

CARTHIANANS



a sourcebook for:
Vampire
THE REQUIEM

*The Kindred are thousands of years old,
if not older.*

That doesn't mean their social politics have to be.

*These are the nights of power
in the hands of people,
not priests and princes.*

— Francisca de Graaf

This book includes:

- The truth behind Carthian philosophy and activism
- New bloodlines, Merits and Disciplines for players exploring a Carthian Requiem
- How to create unique Carthian states for their own chronicles
- Carthian Law, the covenant's power to suppress the disciplines of other Kindred — a power never before seen in *Vampire: The Requiem*™



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Vampire
THE REQUIEM



SOMEHOW

BY GREG STOLZE

THE FIRST TIME DUCE CARTER SAW OFELIA CHASE,

he wanted to kill her. More than that, though, he wanted to annihilate her, wanted to violate her, wanted to do something to her so awful there was no name for it, some obscene, absurd, overblown punishment for her temerity, for daring to exist in the same place as he did. Instant, total loathing. That's how he knew she was a vampire.

He blew it off and put on an easy smile. He cleared his throat to get her attention and kept the smile going as she instinctively snarled at him. The man across the table from her twitched, clearly uneasy.

speed date men, or the glances of interest or intimidation or both commingled from the speed date women.

The singles were taking their five minute turns in a Holiday Inn conference room, with a few pathetic flower arrangements trying to make it less sterile and more fun. Duce told himself that he'd never hunt in this terrain even if the alternative was starvation. He knew, of course, that if push came to shove he would.

He left for the bar. It was better, and he'd gotten a phone number by the time Ofelia entered. She gave him a suspicious glance, hesitated, but sat down by him.



"It's all right," Duce told him. "She's not mad at you."

"Um," the guy said. "This is . . . uh . . ."

"I'm her old boyfriend," Duce said, tipping her a wink. "I'm sorry to interrupt and everything."

"This is his five minutes," Ofelia said, even as a woman with a clipboard and a strained smile came over to ask if Duce needed any help. Her tone told him she was silently praying that he was not going to make a scene, was not going to kick up a fuss, was not going to disrupt this evening's round of speed dating.

"I didn't mean to interrupt," Duce said. "I'm very sorry." He let the woman with the clipboard pull him away, and he enjoyed her relief as much as her nervousness, much as he enjoyed the looks of curiosity or sour competitiveness from the

"Duce Carter," he said, shaking her hand.

"Ofelia," she replied. Her skin was lighter than his, but not by much. Her features, however, were sharper, more typically white. There was a dusting of darker freckles on her straight nose, and on her cheekbones.

"You can do better, right?" he said. "I mean, sure, you can . . ."

"I don't see how that's any of your business." Her voice was sharp.

"Now, now, sister. Don't purse your lips and schoolteach at me," he said. "I'm just observing, all right?"

"Checking out the new meat on the street, is that it?"

"No need to make everything sound ugly. You and me, we have our needs, and if we're not meeting them together, we should at least keep out of each other's way."

"YOU'RE TRYING TO BE COURTEOUS?"

"YOU AIN'T MAKING IT EASY."

He gave her a smile. He turned on the charm. She thawed a little, he could tell.

"You're new," he said. "I saw you at court, and I was going to introduce myself, but your Crone crew seemed to be keeping you under pretty tight wraps. Your sire finally let you off the hook to try something on your own?"

"Not quite." It was a new voice that spoke, one marginally feminine and entirely humorless. It was unexpected and unpleasantly close to Duce's ear.

He did not flinch in surprise. He turned and kept the smile working as he said, "Moyra. Didn't see you there."

"Don't think I don't know what you're trying to do," Moyra hissed. Her face was tight with anger.

"You might want to check your tone," Duce said. His face was still mild and pleasant, but he put a little steel behind his words.

"Keep away from my offspring, *Douche*."

"Put the fangs away, Moyra. They're making you lisp."

Moyra ground her teeth, and he grinned wider, and then she grabbed him by the sleeve and pulled him toward the back exit.

"Wait!" Ofelia called, but Duce gave her a little wave.

"You wait," he said. "One way or the other, I expect this won't take long."

They were barely out the door before Moyra took a swing at him, but Duce ducked it, giving his eyes a moment to adjust, making sure no one else was . . .

Moyra had vanished.

"Aw shit," Duce said, and got his arms up around his head before she reappeared, this time holding a board and swinging it into his side. Since his arms were already up, it was natural to give her a series of quick jabs to the face, snapping her head back. Bruises rose on her flesh and then faded as quickly as breath on a cold windowpane.

"This is stupid," Duce said as they circled.

"I know what you're doing!"

She swung again, and this time he was ready. He grabbed the board and yanked hard, sending her face-first into a wall.

"But do you know what *you're* doing?" he asked, then grunted. He looked down and saw a throwing knife in his gut.

"Bitch!" Now it was his turn with the board, and he cracked her on the skull, no subtlety, just rage and brute force.

It went like that for what seemed like a long time but was only a couple seconds before Duce realized that it was a pretty close fight. Moyra just might kill him. So he said, "This is *really* stupid," again, and swung the board close enough to make her cringe,

BUT CHECKED THE BLOW.

Her face was badly bruised, and this time the marks weren't fading. She had a second knife in her hand. Duce looked at it and dropped the board. He figured he could always pull the blade out of his stomach if he needed to rearm. But Moyra seemed to reach the same conclusion, that the match was too close to call, and her knife disappeared as quickly as she'd drawn it.

"You're not going to take her away from me," she said.

Duce grunted as he pulled out her weapon and closed his belly wound. "That sounds like a bet to me."

When they went back inside, Ofelia was gone.

###

Initially, Duce hadn't even wanted to go. A couple of older, respected Carthians had dropped by his place and shot the shit for a while, watched some of the Duke game on TV, grumbled about the crazies in the Lancea Sanctum. Then they'd gotten to the point.

"She's a Crone neonate, just brought in during the Indulgence," Pete said. Pete was gruff, blue-jeaned, wearing a truck-stop cap and a Teamsters ring. He had clout. "Knock her."

"Aw c'mon," Duce said. "You can't expect me to just walk on by, give her a wink and bring her into the Movement. Be real."

"This is real," the other Carthian said. Her name was Brenda, and she was from the intellectual wing, dressed in Elizabeth Arden and wearing jade earrings that clashed with

her shoes. "The recently Embraced are the most vulnerable to recruitment, and that's especially true of the Circle, where the, the spiritual milieu is alien and therefore alienating . . ."

While she prattled, Pete dropped a folder on Duce's table. Duce opened it, still grumbling.

"Why do I have to do it. Just last month I . . ." He saw her picture and grimaced. "Oh, it's like *that*."

"No, it's not," said Brenda as Pete shrugged and said, "I guess."

"To lure away the *black* Acolyte, you figure you need your go-to brother . . ."

"We can talk around race all night," Brenda said, "But we'll never *get* around it. She's just started her Requiem, she's scared, she's alone, anything familiar might . . ."

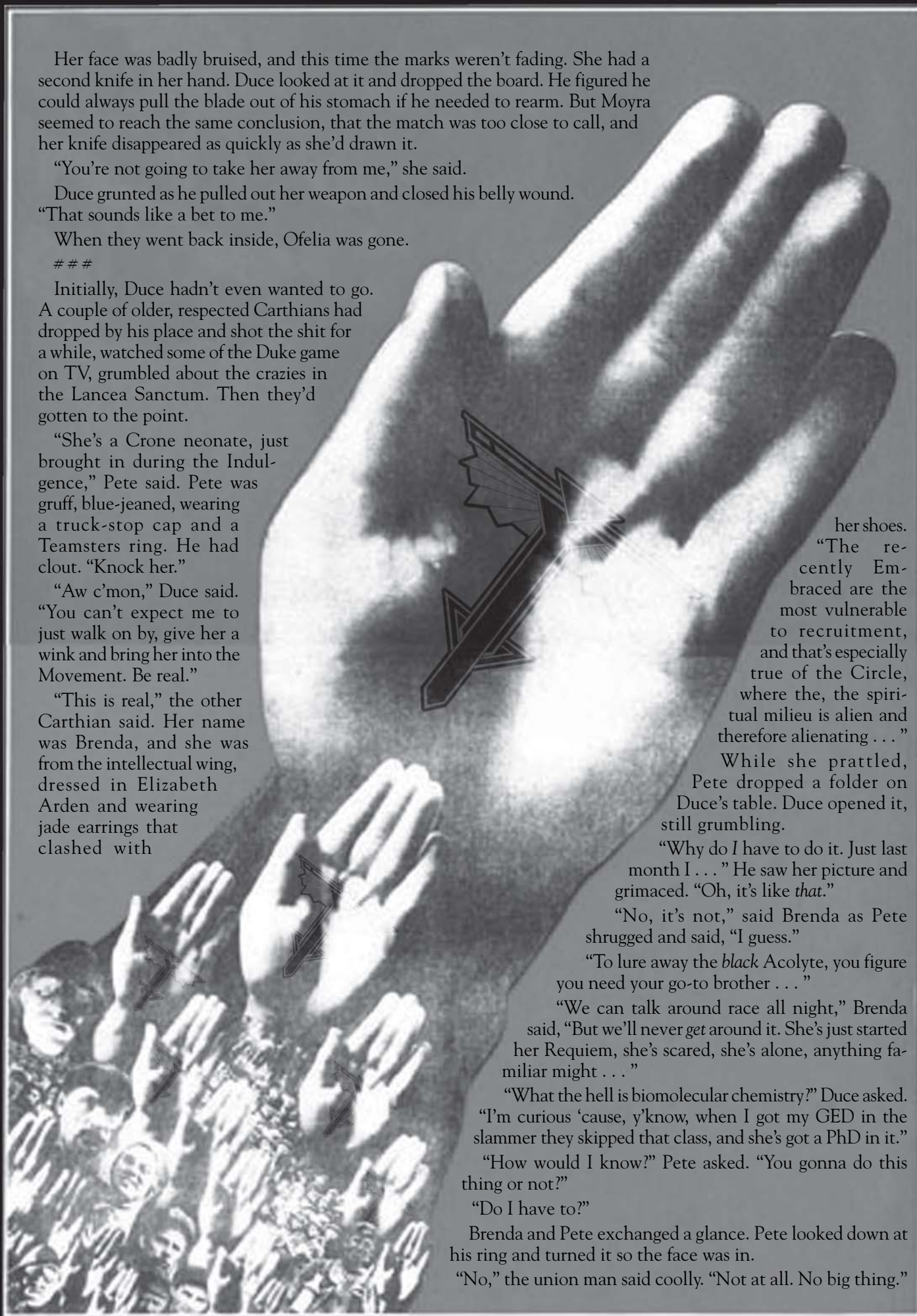
"What the hell is biomolecular chemistry?" Duce asked. "I'm curious 'cause, y'know, when I got my GED in the slammer they skipped that class, and she's got a PhD in it."

"How would I know?" Pete asked. "You gonna do this thing or not?"

"Do I have to?"

Brenda and Pete exchanged a glance. Pete looked down at his ring and turned it so the face was in.

"No," the union man said coolly. "Not at all. No big thing."



Duce saw her a couple times over the course of six months, and he played it very cool. His initial plan at speed dating had been to charge in, be pushy and fly and street, everything he figured a nice, black intellectual from the suburbs would despise, then throw up his hands in defeat to Pete and Brenda. "Hey, I tried," he would tell them.

Moyra though. Moyra pissed him off. Moyra made him want to recruit Ofelia, not because the Movement was so wonderful that everyone should be Carthian, but because if he succeeded, then Moyra would fail.

(The loser of their bet would wind up admitting defeat in a public Elysium in front of no fewer than a dozen other vampires. Not a pretty result. If he won, Duce planned to let Moyra slide on it, in return for some less humiliating concession down the line. He was pretty sure he couldn't lose, since at any point he could just say, "She hasn't joined the Movement — yet." He couldn't figure why Moyra had let him leave the bet wide open, no time limit. Maybe she'd been careless because of greed and anger. Or maybe she just wasn't that bright.)

Moyra made him go the distance, so Duce was there after Ofelia's first kill, there to wipe her tears and dump quicklime on the body. Duce was there the first night she had to run away from her family, and as she had to draw further away from them. He didn't say much, but he did a lot, and most of all, he was *there*.

They were driving up to the northern suburbs when Duce deemed the time right for his next escalation. He was doing her one more meaningful favor.

"I really appreciate this," she said.

"No big thing."

"It is. It is, really."

"It only looks that way to you. I've got all kinds of people in my corner, this was nothing."

There was a pause, and he was about to change the subject when she spoke again.

"What if it goes wrong though? I mean, these aren't — ordinary mortals."

"Nothing's going to go wrong."

"If they find out what we really are . . ."

"They won't find out. Who'd suspect?" He grinned and straightened the black-and-white priest's collar around his neck. Ofelia shifted, uncomfortable in her nun's wimple.

"What if they ask me a question about religion?" she said. "I'm an — I was an Episcopalian. I don't know anything about this Catholic mumbo-jumbo."

"One, anyone who asks a nun a question about religion isn't going to know the difference if you give him some vague line of jive. Two, anyone who *does* know enough about religion to recognize bullshit isn't going to feel any need to get answers from a nun. And three," he said, raising a finger as she opened her mouth to argue, "I specifically asked Pete to get you the habit used by the Sisters of Saint Perpetua,

WHO ALL TAKE A VOW OF SILENCE.

"But why would she want *that*?"

"Oh, maybe because you're the Prince's dream girl."

"Get off," she said, looking out the window.

"Ofelia, it's only, uh, hidden if you don't know the Prince. Moyra told you what, that she Embraced you for your brains? Your shiny doctorate in bio-whatever?"

"Something like that."

"It's even true, as far as it goes, but only because Prince Maxwell is bent for the smart ones. 'Ladies of accomplishment,' he calls 'em. Look at Persephone, he was so taken he brought her into the fold."

"Who's Persephone?"

"The bitchy, white-girl vampire, young, dresses like *Vogue*?"

"You'll have to narrow it down,"

Ofelia said, then shook her head. "No, forget it. This is just too — too much.

Maxwell is supposed to fall in love with me? A 200-year-old vampire?"

"I don't think it's the greatest plan in the world, but look at the women that the Prince sends out for. Classical musicians, college instructors, architects — hell, he sent Garret way out to the suburbs to reel in some woman after he read something she wrote in *Poetry* magazine."

Duce let it sink in. No rush. Still 15 minutes from their destination, in traffic.

"So what's supposed to happen then?" Ofelia asked.

"Who knows?"

Prince Maxwell has done some, y'know, ill-advised things. Embracing Persephone, there's Exhibit A on how he loses his head over a smart gal of a certain age."

When they had 10 minutes left, he added, "Plus, you know, there's the matter of race."

"Moyra may be ruthless, but please give her credit for some brains," Ofelia snapped. "You really think she's stupid enough to think this

"Oh."

"You all right with letting me do the talking?"

"I guess I have to be."

They drove another mile before Ofelia said, "I don't know why Moyra asked me to do this."

"Probably hoping you screw it up."

"What?"

"You yourself said this isn't your bag, you don't have the skills. She probably wants you to touch the fence and get the shock."

"Moyra wouldn't . . ." Ofelia realized what she was about to say, and didn't. "Why would she do that?"

"You want my guess? It's so she can rescue you and drag you in front of the Prince for discipline. She won't suggest that, of course. She'll fight it, to make some Invictus patsy think she's afraid of it, so he'll push for it and she'll cave in and you'll spend an evening with Prince Maxwell Clarke."

PRINCE AND I WILL GET
ALONG BECAUSE WE'RE BLACK?

"There's a difference between stupid and ignorant," Duce said. "I don't know Moyra like you do, but I get the sense that her knowledge of black culture pretty much ended with that darky chef on the Cream of Wheat box. Know what I mean?"

Ofelia laughed, but it was a little bit bitter. Duce was pleased. As he pulled in, he thought about leaving well enough alone, but he couldn't resist one last twist of the knife.

"The Circle's got a lot on the ball, sure," he said. "But no one's ever accused 'em of being sensitive."

• • •

Two months after that, he was ready to seal the deal. He was keeping her comfortable, telling her all the consoling stuff, but only about a third of his attention was on what he was saying. An equal amount was patting himself on the back over, really, how easy she'd been. The remainder was reveling in what he

might ask Moyra to do, how magnanimous he'd be, what a good sport —

"Duce, are you even listening to me?"

"The Carthians are all about feedback," he said automatically, then looked into her eyes and said, "Ofelia, relax. Yeah, the Circle isn't going to be happy you left, but they know better than to make a big hissy fit over it. That just draws attention to their inability to keep their people happy, makes more new recruits think about finding the closest U-Haul depot. It just makes anyone who's got New Age leanings anywhere else decide the Circle isn't cool enough to join, awright?"

"I want to be safe."

"And I've promised you that you will be. Look, John, here's a badass," he said, lowering his voice. "I've seen him tear a Daeva legbreaker to pieces like a fat man eating a roast chicken. As for Lucinda, you don't even want to *know* what she's got up her sleeve," Duce said, thinking that it wasn't much because the Carthians were really, truly confident that the Acolytes would write Ofelia off. Maybe with some bitchy comments and vicious gestures, but, at the end of the night, it was no cakewalk to keep a vampire in a political party by force. Especially if the vampire was supposed to be good for anything after being compelled.

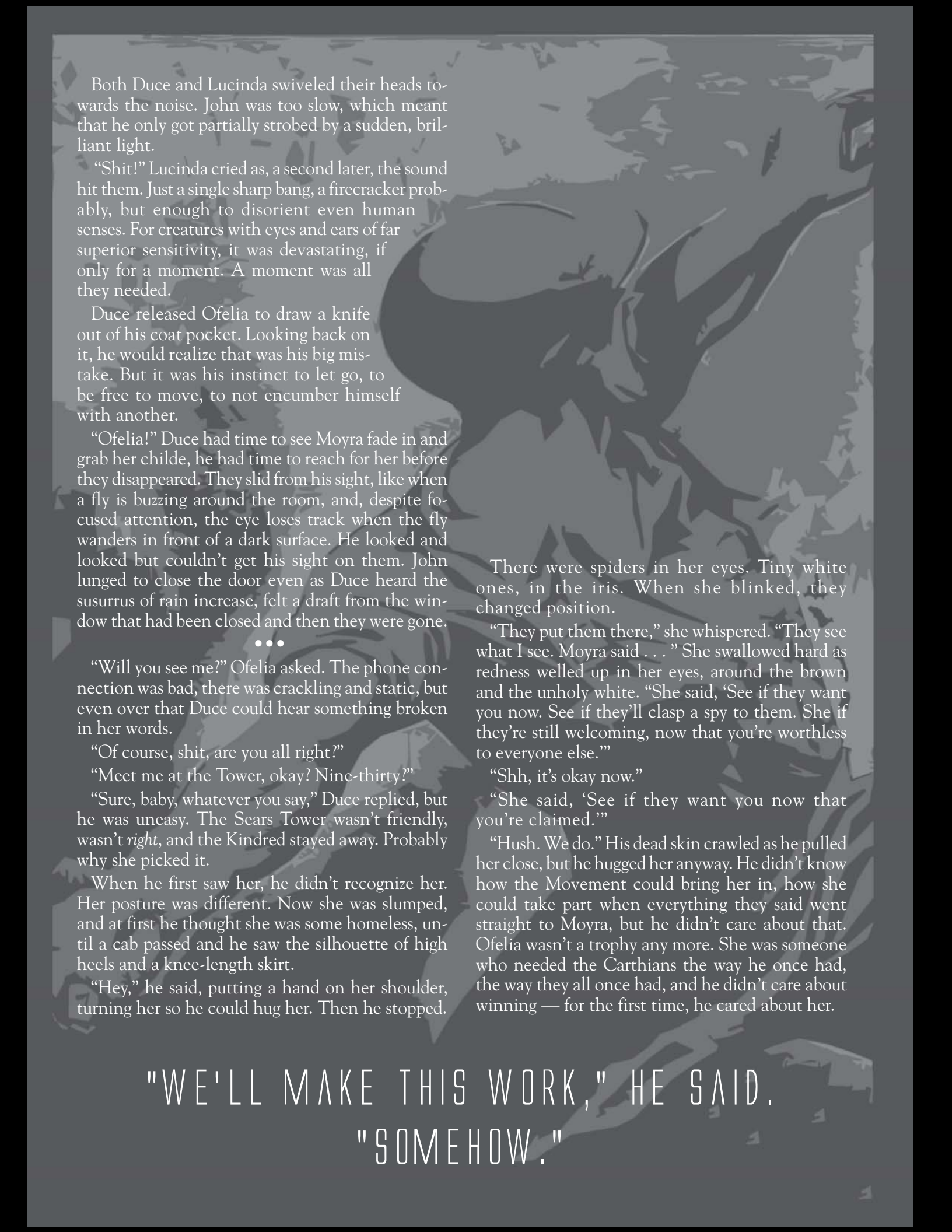
"You think I'm over reacting Duce, but I'm not. The Acolytes . . ."

"The Acolytes are a clique of mini-cults so politically fragmented they can't even set a coherent meeting time. Trust me, they're not going to take on a covenant that was, until fairly recently, running the whole damn town."

"You don't know how strong the Circle is," she whispered, looking out his window into rainy darkness.

"But I know how strong our chains are," he said, taking her hands. He had time to congratulate himself on a good line

WHEN HE HEARD
THE DOOR OPEN



Both Duce and Lucinda swiveled their heads towards the noise. John was too slow, which meant that he only got partially strobed by a sudden, brilliant light.

"Shit!" Lucinda cried as, a second later, the sound hit them. Just a single sharp bang, a firecracker probably, but enough to disorient even human senses. For creatures with eyes and ears of far superior sensitivity, it was devastating, if only for a moment. A moment was all they needed.

Duce released Ofelia to draw a knife out of his coat pocket. Looking back on it, he would realize that was his big mistake. But it was his instinct to let go, to be free to move, to not encumber himself with another.

"Ofelia!" Duce had time to see Moyra fade in and grab her child, he had time to reach for her before they disappeared. They slid from his sight, like when a fly is buzzing around the room, and, despite focused attention, the eye loses track when the fly wanders in front of a dark surface. He looked and looked but couldn't get his sight on them. John lunged to close the door even as Duce heard the susurrus of rain increase, felt a draft from the window that had been closed and then they were gone.

...

"Will you see me?" Ofelia asked. The phone connection was bad, there was crackling and static, but even over that Duce could hear something broken in her words.

"Of course, shit, are you all right?"

"Meet me at the Tower, okay? Nine-thirty?"

"Sure, baby, whatever you say," Duce replied, but he was uneasy. The Sears Tower wasn't friendly, wasn't *right*, and the Kindred stayed away. Probably why she picked it.

When he first saw her, he didn't recognize her. Her posture was different. Now she was slumped, and at first he thought she was some homeless, until a cab passed and he saw the silhouette of high heels and a knee-length skirt.

"Hey," he said, putting a hand on her shoulder, turning her so he could hug her. Then he stopped.

There were spiders in her eyes. Tiny white ones, in the iris. When she blinked, they changed position.

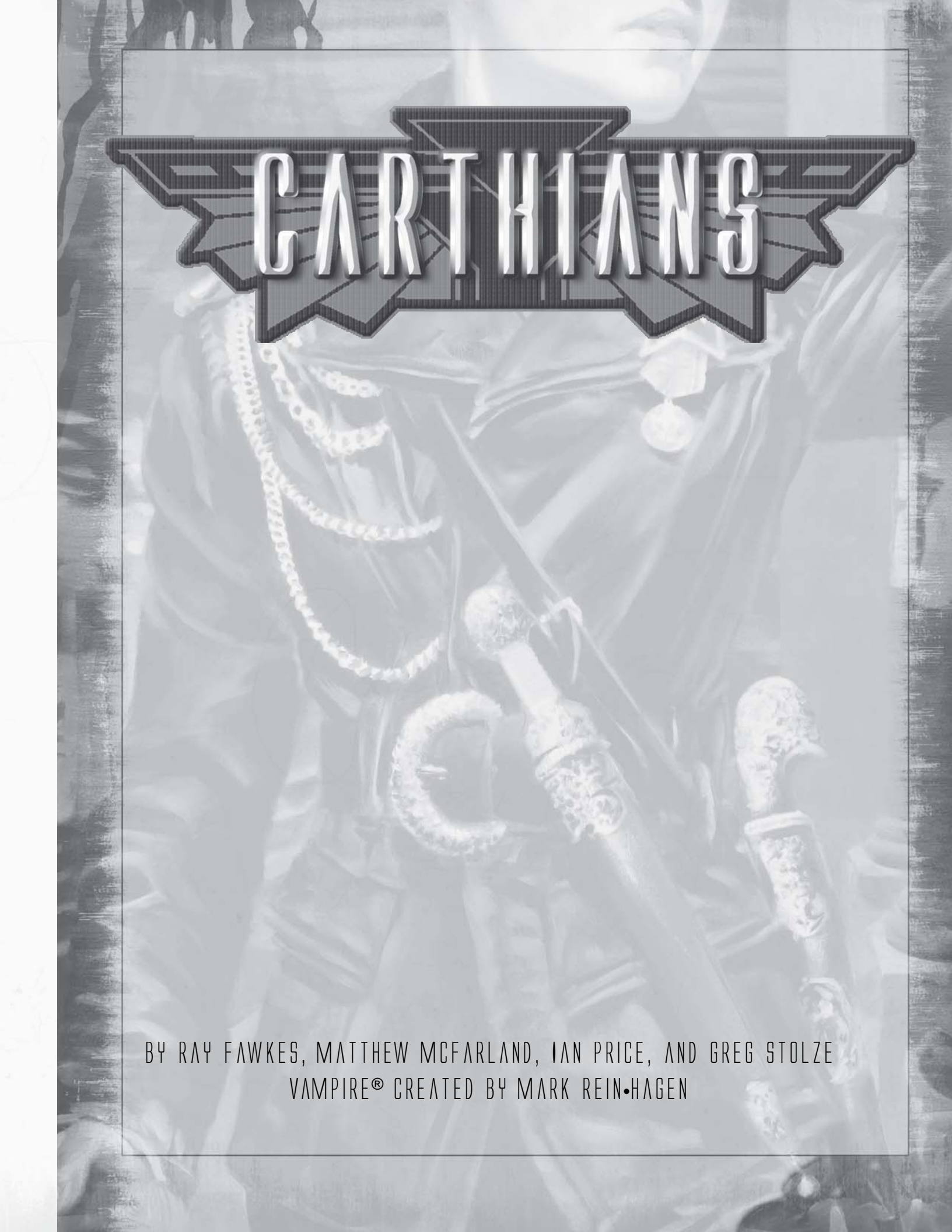
"They put them there," she whispered. "They see what I see. Moyra said . . ." She swallowed hard as redness welled up in her eyes, around the brown and the unholy white. "She said, 'See if they want you now. See if they'll clasp a spy to them. She if they're still welcoming, now that you're worthless to everyone else.'"

"Shh, it's okay now."

"She said, 'See if they want you now that you're claimed.'"

"Hush. We do." His dead skin crawled as he pulled her close, but he hugged her anyway. He didn't know how the Movement could bring her in, how she could take part when everything they said went straight to Moyra, but he didn't care about that. Ofelia wasn't a trophy any more. She was someone who needed the Carthians the way he once had, the way they all once had, and he didn't care about winning — for the first time, he cared about her.

"WE'LL MAKE THIS WORK," HE SAID.
"SOMEHOW."



CARTHIAN

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CARTHIAN



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INTRODUCTION

Modern civilization has bred a race with brains like those of rabbits and we who are the heirs of the witch-doctor and the voodoo. We artists who have been so long the despised are about to take over control.

— Ezra Pound

When we created the covenants for **Vampire: The Requiem**, we deliberately constructed the neologism “Carthian” to *seem* to suggest something — we wanted the word to have a weight of its own, to imply an identity not bound in Latin roots or outside philosophy. “Carthian” sounds a little bit like “McCarthy,” which carries undertones of American political paranoia. “Carthian” also sounds a little bit like “Carthage,” conjuring imagery of the progressive, Classical world (even if Carthage itself was none too progressive). The History chapter of this book presents a linguistic take on the origin of the word. In all, the word has just as many possible origins as the number of philosophies the covenant itself includes.

That’s the thing. The Carthians are not disorganized: they are diversified. The Carthian Movement, as a covenant, includes many different political activists and philosophers, but these disparate factions are not necessarily incapable of working together or organizing. The central belief of the Carthian Movement, the idea that is common to the majority of Carthian factions, domains and members (even though this is not an idea that unifies them) is this: Kindred social systems should modernize to include broader bases of power.

We know what it says in **Vampire: The Requiem**, but the Carthians aren’t all democratic. They may not even be predominantly democratic (there has been no successful survey of all Carthian domains, and no one really wants to do one anyway). We’re expanding our concept of the Carthians with this book.

The Carthians are not anarchists, and they are not always revolutionaries, at least insofar as revolution implies sudden, often forceful change. The Carthians are orderly. The Carthians love orders

and systems. They believe in systems of governments rather than individuals of power. Carthians salute the office, for example, while the other covenants salute individual Kindred. Carthians respect titles, they defer to them, whereas the less progressive institutions of Kindred society historically grant titles to the individuals they want to have power.

What the hell does that mean? For democratic Carthians, this means that power should be spread throughout the voting masses and their representatives. For communist Carthians, this means the smaller, more manageable populations of Kindred should exist as equals. For bureaucratic or corporate Carthians, this might mean rule by hire and fire. For fascist Carthians, this might mean strict authority held by a rotating dictatorial council. Some ideas come straight from mortal philosophers, some come from weird Damned mutations of mortal systems and some are politics that only a secret state of predatory monsters would strive to put into action.

A GRAND EXPERIMENT

Remember that the Carthian Movement is an experiment, and Carthian Kindred know it. Carthians may not care whether or not another city adopts their ways, but they want to see whether their ways will work. They want to succeed themselves more than they want others to fail.

This experimental nature is part of what gives the Carthians their diversity. This means that, where other covenant books might talk about tradition and custom and the majority, this book talks about permutations, philosophies and some of the remarkable, newsworthy extremists who are succeeding, failing or just striving desperately outside of popular methods and opinion.

Here are some other things to think about: the traditional power hierarchy thinks in terms of Demesnes, of lands and territories that are extensions of their masters. Carthians often turn these ideas on their ear, seeing territories as states within the city, owned by all Kindred but regulated by the authorities. Some Carthians think of local rights in terms of citizenship — a vampire is Kindred (a citizen) only in the city where he was Embraced. He has no vote, no authority and no claim to territory in another domain.

CARTHIAN CONCEPTS

A few core concepts define the Carthians as a setting entity. They're not just "the young ones" or "the rebels," as described above, but they're not characterized by what they're not. What are the Carthians?

- **The Carthians are modern.** Although the seeds of the Carthian Movement may go back to the likes of Martin Luther and the French Revolution, the Carthian Movement's distinct history begins in the 1800s with the radical thinkers who led to (or created outright) the likes of Marxism, Stalinism, modern capitalism and so forth. The old nights of the Carthians were bohemian, with cafes and absinthe and art nouveau and the genuine Black Hand and all that. The Carthian Movement makes its big rise not with the founding of America but with the shattering of Europe in the Great War. The Carthians picked up a lot of pieces, climbed up on rubble and rushed in to fill vacuums formed by destroyed and torpid Invictus and other Kindred. Certainly, the Carthians look back on the likes of Jefferson and Franklin for inspiration, but those people weren't vampires, weren't manipulated by vampires and weren't the initial inspiration for the Carthians. The philosophical crucible of industrialized Europe and a million sudden, tragic opportunities made the gardens where the Carthian seed bore fruit. This notion of modernism spreads into Carthian art and style, as well.

- **The Carthians explore mortal ideas.** The Carthians adopt human social and philosophical constructs into Kindred society. Other covenants certainly do it, too, but the Carthians *actively* do it. They strive to do it well, to select the finest in forward thought and create a society better than that which mortals can hope for. Some Carthians look at this through the lens of reason: vampires

have fewer needs, fewer variables and undergo fewer changes over time, so creating a strong and excellent society of monsters that could never survive with withering, less predictable mortals should be possible. Other Carthians look at this through the lens of passion: vampires are superior to mortals, and Kindred should strive to prove it. The Kindred see the ages go by, learn from mortal mistakes in ways that mortals never can and influence human existence in a way that mortals don't reciprocate. Namely, the Kindred get to choose their trends in ways that normal people don't, because vampires participate in mortal society through voluntary action rather than necessity.

In practice, this means that Carthians tend to feel more like archetypal neonates, even when the Carthians are older. Carthians may not keep up with mortal trends, but they don't really think of themselves as being too good for mortal ways. As mortal society moves forward, the Carthians follow behind it like cultural buzzards, feeding off the herd.

Indeed, the Carthians use technology. Carthians use CDs, MP3 recordings of their own voices and desktop publishing to get things done. Storytellers and eager players, be careful with this. Carthians might have meetings over the phone, but that keeps characters apart (which is bad for roleplaying). Likewise, the Carthians are big believers in the Masquerade, because that veil between them and humanity is part of what makes them able to perform their social experiment — they don't have to worry about including anyone they don't want.

- **The Carthian Movement is secular.** The great experiment of the Carthians is political and secular, but not all Carthians are. You'll see that the Carthian Movement isn't inherently opposed to the Lancea Sanctum or the Circle of the Crone. The Carthian Movement might pair with either covenant in some domains. It's possible that this same secular attitude could pair the Carthians against the Sanctified or the Acolytes in a domain that's undergoing a holy war.

What's important to remember here, though, is that a Carthian vampire is seldom just a Carthian. It's not as if he dwells in the Carthian Castle on Mount Marx in Democracyville. Carthians attend Sanctified masses and Crone ceremonies; they visit



with Dragons and associate with the Invictus during debates and conferences in some Elysiums. Not always, sure, and not in all domains, but remember that this is not a game of five covenants forever enduring one another's company. This is the Danse Macabre.

- **The Carthians come from, and influence, all walks.** The Carthians are not the young whelps in the war of ages. They aren't (always) bomb-tossing, anarchist weirdbeards. They're liberal thinkers and political experimenters, but they aren't all young. Think about 300-year-old Mekhet who join their ranks, to whatever extent. Think of vampires who wake up from the distant past and find the Carthian Movement to their liking. The covenants are archetypes more than stereotypes, and you'll witness why they're archetypes by which your troupe can explore the whole game world, not clubhouses where only certain activities are scheduled.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You'll see a familiar format in this covenant book.

Chapter One introduces the reader to the brief, bohemian history of the covenant. Beginning with its earliest nights as an Eastern European protest movement, the Carthian Experiment goes forward into its modern incarnation as an institution that holds something familiar (if not appealing) to all young Kindred.

Chapter Two delves into unlife among the Carthian covenant, detailing issues of identity, philosophy and responsibility. This chapter also includes a look at when things go wrong — when a Carthian experiment fails. Take note, Kindred, and learn from the mistakes of others!

If Chapter Two examines the meaning of the covenant to individual Kindred, **Chapter Three** explores the covenant on its own terms. Models of government, traditions and practices, and covenant policy, are laid bare here.

Chapter Four enumerates the various factions that populate the covenant. Built on everything from political philosophies to existential manifestoes to exaltations of the undead condition, Carthian factions are just as diverse as the Kindred who make them up. This chapter also includes three distinct Carthian bloodlines.

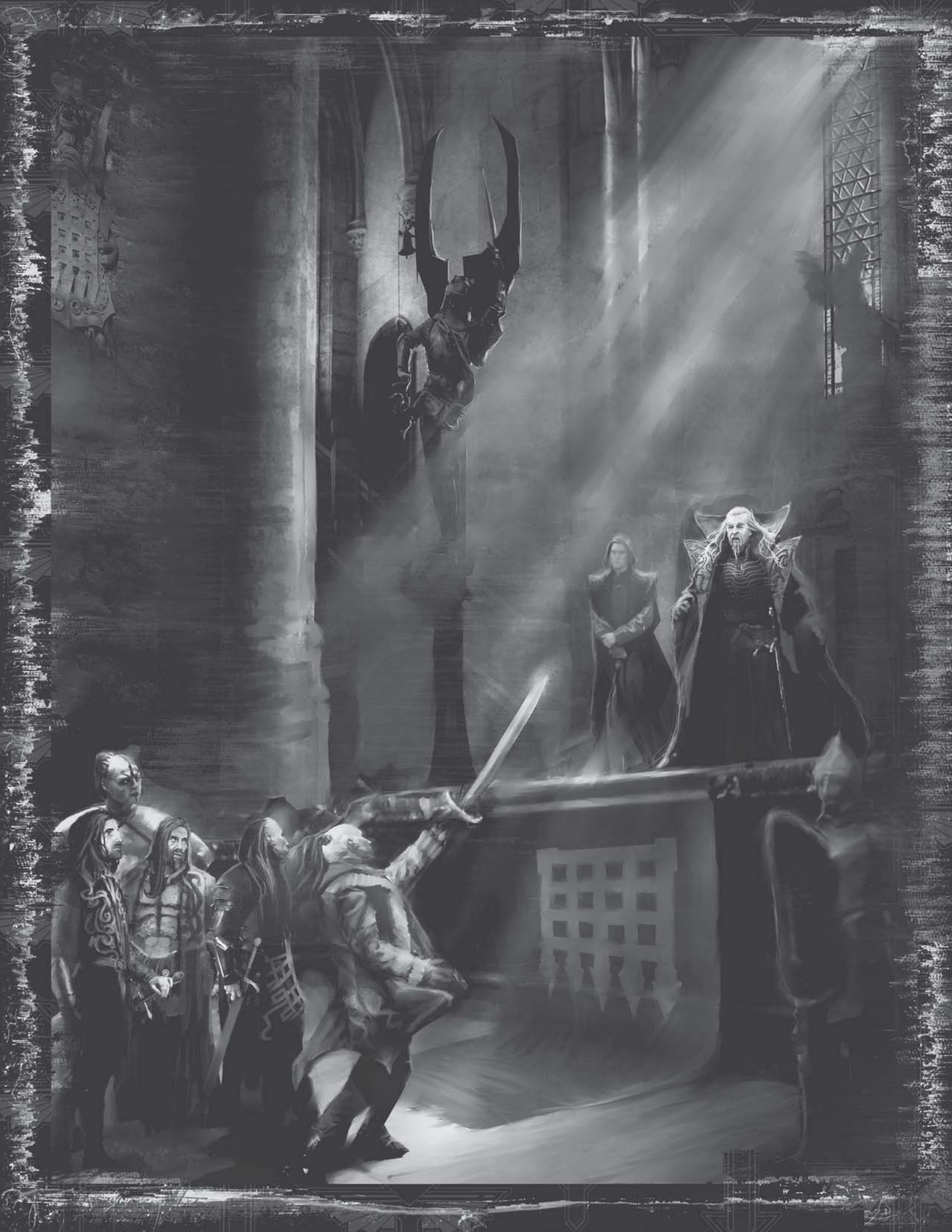
Mechanics constitute the content of **Chapter Five**. You'll find the expected details on

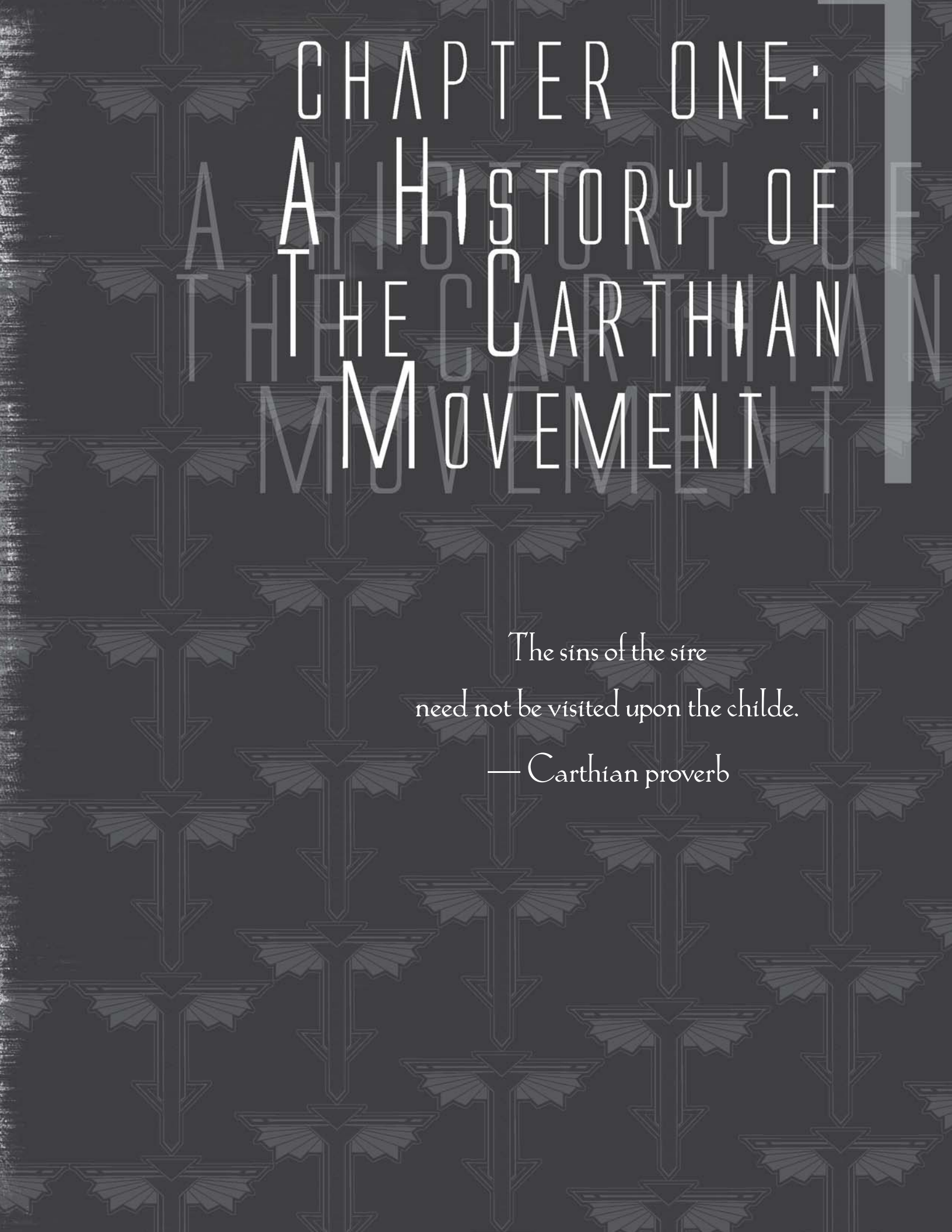
Disciplines, Devotions and Merits here. You'll also find a system by which the rational thought of the Carthian Movement can outwardly affect the domain. Known as Carthian Law, this phenomenon ensures that Carthians

can effectively, intelligently maintain praxis in their domains.

Finally, the **Appendix** hosts a variety of characters one might encounter when moving among the Carthians and their territories.







CHAPTER ONE: A HISTORY OF THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT

The sins of the sire
need not be visited upon the childe.

— Carthian proverb

"New order of the ages" did we say?

If it looks none too orderly today,

'Tis a confusion it was ours to start

So in it have to take courageous part.

— Robert Frost, *"For John F. Kennedy His Inauguration"*

The Carthian Movement may be one of the most recent advents of vampire society, but the story of the Movement's ascendance is a wildly eventful one — so much so that even its history makes the stolid elders of other covenants uncomfortable. Within the Movement, however, Kindred take great pride in its rapid strides and even its frequent setbacks.

THE SEEDS OF A COVENANT

For centuries — arguably millennia — the political rule of Kindred was immutably feudal. No matter which of the covenants that arose in the wake of the collapse of the Camarilla controlled a civilized domain, the hierarchical system of top-down dictatorship and bottom-up tribute remained the same. The system was logical, time-tested and effectively entrenched. It functioned relatively smoothly, and while those in power often fought over *who* deserved to rule, there was rarely a significant dispute over *how* they should rule.

Existing as they did in a largely politically static world, there was little reason to engage in any such dispute. Mortal attempts to develop systems independent of feudal hierarchy were generally limited to intellectual exercise, little more than banter between elites. The serious attempts of the Greek and Roman civilizations to develop progressive systems of rule collapsed quickly (in Kindred terms) into imperial monarchy, aligning comfortably with the prevailing views of the vampire population. Nobody questioned the form or function of Kindred government because nobody had any reason to believe it could be improved. Even as mortal society moved into the Renaissance and edged toward the Enlightenment, most vampires were so slow to make an effort to understand or accept the innovations of mortal society that humanist and neoclassical ideals failed to find reflection in the Kindred world. The governmental innovation of mortals was considered by most to be little more than the product of a peculiar fashion for harmless intellectualization, as sure to pass as the seasons.

Not all vampires were so certain. Slowly, here and there, individual Kindred began to observe the changes in the mortal world with interest. The emergence of modern scientific reasoning and the growing trends of exploration produced fascinating results. To those who bothered to pay attention, the changes occurring in mortal society were clearly far too wide-ranging to be ignored, and were likely to have a powerful lasting impact on both the living and the undead world.

In the early 18th century, avidly following the disruption of the English monarchy by the Parliamentary civil wars and taking great inspiration from the development of "Natural Philosophy" in the works of Newton, Boyle and others, a Hungarian Invictus Mekhet elder by the name of Kerza performed what is now widely accepted as the seminal act of Carthian politics. Incensed by the state of "stagnant upheaval" in his home domain of Eger, which had seen six Princes replace one another in rapid wars of bloody succession, Kerza stood forth in Elysium, proposing an end to the battles. He suggested that a council of Kindred could lead the domain better than their power-hungry solitary elders, rendering the position of Prince obsolete and the bloody ambition of their "clearly incompetent" predecessors irrelevant. For 12 nights, under Kerza's protection, a council of ancillae presided in Eger. While some argued that Kerza had simply seized praxis in the domain and named his Primogen a "ruling council," others believed that he was truly attempting something new, pointing out that Kerza himself made no governing decisions except to enforce the law of his ancillae.

Regardless, Kerza and his inexperienced council were destroyed by a competing elder before Kerza's style of government could prove itself. The domain was restored to the traditional rule of the Lancea Sanctum and the 12-night revolt was officially disregarded as an "unaligned uprising."

As the years passed, the turmoil of the mortal world became steadily more pronounced. Elysium gatherings of Kindred reverberated with discussions of the dangerous and fascinating ideas cropping up all over the world. The buccaneer democracies of the Caribbean were a fashionable topic for some time, as was Pontiac's rebellion in North America, for example. Cosmopolitan domains buzzed with debate over the future of the human race, and the effects of modern ideals upon the Kindred — most notably, those neonates who were Embraced from the currently available stock. The advent of the American and French Revolutions further polarized the participants in these arguments, bringing about serious schisms in previously peaceful domains. Suddenly, as the Kindred watched, traditional systems of rule and the role of the Church were called into question in the mortal world. Some revolutions failed, others succeeded. Entire mortal populations accepted the innovations brought on by the Age of Reason, making it impossible to Embrace in some domains without bringing their ideals into the halls of Kindred power.

Small factions began to arise within the traditional covenants of many domains, encouraging the consideration of new mortal principles and practices. Most of these factions were founded with an eye toward reversing the outrageous disruptions of the status quo in the mortal world and rarely entertained the notion that the mortals' tumult could reflect beneficially on vampire society. To do so, in fact, was to tread uncomfortably close to treason or blasphemy, and very few were willing to do so in open dialog.

INSPIRATION AND SUPPRESSION

In 1805, the domain of Amsterdam collapsed. In a sudden and bloody coup, the Prince and all of his most ardent supporters were destroyed by a coterie of five Invictus ancillae calling themselves a "Kerzian Council". Claiming blood relations to one of the members of Kerza's ill-fated Eger Government, the insurgents declared themselves unwilling to abide by the accepted rule of Kindred tradition, instead laying out a system of republican rule based on the ideals of the anti-monarchist, anti-feudalist literature that was popular among Dutch mortals at the time. Within six months, three members of the Council were assassinated by Invictus interests. The two remaining Councilors



fled the domain, allowing the Invictus to seize control once again.

The members went their separate ways. One is said to have made her way to Belgium, while the other fled to the East. Of the latter, little is known tonight — whether he met his Final Death on the road, succumbed to the long sleep of torpor or simply abandoned his ideals. But the former, a charismatic Ventrue by the name of Francisca de Graaf, found many allies in her new domain, and many eager listeners.

Under her tutelage, a number of neonate vampires assembled regularly at a small coffeehouse to discuss the faults and failings of the old ways and propose new ideals. At first exclusively Invictus, they were encouraged to widen their perspectives by befriending the neonates of other covenants and inviting them to the gatherings. Soon enough, a cross-section of the domain's young Kindred was attending de Graaf's meetings, engaging in lively debates over ethics, politics and social philosophy and becoming altogether enthused by the notions they exposed themselves to. Despite the misgivings of certain elders, the assemblies were tolerated as "idle entertainments" and largely ignored.

Inspired by these coffeehouse meetings, several young vampires wrote the first manifestos of what they termed the "Carthian Movement," an appellation derived from a translation of de Graaf's heavily accented "Kerzian" lectures. Their declared intent: To discover new ways of unlife for the Kindred at large. To find direction in the bold and brilliant innovations of the mortal thinkers of the day. To rework the old ways in an effort to make a better world for all.

Many of the "coffeehouse Carthians" eventually found their efforts curbed by the growing disapproval of their elders. Some neonates abandoned the cause, choosing to "mature" into traditional roles, while others only strengthened in their resolve, opting to travel and find purchase in a new domain. Taking their revolutionary manuscripts and arguments with them, de Graaf's students found homes in England, France, America and Italy. Thence, their teachings spread east and west, but no significant political gains were made. At best, these Carthians were considered interesting partners for debate, worthy entertainment and sharpeners of wit. At worst, they were seen as nothing but nuisances, young vampires with impossible aspirations, annoying and distracting the Kindred with hollow talk.

RESPONDING TO THE CRITICS

"Mister Van Tessel, our esteemed Priscus, agonizes to find terms with which to eliminate our deliberations from the realm of serious thought. He remarks that our meetings are collaborations of childish reversion, supposing that our commentaries are little more than the squalling of ill-informed neonates; that genius abandons us in favor of vulgar ambition. He believes we are no different from the unaligned, formless and purposeless except in complaint for lack of power. Lost in the wadding of his firm, centuries-old position, he imagines that motive alien to him is likewise unfamiliar to us all.

"The idea that Kindred are incapable of considering change without seeking blindly to claim territory is delusive. A new system of thought is opening itself to our world, even as our governing bodies contrive to frustrate it. We are not merely creatures of natural instinct. We are not merely the ignorant youth, struggling to find the purchase of understanding that only our self-declared superiors can provide. No challenge has arisen in the history of our kind that bears the import of our questions. No mockery shall dissuade us from their contemplation. Ours is the voice of the modern world, provoking not the scorn our Mister Van Tessel responds with, but rather the fear that compels it in him. His is the childish tone, replying to discomfort with unreasoned outcry. If he is willing to temper his invective with a calm statement of demonstrable fact, we should be honored to set a place for him at our discussion tables. If he is not, then we cannot further entertain his ill-mannered outbursts; they are too indelicate."

— Francisca de Graaf, in a statement read before the Amsterdam Elysium gathering of July 14, 1808

But their words did find purchase, and not just in the ears of neonates. In New York, a Daeva elder of the Lancea Sanctum publicly abandoned his parish in favor of the tenets of Carthian exploration. By 1876, he had a following of 15 Kindred, a significant portion of the population, all willing to join in his cause. In Santo Domingo, a Gangrel elder declared his intent to reshape the domain as a Pure Democracy as inspired by the writings of the Carthian Movement. In Newcastle, two respected members of the Circle of the Crone denounced their covenant, espousing the ideals of republicanism and declaring themselves Carthian Scientists.

