts*, in order to understand what she is seeing.

• Ghosts have their own arcane powers. Their most common powers are similar to *Auspex*, *Chimerstry*, *Dominate*, *Obtenebration*, *Presence* and the *Thaumaturgy* path *Rego Motus*. Some may also possess the equivalent of demonic charms. They power abilities using Essence.

• It is extremely difficult to prevent a ghost from traveling wherever it wishes. Barring certain occult rituals specifically designed to keep ghosts at bay, a ghost may go anywhere it desires in the mortal realms.

## Faeries: When Legends Live

The Good Family, the Still Ones, the Ever-Young, the Fair Folk — all names that the country folk respectfully use to refer to the faeries. The peasants treat them respectfully indeed, knowing that the Ever-Young are quick to anger and likely to curse those who offend them with madness or bad luck. They hold strongest sway in the wild places, where the old ways still hold power, and country folk know many rituals to placate them or turn their anger elsewhere. Respect and proper manners are perhaps the greatest defense when encountering the Still Ones.

There are places where only the mad or foolish wander, where the faeries are said to rule — old mounds in the middle of the fields, rings of standing stones, mushroom circles. The faeries are said to kidnap mortals for servants in their realms, or they may chase them through the wood for sport, running them down with howling packs of goblins and redcaps who stain their caps with human blood. In general, faeries are like a force of nature, best left alone by mortals and Cainites.

The most commonly known faeries are those of the wilderness, those who love the mountains, the glens, the deep forest, the rivers and lakes. They are said to frolic in the "faerie rings" of mushrooms or forest glades. These are the satyrs, the dryads, the water nymphs, who love to take mortals to share their revels or who charm them for fun. They do not suffer trespassers in their domains.

Household faeries — gnomes, nissen, brownies, bwca — perform chores for a house in exchange for food left out. They prefer the homes of country folk, where the people were raised to respect them. They can turn malicious if offended, and intruders or offensive visitors in their domains will find them very offended indeed.

The noble rulers of Faerie are said to be of such terrible beauty, such grace, that even the Toreador would weep. Many Toreador tell tales of how these great ones have walked among mortals and Cainites, of their great skill at arms and magic, and of their tremendous capacity for cruelty or generosity. Like mortal or Cainite nobles, they are best treated with great respect.

There are said to be two groups or "courts" of fae, who traditionally hold sway at different times of the year. During the spring and summer, the Seelie reign. Some

### Strange Communion: Drinking the Blood of Other Supernaturals

Whenever Cainites encounter strange, potent foes, especially other supernaturals, their natural instinct is to drain their blood and somehow gain their power. It's a natural impulse, but sorely misguided, as such blood often has unusual side effects. Some Cainites become addicted to the strange flavors of these odd nectars and will seek them out whenever possible, sometimes regardless of the danger.

(**Note:** Unless the Storyteller decides otherwise, the rule of vitae is "first in, last out." In other words, a Cainite cannot rid herself of a Trait of werewolf blood until all the blood she had in her system prior to the forbidden drink is disposed of.)

**The Infernal:** The blood of mortal or Cainite infernal servitors is generally little different from normal mortals or Cainites (although a Storyteller can always arrange for a surprise). Demons who are not fully material cannot be drained — they are only spirit. Attempting to drink from a materialized demon is perhaps one of the more foolish things a vampire could do. What happens afterward is up to the Storyteller, but the results should be memorable.

**Werewolves:** Each Trait of Lupine blood counts double (that is to say, a vampire who drinks two Traits of werewolf blood gains four), but the vampire must test for frenzy immediately after drinking. Until the blood is spent, the Cainite has the Negative Mental Trait: *Impatient*, and is bursting with maniacal energy. At the Storyteller's discretion, particularly potent blood (*Pure Breed* x 3 or greater) might grant bonus levels of *Potence* or *Celerity*.

**Mage/Sorcerer:** A Cainite who drinks such blood will often be bombarded by strange visions and hallucinations as a wealth of creative energy flows through her. Ultimately, it is the Storyteller's decision as to what game effects this blood has. Some Cainites gain flashes of insight into the workings of the world, while others simply admire the pretty colors until the blood works it way through their system.

**Fae:** The blood of the fae is extremely potent. Like werewolf blood, faerie blood counts as double, so one Trait drunk by the Cainite counts as two Traits in his system. Any side effects are likely to be very strange. At the very least, the drinker gains a temporary derangement of the Storyteller's choice, with further side effects at the Storyteller's discretion. The derangement and other effects leave when the blood cycles out.

**Numinous Mortals:** Mortals who possess True Faith are anathema to the Cainites. Drinking from those chosen by the Holy is death. Each Trait drunk inflicts a Trait of aggravated damage on the drinker. A Cainite who drinks from someone who exhibits psychic power might demonstrate wild, uncontrolled powers of the same variety. As always, the full effects are at the Storyteller's discretion, although these powers are generally more annoying than helpful and are never under the control of the player.