The sudden appearance of Carthian ideals among the formerly loyal members of established covenants led many Princes to level accusations of insurrection against their own people, often sparking violent purges. Some Princes managed to eliminate true

devotees of the cause. Usually, the Princes lashed out at anyone they already disliked, equating personal disapproval with political rebellion. While the so-called enemies of tradition were destroyed, the fledgling Carthians, bearing witness to the unreasonably violent reactions of the covenants, became further convinced that the old ways were without merit.

More texts were written. More plans and proposals were exchanged. Too late, the traditional covenants realized that they were facing a legitimate Kindred movement, one with ideals that were often in radical opposition to their own. Attempts at suppression met with occasional success, but every quashed dissenter seemed to inspire three new voices. The "idle entertainments" of the Carthian thinkers rapidly drew to a close as they faced harsher and harsher attempts to purge their troublesome ideas. Pushed into conflict in several domains, many were forced to stand behind their statements and fight for their principles in rapidly escalating battles, attracting allies who deemed their opponents too oppressive by far. Toward the end of the 19th century, many members of the Carthian Movement, bolstered by their surprising increase in numbers, set out in earnest to push back.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXPERIMENT

As the early trials of Carthian ethos in New York, Santo Domingo and Newcastle developed into full-scale rebellion, small coterie around the world began to declare affiliation with the Movement with startling rapidity. Paris, Geneva, London, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Montreal, Prague, Moscow, Berlin: all witnessed a sharp rise in Carthian membership within the first 10 years of the 20th century. Some believe that the rapid global adoption of the terms and terminology of the Movement may be attributed to applied use of telegraph technology, an innovation abhorrent to traditional Kindred but happily implemented by less age-entrenched vampires.

That the majority of these Carthian groups were nothing alike didn't seem to matter. They rarely approached the problems of Kindred government the same way, and their means, methods and motives were often completely incompatible. What mattered was that they all had common goals: to step outside their commonly accepted roles and find new ways to dwell as vampires in the modern world.

Socialist vampires in Paris took up the Carthian banner in 1905, operating as a peaceful community

at the periphery of the Kindred culture there. Francisca de Graaf herself is said to have participated in the Paris Movement, siring two children before entering voluntary torpor.

RESPONDING TO THE CRITICS II

"Miss Charlotte, my respected sibling and honored compatriot, has seen fit to throw her lot in with the recidivist Sanctified Kindred of Santo Domingo, making clear her intent before us all. Consanguinity demands that my voice should carry the Carthian response, both in her defense and in our own. Chief among her reasons, she accuses us of destructive caprice. We are cut adrift in the tyranny of the mob, she says, carried helplessly along by our whirling whim. My sister speaks not with derision, but with concern. I beg you to consider that her compassion provokes her ire. Furthermore, her statements are not without merit. We have found occasion to reverse our decisions. We have taken turns that, upon reflection, were unwise.

"It is true that we are, as all Kindred are, foolish, wicked and weak. I will brook no denial of that fact, for I have seen two centuries of insanity pass, from Spain's shores to this salty isle. It is what drove me from my home. It is what brought almost all of you here. Not a one of us is spared the curse of the Beast and its maddening temptations.

"If that is true, then one must realize it is impossible for any one of us to rule. We are all equally stupid, all equally insane. Why exalt one of us over the others? Why suffer to impose the whims of one upon a crowd composed of those no less qualified, no less capable? Unwilling to submit to the rule of a madman, unable to abandon ourselves to simple anarchy, we choose instead to rule by the will of our collective voices. It is the will of that crowd that rises to temper the impulses of its single members, to give strength to the choices that empower the majority and eliminate those that restrict it. If our way seems fickle, so be it — for it is by a great measure less senseless and less cruel than the way of any one Kindred alone. Let us, then, temper my sibling's ire with our compassion. Let us show her that assembled in chorus, we eliminate the barbaric pride of our individual selves. Let us release her, free her to defy us as we defy her tyrannous church of the unanswered single voice."

— from the defense of Charlotte of Gangrel, delivered by Adalberto of Gangrel to the assembled Kindred of Santo Domingo, October 22, 1899

Marxist Kindred in Moscow, inspired by the same texts that drove the mortals, launched violent attacks upon the royalist Invictus of the domain just six weeks after the beginning of the mortals' Bolshevik Revolution. These Carthians, following their living allies' lead all the way to the institution of a



Carthian communist dictatorship, ruled for nearly 60 years, collapsing 14 years before the Soviet Union's dissolution.

A Mekhet claiming to be Kerza's grandchild founded a democratic Carthian Movement in London, attracting significant support before exposure as a fraud. Contrary to expectations, the Mekhet's humiliation and expulsion failed to discourage the Carthian presence in the domain, and their Elysium protests continued in earnest, taking their inspiration from the well-reasoned initiatives of the impostor, not his false fame.

In sudden uprisings or slow-burning progress, heralded by applause or bloodshed, the advancement of the Carthian Movement continued in domain after domain. Reversals were frequent, but rarely devastating. Repression only swelled the ranks of the Movement. Recognition was inevitable. In 1922, the Invictus Prince of San Francisco declared the Carthian Movement a dutifully recognized covenant within the purview of his domain and chose a representative from their ranks to sit on his Primogen Council. Against the protests of his advisors, he legitimized their claim to territory within his borders,

granting them tenurial domain and allowing them to practice their government in a small neighborhood as long they didn't violate his own Traditions for the city. Soon after, many Princes offered similar deals and even Regencies to the Carthian Movements in their own domains. More often than not, the arrangements made were hastily drawn-up attempts to defuse the potential for violent rebellion that were transformed into long-lasting, peaceful agreements.

As the 19th century drew to a close, the Carthian Movement was so ubiquitous as to force near-universal recognition as a fifth Kindred covenant. The Carthians, identifiably organized in each domain that hosted them, could no longer be dismissed as disobedient members of existing groups, and could not be associated with the chaotic independents of the unaligned.

News (and misrepresentations) of the Movement's successes spread quickly through the unconventional communications of the covenant, lending fuel to the fire. Whether individual members could believe what they heard about the Carthians of far-flung domains didn't seem to matter, so long as the news supported their hope. Seemingly everywhere,



Kindred were inspired to alarmingly spontaneous declarations of allegiance to the Carthian cause, choosing the terms and means of their announcements in suspiciously similar language. Borne on a wave of propaganda and misdirection, the Movement swelled again, rising to prominence in many sizable domains. Amidst debate, dispute, martyrs' cries and rebels' violence, the Kindred of the Carthian Movement announced their modernist intentions to worried Princes around the world.

MILESTONES IN THE MOVEMENT

From the early years of the 20th century to the modern nights of the 21st, the Carthian Movement has seen more change, more successes and setbacks and more defining moments than each of the other Kindred covenants has experienced in hundreds of years. Every domain seems to have its own roller-coaster history for the Movement, and no two are anything alike. Following along with (and rolling themselves into) the great visionary developments of mortal society, strength seems to flow into the Carthians when new ideas are unleashed and new freedoms are explored.

During the First World War, violent Carthian cells took advantage of the chaos in Europe to launch a series of attacks on their counterparts within more stolid covenants, hoping to carve out large territories for the Carthians' future experiments. Some were successful, and many found that their intended targets had retreated into torpor before they even had a chance to fight, withdrawing from both the shocking carnage of the war and the outrageous uprising of the Carthians in hopes that better nights would await them in the future.

The Montparnasse district of depopulated Paris in the 1920s saw Carthians share thoughts and dreams with some of the most brilliant artists of the modern world. Picasso, Modigliani, Sartre, Beckett, Duchamp — all befriended several Kindred without ever learning their true nature. Within years, the district was so overrun with Carthian Kindred that it was officially designated tenurial domain in 1931. Those vampires who ruled Montparnasse were said to be among the most diplomatic and peaceful ever to dwell in France, and visiting their domain was something like entering an aesthetic and spiritual utopia, so long as one was willing to leave it unspoiled by one's presence. Horrors may have ruled the night there as anywhere else, but they were horrors perfumed and cloaked in roses.

The advent of the Second World War brought further opportunity for the Carthian Movement, but did not produce as many successes as its most enthused members hoped. Those Kindred who had survived the first decades of the century flocked to the reassuring structures of the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum, offering themselves up in exchange for assured safety and stability. Carthians who encouraged revolution in those dark nights were often accused of opportunism and rejected outright. Many were punished severely for their attempts, and much of the ground gained during the first half of the century was rapidly lost again, paving the way for a return to traditional rule for a great number of European domains. Only the Carthians of Japan made significant progress in the aftermath of the war, rooting their revolution in the demoralization and collapse of several prominent Princes.

The Movement in Europe took a new turn for a while, retreating to a less prominent position in many domains and characterizing itself as a "safe alternative" to membership in one of the more powerful covenants. Many Carthians began to play the role of conscientious objectors, learning from the emotional backlash that their impassioned attacks brought upon them in wartime.

Kathmandu, Nepal, played host to an astonishingly large conversion of Kindred to the Carthian cause in the 1950s following the near-complete dissolution of a Hindu offshoot of the Circle of the Crone under the strict law of the domain's secular Invictus Prince. Although a secular Movement itself, the Carthian cause espoused a "social contract" philosophy that allowed for freedom of religion and freedom of assembly for all Kindred. Many of the persecuted Hindu vampires found safety within the tolerant ranks of the Carthian Movement. Near the end of the decade, the Carthians were declared anathema by the Prince for their refusal to abandon their religious members and fell victim to a fierce purge. None survived. An oft-quoted statement attributed to one of the last to fall is thus: "We took no power, and we held no ground. We welcomed our brothers and sisters to us, and we died in one another's arms. But we were not conquered, for we never deserted our cause."

The prosperity of the West in the decades immediately following the Second World War allowed for an atmosphere of experimentation and exploration to develop among the Kindred, encouraging the activities of the Carthians there.

Individual freedom was a point of pride among the mortals of the region, and the rapid cultural and technological innovations that accompanied this freedom and exploration fostered the development of the Movement. For the first time in history, progress was paramount. The Carthians became convinced that their ascendance was inevitable. Attempts at dissuasion rarely took hold, and the Movement gained an attractive optimism that remains intact in many domains tonight.

Carthian Kindred of San Francisco gravitated to Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s, responding to the alluring promise of the hippie movement. There, the introduction of psychedelics to the feeding stock of the vampires led to a number of violations of Tradition and a series of harsh crackdowns by the domain Sheriff. The domain was eventually forcibly removed from the Carthians by the Prince, and those Carthians who remained splintered into acrimonious factions, some declaring the “freak power experiment” an ugly letdown while others stated that it was crushed by an “ailing Prince terrified of its successes.”

RESPONDING TO THE CRITICS III

“You know what they say? They say the mortals are stupid, that they don’t know what they’re doing! They say that this whole Carthian gig is nothing but a nostalgia trip, a way for us to pretend we’re still alive while we follow their dumb wanderings into the toilet! Bullshit! They’re sitting up here in the Elysium, sitting around in this goddamn tomb, and, I don’t know, it looks to me like they’re the ones pretending, man — they’re pretending to be dead! I don’t feel dead. Do you? They say that we’re forgetting what we are! You know what? I think they’re forgetting what they are. I think they’ve got their pig flunkies and their pig ghouls bringing home the goods for them and they have no idea how to even stand on their own two feet! You think they’d last 10 minutes in the places the Carthians go? You think they would have the first fuckin’ idea what to do in the middle of a real happening? I don’t.

“Don’t let them rub that garbage in your face! Don’t let them talk down about mortal, and don’t let them talk down to you for loving them! They say we don’t got a system? We got a system — the system is the end of their system. The system is the beautiful community of love. The system is the new rule, man, and it’s coming up fast. The rule of the Commune is the new rule of vampire society! Equal rights for all, everybody works the field and everybody shares in the harvest! They can shout out their laws, they can get their pig Sheriff to beat us down when we go back to our rightful domain, but they can’t stop progress! We

are the Carthian Commune of San Francisco and we can’t be stopped!”

— Leonard of Nosferatu, in an impromptu address before the Elysium gathering of May 2, 1968, San Francisco

But with innovation came conflict, as new ideas clashed with established truths. The mortal world descended into a cold war, laying down battle lines around the world at the border of ideals: the Western image of democratic freedom and the communist dictatorships of Eurasia. Some Carthians, reversing the previous retreat of the Movement and turning with the prevailing developments of humankind, developed more violent and more overt strategies, employing tactics that violated many of the long-accepted precepts of the Kindred world. Nothing was sacred to the new Carthian breed, or so it seemed.

In 1973, a group of four Carthians split themselves off from the Hamburg covenant’s socialist majority, declaring that the group would take its inspiration from the activities of the Rote Armee Fraktion, also known as the Baader-Meinhof Group. No longer satisfied with peaceful debate and protest at Elysium, the coterie in question turned to terror tactics in hopes of provoking rapid change in the domain. Seven ancillae and two neonate Kindred (including the childe of the Prince, the sibling of one of the Primogen and two prominent members of the Lancea Sanctum) were murdered over the course of nine weeks. The demands of the terrorist Carthians were delivered to Elysium following each attack, calling for the deposing of the Prince, the establishment of a Socialist Carthian Government and the criminalization of the Church of Longinus. The identities of the Kindred responsible were soon discovered, and all four were executed. Shamed by association, the Socialist Carthians of Hamburg lost significant political ground in the aftermath.

Not all Carthian Kindred gave way to impatience and violence, though. As some gained a reputation for bloodthirsty conflict, others took it upon themselves to prove the intellectual rigor and peaceable legitimacy of their cause. The tactics of the Movement became more refined in some domains, presenting political and rational challenges to their opponents in ever-increasing variety and complexity. Even as the vampires in opposition to the Movement learned how to combat it, the Carthians would adapt, redrawing the rules of conflict and confusing their foes.

The Carthian vampires of Santo Domingo, having surrendered their domain to the Lancea Sanctum during the 1930s experienced a renewal of purpose and vigor in the late 1970s, owing to their Gangrel founder's return from torpor. Weathering the violence of the occupying Sanctified Kindred, the Carthians mounted a peaceful campaign of protest, winning the support of sympathetic vampires in other covenants. Facing the wide-scale withdrawal of tribute, the outspoken disapproval of the majority of their subjects and the limits of their own humanity, the vampires of the Lancea Sanctum stepped aside in 1979, allowing the Carthians to impose the democratic rule they long sought.

As the power of the Carthians fluctuated in these and other domains, many began to notice the peculiar supremacy of Carthian Law: the strange weakness that vampires seemed to experience when defying the dominant force of Carthian Kindred within their declared territories. Whether real or imagined, the phenomenon has been reported again and again in domains around the world, with greater and greater frequency. No Carthian claims to understand the effect they're accused of causing (or taking advantage of), but many are beginning to believe that it ought to be investigated.

MODERN NIGHTS

There is one question that almost every Carthian vampire asks himself on a regular basis: *is the covenant performing its intended function?* The context may be personal, but the question is valid, and one that can be applied to the covenant as a whole. *Is it doing what it's supposed to do? What, exactly, is the Carthian Movement supposed to do?* The history of the Movement is a short and turbulent one, notably rife with collapses and the destruction of its adherents, and remarkably light on successful conquest of domains. But everywhere you go, no matter how oppressive the circumstances, Carthians seem to think they're succeeding. Most of the members of the San Francisco Movement are just as likely to be positive about their so-called achievements as the conquering heroes of Santo Domingo. The vampires of Montparnasse will happily declare their victory over tradition, but then so will the disgraced socialists of Hamburg. It seems that every Carthian attempt can be defined as some kind of success, but differences in philosophy will draw the line for any

individual. Then again, differences in philosophy are what the covenant is all about. Every new idea, every new effort, no matter how valid, durable or attractive, is an addition to the Movement. There can never be an ultimate failure for the covenant, not so long as there are Kindred willing to take up the cause (a cause, any cause) and find a better way for themselves, organized around a structured, reasoned approach that explores options not available through the existing, opposing covenants.

Kindred have given up the fight in the past. Domains have purged the Carthian Movement and utterly erased the Carthians' influence. Those vampires who hear of these collapses debate their significance often, exchanging news and rumors, weighing the impact of their own histories and worrying over the future. The modern nights find the Carthians no less energized than they were during the last years of the 19th century, no less passionate and no less hopeful. Their fervent debates echo in the halls of Elysium now as before, and their manifestos are still produced and traded with startling frequency. Their ranks swell and diminish with unpredictable rhythm. This is not a covenant that can be judged a large-scale success or failure just yet, and may not be for quite some time.

But with such rapid advances and retreats, such frequent shifts and setbacks, the covenant in some domains seems to be risking exhaustion. As the innovations of human society are adopted, emulated, adapted and abandoned, an air of desperation can often make its way into the efforts of the Movement. Some are starting to ask whether the swift advances of the mortal world are so alien to vampire psychology as to provoke insanity when imitated. The Carthian analyses are folding in on themselves, no longer restricted to commentary on the structure of society, but now encouraging commentary on the nature of Carthian analysis itself. New questions are arising: Can the Carthians find a viable alternative to the previously established styles of Kindred government? Is there anything new to learn from their attempts? Is it possible to create an enduring, structured philosophy while remaining open to the oft-shocking innovations of the mortal world?

The answers presented are as varied as the Carthians themselves. Every consideration is legitimate, they say, so long as it is supported by reasoned argument. There are no wrong answers, only undeveloped ones.

RESPONDING TO THE CRITICS IV

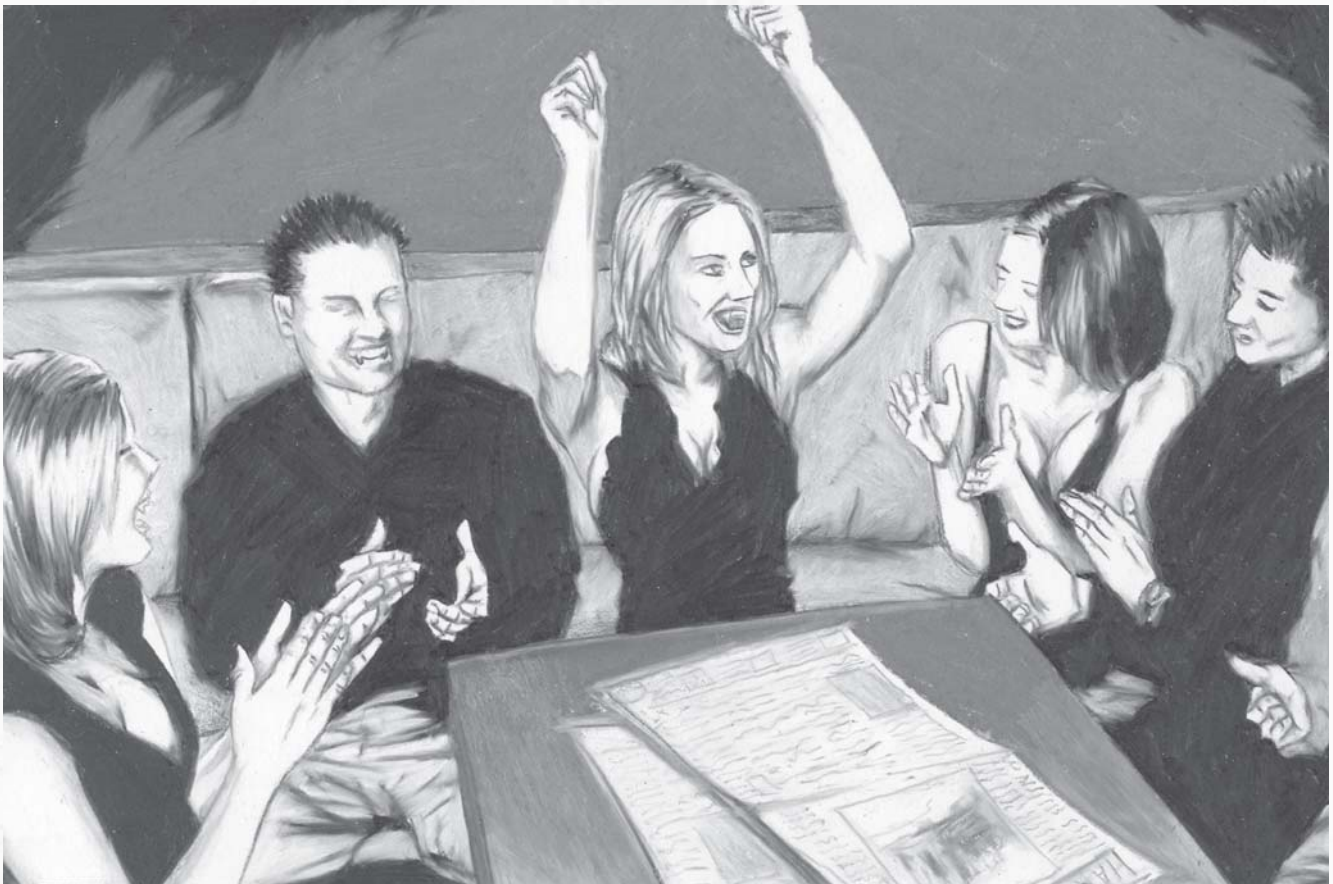
"Let me just repeat your statement before I respond, to make sure I've got it right. You're saying that the Carthian Movement can't possibly succeed, because we have no reliable definition of failure. Is that correct? I won't acknowledge that our communist experiment was a failure, just because we abandoned it in favor of the new communitarian one.

"All right. My answer to you is a two-parter. First, I want to point out that your statement is based on a faulty assumption. The Carthian Movement isn't lacking in a reliable definition for failure. In fact, we have a very clear picture of failure, and we compare ourselves to it every night, and always have. Failure, to us, is surrender. We look around at Elysium, whenever you let us in, and we see that failure all around us. Neonates who accept the crushing rule of their elders, voluntarily silencing their doubts in exchange for creature comforts. Ancillae who abandon all hope of distinguishing themselves in a world of traditional kowtowing, accepting the same-as-everyone thoughtlessness of their predecessors without protest and imposing it upon the neonates without qualm. Elders who are frozen in place by their fear of Final Death, mechanically repeating the same thoughts, words and deeds for decades at a time, setting an enduring example of banality as success, allowing the Kindred to model themselves in kind.

"Second, I'd like to say that, in light of the first part of my response, it must be clear to you that success isn't just possible for the Carthian Movement, it's constant. We are succeeding every night. We are succeeding when we question your system, and we are succeeding when we question ourselves, because we are not surrendering our beliefs and our hopes to your tradition. We are succeeding when we fight over which way to go next, because we are building and rebuilding our Movement, strengthening it with each step. We are succeeding when you kill us, every last one of us, because we won't adhere to your law, because we are inspiring those who will come to take up our courageous explorations. You're wrong, sir, and my willingness to stand here and dispute your claim, despite your status and position, despite your age and your power, is just one more success for the Carthian Movement to add to our list."

— Tess of Daeva, rising to the challenge of a member of the Ordo Dracul before the Elysium gathering of December 1, 2003, Toronto

As postmodern deliberation impacts with the Movement's scientific (and natural philosophic) roots, many of the Carthians in recent nights have experienced an undermining of purpose. In a world where intellectual debate over one's reasons for revolution becomes as important (or valid) as revolution itself, the active expression





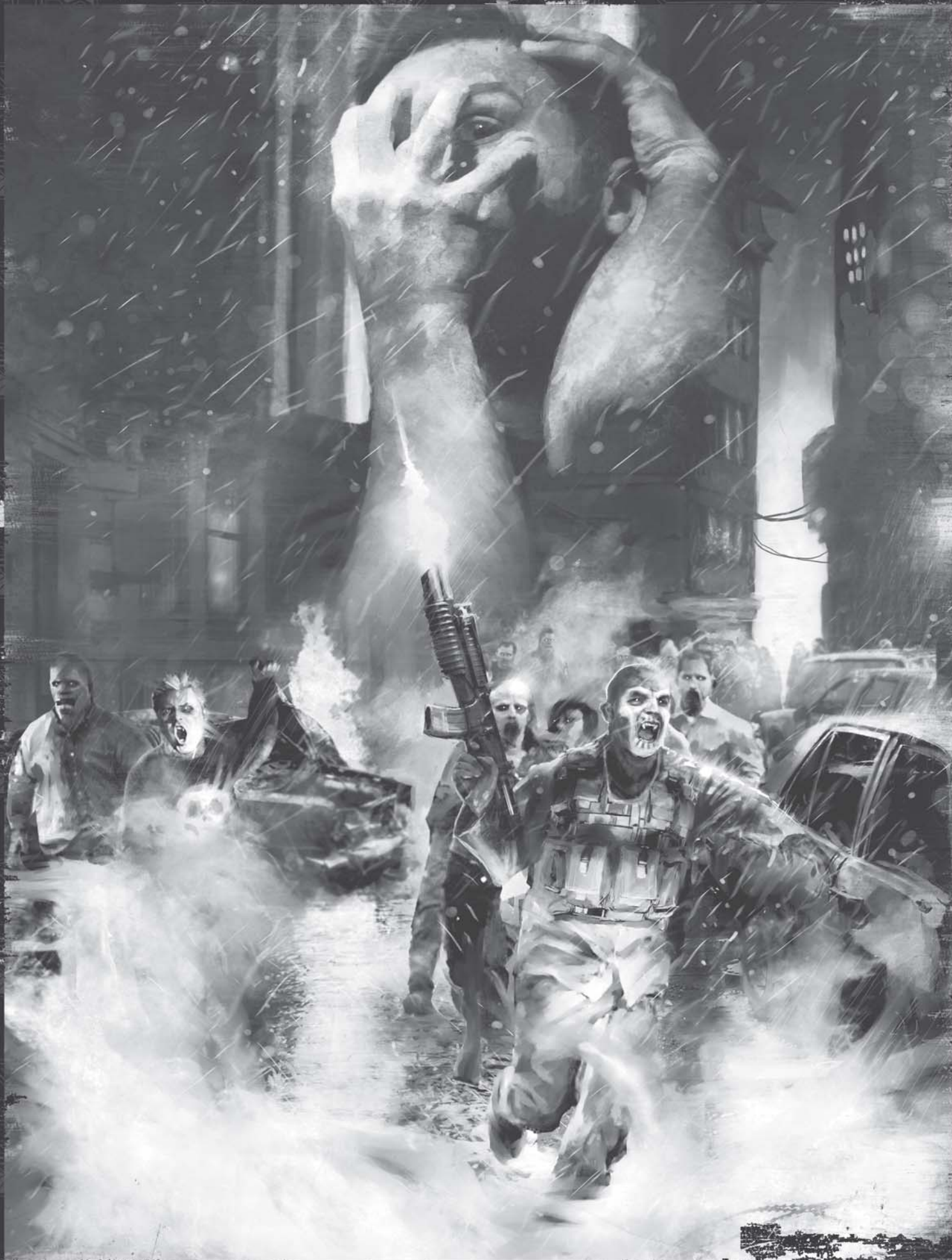
of the Movement is threatened, in some domains, with drowning in the increasingly self-involved arguments of its members.

Carthians in many domains have adopted new criteria for self-evaluation in response to the new problems they are experiencing. Remaining true to the roots of the Movement and referring to their activities as “experiments,” they set up definite, time-sensitive, binary standards for their achievements, laying out statements of intent and logging results. These groups may seem stolid and unforgiving to their younger members, but the groups do tend to see themselves in clearer terms.

There are those who believe that the hard work of the Carthian Movement is complete. The foundations of experiment are laid; the covenant has, in many places, earned the right to explore and refine its goals, in some, even the right to rule. Many groups have agreed on

a basic set of internal tenets, dictating the direction of the Movement and the standards of evolution the Movement applies to itself. All that remains is to function unhindered, growing and changing at a steady pace until the hopes of its members are achieved.

Others, though, presume that the Movement is only now entering its true (and potentially final) test of survival. Now, more than ever, they say, the experiment must be subject to unplanned alterations and the influx of radical new thought. Facing the danger of stagnation, the Carthians must hold true to their dedicated quest for innovation and persevering defiance of the calcified notions of vampire history. Now that the foundations are laid and the doors thrown open, the Carthians finally have the chance to prove themselves. The covenant will stand or fall on the persistent explorations of its members, new and old.



CHAPTER TWO: UNLIFE IN THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT

Is this your first meeting, kid?
Take my advice: sit in the back.
That way they won't see you
get up and leave
when all their rhetoric starts to drive you crazy.

—Mickey Spit, Carthian cadre leader

Government is an evil;

it is only the thoughtlessness and vices of men that make it a necessary evil.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Carthians offer unity and brotherhood, which isn't glamorous when you compare them to the triumphalism, ritual or arcane power of other groups. Nevertheless, they're a major covenant, so clearly the Movement is meeting needs for a lot of vampires.

The question outsiders ask is whether that's all there is to the Carthians, or is there some massive dire secret behind them? From the outside, the Movement doesn't seem like it could possibly accomplish anything (especially for Kindred who aren't accustomed to the modern mindset). The Carthians govern cities, though, maintain the Traditions and do at least as good a job of it as the typical collection of undead. Patently, there's something at work. But what? Magic? Some powerful secret agenda? Or does it all come down to organizational skills?

The Carthians contradict themselves and aren't even embarrassed. They claim to support collectivism and the individual, and they say the Movement is a unified whole that accepts broadly divergent points of view. Philosophically, the Movement is the most diverse covenant. At the same time, Carthian principles, be they ever so vaguely stated, seem to call members together in a way that seems, sometimes, stronger than religious impulse, mysticism or even self-interest.

CARTHIAN UNITY

Carthian unity is real, no matter what sneering petty tyrants from other covenants say. Sure, the Carthians are no selfless band of brothers, all for one and one for all in the grand musketeer tradition — Kindred are instinctive loners with a lot to gain from secrecy and a "me first" attitude. If nothing else, though, the Carthians have some key traits in common beyond the name and a preference for Proletariat Chic fashion.

The following four core beliefs are common to the Carthians, because, without these values, you're just not in the Movement. There are some whose are passionately devoted, and there are some who

are mostly along for the ride, but at least part of the program appealed. Otherwise, why not just screw it all and declare yourself unbound? (Admittedly, some domains have Carthian presences big and aggressive enough to take a "join or die" stance, but, for our purposes, we'll consider voluntary membership.)

Philosophical accord is fine. Most Carthians, however, are in the Movement because it functions. The more it works for them, the more they believe in it. The more they believe in it, of course, the better it works.

ONE: TOLERANCE, WITHIN REASON

One idea the Carthians support is the notion of an environment in which a broad coalition of ideologies can move, interact, exchange concepts, challenge one another without animosity and thereby become stronger.

Some Carthians believe in the God of the Lancea Sanctum. Some Carthians are aggressive atheists. Some Carthians are agnostic to the point of arguing that even if God exists, He's irrelevant to the Requiem. Some Carthians claim that Kindred were mistakenly animated from dust by God's tears as He wept for the fall of humanity, and that they can only escape their merited destruction by consuming the blood of his favored children, which he is (in their version of things) loath to spill.

If religion was the determining factor for every action taken by all those disparate vampires, they'd never agree on anything. But since they're all Carthians, clearly their relationship to the Lord isn't their fundamental motivator. This unity bypasses more than religious difference. Carthian Democrats who think a social safety net provides a more complacent herd class work beside Carthian Republicans, who think welfare leads to economic stagnation, the growth of the criminal underclass and, ultimately, more jobless jerks with shotguns and the free time to investigate their cousins' mysterious disappearance.

Despite disagreements, Carthians put up with one another. They're willing to admit that, while they

think others are wrong, others may think they're wrong. That's no reason they can't set their differences aside when it's time to deal with a haunted Elysium, or an incursion of mortal refugees who are unpleasantly well-informed about Kindred or a Belial's Brood coterie popping up from nowhere.

Working well together on big things leads to cooperation on smaller things, such as the one breather cop who's distressingly resistant to corruption, or a threat to a favorite Rack, or a neonate who doesn't know how to keep his fangs shut or just property taxes that are going insane, and dammit, *I'm* not paying to put any kids through school.

That's the Movement in a nutshell. Theoretically, the Carthians' factional disagreements should yield resentment, spite and murderous hatred. In practice, most Carthians would rather get along than fight about matters of personal choice. At least, they'd rather get along with other Carthians.

TWO: COLLECTIVE ACTION

One powerful impetus for getting along is that Carthians are fans of collective action. Even something as personal as feeding is easier when you've got a couple of coterie-mates at your back keeping your meat from reaching the rear exit and guarding the door from prying mortal eyes.

A common Carthian precept is "The fear of showing weakness is, itself, a debilitating weakness." In the Movement, you can admit to screwups and problems without shame (or, in any event, less shame). Carthians accept as a given fact that the Kindred condition is miserable. Calling it a curse dresses it up, but torpor and sun scorching and incessant evil urges and needing blood, blood, blood is *miserable*.

Being a vampire is a problem, a huge problem. It's a problem too big for one scared and ignorant person to handle, particularly one who's just starting out. The Movement is there to ensure its members don't have to face being a vampire alone.

There's a price for all this togetherness and mutual aid, and it's paid when you're no longer that weak fledgling and everyone starts coming to *you* for a sympathetic ear and, say, maybe a loan until he comes into some money and some help scrubbing cordite burns off the Honda's upholstery. But, by that point, most Carthians are used to getting tapped for unexpected deliverance. Some don't know any other kind of Requiem. For a few who really get it — often converts from more self-oriented covenants — looking out for another person, even an undead one, gives a kind of

meaning to their existence that no degree of power, or security or occult knowledge can accomplish.

That said, the collectivism of the Movement also has a lot to offer those who seek only power, security and knowledge. Existential rewards aren't universal, they're rare — and only an option for those motivated to seek them.

LAZINESS

The Carthians don't have a lock on ambitious, motivated go-getters, and no other covenant has a monopoly on laziness. There are lazy Carthians who go along, get along, do the minimum and phone in their commitments to the cause. They're disliked and regarded with contempt, but as long as they make a token effort, they're grudgingly tolerated. Now and then, East Coast coterie that feel particularly put out by laziness might stack up bricks in front of (or completely obscuring) the entry to the slacker's haven. The more grievous they feel, the more bricks (or bigger things, such as boulders or motorcycle engines or whatever they can get away with under the Masquerade) they stack. A playful, mocking warning is a small pile of bricks, maybe spray-painted gold and plopped down in the middle of the night. A genuinely pissed coterie makes sure to put down a heavy load while the lazy SOB is out, ideally near enough to sunrise to make him worry while moving them.

Carthians who never help anyone may well find themselves blackballed from the covenant, and when the Carthians eject you, it's not quiet. A tradition that started in Louisiana is to literally drum out the offender. The local Prefect and all the Carthians who lobbied for ostracism show up at Elysium with percussion instruments, one apiece. They make an appalling racket entering, process to the offending party and then drop their instruments at his feet. "This is your mess," the Prefect says (or words to that effect). "If you can't get anyone to help you clean it, we're done with you. You can't be part of the Movement by standing still."

Carthians who think the guy should be allowed to stay are each permitted to pick up one instrument and carry it out. The guy on public trial at Elysium can carry one as well. If he can scrape together enough Carthians, he can stay in the covenant. If not, it's tough shit for lazybones.

THREE: INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

While duty to the Movement is job one (at least, the other Carthians think duty should be job one), once that's discharged the Movement takes a hands-off attitude. Carthians don't let members trounce the Traditions on a whim, but other than that, they don't much care about any individual interests, obsessions and crusades its members pursue. There are Carthians who study occult texts, sites and incidents as fanatically as anyone in the Ordo

Dracul. There are Carthians who pursue penitence and scripture with fervor one of the Sanctified would envy, if envy wasn't a sin. Because the Carthians as a whole are aggressively secular, individual Carthian mystics can follow their beliefs without worrying about cleaving to some contrary covenant-wide party line.

For Kindred saddled with Predator's Taint and prey-hunter ratios to encourage a lone-wolf approach, pursuing solitary studies or ceremonies may actually be more comfortable. Even a vampire who strongly backed the Circle's beliefs might join the Movement instead because she prefers the Carthian approach, or because she just doesn't want to share, explain or compromise her personal understanding of the myth of Xquic's pregnancy and her relationship to the rulers of Xibalba.

It's not all a bed of roses for such iconoclast individualists. A lone religious mystic doesn't have to worry about being punished for heresy, but she doesn't get the spiritual support of a prayerful community, either, or can go consult libraries amassed over centuries by undead theologians. If she's willing to make that bargain, she can join the Carthians and know there are other vampires who will help her make rent, manage a herd and keep the police at bay. All the Carthians ask in return is that she perform the same kind of secular services now and again.

The great thing about the Carthians is that they don't give a damn about anything but paying your dues. Of course, the unavoidable drawback to the Carthians is also that they don't give a damn about anything but paying your dues.

While the role of individual rights is clearest in the case of those with individual obsessions, individual rights plays a role for Kindred who are less focused on specific, esoteric goals such as enlightenment or Golconda or claiming praxis. Citizen Kindred with a more night-to-night focus on getting by, being comfortable and attaining security grasp, pretty quickly, that every covenant asks you to jump through some hoops. The Carthians aren't a free ride. But often, the price they ask ("help a brother out when he's low") seems a lot more palatable and simple than covenants that promise far more, but demand humiliation, servitude or spiritual pollution in exchange.

FOUR: THE DUTY TO BE A COMPLETE BEING

Along with a sober recognition of Kindred limits and a healthy appreciation for cooperation, the Carthian philosophy holds deeper levels. Even as its tolerance for diversity makes the Movement a haven for comfortable

Kindred who just want to keep their heads down and stay out of trouble, there's a contradictory urge for members to find a passion and pursue it. In Carthian lingo, this is called "mission" and "position."

POSITION

The Carthian Movement gives its members tremendous latitude of belief. The reason the Movement hasn't been weighed down by inertia is its expectation that members act on their beliefs. That core belief is termed a "position" — some attitude or philosophy the individual not only likes or approves of, but which she thinks is important enough to merit the full attention of her Requiem.

Position is important because it makes Carthianism more than a social club or a clearinghouse for skills and favors. Position makes Kindred into something more than short-sighted bundles of vicious hungers. It provides a purpose, goals beyond slaking the Beast, and therefore keeps the Man ascendant.

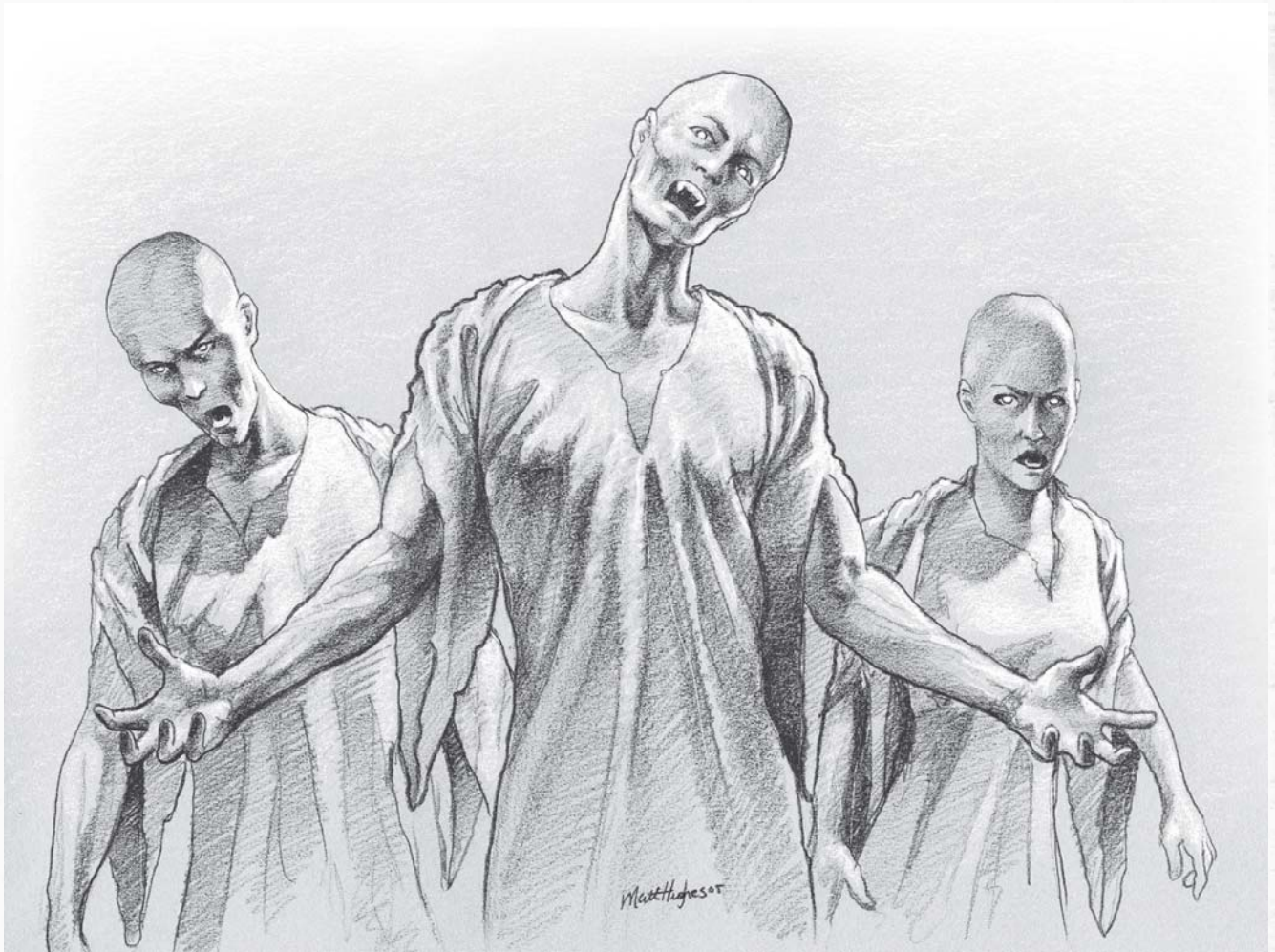
It is important to understand that taking a position is not seen as just a sort of hobby therapy that helps vampires keep their heads together. Remaining a human and not a monster is an important by-product of the process, indeed a necessary one, but unless your position means enough to you that you'd tend to it even at cost, it's not going to work. Unless you're genuinely committed to your cause, you're going to degenerate anyhow, eventually.

This doesn't stop certain desperate vampires from pursuing a cause without real belief, simply because they've got nothing better (or because a cause that could truly inspire them is too difficult or dangerous to pursue). In some cases, they even develop a real care for what began as a pose. More often, they burn out.

Providing existential nourishment is hardly unique to the Carthians. Indeed, every covenant provides positions, ranging from "serve the will of God through perfect monstrosity" through "transcend the shackles of your condition through perfect egoism." The Carthian difference is that you get to pick the reason to your Requiem, instead of accepting one handed down by the ancient authorities.

As with so many Carthian advantages, this is double edged. You get to do it yourself, but you don't get to stand on the shoulders of giants while you do. Instead, you stand side by side with those Carthians who believe as you do. Or, if you can't find any, Carthians who are willing to help you just because you're in the Movement.

Positions can be lone beliefs, but far more often they're held in common with other Carthians. The



Movement contains many “position coterie,” which function much like activist groups, or revolutionary cells. Some beliefs are popular enough to encompass several coterie within a city, or several Carthian groups within connected cities or (if a position is broad and strong enough, like “Kindred should be governed democratically”) multiple cities on a continent.

The Night Doctors

Secretive even by Kindred standards, the Night Doctors began as a small Michigan faction but have spread erratically through the United States and beyond. Much as the Ku Klux Klan, when operating before others the Night Doctors conceal their identities, wearing full surgical gear with masks and referring to each other by the title “doctor” and an initial. **Position:** Understanding the physiology of the Kindred is the key to alleviating the burdens of the condition without recourse to other occult energies, which inevitably come with their own complications.

The Final Civilization

Outlawed in several cities, dominant in none, hidden wherever its coterie exist, the Final Citi-

zens have charted a course so radical that it merges with or surpasses some of the tenets of conservative vampires in all factions. **Position:** It is feasible to destroy the Masquerade and rule humankind openly, if proper precautions are taken.

Humanism

More an ideal or a philosophy than an organized faction, Humanists seek closer ties to the living in order to preserve the values of personal humanity. Some Humanists (mostly neonates) are simply in denial of their nature, but others understand the Beast and still seek to mitigate its needs and urges by dressing similar to, behaving as and communicating with ordinary mortal people. Instead of denying their condition, they defy it. **Position:** It is possible and desirable to maintain human relationships after the Embrace without violating the Masquerade.

The Conscionauts

Possibly a splinter off the Night Doctors, the Conscionauts focus on the mental aspects of the vampire curse, rather than the physical. Neither as secretive nor as feared as the Night Doctors, the

Conscionauts move openly within Kindred society, propagating their ideas and exchanging their theories and data with other Carthians and even open-minded researchers from other covenants. **Position:** The key to the mysteries of the Kindred state are in the mind, not the body. While the power of the Disciplines blurs the line between mind and matter, mind is clearly dominant and directive. Furthermore, old psychiatric modalities do not apply to the Beast/Man consciousness of the Kindred. New studies are needed.

Radical Collective Coteries

There is no one uniform for such coteries, but members of an RCC (as they're called in brief) typically dress alike, based on the style of their Requiem. Some RCCs have members garbed in hip-hop fashion. Others adopt corporate couture because they're operating in a corporate climate. Some can be found in the nondescript clothing of manual laborers, because that's just what they are. RCCs often hold supplemental positions, as Radical Collectivism is more of an organizing principle than a political or religious dogma. Radical Collectivism still grows out of a core of belief, however. **Position:** Kindred function most rationally with forethought and collective checks and balances. This is as true for personal goals as with more typical group goals. It's well worth sacrificing some privacy and personal autonomy for psychological and physical support when the unique challenges of being undead arise.

Hives

The most extreme expression of RCC philosophy, Hive coteries don't dress similarly, but identically. They don't work together, they fuse their consciousness as much as they're able, through Auspex, Telepathy, Vinculum, Dominate and plain old psychological conditioning. Hive coteries are rare, but when they enter Elysium in casual lock-step and make unrehearsed comments in perfect unison, they're hard to ignore. **Position:** Adding one Beast to another does not strengthen the Beast. Adding one human mind to another permits the minds to cooperate. Therefore, assimilation suppresses undesirable impulses.

Zen Carthianism

The most serious proponents of Zen Carthianism shave their heads, and wear white or saffron robes, adopting the appearance of Buddhist monks. Less devoted members may just stick to simple and unassuming garb (probably from Old Navy) with maybe an OM pendant. Some Zen Carthians espouse other Buddhist positions, though in this position's case pacifism tends to boil down to limiting the damage

the adherents do. Other Zen Carthians more closely resemble the Zen samurai of Japanese history, who pursued mental focus only as a means to ensure loyalty and efficiency. **Position:** Meditation for self-control is an essential tool in the struggle to make one's Requiem tenable.

MISSION

Having a deeply felt faith is a great first step, but it's only the first step. Carthians have very little patience for those who develop elaborate theories and then sit on their asses, even if they're sitting around elaborately discussing the theories they're developing. Position is what you believe and that's important. But it's hollow without mission. Mission is what you do.

Every meaningful position implies concrete action. If your beliefs don't prompt you to act, they're either an empty pose or they're irrelevant to anyone but you so who gives a fuck? Shut up already and make yourself useful!

This doesn't always mean firebombing Elysium (though it can, and has). Most often, 'action' takes the form of proselytizing. Furthermore, there's a tendency within the Movement to judge by effort as much as by results. The guy who spends a decade writing out his 400-page manifesto is accorded respect for being a serious thinker who made a statement, even if no one reads his book. Conversely, the Carthian gal who adapts superbly to a crisis and winds up Sheriff after a long and deadly weekend gets credit, too, even if she never set out to gain authority. The highest esteem, however, redounds on those who make a play, pursue it and achieve their goals. That's the ideal of everyone who states a mission.

The Night Doctors

Meeting in hospitals and med school classrooms, referring to one another by monikers such as "Dr. F" and "Dr. N," the Night Doctors contain a high percentage of actual MDs. Other members are Embraced nurses, physical therapists and biologists. A meaningful percentage of Night Doctors had no medical training as mortals, but commenced studies during their Requiem. **Mission:** Unlock the secrets of Kindred biology (which some Night Doctor cells refer to as "thanatology" or even "demi-thanatology" to differentiate between studies on the living) through experiments with Vitae, Kindred, ghouls and, occasionally, mortals as well. Some Night Doctor coteries maintain mortal medical ethics, which forbid experimentation without informed consent from the test subject. For most

coterie, however, the value of the knowledge outweighs the importance of one Requiem. Particularly if it's the Requiem of someone from a rival covenant.

The Final Civilization

Resembling nothing so much as Fascist survivalists, Final Citizens break Kindred tradition by often developing retreats away from cities and stockpiling weapons and valuables there in preparation for the upheaval by which they intend to overthrow humanity. Connected through couriers, the Internet and anonymous pamphlets, the Final Citizens constantly discuss and investigate methods of controlling large numbers of humans — what the Final Citizens refer to as “überherds.” **Mission:** Run feasibility studies on how many ghouls a single Kindred can support. Research methods of using social control Disciplines over broadcast media. Prepare for conflict. Study the effect of radiation on Kindred and the effects of feeding from irradiated vessels. Acquire nuclear weapons.

Humanism

Humanists tend to remain on the fringes of the Danse Macabre, as their interest is in the living, not the dead. While Humanists can maintain contact with beloved mortals for some time — possibly years or even decades, if the mortals are gullible or mentally impaired — most Humanists are ultimately doomed to out-age parents, then former spouses and siblings, then children. Unless the Kindred are eliminated early by sun, stake or starvation. Or unless those precious mortals are discovered by vampire rivals. **Mission:** Walk the walk by retaining contact with living relatives, friends and loved ones. Develop strategies for preserving the Masquerade during said contact. Prepare containment plans in case of unexpected information leakage. Build psychological bulwarks against frenzy. Create an infrastructure of fellow Humanist Kindred to maintain the ruse.

The Conscionauts

Unlike the Night Doctors, from whom the Conscionauts (possibly) sprang, the Conscionauts can identify themselves openly and perform their experiments with far fewer terminal results (though, you know, shit happens). Many Conscionauts do resemble their possible progenitors in their cavalier attitude toward ethics, especially as regards the question of unwilling or unknowing test subjects. (Indeed, if the Beast truly is the separate entity it sometimes seems, there can be no question of obtaining its consent for experiments.) Many Conscionauts were psychologists or psychologists in life, and retain a penchant for short facial hair and comforting fuzzy sweaters. Just as many

were in therapy or in recovery programs. Telling the former doctors and former patients apart can be very difficult — indeed, there are some Conscionauts who've been both. **Mission:** Perform psychiatric experiments to model and predict the behavior of the Beast, as well as tests on the limitations and therapeutic potential of mind-altering Disciplines such as Dominate, Nightmare and Majesty.

Radical Collective Coterie

RCCs typically maintain a joint haven, called a ‘hub,’ where they plan out feeding operations and any additional missions arising from other beliefs. A communist RCC, for example, might invite proletarians to their hub, so that the coterie can raise the proletarians’ consciousness (subtly at first, but more intensely later — probably with Disciplines). A Christian RCC would behave more like a monastery, possibly with a priest hearing confession and leading periodic prayers. All types of RCCs tend toward highly scheduled and disciplined Requiems, the better to keep the Beast under control and the better to allow the members to help one another keep it leashed. With almost no exceptions, feeding is forbidden at the hub. Some RCCs maintain a separate feeding/disposal site, typically far from the hub. You don't eat where you sleep, after all. **Mission:** Help your coterie-mates. Develop increasingly secure feed methods. Bare your souls frequently in order to foster trust. Keep an eye on the others for signs of frenzy. Try to stay out of frenzy-inducing situations, with their help.

Hives

Some Hives maintain a hub, while others use a series of individual havens, usually ones in close proximity. The theory is that if a single component (they call themselves “components” or “hivers” — “drone” is insulting to most English-speaking Hives) is attacked, the others can come to the rescue from a position of strength, instead of being compromised simultaneously. If it's an attack about which they can do nothing, on the other hand, they're not stuck at ground zero. Hives without telepathy most commonly behave like RCCs, but once the link is established the components can move individually without disconnect. (Some try and make do with hands-free radios or cell phones.) Their goals are the same as any Kindred — feed, be safe, possibly advance a power agenda — but all moves are made without personal ambition or weakness, and they're always perfectly coordinated. **Mission:** Maintain the Hive Vinculum. Suppress individuality. Reach concord on all matters. Study the other components and collectively agree on which personality traits

should become dominant for all components. Suppress your own non-dominant personality elements. Develop the telepathy needed for true communion. Once that's done, feed and protect the vampire who maintains the link.

Zen Carthianism

Most people consider meditation a private and personal matter, and that's exactly how they pursue it. Zen Carthians tend to pursue mass meditation, usually as early in the evening as they can schedule it. To this end, they maintain their own community meditation chambers, often in plain sight and with no disguise. (That is, they don't disguise that it's a zen meditation center or *zendo*. They disguise their natures just as all Kindred.) They strictly forbid feeding near the center and uphold the Masquerade there with far greater strictness than usual, often going so far as to chase away Kindred who don't meditate. Mortals who want to come and seek enlightenment are permitted in, but they rarely last long: trying to seek inner peace in a room full of vampires is damn near impossible, even for people who don't consciously recognize the killers surrounding them. **Mission:** Maintain and protect the center. Meditate nightly. Increase the skill and intensity of one's focus.

HYBRID POSITIONS

Dog breeders notice that purebreds tend to be highly strung and less intelligent. Carthians believe this applies to philosophies as well. They seek the strength of alloys, the resilience of mutts and mongrels and the unexpected synergies that strange combinations provide.

No one ever said positions were one to a customer. The most common ideological marriages are between beliefs of behavior (such as the Radical Collective notion that Kindred are more trustworthy when they're all threads in a mutual psych safety net) and beliefs of philosophy (such as anarchy, fascism, democracy or less reputable notions such as pursuing the Final Civilization). There are communist Hives and Zen Conscionaut coteries, sharing the Movement with nihilist Kindred who operate in a strictly regulated free-market barter economy. They mix and match, not because they're flighty, but because creatures with eternity on their hands and no grocery bills have a lot of time in which to really contemplate the issues that inspire them. Humans being what they are, these issues are often diverse, even contradictory. In the attempts to reconcile them or find commonalities, prodigies can emerge.

For example, there's a book that circulates among the Carthians. It's entitled *A Practical Guide to Rustling*. It's short, about 70 pages, no author listed; it explains the practice and theory of stealing mortal vessels (typically blood dolls but also members of Osiris cults) from other Kindred.

What's interesting about the *Practical Guide* is not just its contents, but its origins. Back in the late 1950s, a Conscionaut performed a psych survey of blood dolls (or "Vitae Annies" as they were known back then). He wrote up a paper entitled "The Willing Swoon: A Survey of the Sanguine Submissive Personality." Kindred read it and were interested, and many extrapolated its conclusions into a set of guidelines for finding blood dolls or identifying people predisposed to become blood dolls. Those notions circulated by word of mouth until they reached the ear of a communist Kindred-supremacist Carthian in the early 1970s.

This woman, the author of the *Practical Guide*, regarded human beings as the means of production (a departure from the then-mainstream communist Kindred, who identified mortals with the proletariat and themselves, typically, as the left-wing intelligentsia swooping in to free them). Stealing herd from other Kindred was, in her view, a radical act of wealth redistribution.

Certainly, she might have tried to rustle herd without the insights of *The Willing Swoon*, but it's doubtful that she would have been as successful, or would have created so thorough a step-by-step primer for those who would duplicate her act.

PRACTICAL RUSTLING

All Carthians in good standing can purchase the Herd Merit at half the normal experience point cost. This presumes that they're calling on the covenant's connections, experience and community spirit for help in building a herd up from nothing (or, perhaps, that they're repurposing herd members discarded by Carthians who have tired of them).

If a player wishes to spend the full experience point cost for the Herd Merit, she may do so and increase her character's Herd at the expense of some other vampire. Instead of building her collection of donors from scratch, the character is simply taking over mortals who have already been brought into a herd by someone else. If the other character's herd is a cult, they convert. If they were obeying from fear, they now fear her more than their former master. If they were in it for kinky sex, she's sexier and kinkier.

Storytellers should note that the story process of acquiring these blood dolls is rich fodder. A simple statement from the player that he's robbing

and spending the points wastes a lot of possibility for interesting and meaningful interaction, especially since the Kindred who's been robbed is going to notice. Rustling, even if it's legal in a given domain, is a grievous insult and tantamount to a declaration of war. Fortunately for the Carthian, if handled right, the war starts with one side holding more ammunition.

As well, this should never rob another player's character of points the player legitimately spent on Herd. The intent with rustling is to show how in tune Carthians are with the mortal world, not screw another player out of his rightful earnings.

CARTHIAN DIVERSITY

As is already clear, Carthians are a diverse bunch. Containing their variety of opinions in one structure is a challenge, one common to all covenants but uniquely acute for the Carthians. Suffering from more pronounced symptoms, they need stronger medicine to keep their community healthy. The nature of the steps they should take is, of course, a subject of much debate.

Tensions exist in the covenant, along a thousand factional and personal lines. But most of those tensions are diffused by the general structure of camaraderie. Even if feelings of brotherhood aren't sincerely felt, they're frequently invoked and expressed. More importantly, perhaps, there are exterior threats that keep the Movement unified. In most domains, this takes the form of other covenants, but dominant Carthians have to pull together against nosy cops, crusading reporters who know too much or politicians in the pocket of some other supernatural mystery. For that matter, Carthians often find that as soon as they finally pacify a domain and cement their grip on the Kindred demimonde, they bump into uppity sorcerers, territorial shapeshifters or cults of demon worshippers invested with diabolical powers. Soon, the Carthians are at loggerheads with an external enemy again, if they're lucky.

If they're not lucky, the Movement (so long defined by struggle) finds itself internally riven as factions divide against one another. Observers have opined that a good Carthian collective can retain integrity against any outside corrosive, but inevitably dissolves in a vacuum. The more cynical among them say Carthianism is predicated on conflict, and that when there isn't any, the Movement creates enemies within itself.

MODERNISM AND TRADITION

One tension lies between modernism and tradition. Most Carthians consider themselves thoroughly modern — not, perhaps, in the “iPod and titanium

golf club” sense, but ideologically. Carthians pride themselves on plucking the ripest fruits of political and philosophical thought, while other covenants content themselves with shriveled, flyblown windfalls that passed their peak before America was discovered. Let the fearful losers squabble over which religion's theocracy is supreme in history's garbage can: the Carthians are operating with democracy, or the republic, or fascism or something that can *adapt*.

On the other hand, they're vampires laboring under a curse of stagnation. Every fiber of their unnaturally animated beings cries out against change. This collision of motives results in some paradoxical Carthian elders who are fervently attached to ideas that were modern and innovative when they were Embraced — ideas such as Marxism, or strict Maoism. There are a few Carthians whose opinions about politics haven't much changed since the most important political machine was the guillotine. They even refer to “the month of Thermidor” when they're tired and not paying attention.

The dirty little secret that Carthians of greater status hold close is that tradition works. Having fixed ideas about how to settle disputes is a good idea. Letting people get used to a governing style, and changing it through evolution instead of revolution — it's solid policy. Otherwise, rivals for praxis are going to swoop in while the Carthians are off-balance from reinventing themselves once again.

The Movement is always on the lookout for new ideas. The Carthians who become leaders are those who realize there's a lot to be said for keeping the old ideas, too.

DEALING WITH NEMESSES

Vampires often hate one another. It just works out that way. The Movement rarely has any percentage in encouraging emotional conflicts between its members. Disagreements are fine, vigorous debate is encouraged, maybe even some heated exchanges. Hey, eternity's a long time, and anything energetic is entertainment to *someone*. The expectation, however, is that the disputants see beyond the conflict and accept that their larger brotherhood in the Movement is more important. Kindred being what they are, this expectation often goes unmet.

Some Carthian domains pursue a policy of reconciliation by force. Here's how this policy works: it's an informal process, but at least five Carthians need to be irked enough by the bickering pair that these annoyed Carthians propose this extreme solution to the Prefect. If the complainers' totaled dots in the Covenant Status (Carthians) Merit exceeds the sum of those



Merits held by the disputants, the Prefect probably considers reconciliation by force. Other Carthians may argue against it, effectively adding their Carthian Status Merits to those of the pair being considered. If the two enemies weigh in with greater Status, the Prefect probably doesn't want to antagonize them. (Story considerations can, and definitely *should*, provide temporary Status dots on either side of the equation. Characters who call in favors and lobby hard can definitely tilt this either way.)

If the Prefect decides to pursue reconciliation by force, both Carthians are arrested and starved until they enter Wassail. At that point, they're given a measured amount of blood (about three or four pints) and put in a locked room together with instructions to kick each other's asses.

Senior Carthians watch these cage matches, and not just out of bloodlusty voyeurism. The spectators are ready to intervene and pull the combatants apart before one kills the other. (Accidents happen, of course. Sometimes one fighter is so outclassed that he gets torn to pieces before the referees can arrive.)

The unspoken idea behind reconciliation by force is that there's a pretty good chance that when two hungry vampires fight, each tries to bite the other and steal Vitae. If that happens and the elders swoop in to pull them apart, the former enemies now have mild Vinculums to each other. Additionally, each has had a chance to express his anger physically and may either feel vindicated (if he won or can reasonably convince himself he would have) or cowed and unwilling to pursue the argument anymore (if he got whipped).

It doesn't work out perfectly every time, but even when one vampire outclasses the other, biting and draining makes the winner magnanimous in victory. If a Final Death occurs, it's unfortunate, but that's the risk you run. The silver lining is, there isn't a pair of bickering Carthians anymore.

COLLECTIVISM AND INDIVIDUALITY

The Movement's ability to contain many conflicting philosophies under an umbrella of solidarity and collective action is its greatest strength. This is not an unflagging strength, however.

Sometimes one Carthian wants to stay in her haven, working on her paintings or her manifesto or her efforts to corner the Hong Kong bauxite market online. Her coterie-mates, however — or even some Carthians with whom she's less connected — want her help decorating for Elysium or making a case before the Justiciar or helping them invest the proceeds from their train robbery in socially progressive stocks.

The solo Carthian thinks they should respect her individuality and leave her alone to do her thing. Obviously, the other vampires think she should feel

the collectivism and help them instead. According to the principles of the Movement, they're both right.

In some domains, there's a rigid hierarchy, and, when someone of higher rank tells you to do something, you salute and say "*Jawohl!*" If someone of lower or equal rank asks you for a favor, you can comply or tell him to beat it. While this is easy to figure out, it's also a fertile field for resentment, treachery and the ugliness you get when revenge and ambition are pulling in tandem. Smart commanders either make reasonable demands and cut slack, or they make sure they're invincible compared to the Kindred being abused.

A more serious problem for those domains is member attrition. After all, other covenants can offer that same kind of fealty structure, and they usually hold out additional benefits to make it more palatable. The Carthian stop-loss program is a system of redress in which the lowly can make complaints about their superiors and be judged fairly and impartially, without fear of punishment even if the court (or whatever) finds in their superior's favor. These systems ease the pressure of resentment, but at the cost of vastly multiplying the complexity of the Movement's local politics.

In democratic domains, or anarchist ones particularly, it's a lot less clear-cut. Except for a small minority of governing officers, most of whom have authority only over limited matters such as "Masquerade Breaches" or "Food Supply Control," members of the Movement are equal, free to accept or decline requests for aid as they see fit. At the same time, there's an expectation that everyone kicks in when and what she can.

To go back to our example of our loner who doesn't want to help: if there's no hierarchy in her domain, the outcome of her refusal depends on her history and the history of the people who want her aid. The rejected group may grumble, but if she's known as a solid citizen who has already done plenty for the Movement, it probably reflects badly on the whiners. On the other hand, if she turned down a local hero and has made a habit of declining requests, she may have just dealt her own reputation a black eye.

It's not always articulated (though, in some domains, it's meticulously articulated) but less is expected from those who ask little, while those who receive much are expected to sacrifice much. When the reckoning of debts is left vague, everyone always has a different idea of who owes how much. When it's concrete and tallied, there are always dissensions about how much a given task meant. Naturally, the people keeping the records are always everyone's best friend.

ACTION AND STASIS

One of the most perilous tensions within the Movement is between incremental progressives and activists who want change *now*, not after a decade of negotiating. Found most often in domains where the Carthians aren't in charge, activists demonize the Prince or Bishop or other dominant power structure, and they agitate for immediate overthrow, by any means necessary. Usually, they mean violence.

Working against activists, who are focused on what they can gain, are the conservative Carthian progressives. Often more experienced and influential, they're focused on what they have. Progressives hesitate to knock off the king until they know exactly who is going to inherit the throne. Where the activists are constantly looking outward for an ally against the powers that be, progressives focus their attention inward on their covenant-mates. Progressives are the ideological police, refining their theories and policies so that when they *do* take over, there's a smooth transition of power and a set of governing theories that can hit the ground running.

The revolutionary front is always bringing in more and more Kindred from the fringe, operating on the theory that mutual enemies make them friends. They do this out of fervor for change and belief that there's strength in numbers. Petty ideological disagreements can be ironed out at leisure, they say. The camaraderie of the barricades is supposed to form personal bonds that will lubricate compromise once the power has been seized from the oppressors.

Progressives, on the other hand, are always marginalizing those who don't follow the majority beliefs, striving for strength through ideological unity. They are just as fervent about change as the activists, but progressives are more aware of the pitfalls. They're pretty sure they have one good chance and if they bungle it — or get betrayed mid-stream by some poorly-chosen ally — then decades of effort get wasted. Instead of a mass, violent uprising of the type the activists favor, progressives pursue small, additive changes that build up over time. It's not just fastidiousness about the mess of a genuine insurgency: Because they're unwilling to buddy up with anyone who hates the Prince, they're less muscular and have little choice but to run a marathon instead of a sprint. Though, it must be said, aging Carthians tend to favor the long, subtle view even when a turbulent overthrow is tactically feasible. This is because they get to be old by being Kindred first, Carthians second. Most old Kindred got old because they respect the

Masquerade and know that any time things turn chaotic, the Masquerade trembles.

Revolution cannot be sustained forever, even by deathless creatures. In some domains, the Carthians actually succeed and seize power. There's no one blueprint for revolt, and no common outcome, but one universal element is that success doesn't make the tensions release.

EXAMPLE: COLOMBIA

A Carthian praxis-grab in Colombia was, to the surprise of anyone who knows Colombian history, shockingly peaceful. The city's progressive faction rallied the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle behind them against the ruling Ordo Dracul by masterfully encouraging occult one-upmanship among all three covenants. This would seem to be atypical progressive behavior, since Carthians usually don't want to share power with anyone other than fellow Carthians — and Carthians of their particular ideological slant, at that. While these progressives pacified their own revolutionary branch by allying with other covenants, and comforted the Circle and the Lancea Sanctum by holding no competing beliefs, the hammer fell once the Carthians had achieved power.

Provoking a conflict with the uneasily united religions against the Dragons, the Carthians then mediated a peaceful settlement, since none of the factions were really committed to a spate of Final Deaths. Nobody from the other three really *wanted* a Carthian Prince, but it was a far more acceptable compromise than anything else. They all believed that a ruling council, maintained with Carthian oversight, would give them a voice. This was particularly true of the Sanctified and the Acolytes, who had assurances from their more radical Carthian allies. The progressives didn't take long to marginalize and then completely purge those radicals from real power, however, and with them gone, the influence wielded by the Sanctified and the Acolytes waned rapidly. The ruling council made concessions to the Order, who were angry at losing most of their authority but, philosophically, reconciled themselves to the new order to keep as much power as they could. Many within the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone found themselves elevated (to their own surprise as much as anyone else's) by the new leadership. These were, of course, Kindred whose interests were primarily spiritual. By giving a little power to the un-ambitious, the Carthians could argue that the Circle and the Lancea Sanctum *had* benefited from the change.

After all, they had freedom to worship now, as long as they didn't bother themselves with governance.

When the dust settled, the Circle of the Crone and the Lancea Sanctum were marginally better off than they had been, though not nearly as well off as they'd expected. The Dragons had fallen the furthest, but they actually wound up backing the Carthians, who were certain to tolerate the Dragons much more than anyone else. As for the radical Carthian revolutionaries, they just had to scratch their heads and wonder why nights after the revolt seemed so much like the nights before.

EXAMPLE: TENNESSEE

A city in Tennessee had a very different experience from the slow but thorough Carthian digestion in Colombia. There, the rival covenant cast in the role of "the Man" was that old Carthian nemesis, the Invictus. Furthermore, the local Invictus tyrant was so firm in his grip of the city that no other covenants were *tolerated*. This put the Carthians in the position of being a genuine outlaw insurrection, and one with no mystically inclined allies, either.

The Carthian Movement (or, as it was known in that city, the Carthian Revolution) took a risk that paid off. They went traveling. They risked daylight and uncertainty to recruit unbound and dissatisfied Carthians from all over the state, and a few from Georgia and Alabama, too. Promising freedom, authority and other rewards for loyalty, these Carthians brought their recruits home and began a program of guerilla warfare — burning havens, murdering ghouls and running vessels out of town.

Against a violent and well-organized opposition, the Invictus finally agreed to deal. At that point, the local progressives (who were, oddly enough, believers in the Final Civilization) nearly hijacked the Movement. They haggled and bargained with the Invictus, and peace might have descended. The Invictus would have retained praxis, but with Carthians tolerated and warily respected.

The revolutionaries weren't willing to settle for half a loaf, however. They broke the progressive-negotiated truce, the Invictus' reprisals were brutal and the violence escalated. Both sides were losing members to Final Death, herds were being decimated and the Carthians were raising hell in entire sections of town, just because those areas were known Racks for prominent Invictus soldiers.

Eventually, one powerful Invictus coterie just got fed up and left — moved all the way to Jacksonville,

if the rumors are true. After that, parts of the First Estate defected, or fled or simply surrendered, and the Carthians became the sole covenant in town.

Since that time, the Kindred population has steadily shrunk as the ruling revolutionaries try, and fail, to rein in the violence of their subjects. In their attempts to stifle the bloodlust, they've become more repressive than the Invictus ever was. To be fair, however, the outlook for advancement is much more open under the Carthians. At least, it is for those who are unflinchingly loyal to the government, no matter what atrocities it now commits in the name of order.

EXAMPLE: ONTARIO

A city in Ontario experienced a Carthian power-grab in the late 1980s, with an outcome that absolutely no one in the city would have predicted. The beginning situation was that a Circle-dominated city faced opposition from the Carthians and the Invictus. The two secular covenants quickly made common cause against the Acolytes, hoping that a slight advantage in their combined numbers would offset the disturbing powers of Crúac.

Had it been a straightforward assault, one night of mayhem in which the combined resources of the Invictus and the Movement were flung into overwhelming the Acolytes in their dens, it's quite possible that the Circle would have been massacred and that whichever covenant had the misfortune to bear the brunt of any counterstrike would have been next on the chopping block. But that scenario was grim enough to scare both covenants off from such direct action. Even the most zealous Carthian revolutionary knows better than to show weakness to the Invictus, even a weakened Invictus.

So there was no sudden putsch. Instead, each group hedged its bets, cultivating contacts within the Circle. An ugly and little-discussed truth of revolution is that there are serious drawbacks to removing the entire infrastructure of governance in one satisfying crash. Better by far to quietly co-opt the middle range of the bureaucracy — the people who know, metaphorically, where the stamps and toner cartridges are stored at City Hall. These functionaries may not know the secrets, but, more important than the secrets, they know the things anyone could find out, that everyone needs to rule, but that very few have learned.

Once both outsiders had friends on the inside, it was just a question of who was going to betray first. Being innovative and intuitive and enthusiastic and young, the Carthians pulled the trigger. The Invictus-aligned

Acolytes were swept from power, and, indeed, many were destroyed in a manner far more dramatic than the Movement would have dared hope. The Circle was nervous and on edge by that point, ready to pounce on any threat. They therefore expended their greatest ferocity on the traitors in their midst.

Of course, the Circle's extremism against their own people alarmed the Invictus, who charged into action backed by their allies, the Carthians. But with help from within the Circle, the Carthians were able to pit the First Estate against the top tier of the Acolytes, then sweep in, finish off the Invictus and inherit the earth.

That was the plan, anyhow. The Invictus spiritedly resisted being finished off, and by the time they were finally put paid, they'd done such grievous damage to both the Circle *and* the Movement that neither one was in much shape to govern.

So they merged. The Carthians agreed to at least attend ceremonies and pay lip service, and the Acolytes ceded most day-to-day administration to Carthian authorities, with big policy decisions being made by a Senate, the Senate to initially be composed of equal numbers of (former) Carthians and (ex-) Acolytes.

The Acolytes figured the ceremonies would reveal the truth to the Carthians. The Carthians figured that with enough minor power, they could rule in everything but name (and half in name, too). As it turned out, both sides were right. The city is now run by a theocracy as fervent as the Circle, as politicized and strident as the Movement and as deeply factionalized and variegated as both.

THIRTY-FOUR FAVORS

While the Carthians like to dress it up with rhetoric about the rights of man, a large part of the Carthian Movement is saying yes when another Carthian asks you for a favor. Sample favors can include the following:

- You know that girl who disappeared, Vonda whatsername? In all the headlines? The manhunt for her is near my haven, and I'm feeling the heat, so — what? No! Give me some credit, 'kay? I even know what happened, she wandered off from that party with some guy — I think he's from out of town, I can't find him — they went swimming, she drowned and he split. The cops have their heads up their asses, thinking abduction, and — yeah, okay, yes, *mea culpa*. Can we move on? I'm thinking if we can just drag the lake ourselves, the whole thing will blow over. You've got a boat, right?

• I have it on good authority you died with your hymen intact. I need a virgin for my ritual. Don't worry. You won't get hurt. I'll be at much greater risk than you.

• Did I ever tell you I was married? Um, while I was alive. Married and divorced, actually. Now my ex is coming into town, and we've kind of kept in touch, so it would be weird if we didn't visit. And I said I'd remarried. Which means I need someone to pretend to be my spouse, and, the funny part is, you fit the description I gave. Please?

• Here. Chico backed out of the job at the last minute. You know how to handle a shotgun, right? Just stay cool, and don't let the guards put their hands down.

• Regina told me you were an engineer. I'm trying to design and build a collapsible, completely sunproof shelter than can fit in a backpack. Ideally, I should be able to put it up in an hour or less. Will you help? Oh, and I'm on a bit of a deadline.

• All you have to do is stick the briefcase in your closet and don't let anyone know you have it. You can forget about it. I'll pick it up Monday night, first thing. Just don't open it. Oh, and if you think you're hearing voices from it, just ignore them.

• Yeah, the asshole had a spear. It's the 21st century, who carries a fuckin' *spear*? I'll be okay. I just need to get some, y'know, snacks. I was hoping you could help me out, like. Help me get some groceries, right?

• The bacon's really on me about those runaways. I need your help finding a good patsy and putting on the frame. What? Hey, this isn't just for me, this is Masquerade business!

• You don't have to be a *good* drummer, just keep the beat. I'll find another regular player, but I've been chasing this audition for months and if I can get an in at that club, it'll be like an all-you-can-eat. The owner probably won't even notice you.

• Your name will be Mavis McQueen. Your job is to run a clumsy and transparent grift on this man here, Jim Conrad. I'll swoop in and save him from you, and thereby gain his confidence.

• I really need a sparring partner. Y'know, to keep my edge. It'll be fun! I promise not to freak out like last time.

• I'm not asking you to *commit* to the girl, just fuck her one time. Maybe twice. It's just a piece of meat now, what's the big deal? You can probably get a good feed from her while you're at it.

• Just \$3,000. I swear this is the last time. It's a *lock*, a sure thing. I'll pay you back within a month. I swear!

• My childe Megan has wandered off, and I want to find her before anything unfortunate transpires.

You know how overconfident she is. She was last seen near the industrial barracks, possibly headed for the housing project Rack on the other side. Yes, I *know* it's not ours. She should know, too. No, leave her punishment to me, please. Just help me find her. Oh, one last thing: she's probably on acid.

• You gotta get over here now! The walls, shit, the walls are bleeding, and everything's screaming! *Help me!*

• You really can read hieroglyphics? That's great. I'll bring it right over, and, um, the sooner you can get it translated the better. Oh, and the message is scarred into the dead girl's back. Is that a problem? No, they're pretty clear. I mean, some of them are a little blobby, but I'll understand if it's, y'know, incomplete. I just need an executive summary of what it says before she starts to smell up the place. Hm? Tried that. Funny thing is, the body won't show up on film. Not like us, either.

• I know Elyse is unreasonable. No one knows that better than me. But I need her help for this project, and since she's in your clan I thought you might be able to broker an arrangement. Just talk to her, pour some oil on the water, get me some face time without everything being anger and accusations. That's all.

• She stole my boyfriend! I want you to hold her down while I scratch her eyes out!

• I understand your feelings toward your haven and how threatening this development must look. So I'll sweeten the pot. You move out and find somewhere else to rest for a couple of years, and I'll make sure you get a secret spot, nice and tight, in the condo complex. Hidden doors, sun proof, a regular bat cave. Listen, making this happen puts the mayor in my corner. There's plenty of juice to go around, if you can just give me room to operate.

• I want you to seduce the district attorney's husband. I don't care if she gets a divorce or goes into therapy or hands off the case against my ghoul to one of her underlings. Any of those is better than having a lawyer with a 150 IQ and no distractions investigating my blood slave. No one wins in that scenario. So go give her a distraction.

• We need you to drive the truck, and we need you to dig. Unless you can get a backhoe and know how to use it? No? Damn. You have to dig, then. We all have to dig.

• There's nothing *wrong* with her really. Just clingy, I guess. Calling me on the phone all the time, bugging me for the Kiss. My mistake was giving her my cell number. But you *need* a blood doll, right? Take this one with my blessing. Really.

• She's coming into town all the way from Winnipeg, and the haven we lined up for her fell through in a very big way. Yeah, that fire at the drycleaners. Saw that on the news, huh? So we want you to host her for a while. We'll keep her fed, you keep her safe.

• Holy cow! The way you beat up that Acolyte — was that kung fu or something? Can you teach me how to do that?

• This is kind of embarrassing, but would you take me shopping? It was the Prefect's suggestion. He said you always look like a catalogue shoot and I always look like I dressed out of the laundry hamper. Let's just make it painless and quick.

• I'll freely admit that the bet is stupid. Yeah, spend a night in a "haunted house," whatever. The stakes, however — we could get the deed to the place free and clear, knock it down, build ourselves a whatever. I just want you there to get my back in case it's a setup. Don't think it is though — the guy seemed genuinely terrified. What a drip. Hm? C'mon, do you think we're going to run into anything more scared than ourselves?

• I'm well aware how much time and money it took you to restore that car. I respect that. See, that's what makes it work. The guy's a total recluse. The only thing that gets him off the estate is a classic car from that Beach Boys era. Yours, he'd go nuts for it. No one else has one that's even close.

• Come as quick as you can. Bring guns. If you have any extra Pool Shock, bring that too.

• I'm not going to be coy. I know you have ties to both gangs. You talk them down from this war — I don't care how you do it, but get it done. Otherwise, this whole city's going to be crawling with Feds, not to mention beefed-up attention from the local precincts, which means they *won't* be policing as hard over on Lancea hill. Think about *that* for a second. Oh, and I've got it on good authority that there's a proposal to fund a statewide task force. It's just hanging fire until there's something ugly enough to make sure it sails through the legislature. So if your two groups of friends can't give peace a chance, we won't be able to swing a dead vessel around here without hitting a cop and knocking him into a Fed. Get on it. Blessed are the peacemakers.

• Did you hear the verdict? Man, the riot's already started on the east side! Let's go already! The worse we make it, the more the more concessions we can squeeze from the Prince for helping *stop* it. Plus, lots of scared cops and tear gas makes for *good* eatin'!

• Obviously I can't approach the child in my current condition, and, by the time the burns heal, the

damage will be done. If, that is, the girl understood the events she witnessed. You just need to gain her trust and find out what, if anything, she thinks she saw. Of course, if you're too busy, I can just kill her and deal with the consequences. But I really would prefer to take a more elegant approach.

• Werewolves, man. Straight up. Probably we'll just talk, but, hey, it never hurts to have a getaway driver. Just in case negotiations break down.

• The way I see it, you brokered this deal with your Sanctified pal, so it's partly your fault that half those Reliquaries were duds. Therefore it's your responsibility to help me beat the hell out of him.

• We're petitioning the Prince in protest of his abuses of the Circle of the Crone. I know you don't believe in their religion, but I hope you believe in our philosophy of free practice. If we say nothing while he oppresses them, who's going to be left to say anything when he comes for us? Will you sign the petition?

ATTITUDE AND STYLE

The Kindred of the Carthian Movement make a point of staying in contact with the modern world, ostensibly to learn from its bewildering changes and advances and adapting them to their own Requiem. Philosophically speaking, this tendency informs their political initiatives, but it doesn't stop there. Vampires who maintain close ties to humankind find themselves advancing aesthetically as well, both out of the necessity to blend in with the mortals and due to the inspiration the Kindred draw from their experiences.

FASHION

Carthian Kindred take great pride in keeping pace with mortal fashion, maintaining an appearance that helps them blend perfectly with the local populace. Most Carthians are nearly indistinguishable from humans in their dress, taking pains to change with the seasons and keep abreast of current trends. Doing so is actually easier than many older vampires think; all you have to do is make sure to empty out your wardrobe at the start of each season and fill it up again with new purchases. Visiting a number of mainstream shops (or sending a ghoul to do your shopping for you) can produce an entire season's attire in just a day or two. The result may be unremarkable, but it's perfect camouflage — and it will be conspicuous enough at Elysium, where many vampires' inability to stay timely becomes readily apparent. Those Kindred who can't afford to replace their wardrobe every few months have to put a little more effort into staying current, but not

much: just picking up a couple of items here and there will keep the vampire looking timely.

Some Carthians aren't satisfied with maintaining a mainstream appearance. They go out of their way to identify with a cutting-edge mortal movement, taking pains to assemble the right looks so that they fit in perfectly. Sports enthusiasts with the current year's jerseys, garage punks with carefully selected thrift wear, mod revivalists with scooters and suits — anything works, so long as it emulates a human fad. Keeping up with cutting-edge style is a more difficult approach, because it requires sincerity. The members of a given subculture are likely to spot a "tourist" who just wears the clothes he thinks he's supposed to wear, rather than someone who actually knows and feels the reasons behind the right choices. For those who are sincere, the identification with their chosen culture and the attendant acceptance from particular mortals is well worth the ridicule a vampire is likely to face from the out-of-touch denizens of Elysium.

Some Carthians philosophize heavily on the importance of fashion, noting that a mainstream appearance tends to put mortals at ease, which in turn reduces the stress on a vampire. Those Kindred who expend the relatively small effort of blending in, these Carthians say, tend to expend less energy in securing Vitae, are less likely to lose their self-control in public and are generally happier in their night-to-night existence. Moreover, they seem to have less trouble identifying with their mortal counterparts, making these Kindred much less likely to engage in abusive practices.

On the other hand, some Carthian Kindred have noted that those who seem exceptionally skilled at blending in are often at risk of withdrawing from vampire society entirely, slipping into a semi-delusional state of nostalgia and denial. The vampires of the Movement must never forget that the practice of emulating the mortal majority is a utilitarian one, not an expression of the inner self.

Many vampires eventually slip in the maintenance of their appearance, whether they want to or not. Eventually, the constant updating wearies them, and they just stop bothering. The relatively small effort involved begins to grate on their nerves, seeming more and more unnecessary as they become less and less human. Raw power can be relied upon to negate any difficulties in hunting. Only the Carthians try to follow a policy to resist this encroaching laziness, noting the many advantages a fashionable appearance bestows upon a vampire and the many bad habits that take root in those who ignore it.

LANGUAGE

The discourse of mortals changes no less rapidly or unpredictably than the clothes they wear. Although keeping up with the most current street slang or scientific jargon requires no real effort for neonates, elder Kindred have to work quite hard to maintain an understanding (and a working knowledge) of human dialects. Some read and watch as much modern media as they can tolerate, hoping to absorb the information through simple observation, while others take lessons from younger vampires or engage in frequent interviews with unsuspecting mortals. The Carthians understand that an awkwardly outdated turn of phrase can expose an interloper just as easily as decades-old dress sense, and a smooth emulation of correct speech can pave the way for acceptance within just about any human group.

As with clothing, some Carthians seek to insinuate themselves with specific mortals, taking pains to understand their way of communication. As a result, vampires of the Movement can be overheard engaging in truly bizarre turns, especially considering their age. An elder vampire who expresses himself in ghetto slang is perfectly acceptable to the Carthians, as is an ancilla with a tendency to voice her concerns in modern corporate jargon or a neonate who refers to his surroundings in hacker "leetspeak."

MODERN GIBBERISH

Vampires who become familiar with specialized slang may actually be able to express themselves perfectly openly to one another while remaining incomprehensible to their less contemporary kin. Two Carthians rapidly firing the latest media-fueled teenspeak at one another will seem, for all the sense older Kindred can make of it, to be speaking a foreign language to a contingent of tradition-bound elders.

A Storyteller wishing to reflect this linguistic drift may choose to allow outsiders an Intelligence + Streetwise roll to see if they can make any sense of the dialog at all. Alternately, players who wish to do say may be allowed to spend experience on the system of slang as a Language Merit, representing a system that is either complex enough or cutting-edge enough to escape the understanding of all but the select few who take the time to learn it.

The connection between progressive language and progressive thought is often acknowledged by Carthian Kindred, who take frequent opportunities to point out that a society that bases its primary laws on "traditions" engages in a *de facto* vilification of

innovation, whether consciously or not. To that end, some scan the development of mortal language avidly, hoping to find and adopt neologisms that open the path to new ways of thought. Entire manifestoes have been written about the application of new words or the reassignment of meaning to old ones.

Thoroughly modern language can bewilder and alienate elder vampires though — and that's not always such a good idea. The Carthian Movement benefits greatly whenever older Kindred soften to their viewpoint, and setting up barriers to understanding can prevent it from happening. While Carthians are often enthused in their pursuit of exclusive knowledge, they need to remind themselves that their covenant is, ideally, one that includes all vampires.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Keeping up with modern trends means that Carthian vampires are also able to maintain an understanding of movements in mortal art. An unbiased view of culture gives the Carthians a solid basis from which to make observations of the mood and inclinations of their domain's human population. Moreover, cultural activities provide another access point for Kindred seeking to insinuate themselves into mortal subcultures. A shared appreciation for entertainments goes a long way in modern society, and even vampires who don't feel anything can benefit from emulating that appreciation.

Moreover, Carthian Kindred who were artists in life find great inspiration (or great provocation) in the unfolding trends of the arts. Those vampires who perfect their understanding of a popular trend can earn cash by carefully emulating its features in their own work, while those who make it their business to traffic in influence can quickly spot positions of advantage. Staying current means staying commercially viable — an invaluable resource for vampires looking to escape the traditional means of subsistence without abandoning the comforts of a clean home, mutable wardrobe and idle entertainments.

EMULATION BUT NOT STIMULATION?

Vampires almost never create significant contributions to the art world. This is a fact. But why? They have decades, sometimes centuries to hone their craft, they have access to inhuman levels of endurance and precision and they certainly feel intense emotions. What is it that renders them incapable of leading an innovative push? How is it that a flawless performance can leave mortal audiences cold? Why do the greatest works of Kindred art invite criticism instead of praise?

There is one simple, painful answer to these questions. Vampires are no longer human, and some essentially human component is absent from their work. No matter how perfect, how inspired or how intense a piece of Kindred art is, it will never strike a chord with human witnesses unless enhanced by the artificial stimulus of a Discipline such as Majesty or Nightmare.

Storytellers may wish to reflect this tragic feature of Kindred existence with a limiting mechanic: in the creation or performance of a work of art, the dice pool of a vampire character is limited by her humanity. While the player makes a normal Crafts or Expression roll for the work, the Storyteller makes another one using the character's Humanity rating. The first roll reflects the mechanical quality of the piece, while the second reflects its essential human soul. Only an exceptional success on the second roll reflects a fully realized emotional work.

Example: Jane is playing Deirdre the Ventrue, and decides that Deirdre would like to sculpt a Romanesque image of her favorite mortal thrall. Jane rolls Deirdre's Dexterity + Crafts (a total of 8 dice), with the following result: 7, 4, 2, 9, 8, 2, 8, 0 and an 8 on the reroll — five successes! The Storyteller then rolls Deirdre's Humanity, 5 dice, with the following result: 1, 9, 3, 4, 1 — one success. The Storyteller explains that the statue is exquisitely carved, a technically perfect creation in the neoclassical style. However, Deirdre notices that mortals who look upon her work are relatively unimpressed. It looks "nice," they say, but they're not moved to exceptional praise, and they don't seem to consider the image all that memorable.

Maintaining an understanding of the modern arts seems to be one of the most demanding practices of the Carthian Movement. Kindred are easily jaded, and those with less Humanity are unlikely to experience any genuine emotion when witnessing a truly inspired work. Of all the pursuits of Carthian fashion, keeping pace with the trends in art is the most likely to be abandoned, often by dejected vampires who consider the barrier to understanding an all-too-undeniable reminder of their inhuman state. Worse yet, some art may actually embody an emotion that the vampire never encountered in life, inspiring confusion and discomfort instead.

A TANGIBLE ADVANTAGE

The effort Carthians expend on blending in with mortals isn't just about the satisfaction of shallow preferences. Socializing with them is a hell of a lot easier if one maintains a fashionable appearance and keeps up on current trends. Every vampire who tries going to a bar and picking up a potential snack quickly learns that poor costume choices or inappropriate language choices can badly hinder their attempts. Additionally, those vampires who

manage to update their masquerade simply blend in better than those who fall behind. Disappearing in a crowd of mortals is easier for them, as is flying under the radar of suspicious humans. Hunters are much more likely to investigate the strange, isolated woman who never seems to change her clothes than the one who looks like a trendy clubber, exchanging jokes with the familiar faces of the scene.

It would be logical for Storytellers to apply Socialize and Stealth bonuses to those characters who make an effort to stay in touch with human trends, assuming that these characters are mixing with a mainstream crowd (or one that they've researched properly). Cumulative +1 bonuses could be applied for dress, speech and a shared interest in up-to-date entertainments.

Example: Julia, an ancilla Daeva, takes great pains to watch and listen to the local mortals so that she can keep up with their fashions. Her player documents her efforts and expenditures aimed at keeping her wardrobe up-to-date and the frequent conversations she engages in with the local mortals in order to maintain her understanding of modern slang. She can't be bothered to keep up with their tastes in entertainment, though, because she never really managed to get over her distaste for television sets and CD players. When Julia hunts, the Storyteller decides that her appropriate clothing and easy, authentic approach with language will give her player a +2 bonus on rolls — so long as she sticks to the mainstream crowd she normally hangs around with.

It's best to apply these modifiers as positive adjustments, creating an enjoyable incentive for players to consider how much effort their characters want to put into trendy behavior. Failing to stay in touch should only produce a negative modifier when the character is interacting with an extremely dedicated and exclusive subculture. The relatively clueless nature of the average vampire should be considered the norm in interaction with most mortals, with no modifier applied.

TECHNOLOGY

The arts may be a confusing, discouraging subject for aging vampires, but technology often inspires a near-pathological fear. For Kindred who have still have difficulty understanding the operation of television and radio sets, the advances of the past 10 or 20 years are positively incomprehensible: cellular technology, the Internet, global positioning equipment, digital storage — all represent mysterious, unanticipated sea changes in the mortal approach to everyday life.

The Carthian Movement finds one of its greatest strengths in the steadily increasing rate of advance



in mortal technology. While the vampires of the other covenants are left rapidly in the dust, grinding their teeth in frustration, the Carthians keep comfortably abreast of new developments, adopting them almost as rapidly as their human counterparts. In the early years of the 20th century, many Kindred were inspired to join the Movement because of telegraph communiqués, and the modern nights are no different. Cellular technology is used to keep the Kindred of the Movement in touch across an entire domain, and GPS locators help to make sure that nobody gets lost alone in enemy territory. iPods and laptops help keep up the human camouflage, and media traded on them helps to keep Carthians in touch with the newest mortal trends.

New weapons are adopted just as quickly. Laser scopes and night-vision sight attachments on firearms provide Carthian soldiers with an unexpected edge, and lightweight sport plastics can add serious coverage to make-shift armor. Ghoulish bodyguards are easily dispatched with Tasers, non-lethal weapons that surpass the understanding of all but the most informed elder.

A lot of Carthians like to play a game of one-upmanship with the adoption of new technologies, seeing if they can outdo one another with their forethought and early acceptance of imminent trends. The neophile stereotype holds well for these vampires: they're constantly upgrading their equipment and displaying it to one another, shrugging off the confused glares of their contemporaries at Elysium as they do so. Some elders even get in on the game, reveling in the completely alien world of the new. They claim it allows them to immerse themselves in a Requiem filled with unknowns, a sensation that can be both terrifying and exhilarating for a previously world-weary, centuries-old creature.

The pointed comfort and familiarity with modern technology allows Carthian Kindred to develop skills that are simply unavailable (and unfathomable) to more archaic vampires. Computer and Drive are obvious selections, but many ultramodern Skill Specialties can also be applied.

ANTI-ARCHAISM

One common feature of Carthian style is the extension of modernism to an exclusive anti-archaic approach to speech, dress and behavior. Some Carthian Kindred make a point of eliminating all old forms of expression, even abandoning common terms of reference ("Kindred") from their vocabulary and replacing them with updated or invented

ones ("Licks"). Traditional etiquette is abandoned for new expressions of respect, much to the bemusement of older vampires.

Note that any expression that originated in the past 50 years or so is considered relatively new to many vampires, so the rebellious expressions of Carthian Kindred might seem a little understated to modern mortals while provoking the nearly uncontrollable ire of conventional members of outside covenants. Stepping up and shaking hands without invitation is an egregious offense to the elders of the Ordo Dracul, for instance, while referring to a compatriot as "cool" might invite misinterpretation.

Clever Carthians make use of the disconnected nature of the other covenants, displaying a modern face to recently embraced neonates. Since many new Kindred go through a period of adjustment when learning the protocol of their chosen organization, the Movement can seem quite appealing just because it seems more like modern life (at least on the surface). More than a few neonates have defected to the Carthian cause just because they got more and more annoyed with the relatively strict guidelines of their previous covenant.

More distressing, to the increasingly outdated Kindred of competing covenants, is the notion that the Carthians might actually be better predators than they in the modern nights. While the Invictus remains mired in Middle-Ages procedure and the Lancea Sanctum's ecclesiastical practices become more and more foreign to current styles of thought, the Carthians continue to blend perfectly with the herd, slipping with ease into the role of seducer, brawler, confidant — anything that brings in the Vitae without raising suspicion. Since the Carthian Movement has defined modernity as one of the covenant's key features, attempting to adopt an updated sense of style risks earning a reputation as a Carthian, even if one has no intention of supporting those politics. The Movement has, in a sense, identified itself with progress, thereby forcing the other covenants to identify themselves with obsolescence.

INTEGRATIONISM

All of the aesthetic tendencies of the Carthian Movement tie together into a single, powerful toolkit for interaction with mortals. These tendencies contribute to a complex disguise, they create a more informed understanding of human behavior and they help to attract like-minded mortals to a waiting vampire. On the surface, differentiating one's self and friends from the

majority of the Kindred may seem just a rebellious urge, but it is, in fact, the Movement's shield and sword. Nobody can disappear into a mortal neighborhood the way a well-informed Carthian can. Nobody can strike from an unexpected position with surprise advantages as a well-equipped Carthian.

The Carthians' easy communication with the mortals provides access to allies and influence that outsider Kindred never even become cognizant of, much less take advantage of. Entire hacker communities are working for the Carthian Movement, completely unaware that their partners in crime are undead. Street gangs rush to the aid of their charismatic vampire allies, overwhelming ill-equipped outsider Kindred with laughable ease. Doctors and scientists diligently provide curious Carthians with useful information that is unlikely to reach their enemies for decades.

By associating so closely with mortal culture, Carthians do sometimes tread alarmingly close to undermining the Masquerade. On the other hand, they begin to identify their own cause with that of the humans, making it difficult to oppose them without appearing callous — and difficult to show interest in the mortal populace without appearing to sympathize with the Movement.

VIVACITY

It is said that a vampire who occupies herself with mortal style and entertainments is not quite as dead as her neglectful counterparts. Whether or not this is literally true, Carthian Kindred do seem to hold on to their Humanity more easily than the members of other covenants. Those vampires who devote themselves to occult studies or separatist religious doctrine find themselves drifting toward the Beast just because they rapidly sever their emotional ties to the living world.

Carthians make sure that their lively energy displays itself in their appearance, often opting to expend *Vitae* to warm their bodies and color their flesh, even when they aren't masquerading among the mortals. This habit may be costly to do so, but many consider it well worth the drain, considering that coloring their flesh allows them to remain human-like, and it draws the envious stares of less-vivacious Kindred. Many Carthians also claim that the habit simply renders them more attractive to mortals and vampires alike.

THE MOVEMENT AS A SUBCULTURE

There is a school of thought that posits the Carthian Movement is not a true covenant, but

rather an evolution of the existing body politic of the Kindred. The face of the Movement is distinct and public, but its most effective functional elements are buried within the competing covenants: unacknowledged members who are inspired to seek change by the philosophies and arguments of their revolutionary contemporaries. More than one domain has seen a covenant shift slowly toward Carthian-inspired operation, eventually becoming indistinguishable from the Movement.

To facilitate the connection between themselves and potential future converts, the Carthians often accept and encourage declared members who retain membership in other covenants. Assuming they are tolerated in their original organizations, these dualist members forge links between the groups, representing points of contact for curious Kindred attracted to the attitudes of the Movement.

Some covenant chapters will reject a vampire who openly declares allegiance to the Carthian Movement but a surprising number tolerate such behavior, preferring to take advantage of the direct line of communication presented in order to exchange messages, glean information or engage in deceptive practices. A Sanctified Priest who announces his affiliation with the Carthian Movement might find that his status freezes within the Lancea Sanctum, but doesn't disappear outright — he simply becomes known as a "radical." In fact, it's likely that he'd be assigned to a parish in Carthian territory to demonstrate the Church's tolerance of fringe ideas.

In Carthian-ruled domains, it's often advantageous for a covenant to allow citizens of the Movement to hold official dual membership, since it means that one of their number may take part in the decision-making process for domain law. Effectively, it guarantees a sympathetic voice in Carthian government — something that's rarely allowed under other systems of rule. If the Carthians aren't careful, a covenant can actually flood the Movement with dual citizens, swaying the system of government until it returns to the more traditional mode they're used to. Strangely, certain Carthian philosophies consider this possibility a perfectly acceptable evolution of government and not a threat.

As with any subculture, the Carthian Movement recognizes itself by several means:

DISTINCTIVE LANGUAGE

Taking advantage of the most current mortal slang is one thing, but the Kindred of the Movement also

have their own modern jargon. The vulgar argot of young vampires is commonly spoken by Carthians, in a constantly shifting, evolving tongue. In fact, the language of the Movement changes so rapidly in most domains as to become an isolated dialect within mere decades. Carthians who travel often have as many problems understanding their brethren as outsiders (although they are much more likely to receive friendly instruction).

This local cant may be an innocent, entertaining pursuit for Carthians looking to stay sharp (and demonstrate their capacity to do so), but outsiders often treat slang as a sinister code. Since they can't understand it and nobody seems willing to teach them unless they indicate an urge to join the Movement, most assume the worst. The stolid Princes of some domains have outlawed Carthian slang in their Elysium halls, only fueling the passion of freedom-seeking Kindred outraged by the suggestion that someone should be allowed to dictate their mode of speech.

The devastating power of Carthian slang lies in its attractiveness. The language might seem stupid or annoying to those who don't understand it, but the fact remains that it's an exclusive secret. Some Kindred just can't stand to be on the outside of anything, much less a cryptic system of communication that takes place in their own Elysium. Of course, as soon as someone expresses an interest in learning or mimicking the Carthian language, the Movement has an in for presenting their ideas to him. Since the Carthians can choose almost any word to represent any concept, they're free to redefine meaning and warp language as a means of propaganda. If "Tick" means "Prince," you're evoking an unfavorable image of mindless gluttony every time you mention one.

CRACKING THE CANT

Note that the local dialect of Carthians is not meant to be a reflection of mortal slang. Carthian slang is an artificial system of speech, created by and for the members of the Movement as a personal code. The advantages of inventing a language are twofold: not only does it allow free communication near uncomprehending members of competing covenants, but such new language confuses and frustrates those who think that they're just speaking in modern mortal idiom, only to find that the language doesn't work on the streets.

The problem with a fabricated dialect is that it's only as complicated as its speakers make it. As an optional system, the Storyteller can reflect the development of the dialect by encouraging periodic Intelligence + Expression rolls. When a determined number of successes is reached,

(perhaps 20 or 25), the slang can officially become a distinct Language, reflected by the purchase of a Merit. Until then, an Intelligence + Academics roll could be made by witnesses to see if they can figure it out.

The development of Carthian local dialects is considered a philosophical extension of the "power to the people" attitude of the Movement. Some domains build their personalized code by encouraging contributions from every member, creating a ragtag assembly of words and phrases from their diverse experiences and preferences. This encourages evolution as well, bringing in new additions every time a member joins.

SIGNALS AND SIGNS

Words aren't the only personalized signals adopted by the Movement. Specific accessories and postures are often employed to indicate membership. Local cells become so distinct, at times, as to appear freakish to the majority of Kindred — but this is rarely the purpose. More experienced Carthians always take pains to advise the younger set not to push too hard when separating themselves from the mainstream unless they're willing to undermine their own political aspirations in exchange for a meaningless sense of exclusive superiority.

The signals of the Movement are rapidly adopted and discarded, both as a means to ensure that only those "in the know" can effectively make use of them, and also to reflect the willingness of Carthian Kindred to change with the times, whether they need to or not.

For a few years during the 1950s, the Carthians of one domain in Mexico walked with a specific shuffling step, brushing their left hand through their hair (or over their scalp) when greeting each other. Every member displayed an image of the Catholic sacred heart — some as tattoos, others on their clothing. One year, these signals were all suddenly abandoned, and the members of the Movement chose to display their affiliation through language alone. Years later, a complicated handshake was adopted instead, and the image of the sacred heart was reintegrated into the identification system, but this time with a distinctive pattern worked into the heart.

The displays can be as serious or whimsical as the Carthians choose. What's important is not what these signals look like, but rather what they say: "I am one of the group. I understand how to make myself known to you, and I keep up with the times."

The Carthians of a French domain in the 1980s would all chew a specific brand of gum, blowing a bubble as a

means of greeting. They would stick a wad of the gum to a doorjamb to mark friendly territory, and often passed messages scrawled on the wrappers and reinserted into a pack. The practice was abandoned shortly after outsider Kindred started to clue into it.