### Stranger Baptisms: Embracing the Supernatural

The second impulse of every Cainite who encounters another supernatural being is to Embrace and enslave it. This reaction is less natural than the impulse to drink, and it meets with far less success. The Embrace was the Holy's curse upon Caine and all who followed his path. It was never intended for supernatural beings that have no connection to humankind. As a result, Embraces of other creatures almost never succeed, and generally meet with spectacular failure. For the sake of clarity, here are the possible outcomes of such attempts to create mongrel supernatural creatures.

**Lupines:** The Lupine engages in a Static Gnosis Challenge. On a win, the werewolf dies quickly and painlessly. On a tie, the death is slow and painful. If the werewolf loses, and if the Storyteller permits, a creature called an Abomination is created. Such pitiful creatures lose the ability to regenerate, as well as any benefits they might have from werewolf society, but they may continue to use any Gifts they might have known while they lived, and they may use their vitae like Cainites. (**Note:** Cainites and werewolves alike hunt and kill any such creatures on sight.)

**Other Shapeshifters:** If the Embracer is lucky, he'll end up with a corpse in his arms. Some creatures go up in a column of flame if treated in such a way, killing the shapechanger outright and inflicting five levels of aggravated damage to the Cainite.

**Mage/Sorcerer:** A normal vampire, with a great store of occult knowledge but no functional powers, results from such an Embrace. As the Tremere will attest, Cainites cannot learn mortal magic. Likewise, any Numina the mortal possesses does not survive the Embrace.

**Infernal:** Completely impossible, as the Infernal has no blood as such. The Baali would argue that such an act is completely redundant in any event.

**True Fae:** The fae melts away into formless, glowing mists as soon as such an act is attempted.

**Ghoul:** A vampire is created. The ghoul retains all her learned Disciplines, but these count against the initial three learned at character creation. Note that, unlike every other potential Embrace on this list, Embracing your ghoul is generally considered a sane, sensible move.

hunt mortals for sport or play tricks on them, but they are not as boundlessly cruel as their cousins, the Unseelie, who rule the autumn and winter. These are the most monstrous of the fae — trolls, ogres, goblins, imps and redcaps. Their nobles are as beautiful as the Seelie's, but the beauty only hides their wicked hearts. The Unseelie delight in torture and murder, viewing the living world as but a very large and interesting toy box.

Country folk guard their infants with care, fearing that they will be snatched from their cradles and replaced with changelings, faeries made in the infant's image to distract the mother. These changelings may live for years among mortals, never hinting at their true nature. Stories of faeries hiding among mortals under a veil of illusion that shields their natures from other eyes continue to circulate, and not every changeling is an infant....

## Faerie Abilities

The fae of the Dark Ages are not the changelings of modern times. The Shattering has not yet come. They do not need to cloak themselves in mortal flesh to hide from Banality, nor do they feel the touch of Autumn upon their souls. Consequently, **The Shining Host** provides only slight assistance in introducing the fae into your game. These guidelines, however, might provide some starting points on introducing such creatures to the unlucky or unwise:

- Most faeries have powers much like *Chimerstry*, and they are masters of illusion and deception. Other powers include *Animalism*, *Auspex*, *Celerity*, *Dementation*, *Dominate* (particularly *Reveler's Memory*), *Obfuscate*, *Obtenebration*, *Presence* and *Protean*. Faeries such as ogres and trolls may have *Fortitude* and *Potence* as well. Noble faeries are likely to have variations of *Thaumaturgy* paths, especially *Creo Ignem* and *Rego Tempestas*. These abilities are fueled by a Trait unique to faeries called Glamour. A typical faerie possesses anywhere from three to five Glamour Traits per session.
- Faeries heal bashing and lethal damage like mortals do, but many of them know healing magic, considerably reducing the necessary time to heal. Faeries suffer aggravated damage from fire and weapons made of cold iron. Even touching cold iron causes a true fae extraordinary pain, and she must spend a Willpower Trait every round she grasps cold iron.
- Noble fae are terrifyingly beautiful or nightmarishly frightening, depending on their mood. Anyone who wishes to attack a noble in her court must best her in a Social Challenge before they may raise a hand against her.



Backgrounds

Influences

Disciplines

Merits/Flaws

Physical Traits

Social Traits

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Abilities

Road

Aura

( )

Conscience/Conviction

Self-Control/Instinct

Courage

Blood

Willpower

Health Levels

Mind's Eye Theatre

# FAITH AND FIRE™

Name: _____

Character: _____

Chronicle: _____

Nature: _____

Demeanor: _____

Clan: _____

Generation: _____

Concept: _____

Experience: _____

Clan Weakness: _____