In high-conflict domains where tempers run hot, Carthian Kindred often make use of signals that are direct insults to their enemies, hoping to provoke them into irrational behavior. It's not unusual in some places to see a Carthian wearing anti-religious slogans sure to upset Sanctified vampires or insulting caricatures of Dracula for the benefit of the *Ordo Dracul*. The childishness of these slights may be obvious to all, but the fact is that it's not really that hard to provoke a vampire, especially if her Beast is close to the surface — and sometimes that's exactly what the Carthians are looking to take advantage of. The harsher the measures invoked by enemies of the Movement in response to the insults, the more unreasonable and intolerant they look and the more attractive the apparent freedom of the Carthians seems.

EXCLUSION OF THE OTHER

Certainly, one of the motives of Carthian identification signals and slang is simple exclusion of those who aren't "in the know" — elder or otherwise ill-informed vampires who remain outside the Movement and fail to understand its progressive ideals. Identity and pride become entangled, and Carthians become aggressively elitist, often behaving in direct contradiction to their espoused philosophies. Excluding Kindred doesn't give power to the people; exclusion restricts power to those with the guarded knowledge of cultural indicators.

How do Carthians justify this behavior? Under some systems of thought, identification with a secret set of rules serves the same purpose as dressing in uniform. The notion of secret rules enflames the pride of the "in crowd" while shaming those who are not included, motivating them to seek instruction from the Carthians. Such rules renders the citizens of the Movement easily identifiable to one another, so that the benefits of membership can be readily shared between them.

It's also true that vampires are instinctively territorial creatures, and they like to own things: language and style no less than actual material goods. Marking one's subordinates, associates and allies helps to lay out the political territory of every Carthian, satisfying their inner need for ownership.

But who are the "others" that they're seeking to exclude, really? The Carthian Movement is, ostensibly, one that wants to incorporate every vampire in the

world. They will readily accept members of outside covenants, encouraging them to learn the culture and philosophies of the Movement, and are supposed to share their passion for change without prejudice. Ideally, the practices of the Carthians are exclusive only to those who don't wish to learn them — the slightest effort on the part of outsiders to identify with the members of the covenant ought to be rewarded with acceptance and instruction. In practice, it's more difficult to realize this ideal, especially when personal friction, arrogance and intolerance come into play. The territorial nature of the vampire rises in opposition to the notion of accepting outsiders, and the Carthian involved must overcome his natural urges in order to satisfy his philosophical stance.

It's easy for enthused Carthians to forget where they're coming from, and why the Movement exists at all. Those who get caught up in cliquishness and surface judgment are really emulating the systems they claim to disagree with. How can a Carthian who dismisses a neonate for failing to understand the covenant's style of dress or etiquette claim to be in dispute with the *Invictus*? There is no appreciable difference in their behavior.

Some Carthian cells do get completely carried away, though. More than one domain has witnessed the genuine political interests of the covenant co-opted and then superseded by strictly shallow considerations. This "tyranny of style" is a pernicious element of the Movement, occasionally instigated by its open-arms attitude. If enough Kindred who don't actually care about politics become part of the group, then, by definition, any democratic group ceases to be about politics.

CULTURAL CACHE

The regard Carthians maintain for those who can keep up with the vagaries of the modern world often translates directly into status — an unusual feature, since status seems to have little to do with the actual aims of the covenant. In truth, charismatic, fashionable vampires who can move easily and comfortably among the mortals are arguably the greatest recruiters for the Movement, attracting a good number of younger Kindred who are dissatisfied with their membership in outsider covenants.

A lot of Carthians, admittedly, adopt mannerisms and accessories that even they don't understand (or are comfortable with), just to maintain a modernist look. Fearful of losing the prestige they've accumulated over the years, many will do almost anything to avoid the appearance of obsolescence. As time



passes, they become more and more afraid of slipping up and exposing themselves as frauds. A cycle of paranoia and frustration can spring up around something as simple as choosing which car to drive or what kind of suit to wear, and self-imposed pressures eventually debilitate the vampires in question.

Self-aware Kindred rarely fall into this trap. They are happy to accept the recognition they might earn as capable social and technological chameleons, but remain dedicated to the political progress that forms the core of their motivation. Maintaining ties with outsider covenants and promoting the views of the Movement is their primary goal, and added prestige gained by looking right and sounding right are just optional additions, enhancing (but not overshadowing) one's arsenal of rational arguments and sincere passion. To these serious vampires, the superficial obsessions of their counterparts are actually a threat to the Movement, and many Carthians will do their best to prevent superficial obsessions from inspiring too much respect.

STATUS FOR STYLE

A Storyteller should consider the local composition of the Carthian Movement before

deciding to award Status to a character for his stylish comportment — if the group is largely intellectual with little concern for surface details, raised Status wouldn't be appropriate. If, however, the group is weighted toward the "cool-hunter" Kindred, the reward of Status for style should be valid. Sometimes, entire sub-plots can be based around the justification of status for style, wherein characters debate the validity of the approach with their fellow revolutionaries.

It's safe to say that if a domain sports any Carthian Kindred who have Status ••• or higher for purely stylistic achievement, the local Movement is losing touch with its political roots. Most domains will cap a "chameleon" at Status ••, noting that she doesn't really deserve any more respect than that until she starts promoting the true agenda of the Movement more actively.

Encouraging the spread of Carthian style by those who sport dual covenant membership is a valid tactic, too, and helps to draw attention to the representatives of the Movement without (usually) taking offensive action. Many a competing covenant official, failing to notice the genuinely inspiring message the Carthians convey to their contemporaries, has underestimated those same Carthians as faddish peacocks because of certain members' outré behavior.

BELIEFS

A fundamental feature (perhaps *the* fundamental feature) of the Carthian Movement that separates its members out into a subculture of their own is their shared philosophy, and the application of that philosophy to a vampire's night-to-night existence. Acceptance and promotion of the secular modernist message of the Movement, with its compelling "power-to-the-people" base are the most obvious marks of a true Carthian, whether he declares himself or not.

The populism of Carthian philosophy may take subtle root in a vampire who becomes aware of the philosophy, perhaps only as a curiosity at first. Sooner or later, usually provoked by a perceived injustice, she begins to consider how populism could apply to her own covenant. She might begin to believe that a Bishop should listen to and learn from his own flock just as much as he preaches to them, or that her Ordo Dracul instructors are withholding information from her unfairly, and that she should be free to learn as she chooses. An Invictus neonate might note that his Guild Meister would benefit from the modern tools employed by mortal craftsmen, and wonder why the Meister is so resistant to the suggestion.

When a vampire starts to accept the ideals of the Carthian Movement, she poses an immediate threat to the established traditions of her covenant. If she isn't quickly reined in, she will eventually seek to apply her newfound beliefs to the operation of her covenant. If she doesn't realize, somebody will sooner or later point out her "Carthian" tendencies, and she will have to consider whether or not she actually wishes to declare her sympathies outright.

It is interesting to note that Kindred can define themselves as Carthians just by deciding that they want to change the night-to-night organization of their covenant in a certain way. Even if the Movement fails to recognize such Kindred as citizens, their own compatriots will brand them as sympathizers. Carthian philosophers refer to this occurrence as "negative recruitment," noting that the pressures of a covenant can often provide a strong force of repulsion that equals or exceeds the attractive attempts of the Movement.

SUBCULTURES WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

Kindred already divided from the crowd by their populist philosophies and experimental adaptability, the Carthians are also a varied group within themselves, often splitting into several subcultural Movements of their own. A single city may sport two or three different Carthian groups, each espousing a

competing set of ideals or proposed revolutionary tactics. Most will cooperate in creating a unified front against the policies of outsider covenants, but that doesn't mean they see things the same way — just that they all agree to oppose the dominant system.

Each subculture within the covenant may adopt its own style of speech and dress, further distinguishing the subculture from the "mainstream" Carthians. Layers of discrete political elements are formed, one within the other, distilling down from the basic message of the Movement to more detailed interpretations of its goals and methodology.

Technically, each clan or bloodline forms a subculture within the Movement, unless the clan or bloodline's members take great pains to homogenize with their counterparts among the other clans. It's not unusual for Carthian Kindred to blur the lines of clan membership by trading information and Discipline training, and they tend to refrain from restrictive rules about intermingling, all to promote a unified feeling of citizenship among their members.

By definition, any smaller group that distinguishes itself from the prevailing Carthian Movement organization is a subculture. If it eventually overtakes the rest of the populace, directing the local chapter of the Movement, the subculture becomes the dominant culture. New subcultures form (from the remnants of the previous dominant culture, or as an entirely new entity), and the struggle for control of the Movement continues. Complete accord rarely happens within the Movement: too much stock is put in the individual freedoms and fundamental equality of the Movement's members in most domains to allow for such accord. Even the most dictatorial interpretations of the Movement's aims tend to inspire some rebellion from within.

DIVISION AND ABSORPTION

Individual style and personal philosophies are common in the Movement. Simply standing out in the crowd or debating from an unpopular stance doesn't make for a legitimate division within the covenant. The actual formation of a subculture begins only when several Kindred begin to adopt the distinguishing marks: the fabricated signals, the exclusion of outsiders and the recognition of inside knowledge as qualification for membership.

Every coterie of Carthian Kindred is likely to display all three of these features to some extent. So long as the group participates in the established political approach of the Movement in the coterie's domain,

no such group is likely to be considered a sub-segment of the covenant. Instead, the group will just be regarded as a unit that may or may not display the cliquish behavior that is common to vampires. The definition of a subculture by the human markers, then, is incomplete — especially in a covenant that encourages emulation of varied mortal expression and styles. In Kindred terms, the line is crossed when the coterie or sub-group begins to organize around a principle or political system that is not considered part of the night-to-night practice of the rest of the Carthians in their city. At that point, the sub-group becomes a Carthian sub-unit, attempting to promote a minority outlook. A small cell espousing communist ideals in a domain where the Carthian majority is organized as a republican parliament would be considered one such unit.

Division within a Carthian community is relatively common, and rarely leads to serious dispute. In most cases, the subculture either grows in local popularity until the subculture outshines the previous “mainstream” outlook, or the subculture’s members eventually abandon their unpopular beliefs and are absorbed back into the larger body of the Movement.

Carthian vampires do have to be careful with their choices, lest they begin to look fickle and disorganized. Those who seem to bounce from one unpopular position to the next begin to earn a reputation as directionless naysayers, less concerned with advancing the Movement than being “on the outside.” If these Carthians don’t settle down, they’ll eventually find themselves ejected from the covenant.

Most Carthian systems build in a mechanism for the presentation of alternate ideas and the absorption of those ideas into the system. Being adaptable in one’s approach is advantageous, after all — especially when facing off against the entrenched systems of the competing covenants. Democratic and Parliamentary systems of government are the most likely to accept new ideas, whereas any system founded on tyrannous principles is the least likely.

It is interesting to note that outsider Kindred, conditioned by their own governing principles, tend to view the frequent splits and disputes in the Carthian Movement as a sign of weakness. Carthians, on the other hand, usually regard disputes as a blessing in disguise: an indication of open-minded rule and an evolutionary urge.

TOLERATION OF DISSENT

Although most Carthian governments will happily entertain new ideas and the near-inevitable spate of

disagreements that accompany them, there is a line that must be drawn. If the originators of the new contribution fail to find support among the majority of Carthian Kindred in the domain, and yet stubbornly continue to hold to their ideas, an irreconcilable conflict may be in the making. Careful vampires will work to defuse the impending battle, trying to find a compromise that satisfies all. Doing so is not always easy (or possible), but the attempt must be made. Otherwise, a small dispute can lead to schism, and the Movement will split, turning itself from one covenant into two, weaker units. Keen observers outside the covenant will notice when a dispute flies out of control, and will be quick to take advantage. More than one Carthian domain has fallen to enemies because of inner turmoil spawned of a simple legal disagreement.

Some Carthians work to prevent such disasters by creating a detailed system of argument, including a process for registering new ideas, discussing them, voting on their implementation or rejection and officially recognizing them as integrated into or eliminated from governmental policy. While certain domains have comfortably implemented these processes, others find that their citizens buck against them, finding the rigid etiquette involved to be too reminiscent of the procedural operation of competing covenants.

Others go so far as to create systems that do not allow for the integration of new ideas unless they fall within a defined scope. Constitutional tyrannies, constructed on unalterable laws, are the ultimate extension of this policy, and are one of the least enduring systems of Carthian government as a result. Avoiding the consideration of innovative philosophies seems to be anathema to the average Carthian citizen — most of whom joined the Movement to avoid stagnant or unfair systems of rule in the first place.

Ultimately, the majority of Carthian domains are populist, and will tolerate dissent only if either the argument or the Kindred presenting the argument is respected by the majority. An extremely stubborn vampire with high Covenant Status can get away with bringing up the same unpopular argument again and again (so long as he finds a way to keep his Status from slipping), while a brand-new member with little regard is going to have a hard time sticking to the very same argument.

It’s true, though, that any vampire, no matter how new or how little-respected, generally has the right to present any idea to the Movement. Each citizen is supposed to have a voice, and most domains stick with that rule. It is, after all, one of the most attractive

features of the Movement. The distinction is made when the majority decides that they don't like or want the innovation presented by the vampire in question, and she sticks to her guns despite the ruling. Then, she makes the move from participant to dissenter, and may find herself wandering into dangerous territory, depending on the prevailing attitudes of her domain.

GROWTH INTO FACTIONS

An unpopular idea may survive within the Movement. Kindred who support a policy that is rejected by their peers can always undertake the risk of travel in hopes of finding like-minded vampires in foreign domains. On the other hand, stubborn vampires who remain in a domain long enough may find themselves attracting sympathizers over time, even if their idea is initially rejected. Sincerity and sustained passion can go a long way with the Carthians. Eventually, a single vampire's crusade can turn into a fully realized Movement within the Movement, pushing back into consideration or forming the basis for a coup. A defining ideal can easily become the nexus for a dissenting faction, crystallizing their dissatisfaction and lending meaning to their rebellion. Such a faction can become a powerful unit in the body politic of the domain, making decisions with a single voice and threatening to disrupt the individualist structure of the Movement unless acceded to.

In some domains, the Carthian Movement is so strong that it can sustain a split down the middle and still hold its ground against opportunist attacks from competing covenants. In these rare cases, the two sides in dispute may form their own governments, setting themselves at odds with one another and greatly complicating the operation of the domain. Competing Movements are rarely long lasting, though, and one or the other often collapses under the strain of doing battle with their own kind.

One domain in China has actually sustained two Carthian schisms in a row, resulting in three distinct Movements within the territory. Almost all of the vampires in the domain are participating in the ongoing three-way battle for supremacy, based on a dispute over the assignation of voting rights and the weight of individual votes. There are, in effect, three Movements in the domain: a pure democracy with equal weight on each citizen's vote, a pure democracy with votes weighted based on purity of intent (as attested to by accomplishment and excluding the votes of "vice-ridden" Daeva) and a relatively unpopular socialist dictatorship. Those Kindred who are not part of the Movement tend to operate on the far

fringes of the domain in question, claiming a complete inability to understand the complex interactions of the three Carthian groups, but unable to consider removing all three from power.

POPULARITY VERSUS COMPULSION

There are two ways for ideas to find support in the Carthian Movement. The first, and simplest, is popularity. If an idea appeals to the majority of Carthian citizens, the idea is likely to be adopted and integrated into policy without much trouble. The second, and more troublesome, is compulsion. Particularly manipulative or powerful Kindred can force the majority of citizens to accept a personal dictate whether they like it or not.

The reliability of the latter approach is absolutely unsound. While it can effect sudden and serious change, the fact is that every vampire compelled to vote against his wishes will seek to undo that vote's effects as soon as he is able. Blackmail, seduction, physical threats and magical compulsion are all short-term solutions that can very easily lead to a long-term problem. They may get the job done for a while, but any vampire who puts them to use is going to have to sink a lot of effort into maintaining loyalty or making sure that the changes he's initiated become permanent before things fall apart.

Factions of dissatisfied Kindred often arise when citizens feel that they have been compelled to support a platform they do not agree with. If they can band together for strength, these vampires become very difficult to manipulate, and can bring significant power to bear. Kindred who think they can bring the political practices of the Invictus or the Lancea Sanctum to the Carthian Movement are sadly mistaken, and often learn the error of their ways sooner or later.

Members of outsider covenants are occasionally called upon to engage in a "political suicide attack" on the Carthian Movement, applying pressure to as much of the citizenry as they can bear in order to provoke just such an uprising. The point is usually to demonstrate the weaknesses of the Movement to its members and undermine their confidence, but often it's just an ordinary attempt to disrupt the ongoing operation of the covenant. The initiator of the attack often suffers the persecution of the Carthian citizenry when it's all over, but some consider a few enemies a small price for the damage done.

CLAN ROLES WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

In almost all cases, the role of a Carthian citizen is determined by her individual ability, not her ancestry.

It is very nearly impossible to assume that any Daeva in the covenant, for example, is likely to work within the same functional parameters as any other Daeva, except in that they are likely to share certain Disciplines. Citizens within the Carthian Movement are inclined to trade their so-called clan-specific Disciplines more freely than the Kindred of more traditional covenants. A member making use of unexpected powers is not so unusual: if a Ventrue with *Auspex* gains the extra benefit of surprise, he is an asset to the Movement.

WHEN CLAN MATTERS

Of course, not every domain allows for a family-blind division of labor. Depending on the local flavor of the Carthian Movement and the rule of law, certain clans find themselves in positions of inequality. One democratic Carthian group in Japan, for instance, outlawed full citizenship for Gangrel early in the 20th century with a vote that declared them "intellectually inferior" and "incapable of rendering decisions with necessary consideration." Another small group operating with a fascist model in western Canada has declared the Nosferatu to be the "ideal form" of a vampire, and restricts all power to that clan and those who are bound by *Vinculum* to them.

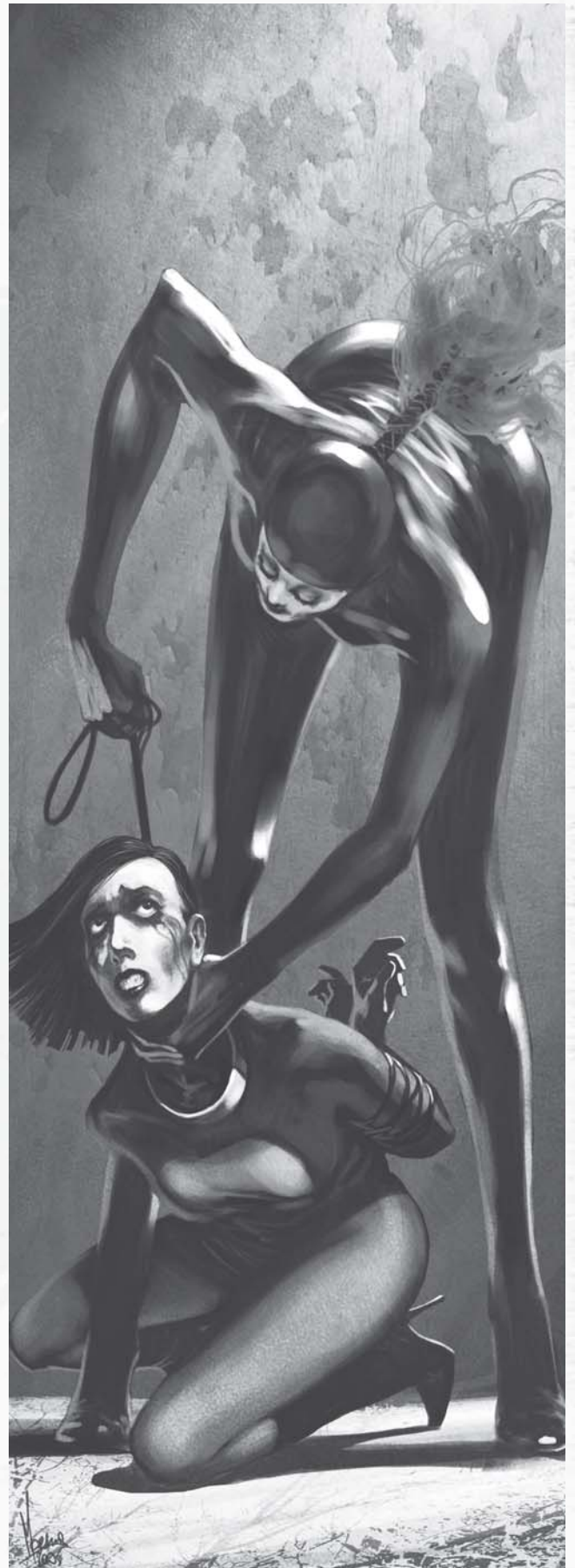
Even in less extreme domains, it must be admitted that blood ties do occasionally translate into social strata. The members of certain clans may enjoy the "plum" jobs because they are close to high-status members of the covenant, while others find themselves gravitating to the riskier or more tedious roles by simple exclusion.

While the designation of clan is ostensibly irrelevant to the selection and performance of roles within the covenant, most Kindred find that their Skill set and Discipline spread often determine their best fit. Thus, while any vampire may perform any function, the likelihood is that those possessing the relevant powers will be more likely to use them in filling certain roles.

AUSPEX, INVESTIGATION AND ACADEMICS

Observers

At the forefront of the Carthian Movement, eager Kindred seek out and record the advanced, experimental philosophies of humankind in hopes of making a discovery that will contribute to the progressive politics of the covenant. Some vampires make a full-time profession of this search, scanning the minds of mortal intellectuals directly so as to bypass the delays involved in waiting for their innovations to reach the masses. These vampires' discoveries are presented at Carthian gatherings for consideration,



where fellow Kindred discuss the implications of trends in mortal thought and decide whether or not to apply them to their own approach.

Many Carthian Observers make a habit of following and predicting all sorts of human trends, not just political ones. Arts, fashion, tactical psychology and commercial attitudes are subjects that many Observers favor, and some become very specialized, spending their entire Requiem analyzing and predicting the development of a particular subculture.

PREDICTION OR PRODUCTION?

Trusted Carthian Observers have real potential to falsify mortal advances, claiming to witness thoughts and preferences that haven't actually occurred yet in hopes of manipulating the direction of the Movement in their domains. Spotting a dishonest Observer can often be difficult, especially if his fellow Kindred are used to responding to his predictions *before* humans openly adopt them.

The potential for this manipulation is strongest in domains where Carthians seek to one-up each other with respect to the speed and full devotion with which they adopt the modern fashion of their living counterparts. The truly complicated results spring from the close relationships Carthian Kindred tend to maintain with their favorite innovators, and the possibility that those innovators will be influenced by the behavior of their vampire friends.

Scholars

Not all Carthian thinkers look to the future for their inspiration. Some are historians and investigators, digging through archaic texts in search of clues and details relating to their favorite periods in mortal development. Keen senses can be invaluable in determining the veracity of an apparent find, and telepathic probing can draw important elements (or even entire texts) from the minds of mortal archaeologists and archivists. Carthian Scholars will frequently devote themselves to the pursuit of a single historical subject, hunting down all available information to provide themselves with the fullest possible understanding of its development and implications.

Many Carthian Scholars spend countless hours comparing details and debating the significance of finds, presenting their conclusions to one another (and to the other members of the covenant) and arguing the application of their favored subject to modern nights. Some are derided for their obsession with the past, but those who provide useful insights are appreciated no less than their neophile counterparts.

Detectives

There are members of the Carthian Movement who can see that there is more than one solution to almost every problem. Direct confrontation may be the most obvious (and most tempting) approach, especially when facing an aggressive foe, but confrontation is often the road to the worst of all possible outcomes. Understanding that many of the obstacles the Movement faces are embodied in the Kindred of the other covenants, some Kindred take it upon themselves to learn everything they can about those vampires and their histories. If these Carthians can get to know the enemy, the reasoning goes, they can find some kind of common ground and defuse any potential conflict. A vampire who hates the Carthians just because he's had some bad experiences with the technology they use can be brought inside if the members of the Movement are careful to alleviate his fears.

Carthian Detectives are not spies. They rarely interact with their subjects, and only engage in surveillance to further their understanding of their origins. Most Detectives spend the majority of their time digging through records, gleaning information from a subject's former possessions and properties and interviewing the subject's acquaintances (mortal and Kindred alike) to build as complete a psychological picture as possible.

Carthian Detectives will often keep secure, coded files on subjects in their home cities. Fellow covenant members are occasionally paid for tidbits of information, and the Detective may be called upon to consult when a problem surfaces with a local vampire. Some Carthian Detectives trade information back and forth in a give-and-take, working to build a complete profile of the entire Kindred population of the domain.

DOMINATE, INTIMIDATION AND PERSUASION

Police

Every Carthian society has citizens, and those citizens need to be protected. While brute force might help keep some threats at bay, the truth is that a strong voice and a fierce gaze are just as effective deterrents. Avoiding escalation of conflict via a mental end-run, application of Dominate can be one of the most efficient and (apparently) painless ways to deal with outlaws and troublemakers in a domain.

Of course, Dominate involves stripping the will of a subject, rendering her incapable of free thought and considered resistance. It's a *Clockwork Orange*-style

of enforcement, reducing the would-be offender to a law-abiding automaton. Many Carthian Kindred are repelled by the idea, and will happily protest its use. Some, however, argue that Dominate is a weapon vampires are gifted with, and that it should be used to protect the Movement, if at all.

DOMINATE AND CARTHIAN PHILOSOPHY

The law of many Carthian domains guarantees certain freedoms for Kindred — most often, the freedom to think, speak and assemble as they wish, so long as doing so does not threaten the Masquerade. The use of Dominate clearly suffers under these laws, most especially when they clearly designate a citizen's thoughts as sacrosanct.

Eliminating Dominate from the stable of Carthian options renders them less capable, but definitely prevents the imposition of mental tyranny. Players with Carthian characters who have access to Dominate should be encouraged to consider the philosophical implications of the Discipline, as applied to their own characters' beliefs.

Saboteurs

There's more than one way to neutralize an enemy of the Carthian Movement. Intellectual sabotage is one of the more underhanded tactics of the covenant, and it's practiced more often than most would care to admit. Often drawn to anger by the stubborn traditionalists of competing covenants, some Carthians are willing to destroy a foe's capacity to act effectively by directing Mesmerize, The Forgetful Mind or Conditioning against them.

The attacks of a mental Saboteur may initially be subtle, but they will be uncovered sooner or later — especially if their victim is seriously crippled. No less a violent assault than beating a vampire into torpor (and often considered much, much more offensive), they will provoke a backlash from all but the most cowed opponents.

Acts of mental sabotage are outlawed in all but the most dictatorial Carthian domains, as they are considered an egregious violation of the freedoms and rights of individual Kindred. There are, in fact, domains in which invasive Domination of the will is forbidden outright, whether directed at vampires or mortals.

Leaders

Sometimes, the Carthian Movement needs clear leaders. Members of the covenant can easily get lost in anarchic debates that threaten to unravel any coherent policy, especially in high-pressure situations. A compelling argument and a powerful voice can

bring a whole cell of vampires together, unifying them and directing them to the achievement of their goals.

Those Kindred best suited to leadership roles are usually careful to take charge of a situation at the behest of their compatriots. Stepping up of one's own accord can invoke accusations of tyrannous or traditionalist aspirations, and are best avoided whenever possible. However, those capable of leading the initiatives of the covenant are also capable of inspiring their comrades to elect them — and many spend much of their time organizing "spontaneous" displays of support.

Carthian Leaders are always in a tenuous position. The temptation to seize total power is always present, and the Beast draws all but the most human Kindred into domineering behavior over the weak. To give in to that urge, though, is to betray the fundamental bases of the Carthian Movement and invite the wrath of one's fellow covenant members.

MAJESTY, PERFORMANCE AND SUBTERFUGE

Orators

The Carthian Movement is, in most cases, a populist organization, and you can't have a populist organization without representatives who appeal to the masses. The skilled Carthian Orators are wise to back their words up with the Discipline of Majesty, enthralling their listeners (when necessary) and amping up the appeal of their statements.

Carthian Orators often lead protests, make public declarations and statements at Elysium and deliver stump speeches to the Kindred of the domain, ensuring that everyone is familiar with the needs and opinions of the Carthian Movement and drumming up support wherever they can find it. Skilled Orators will make use of modern political tactics, putting together attractive sound-bite platforms, propagandizing and smearing their opponents in a bid to bolster the covenant's position.

Crowd-Pullers

Carthians thrive in the company of mortals. Carthians are at their best in a bustling community of thinkers and artists, watching from the wings as the humans all around them experiment freely in search of new ideas. In most domains, though, the Movement is not likely to dominate the most fashionable and populous districts unless Carthians rule the city. Many Carthians with the necessary talents take it upon themselves to reshape their home city, working to attract the creative element of human society to their territories. These "Crowd-Pullers" are



the ultimate herders, latching onto a subset of the mortal populace and creating the necessary conditions for that subset to settle and flourish in Carthian territory. The mysterious relocation of trendy club districts or the sudden revitalization of a derelict neighborhood can often be traced back to the activities of these Kindred and their mortal allies.

Carthian Crowd-Pullers often deal closely with mortals, becoming something of minor celebrities in certain circles. As risky as this proposition may be, it does allow them to exert their power directly over the herd that gathers, facilitating the free exchange of ideas and ensuring that the mortals stay put. Many Crowd-Pullers become central figures in a mortal movement, patronizing artists or arranging popular events. Other Crowd-Pullers operate in the shadows, securing businesses and aligning environmental factors so as to encourage and direct the demographic flow of a city.

Negotiators

Frequent protests and displays at Elysium might stir up the fire with less powerful Kindred, but real wheeling and dealing requires real negotiation. That's where the socially focused vampires of the Carthian Movement step in, handling delicate conversations and facilitating cooperation with more prominent outsiders. Some take up prolonged positions, making a profession of smoothing over disputes and establishing a good reputation for the Movement on a night-to-night basis.

Majesty can enhance the appeal of an argument (or, more accurately, the vampire who delivers the argument) or encourage opponents to honestly reveal their intent at the table, making things easier for Carthian Negotiators and clearing the way for the covenant in dicey situations. Considering that the Movement is often either subject to open persecution or facing it as a possibility in many domains, Negotiators are often valued and appreciated.

Internal debate often benefits from the assistance of Negotiators as well. Establishing laws and focusing the efforts of the citizens of the Movement can take some serious deliberation, and it's always best to have someone charismatic on board when trying to steer the discussion in favor of one's preferred course.

NIGHTMARE, INTIMIDATION AND CRAFTS

Defenders

The citizens of the Carthian Movement are not safe in every domain — especially when the covenant is engaged in outright ideological conflict with

outsider Kindred. Sometimes, it falls to those with the necessary skills and powers to push would-be oppressors away, ensuring that their fellow citizens remain unharmed. Nightmare is a particularly useful Discipline when discouraging attack, helping to defuse or delay some particularly dangerous encounters or fostering an ongoing feeling of fear or unease among the active enemies of the covenant.

Although frightening off an assailant might be insulting, it isn't actually an overtly violent attack, so it isn't likely to violate the tenets of a pacifist or otherwise non-aggressive Carthian cell. Carthian Defenders work to maintain the safety of their cohorts while preventing open conflict, averting what can often lead to a disastrous course of action.

NIGHTMARE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Nightmare may actually present Carthians with peaceful solutions to violent confrontation, but this Discipline also tends to damage the populist image of the covenant. Nobody who espouses a "power to the people" philosophy wants to be known for cowering their enemies by invoking their deepest fears, whether or not it's actually more humane than other available options.

As a result, most Carthian Kindred who make use of Nightmare are careful to make sure that it's covert, letting the enemy assume that their fears arose naturally rather than understanding that they were provoked.

Scarecrows

The territory of the Carthian Movement is often violated by outsider Kindred looking for a quick snack. Mortals therein tend to be more comfortable and vulnerable than those dwelling in close proximity to the members of other covenants (especially the mystic ones), and the Carthians are easy scapegoats for Masquerade mishaps. To divert potential trespassers, some talented vampires take on the role of "Scarecrows"—territorial guards who apply tactics of intimidation in order to guard the Carthian feeding stock.

Carthian Scarecrows will typically do anything they can to discourage interlopers without actually engaging in violence. It's not that they aren't capable in direct conflict, but rather that their purpose is to prevent incursions into their territory and potential slip-ups in the Masquerade, not to do battle with those who defy their warnings. The last thing a Scarecrow needs is a street fight with a determined vampire in front of mortal witnesses. Instead, Scarecrows usually shadow their targets, making it abundantly clear that

they're out of their element while staying just barely out of reach. When violence is necessary, a Scarecrow will do her best to make it as quick and brutal as possible so that the trespasser retreats with a real fear of the Carthians and their territories.

Terrorists

All Kindred are familiar with the powerful motive force of fear. Effecting change via explosive violence or psychological assault is an option that the most desperate vampires may turn to, regardless of the inevitable backlash. Some Carthian Kindred form terrorist cells, operating defiantly in oppressive domains and staging frequent assault on the weaker members of competing covenants in hopes of undermining their sense of security and loyalty.

Most Princes have little tolerance for terrorist Kindred, and will dispatch them as quickly as they are discovered. Many Carthians argue that terrorism usually strengthens an enemy organization's resolve even as it carves the weaker vampires away from them, leaving a leaner, angrier foe to deal with. Then again, some Carthian governments are built on terrorism, keeping outsider Kindred too afraid to resist the imposition of experimental rule.

Contrary to expectations, terrorism is technically illegal in very few Carthian domains. Most don't bother to make the distinction between violent terrorism and murder, which is often covered under law, and psychological attacks, abhorrent as they may be, are usually too difficult to prove or pin down to allow for enforcement.

OBFUSCATE, CELERITY, STEALTH AND LARCENY

Messengers

In any politically charged environment, being ill informed can be extremely dangerous. Up-to-date news on the happenings at Elysium (and elsewhere) must be delivered to relevant members of the Movement in a quick, trustworthy manner to ensure that the Carthians can respond appropriately. Agents capable of avoiding interference and escaping discovery while delivering intelligence can provide the covenant with an unexpected edge at the negotiation table, and those capable of entering secure locations to retrieve that information are more valuable still.

Carthian Messengers typically build up an unparalleled familiarity with their environment, mapping out the fastest routes in the city and arranging necessary obstructions with their mortal allies and contacts. Messengers take advantage of the rapidly changing scenery of their domain, making use of

construction sites, temporary features of the landscape and scheduled mortal events to maximize the confusion of less informed pursuers.

Decoys

It can be dangerous to be a particular Carthian on some nights. When the opposing covenants catch wind of a planned protest or a representative speech at Elysium, they tend to get aggressive. Some will go quite far to try and prevent embarrassment, while others will do anything to earn the favor of their superiors. The Movement commonly employs tactics of misdirection when danger presents itself to one of their respected members, sending a Decoy (or two, or three) into the streets to distract the violent servants of the enemy and ensure that the Carthian in question makes it to his planned appearance. Most Decoys wear a disguise and draw their hunters as far away from the site of the event, choosing the moment of maximum inconvenience to shed their costume. Some employ Obfuscate to actually vanish, while others rely on wit and skill to make their escape.

Carthian Decoys are often used to assist Kindred looking to defect from their covenants, leading those who would prevent the betrayal on a circuitous wild goose chase. Other Decoys prefer to infiltrate competing covenants, spreading disinformation and seeding their organizations with doubt and dissent.

Assassins

The validity of assassination as an ethical political act may be the subject of debate among Carthians, but that an undetermined stance isn't the same thing as discouragement. Sometimes, the only way to get around a firmly entrenched opponent in Kindred society is to make him go away — by any means possible. Stealthy, loyal Carthian adherents may dedicate themselves to the destruction of enemies on behalf of the Movement.

Carthian Assassins are likely to make a public declaration of their motive, making it clear that the destruction of the victim was a political act, not a personal one. The assistance of Obfuscate can be invaluable when escaping the scene of a murder, especially when a statement is made. Martyring one's self for the cause may provide emotional impact, but is more likely to undermine the strength of the Movement in the domain — especially if so doing robs the Carthians of a powerful warrior.

Just about every Carthian domain outlaws the assassination of citizens, and many outlaw the destruction of Kindred in general. Carthians who dwell in domains ruled by competing covenants, however, are more likely to be flexible in the consideration of assassination as a valid tactic.

PROTEAN, ANIMALISM, ATHLETICS AND SURVIVAL

Explorers

In some domains, the establishment of a Carthian power base depended entirely on the ability of the Movement's ability to identify and explore territories that were destined to become bustling neighborhoods *before* development. Moving on the outer edges of a domain and recognizing the features that will appeal to a growing population, Carthian Explorers often help to secure valuable real estate that seems useless to the less modern covenants. The uncanny ability of some Kindred to analyze and grab promising land is arguably one of the most valuable talents available to the Movement, and helps explain the tendency for the covenant to hold domain over some of the busiest and most appealing sectors of cities around the world.

Some Carthian Explorers go even further afield, seeking out towns and villages that don't yet have a significant Kindred population. Those that seem promising become the home for a small cell of Carthian vampires who establish a new experimental government and live out a Requiem removed from the interference of competing covenants. Some of the purest Carthian attempts are preceded by the travels of an Explorer, who often rules the new domain as its Prince.

EXPANSIONIST POLICY

The Carthian Movement is one of the only covenants that actively encourages its members to explore new territories, if possible, and seek domains that have no established government. The practice of trailblazing is controversial, as some Kindred believe that the purpose of the Movement is to encourage change in the existing systems, saving the multiplicity of vampires from the choking grasp of tradition. Others believe that establishing "pure Carthian domains" is perfectly acceptable, citing the philosophical opportunities presented by a "carte blanche" territory.

Both sides of the debate are satisfied by the tendency of certain Carthian Explorers to seek out domains that are already ruled by small groups of Kindred, paving the way for invasion and eventual conquest by representatives of the Movement who have reason to look for a new home.

Spies

A simple fact: only the most experienced or paranoid Kindred constantly scan their environment for spies. Those who do are less likely to notice a bird or a bat in the distance, and of those, few are likely to realize that the animal is actually a vampire. Protean is a

perfect Discipline for would-be spies, and combination with a number of other powers (Obfuscate, Animalism or Nightmare, for example) can provide enough cover to avoid all but the most observant gaze.

Carthian Spies are always on the lookout for dispute within competing covenants (most especially the ruling covenant of a domain), eager to locate potential recruits for the Movement. Some Spies map out the haunts and havens of local vampires in preparation for an uprising, while those who dwell in Carthian domains keep an eye on potential enemies of the government.

According to some systems of Carthian government, spying on one's own citizenry is illegal. Most commonly a feature of constitutional and democratic systems, the price paid in potential criminal disruption is considered a fair trade for the guaranteed freedom from scrutiny.

Teachers

There are certain radicals within the Carthian Movement who believe that restricting one's source of inspiration to human models is unnecessary, and that the animal world should likewise be regarded as a font of wisdom. These Carthians turn to vampires with the capacity to communicate with (and emulate) the so-called lower forms of life for instruction, seeking to discard the human bounds of their behavior and learn from all living beings.

Some of the stranger Carthian domains have actually adopted animal ideals as their own, modeling their system of government on a hive mentality or emulating a pride of hunting cats. While certainly bizarre, the truth is that their night-to-night operation more closely matches the urges of the Beast, and remains relatively stable because of that fact. On the other hand, vampires who act like animals don't often inspire much respect from their neighbors.

VIGOR, RESILIENCE, BRAWL AND WEAPONRY

Soldiers

Revolution is accompanied, in most cases, with war. Limited or otherwise, the inevitable conflict between the powers that be and the ambition of revolutionary elements requires foot soldiers, and there are those among the Carthians who are all-too-willing to fill the role. Motivated by angry loyalty to the cause, a need for vengeance or just an urge to beat on a worthwhile opponent, the Soldiers of the Movement are just as fierce as those of any covenant. Often eager to prove themselves, they step up readily to any battle.

Carthian Soldiers may arrange themselves in military-style units, or they may operate as mercenary

bands with designated roles but little or nothing in the way of a chain of command. Soldiers are almost never uniformed, preferring guerilla tactics to the archaic (and hamstrung) standards of chivalry and classic conduct most opposing covenant forces hold to.

Within the borders of a Carthian domain, most Soldiers double as police, serving the Sheriff's office as Hounds or guarding the officials of government against enemy assault. In democratic domains, the Soldiers tend to fade into the background, only performing their duties when required, but those taking part in tyrannous experiments take care to display their might at every opportunity, warning off potential rebels and criminals.

Guards

As a covenant largely motivated by intellectual concerns, the Carthian Movement realizes that its most precious commodity is one that may be unable to defend itself: the dedicated philosopher. Enemies within a domain can often easily target the thinkers and leaders of the Carthian citizenry; those Carthians with powerful physical capabilities must protect these targets. Some vampires show their support for a particular theorist's position by assigning themselves as his defender, ensuring that nobody threatens his nightly explorations.

There are Carthians who go even further to protect ideals, targeting mortals who the Carthians admire and guarding these mortals from the shadows, hoping that the Carthians' work will reflect itself in the operation of the Movement some night. These Kindred take it upon themselves to make sure that the humans in question are free to (even encouraged to) record their thoughts for posterity, so that they may be communicated to their Carthian compatriots in the future.

Protestors

Under rule that Carthian citizens find unacceptable, those Kindred most capable of resisting violent dissuasion are also most likely to stand up in public and voice the concerns of the Movement. Physically powerful vampires are likely to form the front lines of any protest, preparing themselves to take the brunt of any silencing attempt.

Destruction of property is rarely considered ideal as part of an organized protest, but with creatures as volatile as the Kindred, destruction is a relatively frequent occurrence. More than a few Elysium gatherings have been brought to an early close as angry Carthian vampires tear the carefully chosen décor to pieces, earning the wrath of the domain's ruling covenant. Public disapproval of such outrageous tactics aside, some Carthian cells actively encourage the escalation of

protest into environmental damage, hoping that a sudden release of anger can spark a whirlwind riot among oppressed Kindred. Many an Invictus neonate has been swept up in a mob rampage, violating their oaths of fealty in the exhilarated throes of activity.

CARTHIAN JUSTICE

The Carthian Movement is predicated on the idea that all Kindred are equal in their Damnation. They believe that decisions affecting members of a group should be made by the affected parties. They also share the major grief of the French revolutionaries who deposed the monarchy: that Kindred are not equal under Kindred law. In Carthian domains, there is no Prince, and no officer is treated any differently from any other vampire. If one officer has more or different privileges, those privileges only apply in the pursuit of her duties to the domain and the covenant. This is not to say that Carthians don't abuse their power; vampires are even more treacherous by nature than humans, so of course they do. However, the Carthian system is designed to make up for this with checks and balances, just as mortal systems are. Because of the greater temptation to wrongdoing, these balances are much more complex than their mortal equivalents. The separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers is merely the beginning. Each branch of the Carthian governmental structure is always subdivided with some kind of self-monitoring system of its own. All the watchmen are watched somehow.

Different domains require different watchmen. If Carthians ran Paris's unlife, they would need a few good local officials whose word was trusted by other Parisian vampires. In New York, nobody trusts anybody, so an extensive and impersonal system would be better. In a small town with a dozen or fewer Kindred, the roles of Myrmidon and Prefect might even be rolled into one. The Carthian judicial system shares the diverse character of the rest of the Movement, but news of successes and failures travels fast in the information age of tonight. The most successful practices proliferate quickly, giving the Movement hope that their efforts are not in vain.

THE MYRMIDON

The neutral party in any dispute, Myrmidon is the Carthian Movement's most important office. The whole experiment would fail very quickly without this crucial arbitration of the inevitable disputes among Kindred in Carthian domains. Many such domains did fall in the early days of the Movement, when there

was no Myrmidon, or when one became corrupt. Now, different domains have created different solutions to this problem. The one commonality between all domains is that the Myrmidon no longer has final say. The only right that a Myrmidon has is to bring disputants together to discuss their issues, and keep them so arraigned until they agree to a nonviolent solution. Anything else is beyond the mandate of the office.

Myrmidons exceed their mandate all the time. This usually goes without comment, because, as Carthians themselves, these officers could hardly break Carthian Law concerning Discipline use. On the other hand, the Myrmidons' narrow mandate provides little wiggle room if they do fall under scrutiny for their actions. There are several officers who could bring such scrutiny to bear, usually one or more specifically adapted to that task in any given city. Still, the Myrmidon is the most common office in the Carthian judicial system, and usually the highest.

THE SHERIFF

Conservative Carthian leaders often retain the ancient Kindred office of Sheriff. He may not even be a Carthian himself, depending on the political situation in the domain. One way or another, the Sheriff's job is to prevent Kindred from destroying each other, and to drag wayward vampires before the Myrmidon to resolve any dispute. The Sheriff often has authority to Dominate other Kindred in pursuit of his duties, or to violently render them torpid. This might seem like *carte blanche* to take out personal grudges, but each use of a Discipline or of violence against another Kindred must be defended to the Prefect's satisfaction in front of the Myrmidon.

Sheriffs in Carthian domains also fulfill their regular duties of keeping order in Elysium and otherwise patrolling the city for trouble. They enforce Carthian Law rather than the decrees of the Prince, but other than that, their duties are relatively the same. They have jurisdiction over any other city or Carthian official who does wrong, but if they abuse their power they can be called to account by the Myrmidon or the Prefect, and perhaps other officials as well.

Because of the value Carthians place on equality, a high value is placed on finding the truth in the criminal investigations conducted by the Sheriff. Mekhet are a common choice because of the obvious advantages of Auspex for such truth-seeking. Obfuscate also makes them valuable investigators, allowing them to infiltrate hidden meetings to expose criminals before the worst of the crime happens. Daeva provide valuable physical

prowess, and have their own highly effective method of truth-seeking in the form of Majesty. Majesty is also a welcome method of crowd control, without resorting to violent methods.

THE MAGISTRATE

Large domains often breed disputes that cannot be resolved by the moderation of the Myrmidon. A Magistrate may be appointed on a case-by-case basis, or may be permanently appointed in a troubled domain. Magistrates must be experts on both universal Carthian Law, and the laws of their specific domains. They must also be excellent negotiators, able to create compromises that hotly opposed sides will abide by. They must have the respect and authority to pass down judgments impartially and finally. They must also be proficient in non-lethal combat, in case their judgments cause those who are offended by them to frenzy. It is important that the Magistrate not need others to defend her from frenzied claimants in her court, because of the underlying truth of undead existence that she cannot trust her fellow Kindred.

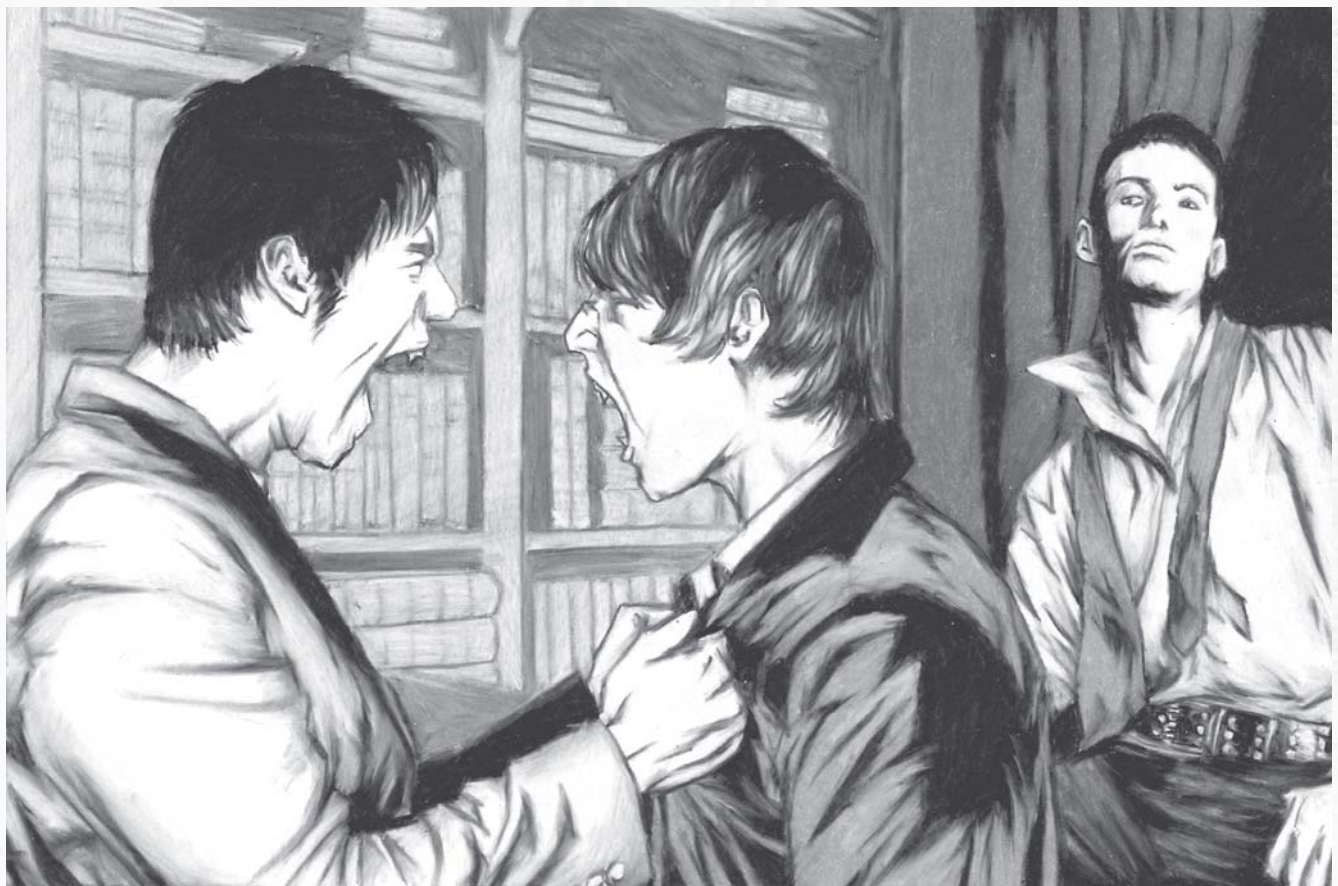
To be a Magistrate often requires at least Covenant Status (Carthians) •• and City Status •••. More respect is required in the city than the Movement, because the Magistrate will have to pass judgment

on non-Carthians as well. All of the city's Kindred must be able to trust the Magistrate to pass fair and impartial judgments, at least in the ideal situation. More often, the Magistrate is a skilled manipulator, who has convinced all sides that she favors them. The line between integrity and corruption is very blurry in the real world of tonight, creating a gray area where Magistrates balance keeping the peace, the law and their own profit.

JUDICIAL CLERKS

Carthian courts share one important thing with mortal ones: they both produce an incredible amount of paperwork. Typing and filing reports is work most Kindred wouldn't care to sully themselves with, though, so most clerks in the Carthian judicial system are ghouls to the officials they file for. Every piece of evidence, every argument and every decision in every case is filed. There are multiple records of what is kept where, because sometimes the Magistrate keeps records, sometimes the Myrmidon, the Prefect or the Sheriff.

Some of these clerks are not ghouls, but most Carthian officials prefer the ensured loyalty. On the other hand, the false love of the Vinculum and the crazed edge of blood addiction can put a strain on



the professionalism of the relationship between official and clerk. Even officials who try to maintain the integrity of their office find their ghoul clerks altering files to the perceived advantage of their masters, while corrupt Kindred often find that their ghouls' comparative lack of subtlety becomes a liability in dealing with the files.

To avoid having 10 different sets of files that all say different things, many large Carthian domains have a Kindred official in charge of central filing. Clever and ambitious vampires find this less-than-prestigious position very advantageous, since it grants unlimited access to information about every Kindred in the city. The ghouls employed by such a Kindred as clerks thus have incentive to make sure that all records are accurate to win their master's favor, and the only problem comes in negotiating with their master to see who gets access to what information.

BAILIFFS

While Magistrates and Myrmidons are well advised to be able to defend themselves, employing extra muscle in the form of lower-ranked Kindred or ghouls is often practiced as well. The rules on this issue vary widely from domain to domain. Commonly, disputants are not allowed to bring their own bodyguards. Relatively often, only the presiding official is allowed to have armed guards present. Sometimes, however, not everybody trusts the presiding official, so another official entirely is in charge of providing security. This may be the Sheriff, the Prefect or even a specialized "Head Bailiff." Once again, each domain's hierarchy customizes its offices and the duties thereof based on the problems they have to solve.

THE TRIBUNAL

For the most serious offenses, among them treason against the Carthian Movement, all the Carthian officials in a domain will convene along with an equal number of otherwise uninvolved citizens to form the jury. Tribunals of this nature hear the arguments of the accused in his own defense, while the panel of officials questions witnesses about his guilt. Each member of the jury has one vote, guilty or not guilty, and the panel of officials (the "Judicial panel") has one vote of its own. Tribunals convict on a two-thirds majority vote. For any crime serious enough to be brought before a tribunal, the penalty is always Final Death.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

In most domains, there is little resemblance between an arrest by the modern mortal police and

the punishments handed down by the Sheriff for breaking Kindred traditions or defying the will of the Prince. Carthian cities are different. The vampires who take you down there might even be legitimate officers of mortal law. Certainly, they will follow procedures similar to those of mortal police, and they will be following Carthian Law. Since this law is designed with its officers' capacity for capricious application of the rules in mind, the criminal can expect a similar level of fairness in his treatment to what he would receive from mortal police.

There are no misdemeanors in the Carthian system. The nature of a vampire's existence demands such depravity that minor offenses are not worth punishing. Not only that, but with no minor charges, it makes it more difficult for officers to justify using their rights of office frivolously. There is only a short list of crimes that all Carthian domains police, though of course individual domains may have their own rules arising from their history. The list of possible punishments is even shorter, and lacks the typical mortal option of incarceration. This option is a little impractical when the only effective methods include things such as sealing the criminal in concrete. Instead, the least punishment that can be levied is a fine of Vitae. From there, the next step is to give up a Retainer or vessel, or to lose access to some hunting territory. Occasionally, a criminal might be branded, the method usually being as simple as the same punishment on a mortal; the fiery iron tends to leave a scar on vampiric flesh that cannot soon be healed. The last minor punishment, doorstep to the major punishments, is evicting the criminal from his haven. This is the last step before exile from the domain entirely; a vampire in a Carthian domain with no haven has no property or territory, and exists at the sufferance of other Kindred. Exile may seem a mercy after this sort of existence. If the criminal is deemed too dangerous to unleash on other domains, but potentially redeemable, then a sentence of torpor may be carried out. The question of what to do when such a sentence ends has never really been addressed so far, since the sentences tend to be rather long. Finally, for extremely serious offences, the offender may be sentenced to destruction. This is usually carried out by first putting the offender into torpor, then incinerating him at a commercial funeral incineration facility.

The most common crime is poaching vessels on someone else's territory. Obviously, this is a crime which could happen innocuously and accidentally. Because of this, the first offense is never punished if poaching is all that happens. If the vessel doesn't die,

the criminal is rarely even caught; even if she is, she'll usually be let off with a warning without even seeing the Myrmidon. When a vessel is killed, the official supervision starts. Another wrongful death will lose the poacher some feeding territory of her own, and a third repeat offense merits exile. Repeated stupidity is too dangerous for a Carthian domain to play host to, even if something so relatively innocent is the cause.

The next most common offense prosecuted in Carthian cities is theft. Theft only qualifies as an offense, however, if an item somebody actually cares about is stolen. Usually this means an item stolen from someone's haven. Most drafts of Carthian Law put the blame for losing anything not kept in a declared haven squarely on the idiot who lost the item, unless it was taken from his person by violence. Even then, the violence is the crime, not the theft. Even in an actual case of theft, if the item is returned undamaged there is usually no punishment. There is punishment on the books for theft, though, however rarely such punishment is implemented: branding is used for the first offense. The pain of the fire sears the punishment into the memory of the thief, while the mark reminds everyone who sees it that this vampire is even less trustworthy than his fellow Kindred. A brand administered as a punishment in accordance with Carthian Law inflicts one aggravated damage, and leaves a burn scar for over a century even after the damage is healed. If someone with such a brand is caught and convicted for stealing again, exile awaits the repeat offender. Serious theft does create one thing any government finds intolerable, after all: unrest in the populace.

Inciting unrest intentionally is another crime most versions of Carthian Law contain, but make conviction for inciting unrest difficult. After all, argument and debate are usually encouraged as means of exploring different options and experiments. Rhetoric with the explicit purpose of creating anger and violence is dangerous, though, and is not tolerated. Speaking in such a way will at least get the agitator barred from Elysium for a period of time. If the offender is found agitating again during that period, or twice more even after the period elapses, the troublemaker will be exiled from the city. Even Carthians only want one revolution at a time, and they certainly want it done *their* way.

When it comes to unrest, neonates are the easiest to agitate, so the Movement's leaders like to know when new vampires are created in their domains. Creating unsanctioned childer is as serious a crime to Carthian officials as it is under a Prince. It's not so

bad by itself, but it is potentially very dangerous. The first such childe is thus usually remanded to custody and supervision by some trusted officer of the court. The sire is allowed to see the childe, and might even be allowed to conduct her normal duties of helping her childe adapt to undead society, so long as neither of them make any trouble. The second time, though, both sire and childe are remanded to alternate custody and supervision. The sire is supervised for a period of time, probably a decade or more, to ensure that no more unsanctioned childer are created. The childe is given to an officer of the court to raise as his own, which supposedly ensures a greater degree of responsibility from the childe than the sire has so far shown. Any vampire who sires a third unsanctioned childe in a Carthian domain is exiled from the city, along with the unacknowledged childe. Both are left to fend for themselves, if they can.

The crimes Carthian courts treat as serious go beyond mere unrest. Injury to members of the Kindred community is the worst crime against Carthian Law, and this is what Carthian officials focus on prosecuting. Proof of a charge of this nature is relatively easy. Corroborated witness reports with no conflicting witnesses or alibi will often make the case. The prior record of the suspect is taken very strongly into consideration as well; someone known to be violent may be a ticking bomb anyway, so many officials are eager to get these Kindred out of their domains. Assaulting another Kindred carries serious penalties, including forcing the guilty attacker to give up enough Vitae to heal the other Kindred and the offender's exile from the city. Self-defense is sometimes accepted as a partial excuse, but will only excuse the offender from the exile part of the punishment. Often, if two Kindred get into a fight, both of them are kicked out of the city. Records of the attacker's identity will be kept indefinitely, in case he finds his way back to the city under another name. A variety of forensic tests can be used to positively identify the criminal, should he ever cause trouble in the same city again.

There is no excuse in Carthian Law for destroying another Kindred. Self-defense is no excuse, and no other circumstance is considered mitigating. Exile is the best that a vampire who kills his own kind can hope for in a Carthian city. If the guilty one has ever been convicted, or even suspected, of another crime, the sentence is more likely to be a period of some decades or centuries in torpor. If the crime was violent, or the Kindred destroyed was particularly well connected, the killer is probably

doomed to destruction himself. Staked and left for sunlight is the usual method. This is often handled much like the Louisiana tradition of “drumming someone out.” The criminal is left in a spot that will get sunlight in the morning, staked; if there’s someone left in the city who will stand up for the criminal, that vampire is welcome to help the criminal, so long as the criminal is never seen in the city again.

Diablerie, however, is never treated so leniently. If this heinous crime is proved beyond a reasonable doubt, immediate destruction is the only punishment. “Burned at the stake” is literally that; the offender is usually staked, put in a coffin and taken to a commercial funeral facility for incineration. A sufficient amount of money changing hands prevents unnecessary questions. If this crime cannot be proved beyond a reasonable doubt, it is simply treated as the destruction of another Kindred. The uncontested testimony of a reasonably trustworthy Mekhet is generally accepted as proof enough, though; nobody sheds many tears if a killer is destroyed wrongly as a diablerist when he really was a killer.

Assaulting or killing another Kindred’s ghoul is also a serious crime, though not as serious as actually attacking another Kindred. Giving up enough Vitae to heal the ghoul is usually considered sufficient punishment. A second incident or the death of the ghoul, however, is sufficient grounds for exile. Ghouls don’t have many rights, but they are the most important form of property a Kindred owns besides her own Vitae. In this case, the murder of the ghoul is treated as an assault on the Kindred’s own person. Exiling criminals is very popular with Carthian courts. It’s less morally repugnant than execution, even with the admitted probability that other cities won’t take the criminal in, and survival on the road is difficult.

There is also one other crime serious enough to merit exile: conspiracy. If a group of Kindred conspires to commit any of the other punishable crimes, even if the crime actually committed was not serious, a conspiracy is, in the eyes of Carthian Law, a threat to the authority of the Carthian Movement. Thus, all participants in the dangerous group are sentenced to exile as soon as it is proven that they conspired together.

INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

Carthian criminal investigations are conducted very similarly to their mortal counterparts. The differences come from two things: the tools and, more importantly, the secrecy necessary. Even in highly classified FBI investigations, there is never quite the same tension as when vampires believe their existence might

be revealed to the public. The truth is not something often sought in Kindred society, openly or otherwise, because exposing the truth about certain important things is so dangerous to the very existence that the Kindred enjoy. Getting to the bottom of a crime involves many uncomfortably direct questions. Not only does the very concept of an investigation threaten the Masquerade, but most of the undead keep their own secrets as well. They are dangerous beings, and loathe letting anyone see what they keep hidden.

The extra tools of a Carthian investigation — the Disciplines of the investigators — are absolutely necessary to overcome the natural disinclination Kindred have to revealing the truth. Different domains have different specific rules, but the generally accepted uses of the various Disciplines in criminal investigations have spread among various Carthian domains all over the world.

Animalism: Animals communicated with and controlled through this Discipline make excellent informants. They will not remember or understand the information they are used to gather in any way that could be damaging, and they are utterly expendable. Suitable animals, such as mice, are also quite innocuous. The full mastery of this power is extremely useful for keeping suspects under control when apprehending them.

Auspex: A reliable investigator with Auspex is the boon of any Carthian law-enforcement coterie. If two can be had, and kept separate so they don’t taint each others’ testimony, investigations become extremely easy. The problem with this scenario is in no way the effectiveness of Auspex in revealing all kinds of information. The problem is that the reliability of any Kindred is suspect from the beginning, and keeping two Kindred with Auspex from communicating with each other is difficult if not impossible. The usual method is for city officials to make they sure know at least two Mekhet who dislike each other, and thus would not talk to each other independently. Then the unconnected individuals can be brought in to corroborate each others’ testimony about the information found with Auspex.

Celerity: Criminals run. Investigators with high levels of Celerity are faster. The advantages of this in apprehending the criminals should be obvious. Besides that, Celerity is an excellent way to avoid death at the hands of a dangerous criminal.

Dominate: Because of Carthian Law, using Dominate in the pursuit of a criminal investigation is actually much simpler than might otherwise be. Confessions obtained by a Carthian Ventrue using

Dominate on the perpetrator of the crime are usually admissible in Carthian courts, because Carthian Law would prevent the Ventrue from forcing anything but a true confession out of the criminal. On the other hand, most city administrations are slow to actually use this “magic bullet,” because, although it is very reliable, it also reliably pisses everyone off. As mentioned before, Kindred hate revealing their secrets. If Dominate is used on the wrong vampire, that vampire will feel justifiably wronged. Carthian Law can’t prevent this from happening, but it does provide penalties after the fact. If not for the sake of avoiding making enemies, avoiding these penalties usually keeps Ventrue investigators in line.

Majesty: Along the same lines as Dominate, this Discipline can easily be used to make criminals reveal their secrets, and it is similarly dangerous to force such revelation without adequate certainty that the subject in question is the perpetrator. Daeva investigators, however, are able to play their somewhat disreputable clan reputation to their advantage in this case. Daeva are expected to worm their way into other Kindred’s confidences, after all, so it doesn’t make people quite as mad when Daeva do so during a criminal investigation. Confessions wheedled out with Majesty are less admissible in court than those commanded with Dominate, but the one is certainly grounds to seek the other.

Nightmare: When using the interrogation tactic of “good cop/bad cop,” the Nosferatu are the ultimate bad cops. The various powers of their signature Discipline are of incredible utility when apprehending and interrogating criminals, but even more risky than Dominate. Where a Dominated Kindred will be insulted and angry, the subject of what can only be called a Nightmare *attack* will be *threatened* and angry. These tactics are thus reserved for suspects nobody would mind seeing disappear.

Obfuscate: Proficiency in this Discipline is another thing that makes Mekhet and Nosferatu scarily good investigators. Criminals who believe they are unobserved continue blithely on in their crimes, until the Carthian officers drop their veil of Obfuscate and bust them. Unfortunately, the criminals the officers are seeking often use their own Obfuscate to hide their crimes, so this sword for justice cuts both ways.

Protean: Not running in fear from an elder criminal is good. Having a safe day’s slumber when anyone who commits a crime against Carthian Law has to worry about you first is much better. The sheer deadly authority of Claws of the Wild prevents a lot of argument when apprehending criminals. Animal forms

taken with Shape of the Beast aren’t exactly innocuous most of the time, but the bat form especially has great mobility. The simple subconscious confusion factor is even still useful for stealth, because not even Kindred will always see “bat” and think “Gangrel using Protean.” The ability to turn into mist, finally, is as useful for stealth as Obfuscate, and as useful for avoiding injury as Celerity. All in all, this Discipline makes Gangrel quite hardy and versatile as investigators.

Resilience: When the criminal attacks, Resilience causes the investigator not to die. It’s pretty much that simple. Most other applications of having high stamina are made pretty much moot by the vampiric condition, but the need to be protected from an untimely death is great in the investigation profession. Not dying is sufficient incentive for most vampires, let alone Carthian investigators, to practice Resilience as much as possible.

Vigor: Criminals run. Unconscious criminals don’t run. Vigor facilitates the latter condition. “Police brutality” is not generally an issue in Carthian Law, so long as the criminal survives to stand trial.

Despite a willingness to use violence and the various Discipline powers at disposal to enforce the law, Carthian officials do follow a form of due process of the law. Hearsay is given no credibility; only eyewitness testimony is allowed, though what an Auspex-user discovers from an object or a target’s mind is considered an eyewitness report. Some domains make the rule that only testimony sworn out under a Dominate command to be truthful is admissible as legal evidence. Circumstantial evidence, such as a weak alibi, can be used to establish probable cause for an arrest, but sworn testimony under Dominate is the most trusted source of evidence by far. After all, although a memory may be placed in someone’s mind, doing so is much more difficult than planting some piece of incriminating physical evidence.

Unlike in mortal society, there is usually no separation of police and court in the process of Carthian justice. The investigators, whether they be the Sheriff’s, the Myrmidon’s or the Magistrate’s officers, report all their findings back to their superior officer, and all the Carthian officers involved in the case share the information with each other. By the time the criminal is brought before the Myrmidon or the Magistrate, the Kindred sitting in judgment already has all the evidence in the case. The criminal is allowed one chance to make a statement in his own defense, once again, under a Dominate-induced injunction to truthfulness. If evidence is revealed at this time that may help the

accused, the investigation continues until it is corroborated or debunked. Otherwise, the judging officer makes her decision based on all the evidence that has been gathered. Usually, if enough evidence has been gathered to bring a criminal in front of the judge, and the accused can't say anything in his defense to change the theory of the crime, the only forthcoming verdict is guilty.

It's not that suspects aren't presumed innocent until proven guilty. Quite the opposite; the standards of evidence the investigators are held to are supernaturally higher than those possible for mortal police to achieve. The mortal democratic idea that one's peers have some kind of right to judge the crime is only seen in the rare case of a treason tribunal, however, because only in that case is the crime considered to be against the entire community. In some ways, this is another nod to the secrecy most Kindred prefer; besides the investigating and judging officers, only the accused and the accuser must be at the final trial. In other ways, it is an acknowledgement that trusting several vampires is a worse idea than knowing how to predict just one. To most Carthians, one judge with special training and put under intense scrutiny seems a more trustworthy agent of justice than a jury.

THE CASE FOR FREEDOM

Members of the Carthian Movement are part of a massive network of Kindred that spans the world. Other covenants are only loosely related from city to city; Carthians, although not connected by ties of government across different domains, *do* take advantage of modern telecommunications technology to maintain their networks of contacts and friends. This is the grandest expression of Carthian forward-thinking. They embrace the modern global economy and community, enabling them to draw on resources from far-off places. Information, money, people — whatever it is they need, Carthians are not limited to one city to get it. On the other hand, the Carthian network is not one thing. Each Carthian knows different people, and a few other Carthians. The path from Carthian A, who wants something, to Carthian contact C, who has that thing, usually passes through most of the rest of the alphabet before even finding Carthian B, who knows contact C. Back on the first hand though, thanks to cell phones and email, this only means it takes several nights of calling and contacting different people to track something down.

The fact that Carthians know each other and share contacts this way is the underlying reason players of Carthian characters get a discount when buying Allies, Contacts, Haven and Herd. However, the diversity of Carthian experiments begs a better picture of these Merits in practice in some different contexts. Not all Carthians have lots of friends, know everybody's phone number, live in communes and have a cult of goth vampire wannabes to feed off. Some, even with the same levels in the same Merits, might just be friends with one popular guy (who has the phone numbers to give them), live in a safe-house set up for homeless Carthians and frequent a nightclub with kinky VIP rooms with bondage and blindfolds making feeding easy. The mission and position of a given domain's Prefect and other leaders affect what these Merits actually look like in extreme ways.

DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES

Direct democracy is popular in small Carthian domains, partly because it is far removed from the usual feudal system of Kindred leadership, and partly because everybody gets a vote. Direct democracies vote on everything — division of feeding territory, whether to pursue a project, where to house the Kindred citizens of the domain, everything. This means a relatively free sharing of information, and though resources are not shared as such, they are always on the table for a vote.

Allies: In a democratic domain, all the citizens will meet frequently, probably at least once a week for meetings to vote on any issues that need to be addressed. These meetings provide a starting point for any Kindred of the domain to get to know each other, so anyone interested in making friends has ample opportunity to do so. Individuals will also sometimes be appointed by the assembly to make friends and cultivate influence with certain groups, so they can then introduce others, or simply call in favors when the city needs them. Gathering friends is an active occupation in this environment, and everyone is actively encouraged to play. Unwary neonates often end up owing quite a few favors they later come to regret, and the lesson is powerful; it's better to be owed than to owe. Kindred who fail to participate, though, learn that it's worse to lack connections than to owe favors; people whom you owe have a reason to keep you around.

Contacts: While these citizens are busily making friends and influencing people, it is both necessary and hard to avoid meeting a wide variety of less influential people who nonetheless have access to certain things.



While making friends in the police department, for instance, it's a short step from doing a favor for the lieutenant to finding out who to call in the department to get the names of known criminals of various stripes. It's an even shorter step from making friends in the forensics lab to finding out where they buy their equipment, or the schools they prefer to hire from. Democratic politics put Carthians in an easy position to make these short steps on their own.

Haven: Adequate housing is difficult to find when you have very particular needs, as Kindred do. Solving this problem is a continuing chore in any growing domain, and even relatively stable cities see quite a few Kindred moving or upgrading their manses. The Carthian Movement promises members they will have the shelter they need, which in a direct democracy makes it everybody's responsibility. Usually, a set of general laws are drafted so that every housing decision doesn't call for a vote. When a citizen has housing desires not provided for in the Law, a vote is called. Often the entire night of the city meeting is taken up with debate, because a change in the housing rules that benefits one Kindred almost invariably puts the burden on another one. If one citizen gets assistance purchasing renovations, why not all citizens? Does she really need these repairs? Why can't she pay for them herself? In the end, though, most requests for assistance

are granted, because even those opposed to a particular request know they will probably want one of their own granted in the future.

Herd: This issue is the most common cause of the failure of direct democracy. When feeding territory is parceled out by majority rule, it's always a compromise, which means nobody is happy. All too often, the Carthian citizens also forget to include the other Kindred of the city in the Carthian division of the herd, leading to bloody conflicts often ending in fire. Success usually lies in creating a standard of law by which each citizen can apply for a certain amount of feeding territory, and establishing what is allowed in defense of that territory. The definition of "territory" is a sticky point, though, since this term just as often includes groups of mortals as it does locations. The end result of this mess is that Kindred in these cities have a lot of hoops to jump through, but once the territory is acquired, it is sacrosanct.

SOUND BITE:

SAMAEL WINTERS, NOSFERATU

"I don't see what business of anyone else's it is where I feed and who I feed on so long as I don't get in their way. What sucks worst is, I don't get to choose. I wouldn't mind asking nice and making sure everyone's got their own, but I just get told by

everyone else, 'this is where you can feed.' They said it's 'cuz that's where I live, but know what? They told me to live there! 'Course, they pay for the place, so I guess I'm aight. I dunno, 's just humiliatin'."

ELECTION NIGHT

A parliamentary republic, known in the American system as a "representative democracy," is a compromise between the desire to represent the interests of all citizens and the impracticality of direct democracy in large populations. A representative democracy is also a solution to the problem of ignorant people voting on issues they know nothing about. The elected representatives are set apart from the rest of society so they can devote all their time to knowing how various issues affect the people who elected them. Of course, the oldest complaint in any republic, all the way back to Rome, is that these full-time politicians are full-time useless, or worse, full-time criminals, robbing their constituency for their own profits. The truth is somewhere in between the extremes, but however corrupt or irreproachable, a Parliament allows the citizenry control over who decides their fate while relieving them of the responsibilities of doing so themselves. Although most republican domains retain the office of Prince, Parliament is always the body truly in control of the domain. Any motion passed by Parliament that the Prince denies without good reason would surely be taken as grounds to remove the Prince in question.

Allies: A vampire needs friends to survive; it's a simple, every-night fact. Keeping the citizens who elect them happy means that Carthian representatives are well served by making sure those citizens have ample opportunities to make connections. Some representatives do this by holding parties and other social events, inviting the Kindred they represent. Other representatives push resolutions through Parliament to create social clubs and meeting places where a Kindred community could form. Once the Kindred of the domain have gotten to know each other, they provide each other with references and introductions when they need to make friends outside the community.

Contacts: Carthian domains of this style usually appoint an officer to gather the necessary information to find all kinds of things, whose job is to then help others in the Movement find contacts when they need them. He keeps huge files of phone numbers, names, addresses and preferred forms of compensation for brokers of all kinds of information and materials. His duty is then to hand this information over to any Carthian who needs it, and keep a

record of who asked for it and why. Of course, if the reason specifically contradicts Carthian Law, he's not going to hand over the info. This officer's job can be very dangerous, because what he guards is almost as valuable as Vitae itself. Sometimes, it's much more valuable, so some domains prefer to spread the risk by assigning multiple officers to gather information for different types of acquisitions. Carthians call these contact-brokers many things, but the most common title is RC, short for "requisitions clerk."

SOUND BITE:

RICHARD SANDOVAL, MEKHET RC

"Welcome to my office. Now, you're new, so here's the ground rules. My associates Rainer and Smith are my blood Retainers, and you are to respect them as you would me. They are asleep now, but Rainer will soon wake for his shift. They are in charge of the rest of my staff. The rest of my staff are mortal, so watch what you say and do. They are extremely intelligent, and suspicious by nature. This is necessary, in the work I hired them to do. I serve our fair city by running this detective agency, and these mortals do the legwork. They make phone calls, comb the classified sections of newspapers, monitor thousands of Internet sites and keep extremely detailed files. I have more mortals employed in my company than there are Kindred in this city."

"Now, what did you want to know?"

Haven: Housing assistance is available easily enough in republican domains. The Parliament usually establishes a trust fund, authorizing yearly withdrawals for all Carthians in the city for the purpose of improving their havens. Whenever a withdrawal is made, the Kindred in charge of the trust fund helps the one making the withdrawal spend the money, taking notes and making sure it actually goes to haven-related purchases. Although there is enough scrutiny of these funds that embezzlement isn't practical, overseeing them does carry the advantage of knowing where every Carthian in the city sleeps.

Herd: The usual republican policy on this issue is, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Established feeding territories are left alone, unless a new Carthian is in desperate need. Mostly, laws are made protecting Kindred's rights to their territories and herds. Sometimes, the Parliament also hands out incentives to generous elders who help younger Kindred establish their own herds.

SHARE AND PLAY NICE, OR ELSE

Altruism is about as common in vampires as a love of tanning. Observing this, some noble-minded

Carthians take it upon themselves to perpetuate the dictatorial role of Prince in their domains, using that autocratic power to force policies of sharing and cooperation on the city's population. This is known as a socialist dictatorship, a system plagued by many, but not all, of the same problems as the feudal system usually replaced. Even a small change to the system is enough to keep people from figuring out how best to exploit it for a while, though, and to a Carthian any system of laws is better than a system of unilateral decrees. Even the Prince is expected to share and share alike. Naturally, non-Carthians who are forced to participate in this sharing are never happy about it. Domains attempting this form of government rarely succeed without a huge Carthian majority in the Kindred population, or else the other covenants at least (if not the unbound) must be exempt from the redistribution of wealth.

Allies: To make sure all citizens are well connected, socialists hold many parties. These are the same parties where citizens are encouraged to celebrate how equal they are, how much conditions have improved for so many. Those who had to give up wealth to be redistributed are encouraged to meet with the Kindred who received their money or property, and everybody is encouraged to meet new people and make friends. Any Kindred in town who don't attend the occasions are sought out and asked why they refused the invitation, so no Carthian has a good excuse not to make a few friends.

Contacts: Information is one of the resources socialist Carthians seek to distribute fairly. To this end, every Carthian is set up with a cell phone plan granting unlimited minutes to other Carthians, and a list of the numbers of all the other members of the plan. Members are encouraged to call around the list to find anything they need, and some members are periodically assigned to call the less active members of the list to keep them in touch and abreast of the news.

Haven: All Carthians are assigned somewhere to live in socialist domains, and that's that. This is the most resented aspect of socialist rule, because those who have the money and property are forced to house those who don't. Those who receive free housing are seen as freeloaders, and that's often true. Some domains encourage the beneficiaries of the city's generosity to consider their free homes as temporary, and actively seek other lodging. Some don't, though, and subject the resentful Kindred to a community-wide guilt trip over their antisocial attitude.

SOUND BITE:

NICHOLAS KRAFT;

ORDO DRACUL VENTRUE

"This is unacceptable, simply unacceptable. I require the use of my entire facility exclusively for myself and my students, but this Carthian who is now Prince says I must house neonates! Are my students not neonates? Yet he wants me to house more. So I say to him, will they be learning from me then? Do they have the devotion to live in my house, under my rule? He says, of course they have that choice, but I must not force them. Fah! It is him forcing me to house them, not me forcing anybody!

"Why doesn't this busybody Prince house these young fools himself, or make his supporters do it? I did not subscribe to this egalitarian nonsense! I will certainly not be supporting it. If these neonates wish to live with me, let them try to pass my tests and learn. Otherwise, I will give them nothing.

"I have taken nothing from any Prince this city has ever had, and I thus owe nothing in return. It does not matter to me whether Carthians, Invictus or either of the ridiculous churches rules. I just want to be left alone!"

Herd: Kine are the most basic resource for Carthian socialists to share, but perhaps the most difficult. Mortal will is easily bent to Kindred purposes, but to bend it so that any vampire may feed instead of just one, without revealing the nature of all involved to the public — that is a tricky thing indeed. Long before the socialists take power, clubs and businesses offering convenient ways to feed are procured by active Carthians. These establishments range from kinky sex clubs where the Kiss is just one more taboo pleasure enjoyed behind closed doors and never spoken of in daylight to semi-legitimate blood banks that purpose many donations to a darker cause.

MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

When a Carthian Parliament starts passing laws enforcing shared resources and equal feeding, the domain is transformed from a republic to a democratic communist state. As with mortal communism, complaints that the government takes away from everyone until everyone is equally poor are often voiced. Successful communists hand out enough to everybody that there are no serious thoughts of revolt, despite universal grumbling. Communism is usually phased in gradually by Parliament rather than as a sweeping change all at once, further reducing unrest by appealing to Kindred's natural stagnation.

Allies: It's easy to make friends when you're required to spend a certain number of hours each week in a

work group assigned by the government. Communist Carthians assign each member of the Movement a task for the general good, so in this style of domain it's normal to end up in two coteries at once: the one you choose and the one assigned to you for covenant work. Some of these groups are actually formed just to encourage friendships among covenant members, and some are assigned the task of cultivating friendships with valuable mortal allies.

Contacts: In a communist domain, it's always *somebody's* job to know who to talk to. The basic necessities of unlife are officially provided for, and everything else is moved smoothly through thriving black markets that are usually secretly encouraged. There's usually an official in charge of contacting Mercenaries and procuring weapons, for instance, and, for a small favor, he's probably more than willing to share the name and location of one of the guys he buys guns from. The line between official channels and under-the-table deals is often difficult to discern, and usually meaningless anyway; if something needs to get done, it gets done — and nobody asks too many questions.

Haven: Shared housing is a simple matter. In a domain such as this, any property owned by Kindred is considered the property of Parliament. All citizens are assigned their own space to stay and sleep. Usually, this space shared by a work gang, so they can do their community service together first thing each night, then disperse for their free time. Depending on how well a work gang does their job, they can apply for better housing.

Herd: Cultivating easy feeding grounds is one of the most prestigious tasks for a work gang in a communist domain. This is a necessary part of any Kindred's Requiem, making the gangs in charge of handing out drinks very popular. The form of the herd depends entirely on the gang in charge of gathering it. A Carthian hooked up with vessels in this kind of city might be introduced to a kinky nightclub with private rooms and plenty of willing customers, or unveiled as a prophet in a false cult or even given a sterile medical treatment, receiving the blood intravenously. It all depends on what the work gang assigned to gather the herd is able to make work.

MY WAY OR THE HIGHWAY

In a socialist dictatorship, the despot is the sole arbitrator of the law. Some Carthians view this as unacceptable, but still want one person ultimately in charge. One person to rein in the evil, one person to blame for failure. In a system called constitutional tyranny, one vampire makes the laws, and the courts interpret them,

with neither having any power to affect the purview of the other. If there is a clear law for a situation, then the tyrant cannot affect the outcome of a judicial case. If there is no clear law, the tyrant must make one, and the court has no say in what it will be. There are many more details, which vary from one constitution to another (see p. 96 for more). Whatever they are, the tyrant makes the rules the city will pass its nights under, and the courts make sure the rules are put into practice.

Allies: Ritual remembrances of Carthian identity are essential for a functional tyranny, because the citizens must stay committed to the ideals embodied by the constitution. The Chain is practiced every week, if not each night, and other events marking important times in the history of the domain and the Movement are also celebrated. These rituals provide a strong sense of community, and ample opportunities to make acquaintances, or even friends.

Contacts: The community in a constitutional domain promotes free sharing of information. Some cities host meetings for various interest groups, explicitly and officially educating citizens about how to acquire guns, people's phone numbers and addresses or any number of other things. Usually it's just a matter of word of mouth, facilitated and encouraged by the ceremonies that bring citizens together almost every night. By providing citizens with an easy excuse to see each other, community events naturally provide the chance for anyone who's interested to build their network of contacts.

Haven: Whether by the sire, the sire's coterie or someone else, newly embraced members of the Movement are usually provided with free housing assistance from a specific source by the constitution. This assistance is usually in the form of advice on how to sun-proof and fire-proof the home that sufficed when the neonate was a mortal. An existing house can be turned into a haven fairly easily by making it vampire-friendly; its location can even be improved by learning of good feeding grounds that happen to be nearby. This philosophy is prevalent in constitutional domains: take what's already there, and make it work.

Herd: Co-opting hospital or Red Cross blood banks is by far the favorite method for tyrants to feed their citizens. It's reliable, and it eliminates the risk of accidental killings during feeding. The problem, of course, is the risk of Masquerade breaches. Therefore, in cities where this approach is unfeasible, a more standard approach such as introducing new Kindred to some of the local nightclubs is used. There is a stronger tendency in these domains than most for the

Carthian government to actually make a point of owning the most popular feeding grounds, to reduce the possibility of problems with the Masquerade.

INSIDE A FAILED EXPERIMENT

It takes years, even decades, for the Carthian Movement to perform an experiment on a domain. The preliminary work, agreeing what form the experiment should take, consumes much of this time, but simply making sure the other Kindred in the city follow their rules and don't louse up the exercise with their very presence is also difficult. More experiments fail than succeed, but fortunately the Carthians always have more ideas. From the ashes of one failure rises a new agenda, a new mission, ready to add its strains to the Requiem.

But not always. Sometimes, a failure is devastating enough that no Kindred remain in the city. This devastation doesn't have to involve fire and screams. Embarrassment, shame and depression are enough to drive the undead away from their works. A failed city can sit empty, the nights safe from vampires, for months or years before another covenant claims the domain, especially if the Kindred in neighboring cities never hear the details of the failure (and who likes advertising their mistakes?).

This, then, is a tour of such a failure, the rise and fall of a Carthian experiment and a detailed look at the wreckage left behind. The city isn't named, because this could happen anywhere.

HISTORY: MISTAKES WERE MADE

The city had been Carthian domain for over three decades, but the Prefect of the city was nearing the end of his elected tenure. When the Movement took over the city, it was decided that the Prefect would be elected and would serve for a period of not more than 40 years, or until he felt the need to sink into torpor. That time was approaching, and the Carthians of the city realized that they needed to make arrangements for leadership and government after the Prefect was gone.

One particular coterie was very interested in this process. The coterie had come together by chance, but had one important trait in common. They felt that modern society was in decline, that the United States in particular had created an environment in which what a person could get away with was more important than what he could do (see the sidebar for a rundown of the coterie and its members). The coterie, calling itself the Burning Horizon, took charge of the future of the city's nights, with the old Prefect's blessing and endorsement.



C. Wilkins

BURNING HORIZON: A PROFILE

The Kindred known collectively as the Burning Horizon took the name because they felt that looking ahead was more important than falling back on "traditional values." Of course, looking to a bright horizon is painful to vampires, but that, they felt, was the point — growth *is* painful, and it was a fatal conceit of the modern world to think otherwise. The coterie's focus was first and foremost on developing working solutions to current problems, rather than worrying about what had or had not worked in the past. The past, after all, was a different animal, and with technology and culture changing so quickly it was more important to remain current than to keep detailed records of the past.

The coterie consisted of five Kindred:

- Christian Ingersoll, the former cop. Chris never worked the "mean streets" as a police officer. His beat was the richer neighborhoods, and, as a result, he saw white collar crime, drug use, domestic violence and other ugly crimes up close. He discovered, though, that he wasn't really able to arrest many of the criminals, and when he did, their friends on the bench usually "took care of things." By the time he was Embraced into clan Gangrel, he was bitter about the justice system and everything involved with it.

- Tanya Righter, the sociologist. Tanya was disillusioned with society by the time she graduated from college with her first degree. She saw what the corporate and academic worlds did to those who braved them, women in particular, and wanted no part of it. Blessed with a talent for manipulating bureaucracies and a knack for finding loose grant money, she remained in college, learning more about the trends of the worlds of business and political theory, until her Embrace as a Daeva.

- John Nowak, the laborer. John might look like a grease monkey (and, by his own admission, he is), but he's never without a dog-eared paperback in his pocket, and he knows a lot more about the history of the last century than his nigh-toothless grimace and slow conversation would indicate. John believes that the greatest tragedy of the modern era is the move away from skilled labor, and laments that young men grow up never learning to change their cars' tires, much less oil. John is a Nosferatu, Embraced one dark night in his garage.

- Max Nesler, the thug. Max (do *not* call her "Maxine") was a petty thief and drug dealer. The coterie found her one night after she'd run afoul of a rival dealer who had beaten her bloody and left her in a parking lot. Christian debated killing her — despite her bad luck, she was an opportunist and a parasite, but Tanya pointed out that the young lady was simply playing the cards she'd been dealt, and clearly had some valuable skills. Christian decided to Embrace Max (he would have left this to Tanya, but Chris doesn't really trust Succubi, and John wasn't interested in siring childer).

- Ted Samson, the deserter. Ted joined the Army out of high school, hoping for a quick and easy way to pay for college. He soon discovered that

military service was nothing resembling "quick" or "easy," and fled the post before the end of basic training. He had barely had a chance to collect his wits when he was set upon by a vampire incensed by Ted's sloth and cowardice. The vampire Embraced him, but Ted wasn't clear as to why until he realized that he now he could *never* go back to either the Army or his family. Ted regrets his laziness, and brings an almost desperate zeal to everything he does. He is a Mekhet.

The Burning Horizon felt that the neonates of American Kindred society, born as they were to culture of entitlement and privilege, were ill equipped to deal with the harsh realities of unlife. They were used to always having a fallback — parents, friends, credit cards — and few of them had any idea what it was to be truly in danger. The coterie realized that they couldn't do much to change these problems in mortal society (and indeed, the complacency of the modern mortal made feeding easy), but they were all sickened to consider what the future of the Carthian Movement might entail if all of the new recruits were spoiled weaklings.

Therefore, the coterie approached the Prefect and outlined their plan. They intended to "train" the vampires of the city, to teach them everything that they lacked from their mortal lives in addition to what they needed to know about the Requiem. To that end, the coterie spent several months with the Prefect (since he was the oldest Kindred in the city) soaking up everything he had learned over more than a century of unlife. When he finally sank into torpor, the Burning Horizon was recognized as the authority in the city.

Why was there never a vote or a consensus on the matter? The very complacency and ignorance that the Burning Horizon sought to stamp out worked for them, in this case. The past 30 years had been difficult on the Kindred of the city for a variety of reasons, and many of them had left, perished or sank into torpor. Only a bare handful of the vampires who originally supported a democratic method of choosing a leader remained, and the newer arrivals didn't know enough to demand it. The Burning Horizon now ran the city's nights.

The night after the Prefect dropped out of sight (for letting other Kindred know the location of one's sleeping chamber is unwise), the coterie outlined their plan for the future. That plan had three steps: Accounting, Training and Assignment. First, they planned to make a full accounting of all of the vampires of the city. Kindred would be required to provide their names, clans and a method of reaching them (a phone number or email address sufficed). The coterie would also

interview each Kindred and assess his or her ability to function in the city. Any deemed delinquent would receive training in such areas as self-control, feeding, stealth, combat, Discipline use, finance, mechanics and any of a dozen other fields that the coterie was equipped to provide. Finally, each vampire was given an assignment within the city, something to do to earn the privilege of residing there.

ENFORCEMENT

Some of the Kindred in the city balked. The Burning Horizon's plan required them to give away too much information, donate too much time and submit to schooling by another vampire. Many of the city's neonates, especially those Embraced from the current generation, had a hard time submitting to any teacher or master. But these vampires learned quickly that the Burning Horizon wasn't interested in argument.

The first Kindred to make a public refusal was a Ventrue named Jennifer Caufield. Born to privilege in life, she had been Embraced by a powerful Invictus Kindred in another city and had moved and joined the Carthians out of spite. She hadn't wished to work under the Invictus, and had no desire to work as a Carthian — she simply wanted to enjoy her Requiem as an eternally beautiful predator. Christian had Max pay Jennifer a visit, and Max gave Jennifer a crystal-clear choice: submit to the Burning Horizon's methods or leave the city. Caufield refused to do either. She flew into a rage and ordered Max out of her sight, but the Gangrel was quite prepared for this response. Before Caufield knew what had happened, she was tackled, trussed, staked and subsequently beheaded. Thereafter, her skull decorated the wall of the Burning Horizon's Townhouse, as a warning to other miscreants. She wasn't the only one to refuse, and she wasn't the only one to meet Final Death because of it, but other Kindred simply met the sunrise rather than lose their heads. The Burning Horizon wanted to make it quite clear that dissenters could expect to disappear entirely, leaving nothing but ash on the wind.

ON LOCATION: THE TOWNHOUSE

The Burning Horizon rented out a townhouse in the city that the coterie members used as a base of operations (though never a haven). They didn't bother with expensive security measures, but did keep the house well stocked with weapons and ammunition. They never declared the place Elysium — Tanya was the only member of the coterie who felt that the tradition of Elysium had any merit —

deciding instead to simply make sure that they had the upper hand while in the Townhouse.

The house was tastefully decorated, but designed with an eye toward large, open spaces, enabling Kindred to be quickly surrounded and incapacitated if need be. The Townhouse was never open unless at least three of the Burning Horizon and three ghouls were present (as discussed below, the coterie was notorious for its use of blood-bound servants), and no more than two visiting Kindred were allowed inside at once. The main room was sparsely furnished, including only a few chairs, a single plastic table and the skull of Jennifer Caufield nailed to a bare white wall.

The windows on the first and second floors were fitted with bulletproof glass, and every room contained at least two fire extinguishers. The house boasted an expensive and effective fire retardant system (halide rather than water-based, since the gas doesn't hurt the Kindred). Very little wood could be found in the house, apart from the sharpened stakes that the Burning Horizon and their ghouls carried.

Tonight, the Townhouse sits empty. Officially, Christian still owns it, but he hasn't been back since he left the city.

The Horizon's tactics for enforcing their policies were swift and brutal. They knew, of course, what the weaknesses of being a vampire entailed, and likewise knew how to exploit the particular foibles of each of the clans. Over the years, the coterie had cultivated an astonishingly efficient system for feeding (see sidebar), and each member maintained several ghouls. Using these servants, the coterie focused on overwhelming and incapacitating their enemies quickly. The coterie members used whatever weapons and methods suited their environment, usually eschewing guns since they had little effect on Kindred. Bladed weapons such as machetes and hatchets worked better, and could sever a vampire's hands or feet to prevent retaliation or escape long enough to facilitate a well-placed stake. The Horizon's methods were brutal, but the message was unmistakable — other Kindred were welcome to direct their own Requiems, but not in the Horizon's city.

THE HORIZON'S METHODS OF FEEDING

Hunting for Vitae consumes a great deal of any vampire's time, but the Burning Horizon managed to find ways to speed things up. Their methods wouldn't work for all Kindred, of course, but the fact that the coterie was always well fed made their takeover of the city much smoother. Their methods hinged on three main principles.

First, the Burning Horizon had no qualms about killing. This would eventually damn Tanya in particular, but, of the five members, only John ever bothered to leave vessels alive.

Second, they used ghouls to best advantage, sending their blood-slaves out to kidnap and seduce vessels for them. Of course, this wound up either driving the ghouls mad with guilt or making them into sadistic monsters, but the coterie stayed fed.

Finally, the Horizon wasn't above feeding on Kindred, especially if the Horizon meant to kill those Kindred anyway. The Horizon studiously avoided diablerie, but would always drain a vampiric offender dry before destroying him. The effects of a single drink weren't usually enough to deter the Horizon, and even so, they made sure that the entire coterie never drank from the same source, just to make sure that the Vinculum wouldn't take hold.

Of course, this violence had an effect on the sanity of the coterie, but to what extent wouldn't become apparent for several years.

SUCCESS

It took the better part of five years, but the Horizon managed to achieve their goals. Every Kindred in the city now had a particular function, and the coterie had a complete list of the vampires dwelling therein. The Horizon established a strict set of rules for how the Kindred of the city could comport themselves during their "off time." (Though, since many of the jobs they assigned these Kindred took the better part of a night, time off became something of a luxury anyway.) Although Max and Christian were the most aggressive in policing the Kindred of the city, they also assembled a small coterie of vampires known in the city as "the Pack" (after the commonly used title of "Hound"), whose given task was to find and apprehend anyone not on the Horizon's roster. Kindred outside the Pack were encouraged to report vampires they didn't know, but were not given any particular reward for capturing them. (After all, it wasn't their job, and if they were doing someone else's job, then they weren't doing their own.)

Kindred found to be in the city but not on the roster were usually taken to the Townhouse and questioned. Depending on who was doing the questioning, the tone of this interview could be friendly, terse or downright hostile. Visitors from other cities were expected to contact one of the locals (and if someone on the roster vouched for a visitor, the Horizon usually stopped asking questions), but the Horizon understood that not all Kindred had the knowledge or contacts necessary and was prepared to be merciful. All visitors, however, were added to the roster, and if they were unwilling to give up the information necessary, the Pack drove them to the city limits and told them not to return.

ON LOCATION: CITY LIMITS

Of course, "city limits" could refer to any area bordering the city, but the term came to mean a specific place during the time that the Horizon was in power. When the Pack referred to "city limits," they were referring to a quarry just over the county line. The quarry wasn't in use anymore, except as a swimming hole in the summer months, and made for a superb place to bring uncooperative Kindred. The Pack used the drive to the quarry as a gauge of how polite their charge was. If the Kindred being expelled was understanding, they let him go at the county line (and pointed him toward a nearby motel). If the vampire was unpleasant, violent or belligerent, however, they threw him into the quarry.

In the years after the Horizon disbanded and the city stood empty, members of the Pack occasionally turned up paralyzed. They didn't sport stakes from their chests, and the paralysis didn't seem to be simple torpor. It seemed, rather, that their veins were full of stagnant water instead of blood. What did the Pack awaken in the bottom of that quarry?

The Kindred in the city weren't universally pleased with this system of government, but the Horizon and their supporters were quick to point out that remaining in the city was by no means mandatory. Neighboring cities, however, weren't always willing to accept "refugees" from the Horizon's brutal reign. For a start, the leaders of these cities were never sure that the Horizon wasn't sending out spies and agitators — it seemed the sort of thing they were likely to do. Fv7 her, the Kindred authorities of the bordering cities had many reasons to hate the Horizon and their politics. After all, passing through the Horizon's city was a hassle, because the Pack was so aggressive and effective. Visiting or hiding out was difficult because the Horizon's policing "outed" any hidden vampires quickly (and such vampires often found that hiding their status via the Obfuscate Discipline didn't work well for some reason — see Carthian Law, p. 172). More annoying still, the Horizon's practices seemed to work. The Kindred who chose to dwell in the city had purpose, training and a good supply of blood, since the Burning Horizon had worked so hard to alleviate problems with feeding. The leaders in nearby cities, most of whom were not Carthians, were afraid that the Kindred of their cities would want to emulate the Horizon's examples and thus tried to both vilify them to their own charges and make unlife as difficult as possible for the Horizon and their followers.

These leaders needn't have worried. The system was efficient, the rules were clear, but disorder wasn't far away.

BREAKDOWN

The Horizon's system failed because the Kindred in charge refused to recognize that their tactics were making them inhuman. Many vampires died making the city what it was, and the souls of the Burning Horizon shouldered the weight of those murders. Many more mortals perished under the fangs of the city's Kindred, and the Horizon likewise took the responsibility for most of them because of their tactics in feeding the city (see the sidebar).

To the coterie's surprise, Tanya was the first to break. Her lust for knowledge slowly became a more primitive hunger, and she spent her nights "managing" the Bank, drinking all she could stomach from the still-living victims. The destruction of the Bank is the night that surviving members of the Horizon use to mark the beginning of the end.

ON LOCATION: THE BANK

The Bank, variously known as "the Blood Bank" and "the Bar" by the city's Kindred, was a converted ice cream parlor that the Horizon purchased and made into a storage unit for human Vitae. Kindred could arrive at any time of night and receive a few points of Vitae, free of charge, provided they were on the roster and were in good standing. Their souls were clear, too, since

the blood came in plastic bottles (though for some reason seemed just as potent as fresh blood). Supplies ran out every night, of course, but for a vampire who needed to take the edge off before hunting or who had suffered injury in service to the city, the Bank was a godsend.

Of course, the Bank wasn't as benign as it seemed. The Horizon kidnapped mortals from all over the city, never discriminating based on race, age or any other factor, and slowly bled them dry over the course of the night (which was why the blood was fresh). Most of the time, the Horizon sedated the victims first, but Max didn't always bother and Tanya tended to drain them dry herself before sedation was necessary.

The Bank still exists, and is haunted by a number of the ghosts of the victims. Despite the fact that the Bank hasn't had power in years, it is always freezing cold inside the building, recalling the nights when innocent people shivered through their last terrifying hours.

One night, Max (who usually brought the victims to the Bank), was unable to find much in the way of suitable vessels. Hunting had grown difficult as the mortals in the city had become afraid of walking at night, since people so often went missing. Tanya flew into a frenzy born of rage and hunger, and tore the place apart looking for any spilled drops of blood. Max ordered her ghouls to subdue Tanya, but the ghouls'



enhanced strength seemed to leave them when they tried to fight someone they had been ordered never to disobey. Tanya killed them and took their blood, and in the process the Bank caught fire. Max fled, but Tanya perished in the blaze. The city's fire department put out the flames before the building was destroyed, and found the ghouls' corpses in the ashes.

Christian and the other members of the Horizon suddenly found themselves with several daunting tasks. First, they had to find a way to replace Tanya, since her knowledge of law and political theory had formed the cornerstone of the Horizon's doctrines. Second, they had to find a way to help the Kindred of the city feed, since the Horizon had promised to do so. Finally, the Horizon knew that there would be repercussions from the mortal world, and they had to help the Kindred cope with them. That last task cost the Horizon another member.

Ted Samson, the Mekhet member of the Horizon, had been responsible for many of the disappearances in the city. (Max was the other member commonly tasked with obtaining vessels.) Although Ted had taken great pains to leave his sloth behind, he still wasn't as thorough as he should have been. Or perhaps the guilt of leading so many people to their deaths caused him to sabotage his own efforts? No one knows, but the fact remains that the mortal police tracked Ted Samson down one night. He jumped into a car and tried to outrun them, but as the sun crested the horizon he was still driving. Rather than risk exposing the Kindred, he steered his car into a truck full of gasoline. Christian still speaks highly of Ted's sacrifice, but it was not enough to save the experiment.

By now, the city's Kindred were learning the truth about the Bank, and many of them were outraged. Some of the Kindred had been given tasks such as "making sure mortals frequent the nightclubs" and "maintaining the Masquerade," and they felt betrayed by the Horizon's actions. Even more incensed, though, were the Kindred who had been teaching other vampires how to maintain their Humanity in the face of hunting and killing. The Horizon, it seemed, expected others to do as they said, not as they did, and that didn't go over well with the Kindred of the city at all. The rumblings of dissent began, and it didn't take long for them reach the ears of the neighboring cities.

FAILURE

The Horizon's greatest strength was their efficiency and their resolve. Without Tanya, the Horizon lacked the knowledge to act decisively. Without Ted, the Horizon

had lost a major source of zeal and commitment. Max died in a brawl with Kindred from a nearby city who refused to accompany her to the Townhouse, and John left the city as quietly as he'd arrived. He left behind a simple note to Christian. It read, "Good run, huh?"

Christian tried fleeing to a number of the nearby cities, but they were not prepared to give him asylum. He discovered that many of his former supporters were ready to put his head on a pike as soon as he admitted failure, but there was nothing else he could do. In disguise, he left the city one summer night, and his current whereabouts are unknown.

THE CITY TONIGHT

A few Kindred still dwell in the city, but they don't try to form any kind of government. This city has had enough leadership for a while. Hunting is difficult, anyway, since the mortal authorities are still trying to make sense of the long years of people turning up missing, and the citizenry is still afraid of night. The leaders of the cities bordering the Horizon's look at the city as bad luck, and, as yet, no covenant has tried to establish a power base there (though that will undoubtedly change as memories fade).

Although these thoughts haven't crossed anyone's mind yet, somewhere the roster of Kindred might still exist. Though some of the Kindred in that book are dead (and are noted as such if they died before the Horizon's fall), many of them are still extant, and this roster notes their names, clans and special skills, as the Horizon used the roster as a way to keep track of what these Kindred had taught to whom. The roster might have been destroyed by now, or perhaps Christian still carries it. Then again, it might simply be in a safe at the Townhouse, waiting to be discovered.

Somewhere beneath the city, though, the former Prefect still sleeps. Are his dreams troubled by the failure of the Burning Horizon? Does he hear the screams from the victims of the Bank, or know the truth about the waters of the quarry? Indeed, was the experiment that took place in the city truly a failure, or is it still in progress?

THREE TAKES: CARTHIAN PROBLEM SOLVING

Trying to pinpoint how a "Carthian" would solve a particular problem is futile, because the Carthian Movement doesn't *have* a binding philosophy that provides any kind of easy road map to problem solving. Likewise, since an individual Carthian's culture, mission and

position are so much more definitive of his approach to the Requiem than his choice of covenant, when discussing how the Carthians approach issues within their domains it is helpful to look at more than one Carthian.

Therefore, consider the following scenario. The city isn't named because the specific location isn't critical. All that's important is that the city boasts a significant mortal population (between 500,000 and a million or more) and good representation by the Carthian Movement.

THE PROBLEM

One of the city's oldest and most well-connected Kindred recently met Final Death. The circumstances of his demise were tragic, but unforeseeable. On his way home one morning before sunrise, his car was struck by a drunk driver and rendered inoperable. The driver of the other vehicle was killed, and before the vampire's driver recovered from the accident, the sun had already begun to rise. Caught without shelter, the unfortunate Kindred perished in flames. He left behind, however, several ghouls who were now without master and without sustenance.

Most of these ghouls found other Kindred masters within a few nights of the vampire's demise (whether they wanted to or not). One, however, a

man named Hugh Grauer, decided that he had enough servitude to the undead, and decided to shake his addiction. He checked into an anonymous clinic and tried to prevent his lust for Kindred blood from overtaking him. He might have succeeded, too, had not a young Mekhet been using that clinic as a herd for months. (A junkie in life, the Shadow enjoyed the slight buzz he got from feeding from addicts.) The ghoul still retained his strength, and when the vampire attacked him, the ghoul flew into frenzy and fought back. He managed to shove a chair leg into the vampire's chest and paralyze him, and, unable to control himself, glutted himself on the Kindred's blood. The ghoul then set the body on fire and fled the clinic, resolving that he could be both a ghoul and a free man.

Since that night, Hugh has ambushed five vampires, attacking by surprise and incapacitating them before they could react. He knows Kindred weaknesses and culture much better than most ghouls, and has used traps, knives and even a bow to achieve his ends. While Hugh is still mortal, he is driven by the strength of his addiction and his hatred for all Kindred, but never lets either one blind him. Hugh is an extremely dangerous opponent for the vampires of the city.



Aside from the obvious Masquerade problem that a rogue ghoul presents, the Kindred of the city can't have the possibility of being ambushed, staked and drained hanging over their heads (though the irony of the situation doesn't escape some of the older Kindred). Plus, what if other ghouls got the same idea? Something must be done, and three Kindred from the Carthian Movement have stepped forward with ideas about how to do it.

THE KINDRED

Two of the Kindred described here are neonates, none of them more than 20 years into their Requiems. The third is an ancilla, Embraced just over a century ago.

ELENA SINN, THE DOULA

A *doula* is a woman who attends a birthing mother, helping her through the process of labor without unnecessary medical interventions. The practice of having a doula attend births is centuries old, and while the word is Greek, most cultures have a similar office. Recently, doulas have become more common in the delivery rooms of America and Europe, and Elena Sinn was one of the first. She attended hundreds of birthing mothers, and saw the focus and strength of the women on a daily basis. One day, though, the woman Elena was attending slipped into cardiac arrest, and both she and her infant son died. There was nothing Elena could have done — but the Nosferatu who found her the following night disagreed.

The vampire was the dead woman's great-uncle, and blamed Elena for what had happened. He felt that she had talked his niece out of using necessary medical practices with her "New Age feminist talk." Rather than killing her outright, he tried to break her via the Nightmare Discipline, but Elena, used to functioning under stress, kept her wits about her long enough to explain what had actually happened to the unfortunate mother. Faced with the knowledge that Elena had no part in his niece's death but unable to admit it, the Nosferatu Embraced her and fled.

Elena still haunts the maternity ward at the city's hospital, hiding in delivery rooms and hoping that her silent words of encouragement help mothers in their time of need. When doctors force their needles and scalpels on women who don't need them, however, Elena isn't afraid to let her Nosferatu nature come to the fore. She is a Carthian through and through, and makes it her mission to keep Kindred, especially older Kindred, out of matters of which they have no current knowledge.

ROGER CURTIS, THE GHOUL'S ADVOCATE

Roger rejects the commonly used appellation for his clan. No vampire should be called "Lord," he feels, because that title should be reserved for God only. Deeply devout, Roger spurned the Lancea Sanctum because he believes (as he did in life) that organized religion is counter to the true teachings of Christ. An advocate for equal rights, Roger has made it his mission to make sure that ghouls are allowed to live their lives as mortals as well as serving the Kindred. Sometimes, this means a vampire must actually bind *more* ghouls so as to spread out the work, but Roger, a ghoul before his Embrace, feels that the benefits of being a ghoul outweigh the drawbacks in most cases.

Roger is young, only five years from his Embrace, but that also means he is well in tune with the mortal side of the city. He has become a kind of folk hero to the ghouls of the city's Kindred, and is constantly trying to push the city's governing Kindred into passing laws against the ill-treatment of these blood servants. He recognizes that because of the Vinculum, many ghouls would never describe their relationships as "abusive," but this is just one more unique hurdle to overcome.

MELANIE, THE HUNTER

Melanie goes by no other name. She claimed that she lost her birth name along with her blood, but she's probably just being poetic. In any case, she was Embraced in 1902, at the tender age of 13, by a Daeva who saw her at play with her friends and was impressed by her grace, speed and stamina. That Daeva wanted a daughter and apprentice, and for five decades that was the role that Melanie played. As the modern age changed the world and the Carthian Movement appeared and grew stronger, however, Melanie realized that she had options not previously available, and asked her sire for her freedom. Reluctantly, he agreed — he could have kept her with the Vinculum, of course, but he suspected that Melanie was strong enough to keep herself free.

Melanie, kept locked away for so long, immersed herself in Kindred society for years thereafter, becoming an avid member of the Carthian Movement and briefly serving the city as Hound. She is a keen student of vampiric behavior and a superlative tracker and hunter, and expert in luring Kindred out of hiding (usually for identification or conversation purposes, though she is quite capable of beating them into submission).

THE SOLUTIONS

Each of these Kindred has an idea how to find Hugh, and what to do with him once he is caught. Although any of these ideas could conceivably work, the Carthians also have agendas that their methods would further, and as such are not interested in sharing the duty or modifying their approaches.

ROGER'S SOLUTION

SOUND BITE: ROGER

"This guy's a ghoul. That's not an easy position to be in — believe me, I know. He's going to drum up sympathy among other ghouls in the city, and don't try and tell me they don't know. They'll hear. I always did.

"So I think we need to involve them. They're better at long-term hunts than we are anyway, and they can go places we can't. And if they're on our side, if we keep them in the loop and try to make them understand what a danger this guy is to them as well as to us, then we lessen the chance of them turning or helping Hugh covertly.

"And, hell, while we're at it, let's get the mortals in on this. Let's slap Hugh's picture on the news, get him wanted for murder or something. Nothing big enough to drag the Feds in or anything, but just local so that cops and citizens' groups are keeping an eye out. I don't want him dead, necessarily, but if he's arrested, then we've got some room to maneuver."

Roger's theories are sound, but he doesn't tell the whole story. In addition to keeping the ghouls of the city "involved," he wants a chance to see who works for whom and how they are being treated. He's not above fomenting dissent among blood-slaves if doing so can give him spies or leverage against future rivals.

Roger is also curious whether ghouls, similar to vampires, become noticeably inhuman as their behavior deviates from that of humanity. He wishes to capture Hugh alive to discover this, but Roger also doesn't wish to risk Final Death or the deaths of any hunters he brings with him. He views Hugh as a curiosity, potentially with much to teach the Kindred, but isn't willing to risk *too* many lives or unives to gain this information (and certainly not Roger's own).

Roger's position and mission, as might be inferred, revolve around relations between ghouls and vampires. In particular, he believes that with slow introduction to the state of being a ghoul, a mortal could learn to manage the Vinculum gradually and not become a complete emotional servant to the Kindred. (To which other vampires have replied, "Possibly, but why the

hell would we want that?" Roger is sickened by the number of times he hears that response.)

ELENA'S SOLUTION

SOUND BITE: ELENA

"This man hurts people and is going to get hurt himself. Ghouls possess some of our healing capabilities, but they can't just shrug off gunshot wounds. That means we should watch the medical community, the anonymous clinics, the hospitals in the poorer sections of town and any back-alley doctors who specialize in pulling bullets out of criminals. There are only a few people, when weighed against the whole population, capable of providing medical care, and sooner or later Hugh will need one of them.

"I suggest that a qualified coterie made up of Kindred who had medical experience in life, headed by myself, make it their mission to find Hugh. I further suggest that this coterie be given as much autonomy as possible — we'll never find him if we have to report our methods and positions.

"Finally, I think it's a good idea if Kindred who keep ghouls keep them isolated for a while, so that no talk of an 'underground resistance' starts up."

Elena wishes to rid the city of any other Kindred like herself (that is, with knowledge and influence of the medical community). Knowing who they are and having some authority over them would be a good start. In particular, she would love to find her sire again, since she never forgave him for taking her away from her beloved profession. She doesn't much care about Hugh, believing her skills in stealth to be honed enough to avoid his detection, but is happy to use him.

Elena is primarily interested in expanding her own power base in the city, but isn't doing so for entirely selfish reasons. She would love to see the vampiric leadership forbid Kindred from feeding on sick or injured mortals under hospital care, because she knows what kind of chaos one mysterious death can cause for healthcare workers. She has watched lawsuits, firings and misery ensue because some careless vampire took too much blood from a patient, and thinking of a vampire attempting to feed in the maternity wing fills her with revulsion. She views the hunt for the rogue ghoul as a way to raise Kindred awareness about her own causes; she just needs to be subtle about it. To that end, if Hugh doesn't provide her with a way to showcase her issues, she might have to stage something.

Elena's position is that Kindred should hunt only from healthy mortals, believing that taking in sickness only makes the body vampiric sick.

MELANIE'S SOLUTIONS

SOUND BITE: MELANIE

"This is simple. Leave me alone. I'll find the little cockroach, but I can't do that with five other Kindred hanging around me. If I need help, I'll want it on deck, but I'm a better tracker than anybody else in this city, and too many cooks will definitely spoil the soup."

Melanie enjoys the hunt and doesn't want anyone else involved. This is partially for the reasons she states, but also because she doesn't want anyone around when she finds Hugh. She believes that he could be useful, either as a ghoul (and she knows his last Vinculum is gone) or as a source of information about the "dead zones" in the city where vampires don't have eyes and ears. She doesn't want the other Kindred to have this knowledge, of course.

Only a part of mortal society in her youth, and locked away from mortals (except those her sire brought her to feed upon) for so long, Melanie doesn't much care what kind of threat Hugh might pose to the city or to the mortals therein. Likewise, she isn't really concerned about collateral damage caused during the hunt. She is simply thrilled to be an active predator rather than a spider sitting lazily in a web, and, therefore, she wants to drag the hunt out as long as possible. In her mind, she is already forming a notion of Hugh as her adversary, dodging her machinations and killing other Kindred to spite her. She occasionally fantasizes about Embracing him and letting him go, just to even the odds a little, but, of course, she has to catch him first.

Melanie is an enthusiastic Carthian, and her mission and position are bound up in the notion of "vampires as hunters." She vociferously objects to Kindred being called "parasites" and lately has been studying evolution theory to see how Kindred might have developed as a check to mortal population explosion. Hunting is her Requiem, and hunting down Hugh threatens to become an obsession.

STUMBLING BLOCKS

The city's undead leadership are happy to have as many pairs of eyes looking for Hugh as possible, and have given these Kindred (and possibly others) leave to search for him. They provided Elena with the coterie she sought, allowed Roger access to many (but not all) of their ghouls and encouraged others to do the same and agreed to stay out of Melanie's way.

Of course, nothing is ever so simple. The three Kindred's paths intersect occasionally, and they act as their own deterrent. Consider the following problems:

ON THE HUNT

The actual hunt for Hugh means that several dangerous supernatural forces are out on the streets at the same time looking over the same evidence. If three factions interview the same bum on the same night, he's likely to crack and start inventing details, or just refuse to answer (and he might give information about the people who have interviewed him previously).

Also, the three Kindred and their pawns might meet up in more direct ways. For instance:

- Melanie meets up with a band of ghouls in Roger's employ. She can recognize the scent of a ghoul's blood, and stalks them for the better part of night before realizing that they are looking for the same target she is. Will she kill one just to make a point (that is, "stay away from my prey") or confront Roger about it?

SOUND BITE: MELANIE

"Look, all I know is that I found three ghouls sniffing around that alley off Broad where that Savage was attacked last week. I don't even know that it was Hugh that attacked him, but suddenly I've got three heavily armed blood-slaves hanging around, and that, to me, looks suspicious. None of them are dead — this time — but if your boys get in my way again I make no promises."

- Elena's coterie includes a few Kindred who still hold down jobs in the medical community, and therefore have access to information that others don't. Melanie might stalk these Kindred in order to learn what they know, but doesn't wish to be detected. If one of these vampires spots her, she might destroy him to keep herself hidden, or simply bribe or threaten him to stay quiet.

- As Roger's ghouls patrol the neighborhoods where Hugh has been spotted, injuries are inevitable. Victims brought into hospitals in the poor sections of town distract Elena and her coterie, which might lead her to confront Roger and tell him to either be more careful or provide his own medical care for these ghouls.

KICKING UP DUST

As the hunt wears on, the effects become noticeable, and the three Carthians find that their "comrades" are actually hindering their efforts. The question becomes, of course, whether or not the other Kindred are *actively* making the hunt more difficult.

But out of devotion to their own agendas, desire to be the first to catch Hugh or simple spite, the possibility of sabotage is never something to discount.

- Roger's ghouls skirt close to the edge of breaking the Masquerade. Only a few nights later, Hugh attacks and kills a young Daeva in the same neighborhood. The repeated gunfire and violence draws police attention and the neighborhood watch, and Melanie finds hunting there a lost cause, even though the area assuredly would yield more information.

- Elena and her coterie spread rumors among the Kindred of the city that perhaps the Vinculum isn't as sure as was once believed. Some Kindred take the opportunity to feed their ghouls more frequently, reinforcing the Vinculum (and making the ghouls stronger, to boot), but others, to Roger's horror, simply kill their servants rather than take the risk.

SOUND BITE: ELENA

"I haven't conducted extensive studies into the psychology of blood-slaves, and, honestly, psychology isn't my area anyway. But my colleagues inform me that under a severe enough stress, mortals can abandon just about *any* moral or emotional tie. They might feel bad later — but if, by abandoning something, they're setting you on fire, does that really matter? Again, I don't have conclusive data, but I'm sure not going to be making any ghouls anytime soon."

- Melanie uses a great deal of Vitae during her hunts, and she revels in feeding anyway. She tries not to kill mortals often, but, even so, her predators often involve beating someone senseless to feed upon them. (She detests hunting by seduction, because anyone who would be seduced by a 13-year-old girl doesn't deserve to live, in her opinion.) The increased number of mortals injured and babbling about being bitten on the neck makes more work for Elena's coterie (which, naturally, often takes responsibility for covering up such carelessness).

CROSSED AGENDAS

What if one of these Kindred actually finds Hugh? They each have radically different ideas about what to do with him. Indeed, the ideas about Hugh's disposition that the Kindred make public might not even coincide with what the Kindred actually plan. If someone finds Hugh, will the Kindred make it public, or simply let the hunt go on?

- Melanie wishes to find Hugh and either Embrace him or kill him. She loves the notion of a competing hunter, lurking in the streets vying for the same prey as her, but she has to admit that giving him the power of a vampire might be a dangerous move (since he's already proven adept at killing Kindred). On the other hand, that might just make the thrill that much more intense. Publicly, Melanie claims that she will kill Hugh on sight.

- Roger insists that his ghoul servants capture Hugh alive, and has pulled every string possible to ensure that if the mortal authorities find Hugh, they do likewise. Roger really hopes that the police capture Hugh — catching him, after all, is the hard part, and Roger would rather see a bunch of cops die than his precious ghouls. If the cops do catch Hugh, Roger believes that he can engineer a "transfer" and then remove Hugh from custody. In any case, Roger wishes to talk with Hugh and recruit him, letting him become a sort of exemplar for ghouls in the city. Of course, this will require putting Hugh under a Vinculum, but Roger believes that he can Dominate Hugh into accepting Roger's terms. And besides, having the once-notorious Hugh Grauer as a manservant would do wonders for Roger's status.

SOUND BITE: ROGER

"We need to take him alive. Who knows how many Kindred he's killed? We can't just have people disappearing with no trace, and then kill the only one who can identify them. It isn't like we'll ever find corpses, after all. The good news is, though, that since he's a ghoul we can shoot him and beat him without worrying too much about him dying. Just have to make sure he's transported here quickly, so he doesn't die en route. No, *here*. Not to a hospital, for the love of God."

- Elena is only peripherally interested in Hugh, but he gives her an excuse to further her own goals. Thus, should she actually find him, she will try to kill him and keep his death secret. She's also not above using scare tactics (such as claiming she's found a list of known Kindred that Hugh supposedly composed) to find other Kindred in the medical community. Her ultimate goal is to *rid* the medical community of all Kindred but herself, and so she intends to do away with her coterie as soon as the opportune moment arrives. It is *possible*, however unlikely, that she might actually choose to work with Hugh, feeding him victims while protecting him from retribution.



CHAPTER THREE: THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT AND THE DANSE MACABRE

I've seen them all:

good Princes, bad Princes, tyrants, despots, would-be philosopher-kings and monsters who hid their evils in the cloak of office.

None of it made a difference.

An edict declared from on high is always detached and arbitrary.

The only time you can respect a decision
is when you've had a hand its making.

—Rick Merriman, Carthian diplomat

I have never had a vote, and I have raised hell all over this country.

You don't need a vote to raise hell! You need convictions and a voice!

— *Mother Jones (US labor organizer), The Autobiography of Mother Jones*

Joining the Carthian Movement is not as simple as one would assume. No less fearful of infiltration and destabilization than any of the other covenants, Carthian Kindred must reconcile the advantages of increasing their population with the disastrous potential of bringing troublesome or unfaithful vampires into the fold. While some argue that selective criteria for Embrace and recruitment is a violation of the inclusive structure of the ideal Carthian society, others know that indiscriminate acceptance of every potential member is a recipe for disaster.

JOINING THE MOVEMENT

Becoming a Carthian seems simple, on the surface. It's not a covenant that demands your soul, or your humanity or your unquestioning obedience through a humiliating period of abject servitude. What the Movement demands is that you do your part, that you help others do their part and that you mean it. Or if you don't mean it, at least put up a good façade.

Although the barriers for entry seem low, the Movement is usually an aggressive recruiter. As always, exceptions exist. When the Movement is supreme in a domain, the Carthians may take on a more elitist tone. It all boils down to self-interest, as so many elements of the Requiem do. Kindred who are fascinated by the powers of dark sorcery are going to gravitate toward the Acolytes or the Dragons — the sorcerous covenants don't need to court them. Vampires with a hunger for spiritual fulfillment and a higher purpose get more proselytizing from the Circle, as well as pressure from the Sanctified, but those groups are still claiming to be the sole source for the soul's fortification.

The Carthians play to a different and altogether earthier set of drives. They help you get fed, get a haven and get set up. They are eminently practical (or, at least, that's what they project to outsiders). This is a tough sell in some ways because all the Carthians have are qualities and benefits that any Kindred can, in theory, acquire for himself with a little hard work.

But between theory and practice lies an oft-overlooked gap that is, on closer inspection, a plummeting

chasm. Getting fed and staying safe and keeping a bank account when you're dead and can't talk to your loan officer by daylight is not easy at all, and when you're starving and broke and scuttling into the foil-lined trunk of your car every day, unveiling the deeper secrets of undeath is a terribly low priority. Sure, there are dark miracles and transforming secrets that can make the Requiem far easier, but they're only available after months or years of dedicated service. The Movement can do the same thing, tonight, without having to sacrifice your brain on the evil altar of some dead saint, undead madman or tyrannical nature goddess.

This is the selling point for the Movement. The Carthians offer results easy, and offer them fast.

JOINING FROM THE UNBOUND

The Movement gets a lot of its members as converts from the unbound. In fact, unbound neonates make up the demographic most likely to go Carthian. The typical recruitment narrative is, a newly Embraced vampire splits from her sire (or is abandoned) and tries to go it alone as one of the unaligned. Maybe she runs into trouble right away. Maybe she makes a go of it before succumbing to loneliness or the pressures of endless nights of strict self-reliance, with only the slenderest margin for error. However long she spends independent, it's enough to sour her on total freedom and persuade her that she needs a bigger gang at her back. The Movement is a compromise choice. The covenant puts obligations on her, sometimes very serious ones. But its respect for her agenda and desires is also a key philosophical element, one given true attention in many domains. If she winds up in an area where the covenant is hypocritical and only giving lip service to the freedom of its members, well, by the time she moves into her haven it's probably too late. At least she gets a decent blood supply as a consolation prize.

The more experienced an unaligned vampire is, the more likely he is to stay independent. That said, there are some times when undecided ancillae or even elders come into the fold. Usually, they're driven by

vulnerability. Being independent is fine in a very stable domain, but if any covenant stages a successful coup and seizes power, the unaligned are often the first against the wall simply by virtue of having no unified contingency plan. If someone other than the Movement takes control, the unbound may join the Carthians as a likely looking group of rebels. If the Movement is the prevailing power — hey, nothing wrong with playing on the winning team. Especially if the alternative is sharp wood and a sunlit field.

There are many other ways to become vulnerable, of course. If the rest of your coterie gets massacred, the philosophical reservations against being a joiner may suddenly seem very quaint. Similarly, an unaligned elder who emerges from a long torpor, weak and confused by cell phones and televisions, may run to the Carthians after the first promise of modernism.

JOINING FROM A COVENANT

In most domains' covenants, some members are members because their sires were members. There are certainly second (and third and fourth) generation Carthians, but they're a smaller proportion. Many Carthians were something else before they joined the Movement, often members of another covenant that made extravagant promises but couldn't deliver. For them, the Movement looks like the realist faction: the group making smaller plans that can be realized, instead of grand ones doomed to stay dreams.

On the other hand, some defectors aren't disappointed, just greedy. Once a Kindred of any age distinction feels she's gotten all the advantage she can from one group, why not drop it and find a new one? It's not like she's going to keep sucking on a mortal once the blood's all gone. Why wouldn't she scale up her behavior to the social level?

Invictus

The Carthians poach a few Kindred from the Invictus, but not very damn many. There's too much pride on the line. "Rescuing a mind from the hidebound, reactionary, regressive policies of the Invictus" provokes more rejoicing at the next rally than successfully recruiting someone from the Ordo Dracul would. Often the Invictus would rather kill one of their own than let a bunch of smelly proletarian hippies with patchouli residue under their fingernails gloat about recruiting her.

In fact, Final Death is often the unspoken issue hovering over many Invictus defections. Say what you want about the First Estate, the Invictus play hard,

and sometimes the winner isn't content to high-five the loser and say, "You showed good hustle, kid." Bungling a high-stakes Invictus defection can make the entire covenant too hot to tolerate. Even if Final Death isn't imminent, a Vinculum could be, or simply a drastic reallocation of property and privilege. If the loser stays in the Invictus, there's not much he can do about it, but if he jumps ship, suddenly his assets aren't his for the winner to take away. They're Carthian property.

Of course, this raises the question of why someone fleeing one secular, political covenant would go to the other secular, political covenant. The answer is that the Carthians might truly be more attractive, since they're focused on many of the same issues as the Invictus, even if they approach them from the opposite direction.

Furthermore, there's a matter of fear. Neither the Carthians nor the Invictus often admit it — publicly, one of the few things they agree on is that blood sorcery is over-rated Vitae-powered wanking — but privately, that stuff is freaky. It doesn't matter how many Fortune 500 executives you've got begging to suckle Vitae from your undead breast, seeing some pasty Acolyte cut his arm and conjure out a bunch of skittering red spiders is scary. Some may see unholy powers and immediately want to sign up, but generally those with a thirst for the arcane join voluntarily, not under duress. When fleeing a political machine, the place that looks safe is inside another one.

When elders and ancillae leave the Invictus for the Movement, it's often a case of rats leaving a sinking ship. The one thing the Invictus must be, without exception, is effective. That's not always possible, especially if the First Estate is paralyzed by infighting, or is led by an out-of-touch elder (or a Ventrue succumbing to the clan curse or a Daeva who has receded so far from functional morality that she needs to murder her vessels in order to feel anything at all) and the Carthians have an unusually sharp Prefect. The more a vampire has invested in the Invictus, the harder it is to admit the First Estate's power is broken and concede to the Movement, particularly if that vampire has made enemies or thinks the Carthians will humiliate him if he comes slinking into the fold. On the other hand, a warm welcome and willingness to let bygones be bygones is a staple of Carthian tactics — if the defector has a lot of power to offer, and the Prefect is unusually sharp.

Lancea Sanctum

If the Invictus has to always be effective, the Lancea Sanctum has to provide spiritual comfort. That's a

tall order for undead monsters, ministering to undead monsters, and telling them that the path to inner peace lies in being a more perfect undead monster.

As with the unaligned, most converts to the Movement from the Sanctified make their move as neonates. A few months or a year of Lancea Sanctum services is enough for some Kindred to decide they made a bad mistake pledging. This phenomenon is particularly acute among American Kindred, who are used to the idea that you can give up a religion, or find a new one in the phone book. While the Sanctified maintain that enlightenment takes time and dedication, cynical and impatient modern vampires are likely to suspect that it's just a ruse, designed to suck them deep enough into the church structure that they can't extricate themselves after finding out there's really nothing behind the altar.

Yet, for every Carthian who makes a hard break from the Lancea Sanctum, there's another who either joined the Movement without a vehement repudiation, or who actually started attending services after being inducted into his cadre. This dual membership is manageable, but comes at the cost of being looked at askance by both groups. With the ordinary Kindred it's hard to know what his loyalties truly are, but with a Sanctified Carthian, it's difficult to even know what he's claiming.

Ancillae and elders rarely leave the Lancea Sanctum. When they do, they most often join the Invictus, if the First Estate will have them. That's a big if. Since those covenants are often strange bedfellows, experienced Sanctified often have good relations with Invictus vampires. On the other hand, if the Invictus has a good relationship with the local Sanctified, the Invictus is unlikely to jeopardize that for just one defector.

The Carthians offer experienced Sanctified a political machine without spiritual demands. Frankly, the appeal is, in many cases, no hassles. The breaking point is Theban sorcery, of course. An elder who departs is an embarrassment, but one who starts putting sacred secrets into the hands of secular *democrats* is often labeled heresy. An Inquisition typically responds with what can only be rightly described as wrath.

Ancillae just might squeak out with their skins intact if they submit to extensive conditioning or Vinculums to prevent them from sharing their Theban mysteries. On the other hand, by the time a vampire learns enough to merit that kind of security, she's usually high enough that she'd be more comfortable, even as an outsider in the Lancea Sanctum, than subjected to that kind of abuse.

To really defect, then, the experienced Sanctified sometimes has to completely burn her bridges and flee to a new domain where she isn't known. If she does that, she's not going to join the Carthians (as opposed to the local temple or Invictus group) unless she really, really hates her old covenant. That kind of revulsion from within the ranks is rare. But when it does happen, it's a choice victory for the Movement.

CIRCLE OF THE CRONE

Structurally, the Movement and the Circle are very similar, even though they're radically different in purpose and history. Both are loose confederations of smaller groups pursuing specific philosophies within a framework of general agreement. The Movement doesn't care which modern organizing principle you follow, as long as it fits the rubric of collective individualism. Similarly, the Circle doesn't care which pagan gods you revere, as long as you acknowledge the primacy of the crone-figure.

Structurally, then, moving from one covenant to the other is a comfortable experience. The difficulty lies in making the shift from a spiritual existence to a relentlessly secular one. This is particularly true since the Circle's spirituality emphasizes the naturalness, indeed superiority, of the Kindred. The Movement's secular power base is the living, and many Acolytes are estranged from the living.

Yet that very estrangement is what can lead experienced Acolytes to join the Movement. Advancement in Crúac dehumanizes, and a dehumanized vampire has a harder and harder time relating to and coping with mortals. The Carthians, on the other hand, are structured around those very tasks. Therefore, an aged Acolyte who is suffering because she's out of touch (either having trouble feeding or dealing with modern times) could find the support structure of the Carthians — lots of nearly warm neonates who deal well with mortals and seem to like helping each other find food and shelter — very appealing indeed.

Even Acolytes who haven't had time to deny their humanity through Crúac sometimes run to the Carthians after the first taste of its terrors. Learning even early secrets of the Crone's dogma can send a sensitive soul fleeing, but neonates who were drawn to the Circle's promises of sky-clad freedom and individuality aren't going to be a good fit for a lockstep hierarchy. They're more likely to settle for the Carthians as the next best thing — or, indeed, a better thing since their path to power doesn't require an Adept to mortify portions of her own spirit.

ORDO DRACUL

Unlike other covenants, defections from the Ordo Dracul are more likely to occur at higher levels than of neonates. Newcomers to the Order are generally very keen to learn the Coils of the Dragon, and if they have to endure the tyranny of their betters, so be it. They usually figure that when they get what they came for, they'll quit for greener pastures.

For most, the covenant entangles them with personal, political and business ties, making it easier to stay than go. Some, however, do just what they planned: learn rudimentary Coils, then leave. Specifically, these clear-sighted Dragons regard the Carthian Movement as a sort of retirement. After their long decades of toil learning how to acclimate themselves to the Requiem, they're ready to relax and have other people do the tedious scutwork for them, while they pay back with tasks that are (to them) negligible and (to typical vampires) terribly challenging.

The Order emphasizes self-reliance to the point of selfishness, but within a strangling hierarchy. Joining the Carthian Movement allows the fullest expression of selfishness, at least from the Victorian perspective of the Order, but in an egalitarian political milieu. For Dragons who consider themselves superior in all things (and who are, to be fair, objectively superior in some things), a level playing field sounds like an ideal place to bully their lessers.

It doesn't always work out that way, since the Carthians have typically been amassing practical power and influence at least as quickly as the ex-Dragon gathered occult advantage. Furthermore, the Carthians often have less interest in what the Dragon has to offer than the Dragon expects. Sure, decreased susceptibility from daylight is impressive, and so is mastery of the Beast. On the other hand, Carthians have access to lots of aid from people with no Beast and no fear of day. They're called mortals.

A very bold Dragon might offer tutelage in the Coils after defecting, but that's a perilous path. First off, without possession of a Wyrms' Nest, it's slow going. Secondly, few Carthians want to put in the months of intellectual endeavor that Coil mastery requires: if they did, they'd have joined the Order. (Spending a lot of time surrounded by Ordo Dracul students anxious to master these techniques can give Dragons an inflated view of their value.) Most importantly, the Order takes a dim view of sharing proprietary knowledge. Unless the local Movement is extremely strong and the local Order exceptionally weak, having one or two Carthians learn one or two

Coils isn't worth the difficulties to be faced at Elysium and God only knows where else.

A few junior Dragons leave to join the Movement — get fed up with menial tasks and anachronistic apprenticeships or just can't grasp the concepts — but quitters from that point are so inexperienced with the Ordo Dracul they might as well be independent. When they know no Coils, the Order lets them go without hard feelings. Often, the Dragons are glad to cut their losses.

EVALUATING A CANDIDATE FOR EMBRACE

Most Carthian chapters work to include the criteria for Embrace into their system of law, ensuring that every member of the Movement has a clear notion of their restrictions and requirements. These laws are detailed, presented and passed in the method chosen by the citizens of the domain. A pure democracy would vote them in, for instance, whereas a constitutional tyranny would include, in detail, a description of the law of Embrace in the body of the edicts of rule.

Laws detailing the requirements for Embrace may be as complex or simple as the Carthians of a domain determine, and the laws may concentrate on the attributes of the candidate or on the hopes and desires of the citizens of the Movement. These laws may be very specific.

Physical attributes: Limits on age, appearance and physical fitness. Exclusion of weak or sickly mortals from consideration is common in domains with a more militarist bent, while some domains will not accept candidates with limited experience or features considered unfavorable.

Minimum level of competence: Mental capacity and training or a demonstrated facility with valued skills. The Carthian Movement is largely a philosophical organization, and some members are loath to admit uneducated or unintelligent new members to the policy-making ranks.

Adherence to principle: A demonstrated political or philosophical bent, with or without affiliation in approved organizations. Many Carthians, when seeking candidates for Embrace, select mortals the Carthians know will mesh well with the local Movement's policy choices. A communal dictatorship is not likely to approve the Embrace of a staunch libertarian, for instance.

Clan or bloodline association: Some Carthian domains support Embrace by specified clans or bloodlines, while other domains take pains to discourage unfavorable ones. For instance, Morbus may

be forbidden membership in the Carthian Movement, whether or not they've manifested the attributes of their line.

Systemic approval: Most laws of Embrace specify a structure of approvals that any candidate must meet. Votes of endorsement are common, as are open discussions of the candidate's background and similar familiarization techniques.

Demonstration of loyalty: Proper behavior under the circumstances of a supervised test. A willing sacrifice is often required, or the unabashed, spontaneous and sincere support of the political views favored by the covenant.

In less forgiving domains, a mortal able to meet the detailed demands of the Movement without assistance is rare. Vampires who take interest in a potential *childe* often find themselves encouraging (or manipulating) the development of the individual in question, working to make sure that the individual will qualify before the scrutiny of the Carthians is brought to bear. Although some argue that a policy of interference is exactly what the Carthian Movement should avoid (since the influence of Kindred discourages natural mortal creativity), others disagree, for several reasons. First, they take pains to mention the difference between a mortal whose ideas will benefit the covenant and one who is likely to make a good vampire. The former is likely to be as stubborn as he is progressive, while the latter ought to be more open-minded. Second, they point out that the close observation (and occasional prodding) of a potential *childe*

gives a vampire the chance to overcome any initial infatuation and take a serious look at whether or not the individual would make a good addition to the covenant.

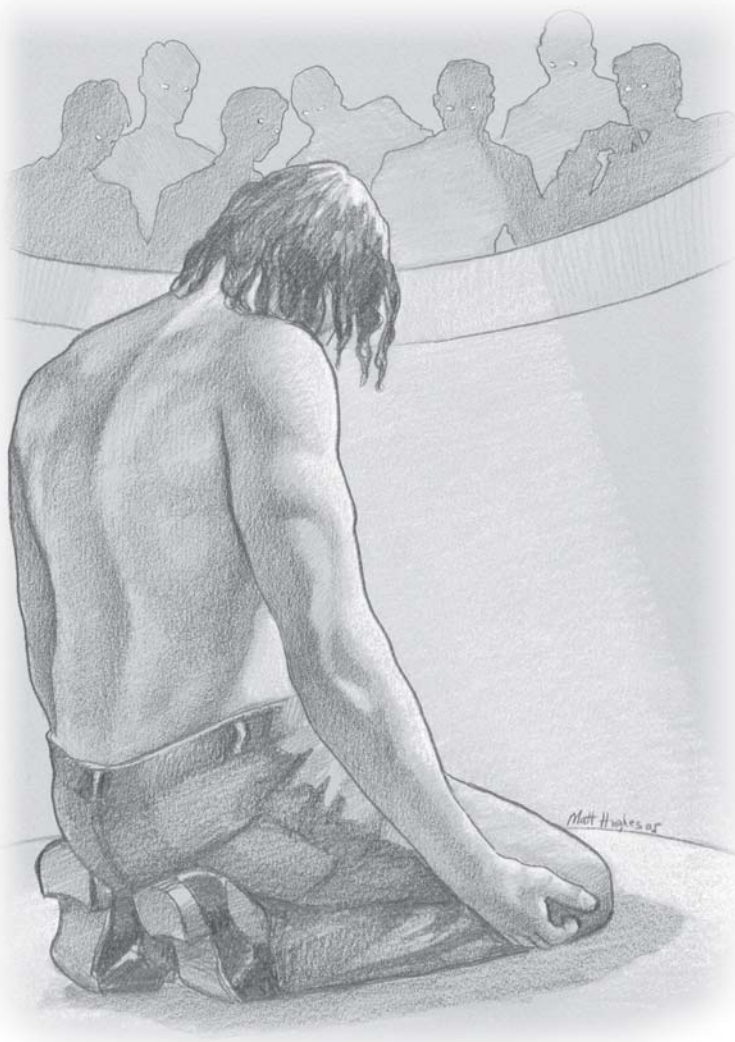
Most domains are more lax in their pre-Embrace requirements, though. It's not the mortal life that concerns the Carthians, after all, as much as it is the vampire who will join their ranks. The evaluation of the mortal who is presented to them as a series of difficult tests — a crucible of will and perseverance

that the mortal will feel extremely proud for passing, if he does. Most often, these tests are operated under the guise of a mortal institution: a company, revolutionary cell or intellectual organization.

While the pre-Embrace evaluation of a mortal's features may or may not guarantee a stellar career within the Movement, it has been observed that more difficult tests tend to inspire a greater level of pride and loyalty within new members. Those who pass the most difficult of tests seem to appreciate their new status as Carthians more intensely, and the fiercely ingrained dedication to the Movement that results helps to solidify

membership in the absence of the dogmatic religious and mystical assurances of competing covenants.

A Carthian domain in Egypt presents its evaluation process as a qualifying test for executive membership in an elite political think-tank. Candidates are taken to a remote, isolated compound and subjected to a series of interviews, covering everything from their knowledge of socio-political theory to their familiarity with pop culture fashion. Upon



completion of the oral test, the candidate is quietly abandoned, and the compound's power supply is shut off. He finds that any communication devices he's brought have either been removed from him or no longer function. A quick estimate of the distance traveled on the way to the compound over barren desert terrain will make it clear that returning to a populated area on foot is an extremely risky proposition. The Carthian Kindred evaluating the candidate observe stealthily while he reacts to his situation. They observe him for three nights (leaving mortal allies to monitor his progress during the days). If he demonstrates ingenuity and adaptability, making clear his will to survive and his intelligent capacity under pressure, the third night ends with his Embrace. If not, he is left to find his own way back to civilization (or die trying).

The Carthians of a domain on the American West Coast subject potential candidates to a series of increasingly senseless arguments, populating the test with a number of individuals who are instructed to disagree vehemently with whatever the candidate says, no matter how rational or attractive her statements. While she struggles to make her points, the Carthians hidden among her opponents watch her carefully, looking for signs of weakness in the face of popular insanity. If she successfully holds her ground, a signal is passed and her opponents suddenly fall silent. Slowly, they applaud, and the vampire who initially chose the candidate steps forward to explain the nature of the test, and her accomplishment. Membership in the Carthian Movement is described as the ongoing battle against the condition she just witnessed: the ever-present madness of irrational power structures. She is then given the choice to join. If she accepts, she is Embraced. If not . . .

One Carthian faction in France styles itself as a subversive terrorist cell, subjecting potential new members to rigorous training in techniques of combat, espionage and sabotage. As the training continues, the Carthians and their mortal allies take great pains to obscure their own philosophies, stating only that they wish to destroy the current system of corrupt government. Any candidate who successfully completes the training without making an effort to discover the actual motive behind the organization is allowed to join as a mortal ally. Those who bother to seek out an understanding of the true reasons behind the cell's existence and rationally judge whether or not they actually want to take part in it (no matter what reason is presented) are separated from the crowd and chosen for Embrace.

THE CARTHIAN PRELUDE

The rigorous process of evaluation that many Carthians undergo before Embrace is likely to solidify their feelings of loyalty to the Movement only if they discover that many of their compatriots endured exactly the same test. If the characters involved pass the ordeal of membership only to discover that they're the only ones who had to do so, they will feel resentment, not pride.

When running a Carthian character through his prelude, remember this. There ought to be a reveal at the end (or near the end) of the test, demonstrating that he's qualified for an exclusive organization *through shared ordeal*. A scar or other physical sign can be a subtle reminder, but even just a sincere expression of sympathy from one's sire or elders can demonstrate that he's only experiencing what they've all gone through, in one form or another.

Not all members of the Carthian Movement are Embraced into the covenant, of course. A significant proportion of the membership is made up of vampires who have joined the progressive Carthian cause, leaving behind (or choosing to operate within) the covenant that first accepted them in their neonatal nights.

Welcoming a "defector" is a dilemma for the Carthians. On the one hand, the Movement always benefits from additional support within a domain, and the more members the Movement attracts, the more power it can exert. On the other, bringing in Kindred who were Embraced and raised by individuals outside the Movement means integrating someone who may or may not be equipped to accept the tenets of the covenant, may or may not be willing to abandon obstructive viewpoints inherited from her original membership and may or may not be operating under instructions to spy on or otherwise undermine the Carthians.

Tests of loyalty and fitness are one thing when dealing with mortals, but for vampires it's a different situation entirely. Kindred who are subjected to a difficult trial are likely to abandon it entirely, returning to the welcoming safety of their home covenant. They already know they're good enough for one group, so forcing them to demonstrate their quality for the Carthians is simply going to discourage all but the most hopeless or desperate Kindred. But accepting a new member without subjecting her to the tests of the Movement can fail to inspire the devotion normally found in new recruits, and can invite the disdain of those who have gone through the full process. In each case, the decision to accept an untested vampire must be made based on

the value he presents to the covenant weighed against the potential for damage he represents.

Some Carthian groups reserve a special initiation ceremony for Kindred wishing to join in order to create the sensation of a passed evaluation, even if there is no real danger of failure. Although the vampire who undergoes the ritual acceptance of his peers is more likely to feel a sense of kinship, he is not going to inspire any more respect or loyalty from established Carthians. The only real test of a defector is her continued service to the covenant and its goals.

MIXED MEMBERSHIP

The Movement as a whole claims no spiritual ambitions. Every Circle of the Crone and the Lancea Sanctum collective at least says their interest in politics is secondary to their religious faith. Often, it's even true. Therefore, there is technically no conflict between being a Carthian and belonging to either of those covenants. A character can have the Status Merit in both the Movement and either of those two religions (but, unless something very bizarre is happening, not both faiths). However, the total dots in those Statuses cannot exceed three. To garner enough influence in any covenant to merit a third Status dot requires a commitment severe and public enough to chill the regard of the covenant that lies second in affection.

It's a different matter with the Ordo Dracul and the Invictus, both of which demand strict oaths of primary obedience. Openly serving both masters is simply not possible.

On the other hand, Kindred are renowned for doing things that can't be done openly. Officially, the Dragons and the First Estate and the Carthians require primary fealty from their members. In night-by-night fact, this is difficult to enforce without draconian paranoia. Furthermore, it's not even desirable. The covenants all demand loyalty without fully expecting it. In many instances, the oaths are symbolic, present to give the authorities an excuse to punish those who screw up. "Screwing up," in this context, doesn't mean trying to play two covenants against one another. It means being so clumsy at it that you get caught and make the covenant look bad or otherwise set back its efforts.

STORYTELLER TOOL: COVENANT STATUS

Every covenant needs its back channels and covert dealmakers and negotiators and people who can get things done. It is therefore possible, for characters who have invested some good story-

effort into the establishment of those roles, to have the Status Merit for both the Movement and either the Invictus or the Ordo Dracul. (For really sneaky sonsabitches, it's possible to get all three.)

There are limits, however: as an optional system, the Merit in the second (and third, if you want the hat trick) Status has to be bought with experience points, and only after events played through explain the covenant's regard. It can't be purchased at character creation. Furthermore, no character can have Covenant Status above one dot in the Carthian Movement and the Invictus and/or the Ordo Dracul. To get that second dot with any group means moving out of the shadows where embarrassing deals get made and pledging fealty in the unforgiving light.

TRUE LOYALTY AND TRUE TREACHERY

The realm of the fringe go-between with a degree of Carthian status and a similar amount of Invictus status is relatively stable, if not a zone of high esteem. Pushing beyond those restrictions are actual spies and traitors.

Rarely are Kindred known to court both covenants recruited as espionage assets. They're just too obvious, too suspect. More commonly, the Carthians make an irresistible offer to a Dragon whose master has made one tyrannical demand too many, or to someone within the Lancea Sanctum whose constant belittlement for his religious peculiarities has made him mad enough (or desperate enough, if the covenant won't help him feed) to gain revenge the coward's way.

A turncoat from outside the covenant isn't trusted. The Carthians know that if a Kindred over there is going to fuck over the Circle for you, he'll fuck you over for the next guy with leverage or a better offer. Nevertheless, a dot in Carthian Status (and the attendant aid with havens, feeding and social climbing) is a good way to represent the payoff the Movement offers to its ears on the inside of other covenants.

The other way to gather intelligence is to place someone the Movement does trust on the inside, undercover. This isn't easy, particularly when dealing with creatures who can compel truth or read minds. Carthian infiltrators may undergo heavy Conditioning to suppress their real motivations until a trigger word is spoken (or, more commonly, a situation such as "being absolutely alone with my Carthian contact" occurs). This sort of compartmentalization gives a penalty of -2 to -4 on attempts to unearth the character's true loyalty through Telepathy, Revelation or Aura Sight, though the Movement has learned the hard way that it won't fool the Theban sorcery rite Liar's Plague. The successes amassed by the Conditioner work as penalties to attempts to dig

out the truth through Dominate, as described on p. 127 of **Vampire: The Requiem**.

If the character is willing to accept a derangement, and has assistance from a Conscionaut, this sort of voluntary, compartmentalized amnesia can completely insulate him against prying from Auspex, Majesty and Dominate. However, the mental damage is considerable, which is painfully obvious to any of those Disciplines, as well as to anyone who gains a success on a Wits or Intelligence + Empathy roll. Effectively, the noise of the madness cloaks the signal of the spy's true fealty.

CARTHIAN STYLES OF GOVERNMENT

The strengths and weaknesses of the Carthian Movement are brought to the fore and powerfully multiplied in the domains the Carthians rule. Their adaptability and innovative practice translate well in chaotic territories where complex, multifaceted political interplay is the norm. The Carthians' general tendency toward humane behavior tends to discourage violent conduct, and their displayed respect for human modernism has a demonstrably beneficial effect on the Kindred who abide by the rules that enforce it. On the other hand, many of the governing styles of the Movement are aimed at spreading power among all Kindred members of the domain, and are therefore vulnerable to a stultifying process of debate that threatens to bog down important decisions. Many a Carthian vampire has faced the frustrating reality of convincing a council of 15 or more vampires that resources need to be diverted to a project that sacrifices personal short-term gain for a universal long-term one. Filibustering and procedures of protest can completely paralyze some Carthian domains, and almost always do so at the worst possible times. Many Carthian governments, by their own populist principles, regularly fail to inspire the same fear and loyalty that some of the competing covenants find themselves capable of. It's not unusual for the Kindred residents of Carthian domains to defy the law — in fact, they do so much more frequently than in many other territories.

Despite the wild creativity attributed to the Movement, the truth is that the vast majority of Carthian domains are ruled in one of five styles of government: pure democracy, republican parliament, socialist dictatorship, communal democracy or constitutional tyranny. A social system that doesn't fall into one of these categories may be

applied — Carthians do take inspiration from just about every systemic human enterprise — but to do so is unusual. The natural tendencies of vampires just seem to draw them to one or another of these five systems of rule, even if the Kindred begin with a different vision to begin with.

PURE DEMOCRACY

Under the rule of the Carthians, every citizen acknowledged by the covenant is allowed (in many cases, required) to register a vote on each and every policy decision rendered by the government. The Kindred of the city *are* the government, plain and simple. The officers of the covenant and the city (including the Prince, Sheriff and Primogen) are representative servants of the collective will, enforcing the law and responding to the requirements as created and modified by the full assembly. Regular gatherings are held under the protective umbrella of Elysium, and any voting citizen is allowed to propose a new policy or amendment to existing policy. While some domains maintain a relatively simple system of proposal, acknowledgement and vote, others develop Byzantine requirements, including a formalized proposal, a period of discussion and contemplation, an acknowledging vote to determine whether the proposal should move into a policy vote, a period of revision and rebuttal, a series of statements of assembly and, finally, the policy vote itself. The great advantage of this system is that every citizen's voice is given equal weight, allowing all to affect the domain as much or as little as they choose. Critics argue that such is also the weakness — the savvy, tenured Prince's vote has just as much weight as the truculent neonate who describes every elder as a "fuckhead."

The distinguishing feature of most purely democratic domains lies in the definition of a "citizen." For some, every vampire in the city is included (though this extreme application opens up a significant weakness in the government, as a large enough gathering of Kindred who pledge loyalty to another covenant can quickly undermine the system), and, for others, every acknowledged Carthian. Some domains require the donation of a specified resource or time in service to earn votes. Votes that alter the definition of citizenry can be carried as well, resulting in exclusive laws of startling prejudice. Since there is no guiding principle outside the rule of majority in a pure democracy, there are no checks and balances to prevent the creation of restricted privileges.

The Elysium gatherings of a pure democracy are lively, chaotic affairs. Debates carry on throughout the night

in all corners, and votes are often underscored by shouted comments, open expressions of criticism and laughter. The only rule of respect goes to the "Speaker," the individual empowered to call an end to deliberation and count votes. Otherwise, speech is free and frequent, covering any topics the citizens feel like discussing.

Kindred with social talents tend to thrive in pure democracies because of their capacity to sway the voting crowd. All too often, fear and fashion, the stick-and-carrot of populist politics, become the driving forces of fully democratic domains. Some democracies remain honest, their officials battling constantly to eliminate unfair influence on the votes — but those territories are home to a difficult, never-ending struggle.

TENETS OF A CARTHIAN PURE DEMOCRACY

- **Power to the People:** One citizen, one vote. Everyone shares equal power and takes equal responsibility for the policies of the Movement. The pure democracy interprets this tenet literally, expecting that every citizen shoulder her responsibility with dedication to the betterment of the community as a whole.

- **Change Is Necessary:** The laws and structure of the Movement itself must be subject to the needs and desires of the masses. The law flows

and alters its course as the citizens dictate. Questions, protest and critique are both necessary and welcome in the process of government.

REPUBLICAN PARLIAMENT

A Carthian parliamentary republic generally operates by subdividing its domain into smaller territories and allowing the residents of each territory to elect a parliamentary representative for scheduled terms. The parliament of representatives is then empowered to choose a Prince by majority vote and may remove her from power by a successful vote of non-confidence at any time. Likewise, dissatisfied Kindred of each territory may initiate a vote of non-confidence in their representative on the council. Because the Prince's continued dominion is dependent on the satisfaction of the majority of parliamentary representatives, Carthian domains under this style of rule demand that the Prince's attention is divided among territories equally. The Prince may be called upon to respond to the concerns of parliament, addressing the representatives' needs and justifying his decisions as often as the council requires. The "board room" system of corporate emulation is actually a parliamentary republic, as defined in



Carthian society. The rule of the most capable seems to apply frequently in domains that abide by this system of government; members of parliament are chosen based on popular support (most especially, faith in one's ability to secure favorable policy), while Princes hold power only if they can please the council. Corruption is possible, but a corrupt parliament is vulnerable to dissolution by the popular vote.

Because a republican parliament doesn't involve the full participation of the citizenry, a republican parliament isn't vulnerable to the same "bogging down" effect common in pure democracies. The Prince is empowered to make policy decisions as quickly as she likes, but she must make sure to make decisions that her parliament approves of, or she will be removed from power and find her declarations reversed. However, domains with a long-running parliament that remain satisfied with their Prince for extended periods often begin to resemble the feudal government of the other covenants, and can earn the ire of the Carthian citizenry quite easily. They frequently "prove themselves" by removing perfectly capable Princes as demonstration of their loyalty to the ideal system over a steady, effective government.

Elysium gatherings in a republican parliament tend to be more structured than those of a pure democracy, with the official members of the parliament abiding by a common etiquette, usually allowing each member to speak in turn on every subject of import. The rest of the citizens may or may not be free to witness the deliberations of the council. In many cases, the majority of the citizenry loses interest in the granular workings of government, choosing only to hear the end result of votes (and expressing their displeasure if their representative fails them).

Kindred with intellectual talents often rise to the top in parliamentary systems of government due to their acumen with reasoned debate and their strategic political skill. Those with incisive intelligence or quick-witted tactical ability can out-think their opponents in parliament, swaying votes and forcing policy. Powerfully attractive Kindred may be able to sway some votes with their social skill, but the reasoned analysis of the intellect often takes a deeper hold in council's deliberations, especially those that take an extended recess before registering a vote.

representatives in government, and they must have recourse to peacefully remove those representatives who fail them. The system must give equal consideration to each of the territories that compose it, ensuring that no citizen receives a lesser share of the attention of her government.

• **Change Is Necessary:** Government must be mutable, and no single representative of the citizenry may hold office indefinitely. Scheduled terms of election ensure that change is a regular occurrence. Kindred are encouraged to rotate the leadership and keep the policies of the domain fresh.

SOCIALIST DICTATORSHIP

A Carthian domain running under the model of a socialist dictatorship seeks to eliminate class distinction and the inconsistent distribution of wealth and territory by strict, often brutal rule. All territory is the territory of the full citizenry, and all possessions are the possessions of the full citizenry, to be divided as the ruling Carthian covenant members see fit. No one vampire may lay claim to a greater share of resources or Vitae than any other. All must be handed over to the government for allocation. Few of the long-lasting socialist experiments in Carthian society begin as a dictatorship, but the vehemently territorial nature of vampires ensures that very few survive if they don't become one sooner or later.

Socialist dictatorships under the Carthian Movement tend to include Kindred who are not acknowledged members of the covenant, whether they like it or not. A council of Carthian elites oversees the application of the law to all vampires of the domain, drawing up rationing formulae and issuing declarations, requests and warnings to all. These elites are generally either served by physically powerful idealists or are quite powerful themselves, backing up their policy with an unavoidable iron fist — often a necessity, considering how alien the concept of sharing territory, hunting grounds and even vessels is to most vampires. As government officials, their purpose is to oversee and enforce the division of wealth and labor, taking no more than an equal share for themselves.

The Elysium in a socialist democracy tends to be a raucous affair, encouraging the citizens to partake in a regular celebration of their empowerment under Carthian rule. Gifts and entertainments are freely distributed to every attending Kindred, and the practice of the Chain occurs at every gathering. The cheers of the elevated lower class are often more than enough to demonstrate the popularity of the Movement to any wealthy (or formerly wealthy) Kindred with doubts. Open criticism of

TENETS OF A

CARTHIAN PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC

• **Power to the People:** The citizens of the Movement must be empowered to choose their

the system is almost never tolerated, though, and those who question the regime often find themselves surrounded by Kindred angrily demanding to know why they don't favor equal treatment for all.

Kindred with physical clout can go very far in a system of socialist dictatorship, providing the backbone of enforcement necessary to keep the distribution of resources on level ground. They can, of course, take advantage of the system, requisitioning additional resources for themselves based on the physical work and risk they have to engage in on a regular basis. Therein lies the greatest vulnerability of this style of Kindred government: the tendency to slip from the enforcement of equal standards to a simple, thug-ruled kleptocracy. Still, strength in the right place can keep everyone honest, whether he likes it or not.

TENETS OF A CARTHIAN SOCIALIST DICTATORSHIP

- **Power to the People:** All resources and territories shall be divided equally and proportionally, in return for equal share in the labor of running the city. There shall be no benefit of age, class or clan. All citizens are identical under the law.

- **Change Is Necessary:** The system of Kindred territorial hierarchy as practiced by the entrenched covenants is unacceptable. Greed and gluttony are intolerable behavior in these modern nights. Centuries of bloodshed and servitude have damaged the hearts and minds of the vampire race. Only a complete revolution in thought and behavior can save them.

COMMUNAL DEMOCRACY

Communal democracies operate on a system of weighted votes, divided among small, territorial sub-populations within a domain. Each sub-population gains a number of votes based upon set criteria: territorial size and Kindred population, proportion of resources donated to the government of the domain, possession of certain artifacts, fulfillment of specified duties, quality of hunting grounds or almost anything the citizens agree to upon formation of the government. Each sub-population operates on a communal or near-communal system of shared territory and resources. The system of setting laws and dividing domain-wide benefits depends on the accumulated votes of these sub-populations, thereby creating a hybrid socialist/democratic style of government. Many communal democracies actually do away with the position of Prince, leaving the enforcement of law and to a Sheriff/Myrmidon figure.

Communal democracy is another system that tends to include non-Carthian Kindred in its notional citizenry, dividing the sub-populations so that no significant weight is given to their vote is simple. Because convincing smaller groups of vampires to share equally among themselves is easier, this system doesn't tend to require the heavy-handed enforcement style of a socialist dictatorship. Every sub-group is allowed to determine how the group chooses its votes its own way, so the potential for dissatisfaction is lower than under some other structures. On the other hand, the subdivision of territories must be carefully engineered to prevent any single group's superiority over the rest, lest the domain slide back into a feudal tyranny.

The Elysium gatherings of communal democratic Carthian domains are, at best, celebrations of the diverse interests and features of the populace. At worst, these events are fractious gatherings of factions, ringing with voices of dispute between sub-groups. Expressions of displeasure are encouraged, as is the settling of differences by debate or structured challenge. These gatherings are usually hosted on a rotating basis, with each sub-group taking the opportunity to direct the flavor of the assembly.

Kindred of all walks can thrive in a communal democratic domain, so long as they find themselves dwelling with a group of like-minded allies.

TENETS OF A CARTHIAN COMMUNAL DEMOCRACY

- **Power to the People:** All citizens should have equal opportunity to influence the policy of the Movement, but those who do not wish to sacrifice their time and energy to the governing of the domain should be free to withdraw themselves from electoral decisions. Kindred should be empowered to participate without obligation, and they should benefit from peaceful and prosperous co-existence.

- **Change Is Necessary:** The law must be capable of meeting the changing needs of the citizenry without disorganization. The system of representative democracy best satisfies this requirement, and a council of members who are no more exalted than their non-voting coterie-mates provides a stable base from which to oversee these adaptable laws.

CONSTITUTIONAL TYRANNY

Almost always imposed by a Carthian revolutionary dictatorship, this style of rule involves the creation of a constitutional set of laws that must thenceforth be followed by all citizens, including those who

originally wrote them. Under ideal circumstances (and these circumstances occur more often than one might assume — revolutionary principles are more vulnerable to corruption after a movement's success, not during the struggle), the written law is fair and equitable. Any government that results is more a judicial body than a legislative one, simply enforcing the law and ensuring that disputes over its interpretation are settled with authority and logic.

The body of Kindred created expressly for the purpose polices the law, and it cannot be superceded. There is no recourse for Kindred residents of the domain to alter the law; no officials are allowed to reinterpret or rewrite it. As the law is written, so it remains. The corrupting influence of power is eliminated by the strict interpretation of a document created before the successful assumption of office.

Constitutional tyrannies stand or fall on the quality of their law. No matter how powerful the enforcers are, wildly unfair or contradictory rules lead to dissatisfaction, which leads, in turn, to widespread defiance. Since literally any law can be written into a constitution, this system is incredibly flexible in its founding, and, because the law must be followed to the letter afterward, the system is very rigid in its function. If well organized, the system uses the best of both features to the advantage of the citizenry. If not, the worst features of both rapidly become apparent, leading to eventual collapse.

Elysium gatherings of constitutional tyrannies are divided into two types. First, celebrations of independence are raucous affairs that pay tribute to the ascendancy of the law and the citizens' release from the willful, irrational whim of the previous leadership. Second, criminal trials are held in public view to demonstrate the superiority of law and the futility of defiance.

Kindred of intellect are best suited to the founding of a constitutional tyranny, but those with physical prowess tend to function best as the enforcers of the law. As a two-stage system of revolt, the most difficult moment in the founding of a constitutional tyranny lies in the identification of the right time to transform the Movement from an ideal formulation of law to its directed imposition in the aftermath of physical revolt.



TENETS OF A CARTHIAN CONSTITUTIONAL TYRANNY

• **Power to the People:** Let the citizens of the Movement detail the law of the domain. Let them determine the boundaries of acceptable

behavior and the severity of punishment for anti-social Kindred. Remove the power of law from the whim of individual rulers.

• **Change Is Necessary:** The old systems of despotic monarchy are outdated. The Kindred should be allowed to rewrite the policy of their government, defining their own rights and privileges. Once a fair law is arrived at, those who support the old ways should be overthrown and subjugated.



CARTHIAN IN OPPOSITION

With the reins of command over a domain in its possession, the Carthians are just as likely to succeed or fail as any other covenant. The power and promise of the Movement is brought into the light, and the actual function of rule becomes an issue of applied ideals, which may or may not lead to the corruption or dissolution of those ideals.

There are those within the Movement who prefer (whether consciously or not) to avoid such a clear test of their principles, claiming that the Carthian system works best as one of opposition, not one of rule. The logic is as follows: The systems of the other covenants are corrupt and incomplete, but not so utterly without merit as to be abandoned in favor of modern ruling styles (which most older Kindred will fight desperately to resist). The purpose of the Carthian Movement under the rule of these covenants is to force the improvement of the system through reasoned debate, political pressure and careful subversion of tradition. Some may claim that this logic simply justifies collusion with established rule, but the point is still valid. The Carthian Movement does function very well in opposition to a superior force. Under circumstances of oppression, the Kindred of the covenant invariably band together, forgiving differences and pooling resources to undermine the enemy. Even in relatively "soft" societies, wherein the Movement is not persecuted or otherwise suppressed, both the idealistic and the pragmatic Carthian vampires tend to have a clear, common goal, and will work together (or at least avoid destabilizing one another) in order to accomplish it. Without this unifying force, Carthian Kindred are often given to squabbling factionalism, occasionally becoming so caught up in their disagreements about ruling style and the ideal system of government that they fail to prevent one of the competing covenants from seizing power.

One of the greatest activities of the Carthian Kindred under outsider rule is that of protest: the activity of making the dissatisfaction of the Movement





heard in public forum (most often Elysium) by word or deed. Demonstration may be vocal, or it may be a more passive defiance — a simple refusal to participate in domain celebrations or an organized halt to policing territorial boundaries can produce startling results, especially under oppressive rule. Anything works, so long as it draws the attention of the local Kindred to an injustice.

On a more intellectual level, many Carthians prefer to engage in an ongoing critique of the ruling system, making statements at Elysium, writing manifestoes and commentaries and calling for open debate. Their efforts meet with varying success, from apathetic brush-offs to enthusiastic responses, but their aim is usually to make and prove a point, not engage in friendly repartee. Carthian critics are often unpopular, and their antagonist behavior forms the basis for some of the negative stereotypes Kindred form about the Movement.

In truly oppressive domains, ones that forbid protest and refuse to recognize the Carthians as a legitimate covenant, the Movement resorts to more underhanded tactics. Terrorism, sabotage and conspiracy all become useful tools. Violence is not as uncommon as most Carthians would prefer to believe (or admit), and organized revolt becomes the clarion call of the covenant. Even those who don't turn to illicit activity in order to keep their hopes alive end up retreating from public unlife, attending secret meetings and exchanging coded messages in order to maintain operation. Because the nature of the Carthian Movement attracts dissatisfied Kindred in any domain, the Carthians often find that iron-fisted regimes actually increase their support among the fringes of the ruling covenant. At best, the Carthians invoke the sympathy of more forgiving vampires, and, at worst, the Carthians become a potential ally (or tool) to those planning a coup d'état.

More often than not, Carthians in opposition become “spoilers” in political play. If they are numerous enough, they can often make an impact by simply refusing to participate in the prevailing customs of a domain. Doing so forces the ruling covenant into a difficult situation: enforce their way of unlife, risking the alienation of every vampire who doesn't enjoy the prospect of being muscled into conforming to the power elite's system, or allow the defiance to continue unabated, demonstrating that public insubordination is pardonable. Either way, the risk of losing followers to the Carthian cause is very real, and it's difficult to pin the cause on the Carthians themselves. Even a relatively small number of vampires can make

a significant difference, provided they're willing to make an example of themselves. As with anything, safety comes in numbers for Kindred, and conscientious objection can easily turn into certain destruction if they don't have enough friends to back them up.

FRONTIER DOMAINS

A domain can be said to be "desirable" for vampires as long as the area provides enough mortals who are active after dark to facilitate feeding. From that point, the commonalities in what various vampires find appealing in a domain vanish quickly.

Within the Carthian Movement, the various positions of the members make domains of differing characteristics seem good choices, and, indeed, some of the domains in which the Carthians choose to dwell are among the worst, from other Kindred's perspectives. But the notion that hardships force the Kindred to keep their wits about them, keep the Beast in check but honed and keep the Man in control but wary is not uncommon as a Carthian philosophy. As such, when a domain opens up due to aggression, natural (or supernatural) disaster or any other circumstance that makes for harsh existence among the Kindred, the Carthian Movement often moves in to take up the slack. Members of the Movement often refer to these sorts of places as "frontier domains," because, although the literal borders of the domain are probably well defined, the greatest danger in them is what waits to be discovered.

WHY CARTHIAN?

Frontier domains are not a uniquely Carthian phenomenon. Depending on the nature of the domain, intrepid Kindred from any covenant might try to claim such territory. Why, then, are these domains so commonly identified with the Movement?

Part of the reason is that the Carthians are willing to move quickly. Adaptability and ambition, as well as a focus on action, allow Carthians to set up shop in dangerous places more rapidly than most other covenants. This means a certain degree of sacrifice where caution is concerned, of course.

Another reason is simply that the Carthian Movement is the youngest of the covenants, and thus doesn't have as much to fall back on in the way of history. When new territories become "up for grabs" it behooves the Movement to seize it. The other covenants already have their traditional domains. The Carthians are the ones who have the most to gain by taking risks, much like the settlers of the American West.

Finally, the experiments in social order undertaken by the Movement often require

"virgin territory," without an existing vampiric order. Frontier domains are the best source of this kind of clean slate. The alternative is rebuilding the Kindred society of a city wholesale, which is difficult logistically (and potentially risky morally, if the process is dire enough).

CLAIMING A FRONTIER DOMAIN

The first thing to consider when claiming a frontier domain is how that domain became "wild." What happened to the Kindred who claimed the domain before, if there were any? Are the dangers that cost them the domain still a factor? Indeed, do the Carthians even know what happened, or is investigating the circumstances a major part of claiming the domain for them? What follows are a few possibilities for how a domain might suddenly become open territory.

- **Aggression from other vampires:** Normally, if one of the other covenants takes out a city's resident vampires, the covenant does so with an eye toward replacing them rather than simply exterminating them. Exceptions occur, of course. The Lancea Sanctum occasionally harbors hardliner factions that might mark all vampires in a given city for Final Death as part of some twisted attempt at purification, while the Ordo Dracul subscribes to odd notions about "Wyrms' Nests" and their energy poisoning a city's Kindred. Generally, though, if vampire-on-vampire aggression is responsible for opening a city, either Belial's Brood or VII are involved.

An attack by Belial's Brood doesn't tend to be the only factor when a city's Kindred population is wiped out. These vampires are too wild and unfocused to track down all of the vampires in a domain. That said, some vampires are bound to flee once the profile of the Kindred in the area is raised, and some would rather run (or go to ground) than face the Brood. Also, Belial's Brood tends to attract vampire hunters and, worse, VII, so it's not unknown for a city to be bereft of Kindred a few months after the Brood arrives.

VII, on the other hand, is often more subtle. Weeks after the first murder (which may or may not have been identified as the work of this mysterious faction), members of the last surviving coterie might realize that they are alone. Once the Kindred are removed from a city, VII moves on — at least, the vampires who claim the empty city hope so.

- **Aggression from other supernatural forces:** Werewolves, mages and other supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness don't have anything in particular against vampires as a race. That said, the right

group of werewolves or mages might, for whatever reason, decide that the vampires in the city need to die and have the resources to pull off such a culling. In such an instance, the incoming Carthians probably don't have much idea what happened to their predecessors (though tracking down and interrogating a survivor or a survivor's ghoul might make for an interesting story), and that means they need to be extra careful when they claim the domain because they don't know what they're looking for.

- **Vampire hunters:** Sometimes mortals summon up the strength of will to hunt the Kindred. Often, this is out of a desire for revenge, but religious fervor is another common motive. In any case, such mortals are rare, and so groups of them are even rarer, which is fortunate for the Kindred. One mortal isn't usually much of a threat, but the danger grows exponentially with each additional hunter. A large enough cell could conceivably destroy a small city's Kindred population, especially if the cell is working in tandem with another force, knowingly or not. This would beg the question of how the hunters could identify the Kindred, of course (perhaps a traitor vampire is aiding them?), and whether they would be willing to, say, burn buildings to destroy powerful vampires, but those are questions individual Kindred can confront.

As an interesting side note, since Carthians often assimilate and restructure mortal practices, what if the incoming Carthians captured or simply observed these hunters and took their model of perseverance, righteous anger and self-sacrifice (because vampire hunters are living on borrowed time and they know it) to heart? What would these Carthians focus that aggression on? What would they hunt?

- **Natural disaster:** The Kindred have, perhaps, more to fear from natural disasters than mortals do. True, being buffeted by debris in a tornado isn't likely to cause Final Death, and of course a vampire won't drown in a flood, but natural disasters destroy shelter, leaving Kindred exposed to other elements. On the other hand, a citywide inferno isn't something any Kindred of any covenant wishes to face. What's more, natural disasters force mortals together into tight groups for intolerable periods of time, making feeding difficult. Even though a natural disaster isn't likely to actually destroy the Kindred of a city, a catastrophe can send them running for more hospitable climes. Sometimes, the Carthian Movement slips in during the chaos and tries to establish itself.

Catastrophes give the Carthians good opportunities to become fixtures in a city. They might patrol

the city by night, looking for survivors with enough Vitae to be useful. Kindred blessed with monetary wealth might donate some of those funds to charitable organizations or, more likely, purchase medical equipment that they can then loan out (and retrieve when the time has come). One particularly brazen group of Carthians actually held a midnight blood drive in a city torn apart by an earthquake. (Tragically, that blood never reached its intended recipients. A fire reportedly destroyed the supply.)

- **Disease:** Similar to but more insidious than natural disaster, an outbreak of a disease can scatter the Kindred. Most diseases do not affect Kindred (see below, however), but as the mortal herd sickens, feeding becomes scarce. Not only that, but spreading a disease from one vessel to another is frighteningly simple.

With all of that in mind, a disease must be extremely potent to clean out the Kindred of a city. Smaller towns are more prone to this occurrence, since they don't have the profligate Kindred population that bigger metropolises do. Even in cities, though, if a disease strikes at a particular class of people (the same class that has been coincidentally feeding the city's vampires), the result can be much the same.

The Carthians adapt very well to this kind of problem. They simply shift their feeding habits and steer clear of sick people for a while. Therefore, although a disease won't normally empty a city of Kindred, a disease can certainly pave the way for more adaptable vampires to take power, a fact not lost on Carthians willing to stoop to a kind of biological warfare.

- **Supernatural disaster:** Aggressive action by strange creatures isn't the only way that supernatural forces can depopulate a domain of vampires. Mystical diseases can spread among the Kindred, driving them into torpor or rotting them away. A magical ritual gone awry can release strange entities that destroy the city's vampires in the space of a few hours. One story even claims that a series of lightning bolts struck every vampire in one domain over the course of a five-hour storm, reducing them to ash in the blink of an eye. The vampire who thinks she has seen everything the World of Darkness has to offer is a fool.

As with aggressive supernatural action, a supernatural disaster often leaves no hard evidence as to the true nature of what destroyed or drove off the Kindred. The Carthians, therefore, are quite likely to come up with other, more rational explanations for discovering a domain that seems desirable and yet has no vampiric population. As the new residents explore the city and learn its past, however,

they often come across evidence of recent vampiric activity and wonder where these Kindred went. Investigating a supernatural disaster might be the only way to know the truth. Of course, an investigation might also be a good way for history to repeat itself.

STORYTELLING IN FRONTIER DOMAINS

So what is it like to dwell in a frontier domain? The city is still a city, still populated with mortals, and thus by no means empty. And yet, a Carthian coterie in such a domain might well describe it as such.

Vampires are used to being able to sense each immediately through the Predator's Taint. Certainly, some vampires have ways around this, but, for the most part, Kindred can identify one another from across a room. The Taint is by no means pleasant, but it is a constant reminder that the vampire is not alone, that other beings like him stalk the night. Sometimes that reminder is fearsome, sometimes infuriating, but knowing that others share the Kindred's curse is oddly comforting. In a frontier domain, however, the Kindred might go weeks or months without ever experiencing that feeling. If he belongs to a coterie, he knows that other Kindred are nearby, but familiarity breeds contempt. When a new vampire finally does arrive, the feeling of rage or fear from the Beast might feel much stronger than usual — and the Kindred might welcome the feeling even as he feels suspicious of this new vampire's intentions.

Frontier domains often have a nominal leadership, but, in practice, survival of the fittest rules the night. The Kindred must be able to survive in the domain, and, depending on what opened the domain, that might not be a trivial concern. A group of Carthians might claim praxis over a domain while the old Kindred leadership still exists but is obviously on its way out. This means that in addition to whatever destroyed the old guard, the Carthians must contend with (or assimilate) the old guard itself. Frontier Kindred must be tough and persistent, but they must also be curious and clever. They cannot afford to be ignorant about the past, lest they share the fate of those before them.

Once the incoming Carthians know what happened in their chosen domain, or at least know enough to make a start, they need to cope with any pre-existing supernatural elements therein. This usually doesn't include vampires, obviously, but, depending on the nature of the event that drove out the previous Kindred, there might still be a few of the undead lurking about. For instance, if the city's vampiric elite all feed from the same herd (say, a particularly large mortal family and its sycophants), and that family succumbs to a disease that, in turn,



incapacitates or destroys their Kindred parasites, the Carthians might simply sweep in to take the reins of power before someone else does. In such an instance, other vampires of the domain who have been waiting for a chance at power might well take exception, but that just means that the Carthians' first task is to show why they should be in control.

More often, though, a city has dark secrets that have nothing to do with the Kindred. A pack of werewolves might hunt the area that the Carthians wish to use as the Rack, and that merits investigation. Preliminary evidence might suggest that vampires just disappear in a particular suburb of the city, and that means that a coterie should go out there and have a look around. The hurricane that left vampires exposed to the sun might have uncovered evidence of their existence in the form of letters, and that means someone needs to retrieve those articles. Before getting down to the business of running a city's nights, the Carthians need to be sure that the city is going to remain inhabitable.

This doesn't mean, of course, that the Movement doesn't jump the gun occasionally. It happens that a headstrong group of Carthians, trying to set themselves up as a credible force in vampiric society and ward off any other buzzards come to feast on a city's corpse, move into a domain and establish their rules right away. Unfortunately, once the Kindred become entrenched in their societal concerns, the maintenance of the city falls by the wayside, especially if the tasks involved in maintenance consist of dangerous investigation. A city founded on impatience tends to hide secrets of a most deadly variety.

After the Kindred have determined that the city is safe (or at least declared that it is safe), the next step is usually a gathering of the city's Carthians. Sometimes this meeting is open to vampires of other covenants as well, but normally there is first a preliminary meeting at which major titles and offices are decided, followed by an open meeting to decide upon lesser offices and figureheads. What form the meeting takes depends, of course, on the Carthians in question. It might be a town-meeting-style affair in which any vampire can stand and be heard. It might be a primitive discussion in a forum at which the eldest speak first. It might take place in a function space at a hotel or at a private club, depending on the bent and influence of the Kindred in question.

Security is paramount during these meetings. No matter the format, every vampire present (or, at

least, the ones the vampires in charge of the meeting deem important) knows the escape routes, and most of the participants are armed and well fed. This is doubly true if the city was emptied by VII or other aggressive supernatural force — it wouldn't do if the city's new Kindred inhabitants met Final Death before even getting started.

Fruitful meetings acknowledge any lingering threats, and, to qualify as a "frontier domain," something must be acting as a threat to the Kindred. The Carthians might not have any idea what that threat truly entails, but they warn all present that safety is not a guarantee when dwelling in the city. This, of course, frees the eminent leaders from a certain degree of responsibility.

Just holding the meeting goes a long way toward establishing the Carthians as the vampires in charge of the domain. From there, it's just a matter of making sure they can enforce any decisions they make (see below).

CHARACTERISTICS OF FRONTIER DOMAINS

While, of course, every domain is different, frontier domains do have some commonalities.

- **Violence:** Unlife in a frontier domain is not peaceful. The Kindred in such domains are under the gun, and they know it. The usual Kindred practice of allowing slights and insults to fester until one can take revenge at a later date, therefore, tends to fall out of vogue quickly. Fistfights or pistol duels to settle minor differences are quite common, and two Kindred fighting to the death over matters that would be resolved with rumormongering in more "civilized" domains is not unheard of. Most of the Kindred of the city tend to have some skill in martial practices, be it marksmanship, hand-to-hand combat or weaponry. Those who don't have those skills either develop them quickly or get used to insults and bullying.

While many frontier domains have rules against Kindred-on-Kindred violence, such rules go unenforced, and are only put in place so that if someone really gets out of control the Kindred leaders have a legitimate reason to put him down.

- **Tight coterie:** Solitary Kindred are rare in frontier domains, just for simple survival reasons. A group of vampires has a much better chance of avoiding ambush or bad luck than a lone hunter. While trust is a rare commodity among vampires, frontier coterie are usually tight-knit allies, and action against one is answered by retaliation from all of them. Covenant and clan are much less important among these

coterie's reputation and accomplishment with the domain, meaning that new arrivals can expect to be followed and even harassed until they prove themselves worthy of permission to stay in the domain.

Frontier coterie's normally function as a kind of mix between a rural family and a street gang. Most frontier coterie's have their own tags that they leave on buildings in their turf, and have names that reflect the coterie's reputation ("Dogcatchers" for a coterie that hunts werewolves), membership ("Warren's Brood," after a leader or even a common sire) or territory ("C2C" for a gang whose turf runs between Carpenter Street and Christian Avenue).

Coterie's in frontier domains normally share havens, but often have more than one. Temporary havens, making use of empty houses or other found space, are also common, depending on the nature of the threat in the domain.

• **Covenant representation:** Although the Carthian Movement claims leadership of a given frontier domain, members of all five major covenants can usually be found in such cities. This is for two reasons. First, none of the other covenants likes to miss an opportunity, and since the Carthians tend to be lax about whom they'll let into the city, having a few members around just makes sense, just in case something interesting happens. Second, if the Carthians should fail in their bid for the domain (with or without help from rivals), the covenants like to have someone already in place to scavenge or make a grab for power.

Open conflict between the covenants, not usually common, is especially rare in frontier domains because the Kindred usually have enough on their collective plates already. That said, if the only Acolytes in town are known to set upon lone Kindred and drain them dry, any other members of the Circle of the Crone who arrive later aren't likely to get a good reception.

It does happen, of course, that the Carthians might attempt to bar a particular covenant from entering a domain. This usually relates to whatever situation opened the city up to the Carthians in the first place. For instance, one city in Spain became void of Kindred after a strange black fog blanketed the domain one night, seemingly causing any vampires the fog touched to choke to death. The Carthians took power shortly thereafter, and learned that the fog first oozed out of a church where the Lancea Sanctum was performing some kind of perverted Mass. The Carthians decreed that the Sanctified were not welcome in the city unless they were willing to explain exactly what happened, which, to date, has not happened.

• **Disciplines over sorcery:** Although Sanctified and Acolytes are welcome in frontier domains (normally, though see above), Theban sorcery and Crúac aren't typically very popular among the members of their practitioners' covenants. This might seem strange — after all, both forms of blood magic offer not only practical methods of survival but frames of reference to understanding any supernatural tragedy that might occur. This sorcery also, however, requires that the practitioner spend a great deal of time studying such magic, which runs counter to the frontier domain mentality of action and motion. The other concern is that the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone keep their magic secret, which again is somewhat antithetical to frontier Kindred thinking (you should share everything with your coterie).

In general, the physical Disciplines tend to be the most widely practiced in frontier domains. Gangrel willing to teach Protean often enjoy *carte blanche* when it comes to feeding rights and other such privileges, too.

• **Clearly defined areas:** In some cities, asking three vampires where the Rack is might get three different answers. Not every vampire has the same tastes in victims, after all, and a socially savvy Kindred might find it easier to hunt in a club than among street people. In frontier domains, everyone knows where the best feeding can be found, and everyone knows what areas of the city are Barrens. The Carthians make it a point to define which areas are safe, which areas have seen Kindred destroyed or missing and which areas are virgin territory. Likewise, most frontier domains have Elysiums where the Carthians meet (and they or their agents can always be found — accessibility is important in a dangerous city), as well as several "dummy Elysiums" that Kindred refer to when talking out loud in order to lure anything that might be listening.

• **Leadership:** The Carthians in charge of a frontier domain tend to be capable, strong and smart. If they aren't, they meet Final Death or flee. Normally, the leader of a frontier domain is a single Kindred, rather than a group or committee. In a dangerous city, someone needs to be able to make decisions quickly, and that requires one mind rather than a team. The leader isn't necessarily very old, but is always martially capable and usually intelligent, if not learned. Most of the time, he was a resident of the city in his mortal life.

Sometimes, though, it's hard to know who the real leader is — it's not uncommon for a clever Carthian to help a less-capable but personable fellow to declare himself Prefect or Sheriff, and then lead the

other Kindred in a lesser position while the nominal leader mollifies any complainants.

- **Visitors welcome:** One interesting facet of frontier domains is that although strangers aren't necessarily *welcomed*, they are normally *welcome*. The reason for this is simple, if a little cruel. The more Kindred in the city, the most chances to draw out any hostile forces. The more Kindred there are who don't know the city well, the more fodder the experienced vampires have. As such, new arrivals might see some hazing from other coteries, but nothing fatal or even terribly inconveniencing. The locals are always watching, though, and if trouble comes looking for the newbies, the locals might jump in to help. Alternately, the locals might wait until the hostiles finish with the new Kindred and then mop them up

(D)EVOLUTION OF FRONTIER DOMAINS

Of course, the status quo cannot hold in a frontier domain. With so much tension, something must eventually change or break. What happens in such a domain depends on the Kindred involved, but in very general terms such domains can improve or self-destruct.

Improving a frontier domain usually means resolving whatever is threatening the Kindred in the city. In some cases, such as when the city is recovering from a natural disaster or a spate of disease, this is just a matter of patience. The mortals of the city will rebuild, and the Kindred just need the perseverance to wait things out. In cities where the threat comes from hunters, werewolves or other such arcane culprits, a more proactive approach is necessary. The Kindred of the city must confront these beings, or must be prepared to fight them and win when they show themselves. The Carthian Movement's strengths, of course, are adaptability and willingness to admit when something isn't working, and so, provided the odds aren't stacked horribly against the Kindred, the Carthians can often prevail. Mind, it might take a few Final Deaths first, but that's the necessary sacrifice of the frontier.

Once the threat is over, the situation in the domain stabilizes a bit. Rules become better codified and more strictly enforced, and some reshuffling of the city's offices is typically in order. While some threats can never be said to be truly resolved (just because the Kindred destroyed one chthonic monster stalking the city for vampire hearts doesn't mean another won't arise), having a night that marked the end of the struggle does wonders for the mentality of the domain's Kindred.

The anniversary of the night that the threat finally fell, or the damage from the storm was repaired or the disease was finally eradicated within the city is often a celebration among the city's vampires.

Sometimes, leaders among the Carthians find that, without the constant danger hanging over everyone's heads, the tone of the city becomes too political for their tastes. These types of leaders thrive on a direct, unpredictable threat rather than the constant demands of diplomacy among the undead. At this point, such leaders often leave the city, though in some cases they find ways of "bringing back the old nights" by introducing a new danger to the city's Kindred. Likewise, some Carthians don't really try to end the threat in the first place, preferring the rugged, tense unlife of a frontier domain. In such cities, or in domains where the threat can't be addressed for whatever reason, the situation tends to worsen rather than stay stable.

Falling into any kind of equilibrium is difficult when one is constantly in danger. Kindred are creatures of routine, much as the mortals the Kindred once were: when having a routine can be deadly, it throws everything out of joint. Thus, paranoia and violence escalate in frontier domains if the situation does not improve. Every time a vampire dies, the other Kindred in the city ask if the death was the fault of the domain or the fault of that unfortunate vampire's enemies looking to cash in on the danger of the area. And, of course, since Kindred in frontier domains run in tight coteries, a death never goes unanswered. War between coteries is brief, but brutal. Breaches of the Masquerade attract hunters and investigators. Once the slide into utter chaos begins, the domain can be depopulated again within a month — and all without ever involving the true dangers of the domain.

It doesn't have to be so dramatic or so quick, of course. Some frontier domains persist for years, even decades. The Carthians in charge move from fair and just leadership to ruling with an iron fist, taking tribute in favors or Vitae from the other vampires of the city. Of course, some leave, but many are afraid to do so, choosing instead to try and lure other coteries into the domain so as to have someone lower on the food chain than they. A frontier domain can become as much a nest of vipers as any vampiric domain. The only difference is that the vampires have something else to fear other than each other, and they know it.

PREVENTING DISASTER

How can Carthians dwelling in frontier domains prevent a recurrence of the circumstances that

opened the territory up for them? Indeed, how can these Kindred prevent a stable domain from becoming a frontier domain?

Obviously, some calamities are unstoppable. No vampire can stop a hurricane, and no vampire can predict a fire. Many Carthian domains, however, do observe some simple policies to avoid tragedy.

- **Know the Kindred:** Strangers are dangerous. Some frontier domains enforce a “one warning, then one shot” policy — any Kindred who doesn’t identify herself gets a bullet. (This is, of course, not too much of a problem for the Kindred, but it does get their attention.) Most domains aren’t nearly this stringent, but many Carthian cities do keep track of the Kindred hunting within them. This usually isn’t very extensive. As long as the Kindred in charge know everyone’s name and perhaps sire or covenant leanings, the leaders feel they have enough information, though in some cases age and even clan are added to this profile. This doesn’t stop Kindred from lying about themselves, naturally, but the truth does tend to come out given enough time. The point is, the more complete information the Carthians have, the fewer surprises they face in a crisis.

- **Have escape routes:** Good advice for vampires in general, the Carthians advise, especially in frontier domains, that all Kindred watch the doors and windows wherever they happen to be. Havens should be built with a secret door or a hatch leading to the basement or a room with a window. Some Carthians swallow a key to a storage unit or a spare car, just in case they need to flee quickly. (Retrieving the key is painful, of course, but at least it won’t be lost before the vampire needs it.) Intrinsic to the notion of keeping escape routes is staying fed. If a vampire needs to hole up for a while but doesn’t wish to enter torpor, going to ground without any Vitae in her veins doesn’t do her any good.

- **Know the surrounding cities:** Travel is unsafe, especially over long distances. Therefore, wise Carthians try to arrange communication with one or two nearby domains, just so they have someplace to flee if anything ever goes really wrong. Of course, the Kindred authorities in these cities might refuse to take refugees, even after years of amicable correspondence, but knowing the covenant and temperament of one’s neighbors is still better than just showing up one night and hoping to be welcomed.

- **Diversify:** Focusing too much on one area of influence or expertise can be disastrous. If a Kindred places all of his funds in a safe-deposit box in a bank, what happens when that bank burns down? If a vampire

works to cultivate ghouls in the mayor’s office, what happens after that mayor leaves office? Even hunting in the same area every night is unwise, because it means that if the Kindred is forced to find other means of feeding he will be off balance and adjusting to new surroundings while looking for blood, which sets him up to lose control to the Beast. A wide and diverse range of knowledge about the city and what it offers is critical to avoiding catastrophe.

- **Don’t grow complacent:** A rash of strange murders in the Barrens might be nothing more than a garden-variety serial killer, or it could be a vampire gone mad from degeneration or something stranger still. The Carthians strive to avoid the blasé attitude that dooms mortal society to ignorance. “If the herd wanted to know,” a Carthian saying goes, “it would ask.” Carthian coterie that feel lost or directionless have only to ask their superiors within the covenant or the city for a suggestion on how to spend their nights, and they can be assured that unlife will grow interesting again.

FRONTIER DOMAIN: ROT-TOWN

Presented here is an example of how a vampiric domain becomes a frontier domain, complete with game systems for the tragic events that catalyze everything and the methods that the incoming Carthians use to stabilize things. The city itself isn’t named; it can be any city in any country that has a good-sized mortal population and some industry.

A few years back, the city now called “Rot-town” among the Kindred was stable, at least among the undead. The vampires with the greatest amount of clout in the city belonged to the Lancea Sanctum, although the Invictus and the Ordo Dracul both had strong presences. A Gangrel named Tanner claimed the title of Abbot, and looked at the city as his personal testing ground — he would resist the impure impulses of his mortal mind and become a true Kindred in the eyes of the Lord.

The Lord, perhaps, saw fit to test Tanner beyond his ability. Or perhaps the disease that struck was, as was rumored, the work of the Circle of the Crone and their blood magic. The Ordo Dracul claim that its members were the first to discover “the Rot,” when they learned of a Wyrms’ Nest in the city’s largest cemetery. Unfortunately, their discovery spread to the other Kindred of the city.

The disease, clearly supernatural in origin, rotted away the Kindred from the inside out. Their organs, all but the heart, liquefied without doing any real

damage to the vampires, but this caused their undead bodies to reek of decay. In advanced cases, black fluid would leak from the vampire's lower orifices. No amount of Vitae could reverse this putrefaction, and the Kindred best suited to study it, the Ordo Dracul, were the first to fall to it. In a matter of months, most of the Kindred in the city had either fled or learned to cope with their disgusting new existence.

Then the hunters came.

The disease had sparked a rash of murders, as vampires fed to excess, trying to heal themselves. This attracted a band of mortals, some of whom had lost loved ones to the Kindred's hunger and some who had simply noticed the undead skulking in their city (since the disease's symptoms made it harder to hide). Following the stench and the trails of fluid, the hunters stabbed, staked, shot and burned the Kindred. For six months, no known Kindred called the city home.

Blythe Geary had been an immunologist before her Embrace into clan Mekhet, and was interested in the diseases that Kindred could pass along to their herds. Hearing about a disease that could actually affect vampires fascinated her. She gathered a number of fellow Carthians and explained that Rot-town made for an interesting experiment. Any Kindred who entered would have to be quarantined, meaning only Kindred truly brave enough to enter or dedicated enough to search for a cure would bother. She contacted the Kindred of nearby cities, who agreed that any vampire exiting the city was to be slain, in exchange for which Geary agreed to share the information she found about the disease with them. She and her coterie of Carthians entered the city the next night, knowing the work that lay ahead.

First, they needed to assess any lingering danger from the hunters. Blythe had brought Kindred with her who were not only skilled at medicine, but who were martially proficient as well (some of whom had been banished from other cities for breaches of Elysium and other violent offenses). They fed on the local mortals, lured the cell of hunters into the open and slew them over a period of months. While Blythe still isn't sure the coterie got all of the hunters, there haven't been any attacks on the Kindred since one climactic ambush in late November. (Thanksgiving night has, among the Kindred of Rot-town, become a celebration of victory over these hunters.)

After dealing with the hunters, Geary and her coterie-mates started looking for survivors in earnest. They have not, to date, found any, but the disease is by no means dead. Every now and then, one of the Kindred

in the city starts to exhibit symptoms. Geary has developed a cure involving spending a night soaking in some extremely caustic chemicals. This can stop the disease in its early stages, but once it progresses to the point that the Kindred starts oozing fluid, there is nothing she can do to help. She is working nightly on a real cure, but the answers are slow in coming. She recognizes that venturing back into the cemetery where the infection started would be useful, but doesn't have the protective gear she'd need yet.

Geary is the recognized authority in the city. She makes decisions coldly and logically, and orders the execution of any vampire who attempts to leave the city, breaking the quarantine. She does not allow mention of God or religion at the Carthian meetings, stating that it is science and not superstition that will cure the Rot. Her coterie wears surgical masks when dealing with other Kindred; this gesture is largely symbolic, since the Rot spreads by touch or feeding from a common vessel, but does serve to represent the emotional distance they keep between themselves and the other vampires of the city.

What no one yet realizes is that Tanner, the Abbot of the city, is still present. He hides in the cemetery most nights, in constant pain. He is suffering from an advanced case of the Rot, to the point that his footfalls make soft wet sounds from the fluid pooling in his body. He still believes that God will cure him if he makes the right offering.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COVENANTS

Only reductivist thought defines the Carthian idiom as "us versus them." Wise Carthians can work within existing social hierarchies to achieve their ends. Indeed, the Carthian Movement need not always be ascendant to achieve its goals — much can be gained by playing Devil's advocate, kingmaker or swing vote in an existing social structure.

Invictus

On paper, you can't find a covenant more opposed to the views of the Carthian movement than the *Invictus*. The "Power to the People" ideology is anathema to the feudal systems of heredity nobility and stratified classes, and will find little support or purchase with them. In the eyes of the *Invictus*, their long-tested system is not only a good one, it is unquestionably the best possible one. The attempts of the Carthians to alter or replace the feudal system with mortal progressions are considered immature and foolish at best, idiotic and dangerous at worst.

That isn't to say that the two covenants are always at odds, though. Quite the contrary. Both are secular, so they speak a common language of unclouded politics, and both are often willing to make deals to ensure the smooth function of a domain. Invictus Kindred aren't nearly as interested in dominating every vampire as they are in ensuring safe and prosperous futures for themselves. Carthians often find themselves forming pacts of non-interference with the Invictus, and the Invictus are rarely the ones who violate those pacts.

Problems between the covenants most often arise when the Carthians see fit to protest the workings of the Invictus within its own boundaries, attempting to force the Inner Circle to allow its lesser vampires rights and freedoms beyond those outlined in their Oaths of Fealty. Perceived (or actual) abuse of less powerful Kindred within the system of the Invictus often spurs selfless (or opportunistic) Carthians to action, and can lead to serious conflict. The duty-bound vampires of the Invictus are, after all, the property of their superiors. When the Carthians decide to interfere with the Invictus vampire, the Carthians are invading the territory of the elders, whether the Carthians realize it or not.

The members of the Invictus who are most likely to convert to Carthian philosophy are almost always young, less powerful Kindred. They are the ones who find themselves chafing under the system of absolute fealty to experience and tradition (most especially in the modern West, coming from relatively free mortal lives), and the promise of equality under Carthian law often appeals. To win these Invictus

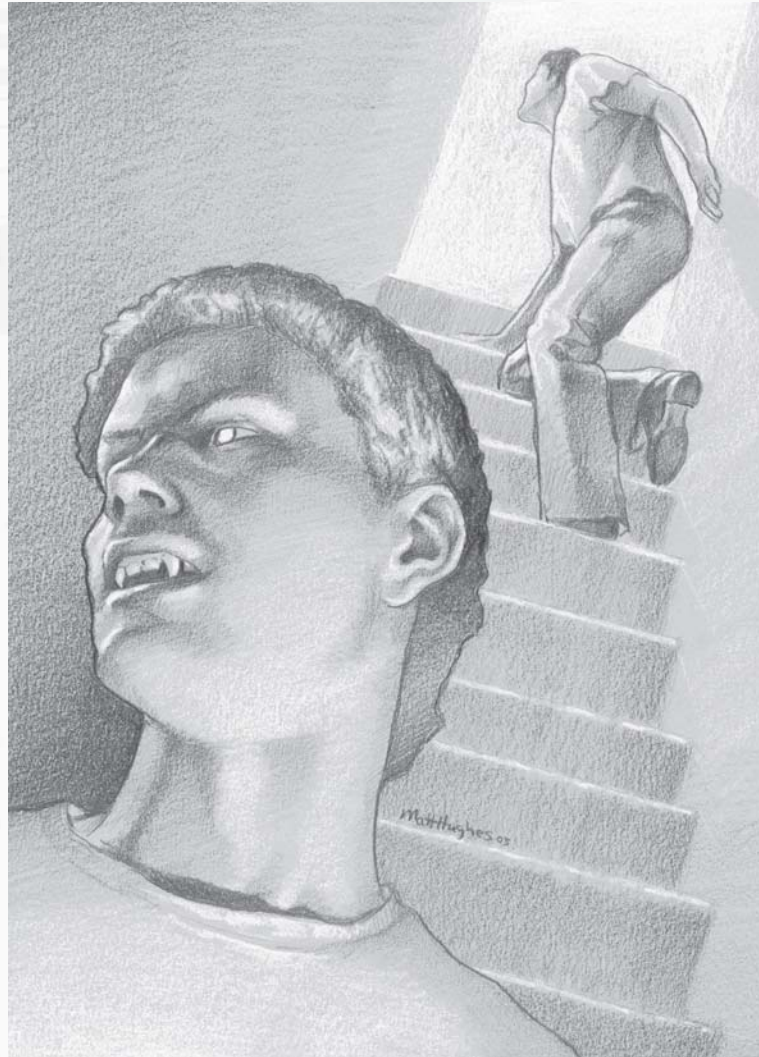
members over, the Movement needs to demonstrate that the material gains offered by Invictus membership are not the gifts young Kindred tend to think they are, and the Carthians need to overcome the fear Invictus members have of violating their complicated oaths and obligations. Tense negotiations often accompany the defection of any Invictus neonate, as the Carthians must deal with the Invictus elder who formerly lorded over the young vampire in question. The conversion of the neonate represents

a loss of resource to the elder, and a failure to compensate him can result in the nullification of treaties or agreements between the covenants.

Unlike under Invictus rule can be difficult for Carthians, since the imposition of Oaths of Service may be applied to all Kindred simply to preclude the notion of revolt. Any such oath restricts the freedoms of those who take it on and may interfere with the operating policy of the Movement in the domain. Even without the oaths of the Invictus, Carthian Kindred often chafe at the extremely conservative values and fashions of the ruling covenant, making spectacles

of themselves in hopes of spurring change.

Invictus Kindred dwelling under Carthian rule will almost always opt out of the spirit of the Movement's governing attempts, still looking to their Inner Circle to render all decisions. Pure democracies are undermined by the votes of the Inner Circle, which are unanimously supported as a bloc by the rest of the Invictus. Attempts to enforce communal behavior are frequently resisted, and constitutional law is never honored.



Lancea Sanctum

Much more tolerant of Carthian experimentation than the Invictus, the Lancea Sanctum still finds itself at odds with the Movement in many domains. Most Bishops will accept (and even encourage) the attendance of declared Carthian members in the Sanctified churches, hoping that the teachings of the Lancea Sanctum will eventually convert the wayward Kindred and lead them to a brighter future. Coincidentally, this is almost exactly what the Carthians who attend the masses are hoping will happen to the Sanctified vampires once they, in turn, are exposed to the ideology of the Movement.

The problem with this relationship is that it's nothing more than temporary tolerance. Sooner or later, somebody either decides that the other covenant's members aren't changing fast enough or, worse, that they're too good at conveying their way of thought to one's own membership. When that happens, as it inevitably does, the two groups break with one another and rarely mend their ties. Forbearance sours into acrimony, and former allies become bitter rivals, forcing their mixed membership to choose sides in a rapidly deteriorating relationship.

Predicting which Sanctified Kindred are likely to convert to the Carthian cause is difficult. Only those who suffer a crisis of faith seem to be willing to entertain the intellectual arguments of the Movement as serious philosophy. Whether that crisis comes from decades of eroding belief or from a sudden breach of trust, the shamed or fearful vampires who experience it almost always hide it. Many try to deny their feelings, hoping that the fire of conviction will rekindle itself before anyone notices their slip. Astute Carthians must learn to recognize the signs of doubt in Sanctified Kindred, and to broach the subject of conversion diplomatically.

Carthians are rarely happy in a Sanctified domain, generally because the superior powers in the Lancea Sanctum preach disconnection from one's mortal roots and assumption of a new, entirely supernatural persona — a doctrine foreign to the mortal-compatible vampires of the Movement. The more power the Lancea Sanctum has, the less humane the Sanctified's behavior at gatherings and functions of the local Kindred. Younger Carthians especially find themselves alienated by the stylistic ritual and revelry of the Lancea Sanctum, steeped as it is in increasingly archaic language and lore.

On the other hand, Sanctified Kindred tend to thrive in Carthian domains, so long as the governing body does not outlaw the Sanctified's religion. If it remains

legal, the Church is treated as a perfectly acceptable refuge (and outlet) for vampires with a yearning for spirituality and ritual (and, some say, anachronism). If the Church's Bishop is politically passive, the Lancea Sanctum is treated by most Carthian leaders as little more than a relatively harmless social club, a place for like-minded, old-fashioned Kindred to pass the time. Of course, the Carthians of some domains don't have quite as much tolerance for religious orders of any kind, and may well choose to outlaw the Church.

CIRCLE OF THE CRONE

Few dedicated Carthians even understand the Circle of the Crone. It's not that they're religious, or that many of them steadily refuse to hide their religion, even in the face of discrimination. Holding true to one's beliefs is something that the Carthians have a deep, abiding respect for, and they find the tenacity of the Circle quite appealing. The Circle's passive acceptance of oppression (in fact, their apparent urge to provoke it) is what confuses Carthian Kindred. More often than not, an offer to relieve members of the Circle of painful circumstances will fall on deaf ears. They almost never want things to change for the better, at least not the way the Movement does.

Even more curiously, the Circle of the Crone may align itself with the Carthian cause under the most dangerous circumstances — during an anti-Carthian pogrom, for instance — but will quickly abandon the Carthians when the peril passes. It's as though the Circle encourages its members to test themselves, and the Carthians are acceptable allies only when their friendship increases the difficulty of the test (or, on rare occasions, helps the Acolytes survive it). Many Carthians quickly grasp this feature of the Circle and either learn to take advantage of it or do their best to ignore it.

Conversion from the Circle of the Crone to the Carthian Movement is infrequent, but does occur. The mystical tenets of the former can actually overlap comfortably with the political philosophies of the latter, but it's often hard for Circle members to identify with outsiders, and doubly so for them to integrate comfortably into a secular organization. More often than not, members of the Circle will lend their support to like-minded Carthians without actually crossing over from the Circle.

Carthian rule is often just as forgiving of the Circle as the Movement is of the Lancea Sanctum, so long as the Circle refrains from overtly inhumane activity. Many governing members of the Carthian Move-

ment balk at the Circle's apparent obsession with blood, but only because it seems to indicate a tendency to monstrosity that most covenants are more careful to conceal. Strangely, the Circle often seems most resistant to Carthian rule when the Acolytes are indulged and acknowledged as legitimate citizens. A problem for governing Carthians seems to be finding a balance between tolerating the Kindred of the Circle and finding a way to make them feel as though they're still struggling to survive without endangering the smooth function of the domain. Many Carthian leaders abandon the effort in favor of a simpler choice: outlawing the Circle and allowing it to function as an underground cult.

ORDO DRACUL

The Ordo Dracul, of all covenants, is the easiest for the members of the Carthian Movement to get along with. Viewed by most, perhaps erroneously, as nothing more than a secular, scholarly organization, its members are often respected for their perceived intellect and wisdom. Although a minuscule number of members (or former members) of the Order number among the adherents of the Carthian Movement, the two covenants often enjoy a relatively civil dialog. If there is anything about the Ordo Dracul that invokes the displeasure of the Carthians, it's the Dragons' tendency toward isolationism and esotericism. Their unwillingness to share information and their reticence in political maneuverings sometimes strikes the Movement as unnecessarily obstructive.

Alliances with the Ordo Dracul are almost always strict arrangements of trade: items and information that appeals to the Order are bought and sold in exchange for political support, territorial access and occasional harboring from oppressive forces. Formal alliance is not entirely uncommon, but it's relatively common knowledge that any relationship with a member of the Ordo Dracul will go only so far as long as you remain outside their covenant.

Very, very few Kindred convert from the Ordo Dracul to the Carthian Movement wholeheartedly. Only those who are disappointed in the teachings of the Order, for one reason or another, are likely to join up. Even they are more likely to withdraw completely from vampire society, though, remaining members of their covenant without participating in its traditions, or becoming unaligned and disappearing from Kindred politics entirely.

Likewise, the Ordo Dracul is often allowed to function relatively unmolested under Carthian government. Members of the Order are more than willing to

participate in votes or debates, so long as such things don't take too much time away from the Dragons' own pursuits; when politics does take too much time, the Dragons are all too happy to forfeit their positions, allowing the Carthian Movement to direct their choice. The Dragons' occasional unwillingness to answer questions about the details of their research can raise the ire of particularly domineering Carthians, but stubborn silence is usually the least of a repressive ruler's worries.

Unaligned

As far as most Carthians are concerned, the unaligned form little more than an unguided talent pool for the Movement. Disorganized, unwilling or unable to commit to structured causes and often fiercely proud, unaligned vampires can be slow to learn the lessons Carthians are all too willing to teach, but the unaligned are also more likely to see things the Carthian way than any other. At least the unaligned get an equal voice under most models of Carthian government, so long as they're willing to call themselves citizens. The attraction of a group that's willing to defend your right to speak for yourself is undeniable, especially in domains that are dangerous for vampires without any friends.

In fact, disputes with unaligned vampires most often arise when they refuse to throw in with the Carthian movement in defiance of all the good reasons to do so. Stubborn pride and fiercely individualist tendencies may be tolerable traits to the Carthians, but refusing an honest hand of solidarity under reasonable circumstances can be perceived as suicidal arrogance. Frustration with adamantly independent Kindred is not uncommon within the Movement, especially when the added muscle could really help the Carthian cause, improving conditions for all vampires in a domain.

The unbound enjoy an unusual level of safety and freedom in most Carthian-run domains, although the unaligned almost always complain that the Movement pressures them to abandon their solitary status and join up as covenant-mates, whether or not their personal philosophy meshes with the ruling system in the territory. As a potential pool of allies (and a sure-fire resistance force if another covenant tries to seize control), the unaligned are usually left to their own devices just to keep them pacified.

CARTHIAN AND THE WORLD OF DARKNESS

The Carthian Movement doesn't have the same mystical focus as the Lancea Sanctum or the Circle



of the Crone, but the Movement's members are still vampires, and thus still part of the greater supernatural world. Even if the covenant doesn't teach a particular philosophy with regard to the strange beings that lurk out of sight of humanity, Carthians in various cities learn to recognize the signs. When the moon is full, Carthians avoid a particular stretch of gang turf known locally as "Wolf's Run." On a particular night in December, they steer clear of the homeless shelters, because everyone knows Cold Man gets first pick of victims that night. On the anniversary of the 8th Street triple murder, the Prefect decreed that the Kindred in the city need to take alternate routes. She claims this is out of respect, but she seems nervous when she says it.

The World of Darkness is a dangerous place. Vampires, of course, are part of what makes it dangerous, but the things in the dark don't always (or even often) look kindly on the undead. The legends of the cities serve as cautionary tales for the Kindred, letting them know what areas and activities to avoid. Some Carthians, however, are not repulsed but enticed by the notion of coming face-to-face with a ghost. As with so many other things, the Carthian Movement's attitude toward the other beings in the World of Darkness depends on which Carthians in particular one is discussing.

IGNORANCE IS BLISS

Some Carthians don't really want to know whether or not these creatures exist in Carthians domains, because if the Carthians knew, they might be bound by honor (or, worse, by the established laws of the domain) to do something about it. In the meeting halls of these Carthians, the question of whether or not a bizarre string of murders might be anything other than a mortal serial killer or *possibly* a vampire on a binge doesn't often come up, and, if it does, it tends to be laughed off. After all, the notion that a person could come clawing back from the grave is a bit absurd, and so in rational discussion it shouldn't even be considered.

Of course, a discussion in which the participants are undead bloodsuckers is already a step beyond rational, but with enough derision, this little point can be overlooked, and the Carthians can move on to topics in which they feel more at home.

Carthians who have only recently been Embraced or who spend most of their time primarily in the company of other Carthian Kindred are most likely to fall into this mindset. They wear blinders to the

supernatural, perhaps because the process of becoming Kindred has already overloaded their minds on the subject. These kinds of Carthians are likely to respond with anger and fear should the existence or presence of non-vampiric supernatural beings ever be brought to their attention.

"LIVE" AND LET LIVE

Most Carthians — indeed, most vampires — are willing to accept the notion of supernatural creatures existing. Sometimes, Carthians might decry a particular legend as impossible, using whatever faulty logic they like. For instance, a vampire might claim that a human being performing magic is impossible, because magic comes from the power of Vitae, as evidenced by “that creepy shit those Crone-people do.” Another Kindred might disagree, saying that mortals could conceivably use a different form of magic, but a human turning into a wolf is impossible because doing so violates the laws of physics. A third vampire might point out that some vampires can change into wolves regardless of said laws, but that a dead body can’t reanimate without Vitae, and so on. But all of these arguments are predicated on the same notion: a willingness to accept the supernatural, and ignorance of how it truly works. Once such Kindred see for themselves a small fraction of the truth of the World of Darkness, they tend to become more open to possibility — and tend to want nothing to do with it.

The Carthian Movement isn’t always egalitarian or even meritocratic, but the notion that people (vampires, anyway) should make their own choices tends to be fairly central to the covenant. That in mind, the Carthians don’t care so much if werewolves and mages exist in their cities, given a few provisos. Some Carthians might want to know what parts of a city a werewolf pack claims, so that the Kindred can avoid those areas (and, likewise, so the Kindred have a convenient place to send or lure enemies). Some Carthians might wish to know if a mage employs any mortals in the city, so that the Kindred can avoid feeding on them. The intent here is twofold. First, the Kindred don’t want to make enemies, especially enemies that the Kindred don’t understand. Second, they want to learn as much about the practical realities of the “intruders” (for the Kindred tend to think of the cities as their domains, as ridiculously egocentric as that is) as possible, in case the intruders do become enemies.

The average coterie of Carthians in such a city doesn’t usually consider the possibility of ever going

toe-to-toe with a pack of werewolves, though. All the Carthians know is that certain parts of the city are off-limits and marked as dangerous. What they choose to do with that information (ignore it, follow it, learn more) is up to them.

Carthians who acknowledge other supernatural beings but don’t seek them out tend to represent those with some experience under their belts and a solid connection to their home turf and their bases of influence.

CURIOSITY AND CATS

Of course, some vampires feel the need to search out other supernatural beings. Motives vary; some feel that since these creatures were once human, they might have some interesting perspective on adjusting to a decidedly inhuman mindset. They might perceive the other inhabitants of the supernatural world as a threat. While the vampires might be right, the threat usually doesn’t come about for the reasons they think it should. For instance, a vampire might believe that a man becomes a werewolf by suffering an attack by another werewolf. To stem a possible “werewolf plague,” the vampire goes looking for werewolves to “cure” them. The actual werewolves, of course, take issue with the notion that their condition is a disease (and quite correctly point out that they aren’t the ambulatory corpses in this scenario), and might either go to ground and wait for the vampires to leave them be, or go on the warpath.

Carthians who go looking for trouble from other supernatural creatures tend to be neonates who were curious about such things pre-Embrace or who latched on to the supernatural aspect of vampirism soon after (which begs the question of why the Carthian Movement appealed more than, say, the Ordo Dracul, but such Kindred definitely do exist). The Movement does sponsor Kindred to investigate such things occasionally, though (see below).

MYSTICISM IN A NON-MYSTICAL COVENANT

The Carthian Movement is inherently secular. As such, discussions about the “true nature” of beings such as werewolves, ghosts, mages and even vampires tend toward either the practical implications of such beings or pure, blind speculation. In areas where influence from other beings is strong, however, the Movement doesn’t just fold up and cede the area to another covenant. After all, a given Carthian vampire, or even coterie, might have a position dedicated

to understanding the truth of the supernatural world. Any Carthian city usually boasts either a few vampires of other covenants, or a few Carthians with esoteric pursuits. Thus, when the house in the rich suburb that the local kids pass with their fingers crossed suddenly erupts in blue flame for a full minute, and then returns to normal before anyone can even dial 911, any Kindred in the city known to be interested in magic, ghosts, demons or anything even peripherally connected to such phenomena might be getting a call.

The problem is, though, that the most dangerous manifestations of the supernatural don't tend to be the most overt. In fact, the really obvious instances are more likely to be hoaxes. It's the things that happen when no one is looking, the occurrences that people see out of the corners of their eyes when walking to their cars at night, that really worry the Kindred. Consider: A ghoul casually mentions to her regnant that she saw a rat fall out of a man the other night near the docks. The regnant asks for clarification — did the rat fall out of the man's coat? No, the ghoul replies, he wasn't wearing a shirt, and the rat peeled itself away from his skin and fell off. She didn't mention it before because she was drunk at the time and still isn't sure what she saw.

The vampire now has a dilemma on his hands. This whole incident could have been a hallucination, or a misinterpretation. But suppose it wasn't. If a rat really did fall out of the man's skin, what the hell does that mean? Could the man have been a vampire using some heretofore unseen manifestation of the Protean Discipline? Maybe the rat wasn't a rat at all, but some unholy creature attempting to slither into his skin. Maybe the vampire has even heard legends of wizards and their familiars, and is now free to agonize over whether such things exist and what implication this might have for the city. In any case, without a common religious or mystical frame of reference, the Carthians can often feel lost or overwhelmed when dealing with the supernatural.

SWEET MERCY

Sweet Mercy is a coterie of Carthian vampires dedicated to hunting down and saving werewolves from the horrible pain of their existence. This work began when the coterie piled into their truck one summer night and headed out toward a state park that was hosting a communal gathering. (The Carthians figured that feeding on "those hippies" would be easy). The first campsite they found, though, was in shambles. Body parts lay strewn

everywhere, and in the midst of it all was a man in his mid-20s, weeping and staring at the blood on his hands. He claimed to be a werewolf, and that he had killed and consumed these unfortunate people.

The vampires didn't believe him at first, but he demonstrated his shapeshifting power and begged the Kindred — the first he'd ever met — to help him. He'd tried to kill himself before, but the wounds healed too quickly. The Carthians, falling back on what little they knew about werewolves (mostly from pop-culture sources), hit on the notion of silver bullets. After a few quick errands, they filled two shotgun shells with the remnants of one of the vampires' wedding silver (she wasn't thrilled, but she wasn't actually married anymore anyway), bade the werewolf close his eyes and pulled the trigger. They had to empty both barrels to kill him.

Moved with pity for this creature, and worried about the damage other such beasts might do if left unchecked, the coterie named itself Sweet Mercy and went on the hunt. They haven't had much luck so far — apparently these creatures are rare — but these Carthians are armed with silver bullets and a profound sense that they're doing the right thing.

Some Carthians would argue that this isn't a bad thing, though. After all, fear of showing weakness is itself weakness, and so admitting that one is overwhelmed by events that would cause most sane mortals to reach for prescription medicines isn't so much weakness as common sense. Indeed, the fact that the above Carthian can't haughtily say "obviously a demon" as a Sanctified Kindred might actually gives the Carthian a decided advantage — he might not know as much about demons, but he won't be completely caught off guard if the rat-man isn't a demon after all.

GLIMPSES

The following sections present the Carthian Movement's views on werewolves, mages, ghosts and spirits, after a fashion. That is, they present what the Carthians are most likely to see when dealing with these creatures and what the covenant, all else being equal, is likely to do about it. Don't take any of this as a pat "this is how the Carthians feel about werewolves" answer, however. As the rest of this book makes clear, Carthians are diverse and unpredictable, and those watchwords should guide their dealings with everything, other supernatural beings included.

Also included are rumors and anecdotes that Carthian vampires have related to others. You might assume that your character has heard one of these stories through word of mouth — or has actually seen one of these odds events and claims it happened to a friend so that he doesn't have to admit to it.

WEREWOLVES

The average mortal isn't likely to know much about werewolves beyond what he's seen in films. The average Carthian isn't likely to know much more. Carthians dwelling in areas of high werewolf activity note that these creatures are violent, territorial and nearly impossible to kill. The jury is out on whether silver actually works or not — silver bullets are expensive and difficult to make, silver knives even more so and either method requires actually fighting a werewolf.

Reports from rural areas indicate the werewolves run in packs, while tales passed along at urban gatherings seem to indicate that werewolves are solitary hunters. One thing that no one disputes is that these beasts are hunters, but the question then arises: what are they hunting?

This question concerns the Carthians. If werewolves hunt prey, what do they eat? Legends say that they eat human flesh, but legends also say that vampires can't cross running water and must stop to count grains of spilled rice, neither of which are true (at least, not in most Carthians' experience). If werewolves are hunting mortals, why don't mortal authorities notice the disappearances? Most Kindred know, though, that it's not impossible to dispose of bodies surreptitiously.

Some Carthians scoff at the notion of werewolves in the city. After all, a wolf looks nothing like a dog, and surely someone would notice if packs of wolves were rampaging around urban areas? More cautious members of the covenant remind the skeptics that admission of ignorance is good thing — what if werewolves can change at will, rather than only under the full moon, as some sources suggest? What if an effect similar to the Lost Visage (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 75) prevents mortals from seeing werewolves as what they truly are? The most intelligent move the Carthians can make when dealing with werewolves is to be cautious.

Rumors:

- “I had a bad month about a year back. I probably killed 20 people in as many nights. No, I'm not proud of it. Shut up and listen. After I came to my senses, I went back to the places I'd stashed the bodies — I said it was a bad month! — to make sure they'd be found and given proper burials. Every single body had its heart, kidneys and liver chewed or clawed out of it, and there were paw prints all around them.”

- “I saw a werewolf once. I mean, I saw a guy turn into a wolf, and I'm pretty sure he wasn't one of us. He was standing by a car — I don't know whose, I never checked. He dropped to the ground, reached under it and then rolled over, turned into a wolf and ran away. I looked under that car. The axle was bent to shit. I don't know how he did that one-handed.”

- “Werewolves don't spread through a bite. I mean, they do, but it's just like with us: they have to want to do it, so it's not like a disease. I knew a guy when I was first Embraced who was all up in arms because they came for his sister. They bit her, and then she became one of them. He watched the whole thing, but he couldn't stop them. It was just before sundown, and he was trapped in his house, watching from a little window. He swore he'd hunt them down — but I never heard from him after that.”

MAGES

A vampire might be aware, or even just suspect, that occult secret societies exist among mortals and that these societies might profess to wield mystical power. “Mystical power,” however, is maddeningly vague, as are such terms as “mage” and “sorcerer.” Such people might exist, but what can they really do? Vampires, especially Carthians, who don't have much contact with ritual magic as a rule, are often inclined to scoff at notions that mortals can perform “magic.” Vampires suspect that this mystical might actually boils down to garden-variety fortune-telling or cold reading, or, worse, some New Age notion of magic-as-empowerment, affecting nothing in a concrete sense.

Imagine the surprise of these vampires, then, when fire leaps from a mage's fingertips to incinerate one of the Kindred's coterie.

Magic is quite real, but the Kindred of the Carthian Movement don't tend to have any context for magic's practitioners. While Carthians might not understand werewolves, at least folklore has a fairly consistent portrayal of them. Not so for mages — a spellcaster might be a pious Theurgist calling down holy fire, a Necromancer interested in all manners of animating the dead (including the Kindred), a Shaman communing with the spirits surrounding her or an eldritch scholar always followed by a chill wind. When the Carthians encounter mages, the first meeting tends to set a precedent for future interactions. Thus, if the first time a Carthian coterie meets a spellcaster is a conflagration that sees three vampires scorched to ash, the standing policy for future run-ins with such beings is probably “shoot first.” Such policies



might well be in place 100 years later, even though no active vampire in the domain has ever personally met a mage.

Rumors:

- “Witches are real. They keep cats as familiars. One scratch from a witch-cat’s claws, and your mind starts to go. I’m serious. A week later, and if you haven’t burned off that scratch-mark, you can’t even remember your name.”

- “I talked to a guy on the subway once. Thought he was normal, actually kind of cute. I figured I’d chat him up, take him outside and have a little snack. Nobody gets hurt. But then suddenly he stops talking, stares me right in the eye and says, ‘Don’t even think about it, dead girl.’ And for the next week, I swear to God, my reflection was crystal-clear, except my eyes were blood red. I don’t ride the subways much anymore.”

- “I knew a Shadow once who said that you can tell if a breather knows magic because he’ll always offer you his left hand to shake first. It’s like a compulsion. They can’t help it, and they’ll correct it almost immediately, but if you know what to watch for you can catch them. That’s what the guy said, anyway.”

GHOSTS AND SPIRITS

Belief in ghosts, to many Kindred, is fairly intuitive. Vampires exist, after all, so the idea that the human soul can linger after death doesn’t seem to be much of a stretch. That, of course, gives rise to a niggling concern — since vampires kill a decent number of mortals, how many of them are still around?

This is a disturbing thought to the Carthians. Without a unified school of thought on such matters as the disposition of the soul after death and the true nature of ephemeral entities, a Carthian confronted by the ghost of someone whom he or a coterie-mate murdered isn’t much better equipped to handle the experience than a mortal. In fact, the Carthian might be even more terrified. A mortal, after all, doesn’t need to fear burning to death in the sun because a ghost unlocked a door and let someone into the haven. But possibly more disquieting is the implication that a vampire might also linger after death, and might therefore confront the souls of those he killed. Again, the covenant offers no comfort, and so the Carthian must draw his own conclusions.

Some Carthians have noted that ghosts often seem bound to locations, typically the spot on which they died. Dissenting reports claim, however, that ghosts are able to follow their murderers and hound them, while similar stories talk about unquiet spirits protecting their still-living loved ones. More practical Carthians insist that these ghosts must be rare in the extreme, as very few Kindred have ever reported spectral interference while feeding or undertaking other actions that might arouse the ire of a ghost. Fearful Carthians wonder if this is indicative of the rarity of ghosts or of survivors of such incidents.

Not every spirit is a ghost, though. Most Carthians don't realize this, and unless they subscribe to a belief that encompasses a somewhat animistic view of the world, the idea that objects, places and even ideas can have spiritual representations is strange and foreign. Even if a vampire is willing to accept this notion, a typical, skeptical Carthian question is, "So where are these spirits?" No easy answer is forthcoming, and vampires seem to lack the apparatus to sense these beings. And yet, every now and then, a Carthian tells a story about an encounter with an alien-looking being that materializes from nowhere and carries with it an unmistakable air of something, be it anger, loss or even something as specific as asphalt or rain. In general, though, the Carthians file these stories with all of the other unverifiable and out-of-context yarns that nights in the World of Darkness seems to produce.

Rumors:

- "Children who die always become ghosts. The thing is that they only linger as spirits for as many years as they were alive. After that, they fade away forever. But see, since we're dead, we can adopt ghost kids and they can hang around for as long as we do. I don't know how you'd go about that, though."
- "A friend of mine — still mortal, for what it's worth — saw a ghost on the river the other night. She said it was just about sunset, and this guy in a fisherman's coat was walking across the river toward her. She panicked and ran, but she said she heard him calling out to her. Only thing was, he was calling *my name*."
- "There's a gal who volunteers at the humane society that's into bloodletting. I met her a few months ago, and it's a mutually beneficial relationship, right? So I went to visit her at the society, and as I'm walking through the place, suddenly every dog in the room stops barking, stands up, faces me and stares. Just stares. This big Doberman at the end, he was the leader. As soon as he stopped looking, they all did."

CONQUERING A DOMAIN

The capture of any domain by the Carthian Movement can take one of two routes: rebellion or subversion. Whether through brutal imposition or diplomatic avenues, sudden explosion or steady build, the process of seizing control is a risky one — and can determine the success or failure of a Carthian experiment even before it gets a chance to get off the ground.

REBELLION

Usually precipitated by the strict rule of a competing covenant and the attendant perceived injustices of that rule, Carthian rebellion is often a violent affair. Conquest by attrition is far from the preferred method of ascendancy for the Movement, though, since rebellion threatens the imposition of a cyclic vengeance-and-oppression model of rule — something that very few Carthian Kindred want.

The process of rebellion itself is often the subject of impassioned debate in Carthian circles. Because rebellion entails sudden, volatile change, many argue that rebellion is an unsuitable means to attaining "proper government" in almost any style. Vampires react badly to sudden paradigm shifts, the argument goes, and will react violently to a cause that they might otherwise find acceptable if it surprises them. While, undeniably, change in some domains is impossible without violent uprising, the immediate shock attending that change will pave the way to months (if not years) of bloody conflict and forever paint the resulting Carthian government as one built on the vicious destruction of its predecessor.

Still, Carthian Kindred are usually passionate adherents to their philosophies, and many are willing to take the risk in order to see their dreams to fruition. Furthermore, taking up arms against the ruling covenant in a city can unify and galvanize the Carthians, lending their organization structure and purpose with the opportunity to achieve direct, measurable results.

STORY CONCEPTS: REBELLION

Storming Elysium: The Invictus Prince of the domain has scheduled a show trial of pacifist Carthian leaders at the next month's Elysium for failing to publicly condemn an accused violator of Tradition. It's clear to everyone in the Movement that their leaders are headed for execution on the flimsiest of charges, just to demonstrate the power of the Prince. Angry whispers of revolution are beginning to circulate among the Carthians, and it seems that the trial is going to be interrupted by violent protest. Do

the characters participate in the revolt as planned, or do they try to find a peaceful way to defuse the looming violence by diplomacy? If seizing control of the domain and freeing the leaders of the Movement involves full-scale war with the Invictus, are the characters willing to participate?

Conflagration: An unplanned rebellion in a powerful Sanctified domain breaks out when three young Carthians are brutally punished for openly questioning the decrees of the Archbishop. The characters suddenly find themselves in the midst of a chaotic battle for control, watching as their friends and allies leap into the fray, fearlessly facing the blood lashes of the servants of the Church. The characters, realizing that they are likely to be punished alongside the rebels, must face a decision: attack the superior force of the Sanctum in hopes that the Carthians can actually eke out a victory or renounce the Movement, letting their cohorts fall unaided.

SUBVERSION

Slower to achieve and more difficult to plan, the subversion of a domain involves the infiltration or conversion of covenants with competing ideals. Sooner or later, successful subversion tactics bring a domain to a tipping point of Movement sympathy, wherein enough Kindred support the replacement of the current government with a Carthian system.

Almost universally considered superior to sudden rebellion, subversion of a domain is many, many times more difficult to achieve. Despite appearances, subversive strategy is not entirely peaceful. It can involve sabotage, assassination, even terrorism, so long as the actual operation of conversion appears to be happening from within the competing covenants or via diplomatic interaction with the Carthians. Deception and intrigue are the hallmarks of a subversive campaign as well, and can lead (if improperly concealed) to just as much violence as open rebellion. However, the proper planning and execution of a subversive campaign can result in the entirely peaceful rollover of government in a domain and impose an “untainted” Carthian system in its wake.

Not all Carthians are up for the rigorous secrecy and manipulative politicking of an aggressive campaign of subversion, though, and realize that failure and exposure could forever damage whatever trust they share with the Kindred of the domain. These vampires prefer to take an open approach, hoping to win the Damned over with simple argument and enthusiastic offer of a new deal.

The greatest problem facing Carthians who successfully seize control of a domain reveals itself

immediately upon acknowledgment of their ascension to power. They must, thereafter, impose law upon the other covenants, deciding whether to afford them the rights and freedoms entailed in the Carthians’ ideal system or to exclude and oppress the covenants in hopes of eliminating potentially dangerous competing philosophies. Faced with the decision of forming an unstable but honorable government or sinking to the level of the Carthian enemies and crushing dissent in the name of security, many newly empowered Carthians struggle to satisfy their own ideals in the realpolitik world of Kindred government.

STORY CONCEPTS: SUBVERSION

The Moment of Truth: The ruling Circle of the Crone government in the domain is on the brink of collapse. The lower-tier members are starting to lose faith in their Hierophant, and many are beginning to take interest in the Carthians who attend ceremonies with the Acolytes and showing interest in the philosophy of the Movement. All the Carthians need to tip is some kind of demonstration of bad faith on the part of the Circle leadership. The characters are secretly asked to participate in an initiative by a Carthian elder — to assassinate one of the less traditionally minded scions of the cult and leave evidence attributing the crime to the Hierophant. Can the characters plan and execute the task perfectly, setting popular opinion squarely against the Hierophant, or will they fail and ruin the reputation of the Carthian Movement? Even if they succeed, do they approve of the underhanded tactics of their own elder?

Gentle Siege: The Invictus is in full, undisputed control of the domain. All challengers have been eliminated or absorbed over the past decades, and the change-hungry Kindred of the Carthian Movement are well aware that any open defiance of the law will result in a purge. Eager to avoid the swift punishment visited upon dissenters but unwilling to abandon the cause, the Carthians begin encouraging discourse with Invictus coterie in hopes that reason and Socratic debate will win the Carthians support where protest and revolt would fail. The characters approach one such coterie — that of the Prince’s childe, and must work to win the respect of its members. Can the characters do so without becoming subservient to the Invictus? Is it possible to gain enough trust to bring the Invictus Kindred into the Movement, increasing the covenant’s numbers and making persecution by the Prince more difficult?

CARTHIAN CIVIL DISPUTE

Certain Carthian experiments are doomed to failure. Whether through the misapplication of rule, the creation of illogical or unworkable policy or just

unpopularity, a Carthian government can certainly collapse. When it does, the members of other covenants stand at the ready to rush in, hoping to fill the vacuum with their own figureheads and take control.

In general, the first signs of failure in a Carthian system will be obvious to the members of the Movement long before the signs become apparent to the rest of the vampires in a city. In these cases, some Carthians see the opportunity to evolve the local Movement, eliminating the current experimental government and replacing it with another applied ideal. If the originators of the failed regime refuse to step aside for the replacement, a schism within the covenant forms, leading to an internal struggle for control. Dispute gives rise to animosity, and animosity leads to bloody conflict.

There are all sorts of ways to settle a disagreement over the right to rule. In some domains, a simple vote can lead to a wholesale replacement of policymakers, while in others a more physical approach is required. The more open the conflict, though, the more obvious the rift in the Movement will become, and the more likely that competing covenants will try to take advantage of the situation. For this reason, secret conspiracies and backroom dealings become the hallmarks of a Carthian government on its last legs, as members of the Movement plan their last-ditch efforts to maintain control. If the situation isn't resolved quickly, politicking can give way to kidnapping, blackmail and extortion — more often than not spelling the end of the Movement's reign.

Worse yet, a meltdown between Carthians can have wider and more lasting effects. In an idealist's covenant, failure to maintain government can crush the spirits of both the covenant's members and the outsiders who are beginning to believe in the promise of escape from feudal rule. Those who might yet be relied upon as subversive allies draw back, reassuming their former loyalties with redoubled intensity and regarding the Carthian Movement with suspicion forever after.

STORYTELLER TOOL: STABILITY RATING

A Storyteller may wish to create a simple benchmark for the domain in his chronicle to indicate how strong the current system of rule is. This Stability rating can help to determine how open and obvious dissent is among the local Kindred, as well as how easy directing public support against those in power should be. The Storyteller need not confine this to Carthian domains — it's a good system by which to determine the stability of any Kindred domain.

To determine the Stability rating of a domain, quickly estimate each vampire's satisfaction with the current system of rule on a scale from -5 (for most unhappy) to +5 (for complete support). The rating for the entire domain is an average of those for all of the Kindred who make up its population, rounded down if negative and up if positive. In most domains, the rating will be close to plus or minus 1, considering the attitude of acceptance many vampires come to hold. Only in truly fractious or fanatic territories will a radical rating emerge.

The domain's rating can be used as a bonus or penalty applied to attempts at swaying popular opinion with respect to the current government, as well as a quick-glance system of determining how likely any single vampire is to help or hinder attempts at revolution. For attempts that support the system, apply the rating exactly as it appears (so an average rating of -1 would become a -1 penalty). For attempts to speak against the system, reverse the rating (so an average rating of -1 would become a +1 bonus).

Example: A Carthian domain houses a particularly troublesome Kindred populace in a town of 20 vampires. No matter how hard they try, they don't seem to be able to get the Kindred of other covenants to accept the rule of a pure democracy, and abstainers from votes always outnumber participants. A couple of Carthians are beginning to think they're going to have to try imposing a stricter, more directed system of rule. The Storyteller does a quick census of the vampires of the town, coming up with the following ratings for them based on the strength of their opinion: +1, +1, +2, +2, +3, +4, +5, 0, 0, 0, 0, -1, -1, -2, -4, -4, -5, -5, -5. The large number of negatives may spell trouble for the ruling party, but the truth is that a large chunk of the populace (reflected by the set of five zeroes) just doesn't care either way. The average rating of the town is -0.45. Rounding down gives us -1 (we would round up if the value was positive): the penalty applied to any attempts at gaining support for the current system.

Anything that has a profound effect on the Kindred of a domain, such as witnessing a severe injustice or an act of bravery on the part of the leadership, for example, can produce a shift in rating for all but the most adamant local vampires.

This rating can be applied to any domain, and may prove useful to Storytellers who are running a campaign that involves the threat of insurrection or revolution. As well as providing a means for measuring the potential reaction of the local Kindred to any change in government, the individual ratings provide a quick-glance shorthand for the personal opinion of any single Storyteller character.

The potential for schism is an extremely difficult problem for most Carthians to deal with. On the one hand, dispute and debate are engines that drive innovation, allowing the Movement to accept and integrate new ideas and refine its approach. On the other, competing ideas frequently draw hot-tempered



vampires into dangerous conflict. How does a domain allow for one without accepting the other? Is forbidding the former without restricting the latter possible?

One European republican domain allows complete freedom of expression at Elysium while imposing a strict penalty on any vampire who interrupts a parliamentary session. Furthermore, the members of Parliament themselves are forbidden to stand or come into contact with one another during a session. Anyone who violates these rules is immediately escorted from the gathering by the Sheriff and his Hounds and prevented from participation during the rest of the session in question. This simple but harsh punishment guarantees that those who misbehave will have no effect on policy, giving all Kindred a strong motivation to remain within the bounds of acceptable conduct.

The constitution of a tyrannous Canadian domain simply forbids vocal disagreement with respect to interpretations of law, requiring that all disputes be conducted in writing with no less than a 15-minute pause between statements. The result is a slow and aggravating process, so most Kindred avoid it altogether. The punishment for violating this law is severe: the restriction of territory and the surrender of material goods for

redistribution among the Kindred of the domain. All who abide by the constitutional restriction are heard, though, and their arguments are demonstrably capable of initiating radical reinterpretations of law.

When these measures fail, the inevitable result is revolution. More than a few domains have collapsed into civil war, only to see the reins of power seized by opportunist members of the Invictus or the Lancea Sanctum. Collapse of Carthian power rarely leads to the ascension of one of the other covenants, as the downfall of idealistic philosophy is generally considered a vindication of traditional rule.

LEAVING THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT

Among all the covenants, leaving the Carthian Movement is paradoxically easiest, yet the Carthians are the hardest to get away from. The open nature of Carthian organization means that often, there's nothing binding a Carthian Kindred from leaving the covenant proper. Most members of the Movement don't know any sensitive secrets or perform essential duties that couldn't be reassigned, so all they have to do is leave. There aren't any forms to file, and rarely do other members ask any questions. Those Kindred who leave in an orderly manner are even welcome

to return to the Movement later if they want. This openness actually creates an atmosphere in which Carthian Kindred are comfortable suffering most abuses that fall their way without considering leaving the Movement, because the strain is easily relieved by complaints and the illusion that the establishment is “doing something about it.”

As a matter of fact, Carthian Kindred with no formally recognized status can simply up and leave without hassle. In a passive-aggressive sense, they might cease any duties they may have been observing in the first place, which with such low status could not have been much. Except for extremists such as the Burning Horizon (see p. 74), the Carthian policy on slackers is usually, “You don’t work, you don’t eat.” So no retribution is visited besides losing the benefits of Carthian membership. Some contacts might stop talking to the vampire, and access to shared vessels would be lost. Most Carthian cells have better things to worry about than flaky neonates.

Carthians who are involved, but not influential, might experience more difficulty trying to leave. Low levels of Status (• to ••) usually carry enough responsibilities that the Kindred in such positions are considered useful, though usually not enough that they are considered dangerous if they leave. The details depend on the experiment in progress in any given domain. If the Carthians of a city are organized as a terrorist conspiracy out to bring down the establishment, any Status with them at all makes a character into a potential risk if let go. If they are a public lobbying group or a democratic city government, even a highly placed official with Status ••• or •••• might be free to leave without incident. Status ••••• with the Movement indicates a leader of such stature that her departure would probably cause the local movement to crumble; her closest followers and colleagues are likely to discourage this strongly, possibly violently.

Officers and policy-makers at the highest levels sometimes have difficulty making a clean break. Carthians in high places might have sworn oaths to their fellow officers and to the Movement. In especially radical or totalitarian domains, Carthian luminaries might have signed contracts in their own blood, or agreed to contracts penned in the Vitae of their fellow officers. All this blood is a practical symbol, and perhaps a bit of practical magic, binding Carthian high officials to their sacred duty with the only thing that is always sacred to a vampire. If

an officer even tries to betray the Movement, such duplicity will usually be detected long before it bears fruit. As professional revolutionaries, powerful Carthians are very well practiced at the business of paranoia. This paranoia is a constant no matter what brand of politics is the norm in a particular domain, or the position and mission of a particular officer. Even if a group of younger Kindred gets charge of a domain, they probably have a shorter leash than they think. The Burning Horizon for example: their sire was still in the city, and, for a powerful vampire, torpor is only a small impediment to keeping tabs on somebody. He might have had ghouls continuing surveillance on them, or simply hired mortal investigators who didn’t know the purposes of their observations. He might have created other childer the Horizon didn’t know about, or had other associates doing the job.

BLOOD CONTRACTS

Carthian Law is binding in more ways than the Vigor of the local Sheriff backing it up. The mystical properties of Carthian Law are not lost on most of the movers-and-shakers of the Movement, so the practical measure of contracts signed and possibly penned in Vitae was independently implemented by several different Carthian domains early on. The effects were not immediately obvious, except that those who refused to sign the contracts were summarily drummed out of their former domains. Those who remained were naturally the most committed to the causes they signed up for. It was decades before anyone broke their contracts.

One desperate night, Richard Foss realized that he was becoming a monster. He had handled hundreds of murders for the cause; Kindred, ghouls, mortal vessels, all of them. When somebody needed to go down quietly, Richard would get sent in. Sneak up on the mark with Obfuscate, snap her neck instantly with Vigor. All in a good cause, but it became too routine. Too convenient to use his services instead of slower ways of solving problems. Foss wanted out. He asked his superiors — his friends, he thought — for some time off. He was denied. The administration was in trouble, and there were enemies they needed him to kill. Always more enemies. So, he went to ground, and on the road. As soon as he left the city limits, his blood started boiling, causing him to swerve off the road. Others from the city found him and imprisoned him before dawn. Before his execution, he described the feeling as a screaming in his veins, with the words of the contract he was acting against ringing in his head over and over.

If a contract is penned and signed with ink containing at least 1 Vitae from each party concerned with the contract, including legal counsel and any witnesses, and the contract is

legal by Carthian Law, breaking the contract becomes almost impossible. All those bound by the contract become bound by their very own blood. Any action against the terms of the contract causes the offending party's blood to boil and scream of his offense, causing a penalty to all actions equal to the offender's Blood Potency. Once incurred, this penalty lasts for the rest of the night once; after that, the offender is no longer bound by the contract. This magic only works if at least one party of the contract is a Carthian, because a blood contract is an extension of Carthian Law.



Even if a Carthian official manages to escape with sensitive information, it's only a matter of time before she's found and reported. The diversity of the Movement's members leads naturally to the acquisition of contacts and informants anywhere a traitor might run to (as represented by the discount on acquiring the Contacts Merit for Covenant members). Once the escapee has been located, Carthian mercenaries are mobilized. Due to the demands of the Masquerade, these Kindred troops are already trained in special ops-style, covert, low-impact urban warfare. Traitors escaping from the covenant are quickly and quietly put into torpor, to be brought before a Carthian tribunal. These tribunals rarely deliver anything but a unanimous guilty verdict, with rarely any punishment other than a full day's exposure to sunlight.

Theoretically, a highly placed Carthian officer could leave the Movement peacefully, despite the strong tendency toward violence that is bred by Kindred paranoia about secrets. The practicality of this approach varies wildly from one domain to the next, though. Do you have to sign a blood contract to be an officer in this city? How strict are the terms? How flexible and forgiving are the other officers? Depending on the answers to questions such as these, leaving can be a simple matter of turning in a written resignation, or downright impossible to do without slaughtering the rest of the conspiracy. Such slaughter is the unfortunate eventual result of many Carthian experiments. The only sure-fire way an officer can get out of the Movement for good is to kill everyone who knew her.

JOINING OTHER COVENANTS

Those leaving the Movement usually have another home in mind for themselves. This might be independence, but usually it is to join one of the other covenants. The Invictus in particular are more than happy to recruit disillusioned Kindred away from the covenant that is most often their direct rival. The

other three major covenants simply are what they are, and thus offer something to other Kindred that Carthians can't: philosophies of faith, power or transcendence. The Carthians themselves admit that their social experiments often meet with minimal success, and one of the consequences when any such ship goes down is that there will be deserters. When Carthian power declines in a domain, disillusioned Kindred may go to the Invictus if the Kindred still desire the same kind of authority, or they may lose faith in temporal power entirely and head to the Sanctified, the Acolytes or the Dragons.

CIRCLE OF THE CRONE

The Carthian Movement does not discourage religion among its members, but the Movement doesn't support it, either. Despite this indifferent openness, covenant membership is an exclusive deal due to the nature of Kindred politics. This means those who seek enlightenment through the ways of pagan magic must leave the Carthians and join the Acolytes. Sometimes, these seekers are after the power of Crúac, having decided they prefer it over the power of law and politics. Usually, this means they have been burned by a failed experiment, though sometimes it is a long-term plan for an elder's self-advancement. The motive for conversion might also be a genuine desire for the agonized enlightenment offered by the Circle's philosophy. Where Lancea Sanctum justifies the way things are, the Circle of the Crone believes things could be different, and can be made better. Their notions of blood, sacrifice and pain are deeply resonant with the Kindred condition, potentially a strong draw for those who are not seduced by, or who tire of, temporal power.

Regardless of former status, all new Acolytes start at the ground level. Elders and neonates advance at the same rate, depending on their progress in knowledge of mysteries and acts of virtue. Any advantages that elders enjoy by virtue of their greater skill and resilience are balanced by their greater indifference and stagnation, making the works of creation necessary to become great in the Circle more difficult. This equality is less artificial than that enforced by Carthians, which often seems appealing, given how often the Carthian variety simply doesn't pan out.

Existence as an Acolyte also fails to pan out for many former Carthians, though. The trials and scarring of the psyche necessary to learn Crúac are more difficult than anything the Carthian Movement ever asks of its members. Though the structure of

the Circle is equal in theory, the gap of power and respect between new initiates and experienced Acolytes soon seems insurmountable to a mind practiced in Carthian egalitarianism. Enlightenment is a long way off, and much more nebulous than the concrete social goals a Carthian would be used to.

Invictus

Practical Invictus recognize the danger of social change to their positions, especially after Carthians become a prominent power in a domain. A common tactic, because of its proven effectiveness, is to buy off the worst agitators by giving them positions of moderate authority and prestige among the First Estate. This gets the agitator away from the angry mob, defusing the danger of both. The responsibilities of the position will provide a short leash that outweighs the authority granted, yet allowing the former agitator to make a few small changes will make both him and his former followers happy.

Spontaneous conversions from Carthian to Invictus are also accepted, somewhat smugly, especially since these are usually fallout from failed Carthian experiments. Of course, this always draws a few snide comments from the First Estate about the inevitability of such failure, yet Carthians who get out early enough can play this reaction to their favor. Recognizing inevitability before it strikes shows that the vampire, probably a neonate, is capable of the same insight the Invictus has always enjoyed; this is worthy of some respect.

Elder Carthians who leave the Movement join the Invictus less frequently than one might think, though, despite the obvious perks offered to elders by the First Estate. The elders among the Carthian Movement usually fall into two categories: founding members, and influential latecomers. In the first case, the philosophies that drove these Kindred to found their cell of the Movement in the first place are more important than anything. In the latter case, the canny elder would likely rather manipulate naïve neonates than contend with other powerful Kindred in the upper ranks of the Invictus. If a vampire 200 years old or older wants to leave, she's not looking for political power. Very rarely is the move from Carthian Movement to First Estate actually advantageous for established elders.

The problem faced by the Carthian Kindred who do join the First Estate is that the Invictus system actually fails almost as often as Carthian experiments. Princes are assassinated and replaced all the

time. Power is brokered, gained and lost. The system may not change as it changes hands, but the unrest caused is no less turbulent and lasts just as long. Former Carthians soon find themselves wondering why they bothered to switch; they are not enjoying more power or luxury, or even more stability. Experienced at seeing through the bullshit and propaganda, these Kindred cannot help but discover that the Invictus does not live up to its mythic image. For rats who fled a sinking ship, this is often a revelation that they fled to another ship, also sinking, that has been sinking for longer.

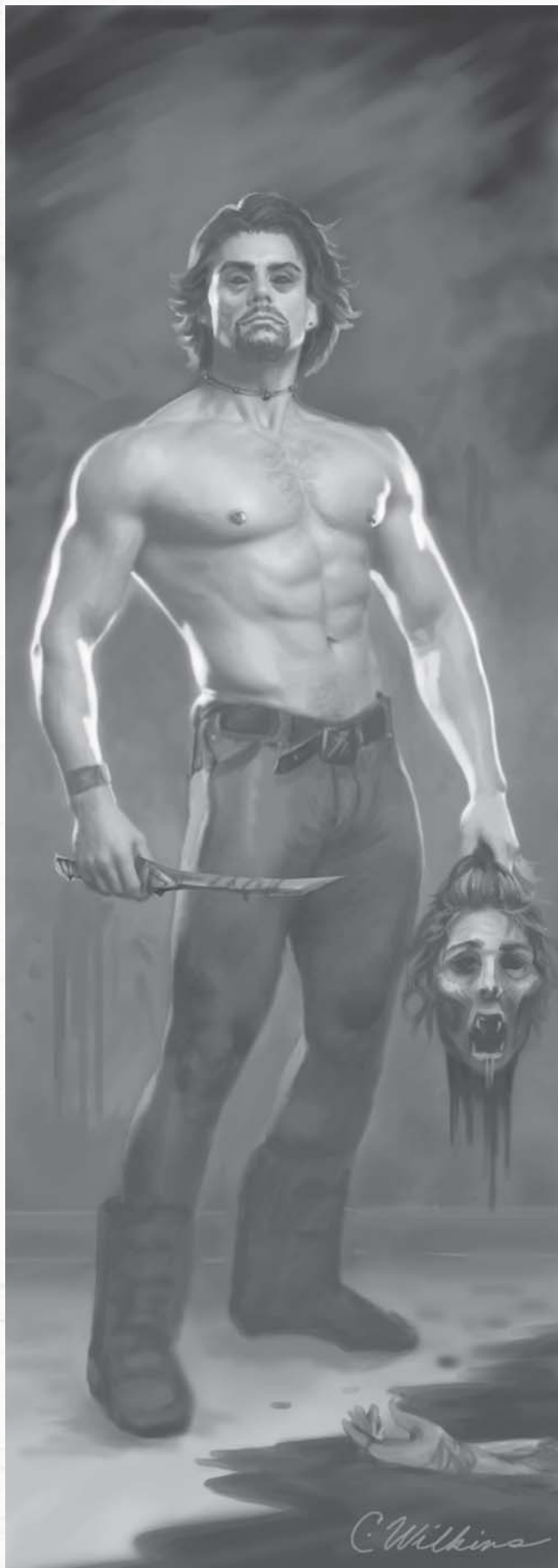
Lancea Sanctum

The Lancea Sanctum preaches a faith that is no mystery. Kindred are damned, and the Sanctified do not deny this. They do not offer some pointless false hope of redemption. The Church of Longinus offers one edifying thing: a philosophy justifying Kindred existence, allowing for monstrosity without severe degeneration. Many Carthians who give up on their own laws find it comforting to think they are following God's law instead. Elders are less susceptible to this rhetoric, knowing that the interpretation and enforcement of these laws is up to those Kindred in charge of the Church. However, similar to the Invictus, the Lancea Sanctum has no qualms about offering a high position to an already aged and powerful vampire, though such positions are often temporal instead of clerical.

The miracles of Theban sorcery are, of course, also a draw. Besides the usual reason of deserting a failing experiment, the powers of the Sanctified make a statement that often convinces even the staunchest politicians that their ways might be wrong, or at least that they are in the wrong covenant. The desire for power draws as many Kindred away from the Carthian Movement as it draws to them, since the taste of mystic might versus that of temporal authority is a difficult choice. Unlike the Circle of the Crone, however, the Lancea Sanctum does not accept seekers who are in it solely for the magic. Theban sorcery is only for the truly committed among the Sanctified, and there are many tests of faith administered before any secrets are revealed.

ORDO DRACUL

The Circle of the Crone offers mysteries. The Lancea Sanctum offers faith. The Ordo Dracul offers more: knowledge and certainty. This route to power is easier to grasp than the other mystical paths among the covenants. The results are less flashy, but they are very practical. Furthermore,



the Dragons know that others come to them solely to learn their Coils, and encourage this. Though the secrets of mastering the Coils are a closely guarded secret, their existence is widely known. With this most secretive of covenants, then, the irony is that any prospective member knows exactly what he or she is getting into.

Carthians come to the Ordo Dracul for the same reason everybody else does. They are perplexed by what they are, and seek to transcend. The foibles of Kindred nature prey on Carthian experiments, especially irrational fears and frenzies. The Coils of Banes and the Beast can cure these problems from inside each vampire who learns them. When social structures fail to control the problems from outside, former Carthians often seek to join the one covenant with a proven method of control. Certain sects of Carthians even appreciate the strict meritocratic hierarchy of the Order. A Dragon's role in the Order and knowledge of the Coils are the only determinations of rank and privilege. There is no uncertainty, and there are certainly no failed experiments.

Unfortunately, most former Carthians seeking to join the Dragons are rejected, just as almost all applicants to the Ordo Dracul period. The Coils are not meant for teaching to just any Kindred; the Order is exclusive. The Carthian ideal of equality and universality is nowhere to be found in this secret society. Only the most elite are welcome to join the Dragons. Refugees escaping from a failed Carthian experiment, which they may have caused to fail or simply failed to stop, hardly qualify as elite. A former Carthian may have to spend decades or centuries proving his worth, an eternity of frustrating nights as new Kindred are embraced directly into the Ordo Dracul, or other, more promising candidates are accepted without all the fuss.

Unbound

When the experiment prospective Carthians signed up for, or were swept up in, fails, they are cast to the winds. No other covenant wants them particularly, and many Carthians have soured on the idea of working with a covenant. The ones who don't eventually drift back to the Carthian Movement tend to stick together in Carthian coterie with new philosophies or dedicated observance of the old. Few of these neonates are ambitious or driven; if they were, then the major covenants would be the place to satisfy their drive. These are the flotsam of the Movement, who contributed little

in the first place. Such lowly vampires typically simply continue existing below the radar of the city bigwigs. Sometimes the ones who drift away like this are actually passionate non-participants, taking individualist philosophy to its logical extreme.

Other than those who lack ambition or commitment, there are two major kinds of former Carthians among the unbound: rabble-rousers and fakers. Rabble-rousers are activists so extreme in their views they can no longer even work with the Carthian Movement. This usually means crazies: perhaps those who favor explosives as a solution to most problems or proponents of definitive violations of Kindred Traditions. Groups of rabble-rousers are usually threats to the Masquerade as well as the unives of other Kindred in the city. Fakers, on the other hand, are actually not former Carthians at all. Fakers are, in fact, secretly still members of the Movement, pretending to leave with the rest of the refugees from a failing domain. These secret Carthians act as sleeper agents, maintaining a relationship of trust with the actual former members, ensuring that the Movement does not lose any of its network of contacts.

Many former Carthians eventually drift back to the Movement, and although this is partly due to the subtle influence of the fakers, mostly it is because the ideals of the Carthian Movement really cannot be found anywhere else. Unbound Kindred who once had access to Carthian resources miss that luxury, and unlike those who join another covenant, the unbound have nothing to replace those resources with except personal freedom. The difference between freedom inside or outside the Carthian Movement is not easy to see, though. Carthians enjoy a great deal of freedom, and not all of it is an illusion. Even the part that is an illusion holds power over the minds of the former Carthians. Sure, there are more rules back in the Movement, but what effect does that really have? A little bit of intangible freedom is often seen as a small price to pay for what can certainly feel like a lot more security.

MULTI-DOMAIN POLITICS

The Carthian Movement may well be the only vampiric covenant to embrace modern science and technology in a comprehensive sense. Only few Invictus keep in touch by cell phones, but all Carthians do. Some individual Dragons keep their personal notes on a computer, but savvy Carthians not only keep computer records and backups, but

are familiar with instant messaging programs and personal networking website communities. Carthian elders laud this as the most successful expression of the Movement's core tenet, "Change is necessary." The general consensus on Carthian forums and email lists is that the anonymous nature of the medium also promotes the other tenet, "Power to the people." Vampiric powers have no merit in the online world, only the words someone types. Everyone is thus rendered equal.

Having adopted the Internet in both medium and message, Carthians have found that the Internet is a big place. Their organization already had precedent for this, though, in the Carthians' acceptance of telegraphy and, later, telephones. Prefects, committees and even ruck-and-run Carthian Kindred keep in touch with each other across the globe, and they've been doing so for almost 100 years. The ousting of a totalitarian Invictus Prince in Prague raises a cheer in Chicago. A request for information from Tokyo will be heard and responded to from both Hong Kong and San Francisco. Many Carthian operations all over the world are funded by byzantine connections to front organizations such as drug cartels, import/export firms, mercenary companies, art thieves, smuggling rings and even securities traders, all supported by or connected somehow to Carthians.

Despite the many advantages of modern technology and globalization, even the Carthian Movement has failed to create a truly effective multi-domain government, however. The one piece of technology crucial to such government is denied to them by the absolute necessity of the Masquerade: mass media. The printing press, and the attendant rise of literacy through the years following its popularization, allowed mortal governments to escape the hand-to-hand chains of feudalism, a style of government that was mostly local. When an American invented the steam-powered printing press, newspapers captured public attention in cities all across the Western world, contributing greatly to the rise of nationalism. Nationalist feelings continued to rise with the popularization of radio, and were polarized in the extreme with the coincidence of television and the cold war. Mortal politicians can appear on the air free and clear, influencing whatever masses put themselves in range of a set. Kindred have no such option, and this is what some Carthian scholars see as a key component of the failure of multi-domain government.

SPECTACULAR FAILURE

While picking themselves up from the War of 1812, American Carthians marveled at the undaunted spirit of Manifest Destiny. Infected with this pattern of thought, and in control of several American domains at the time, the loose confederations of Prefects contacted each other and formed a plan. In 1850, they were poised to declare the United States of America the domain of a New Carthian Nation, founded on the principles of its home nation just as the Camarilla had been during the heyday of the Roman Empire. Invictus Kindred in various cities generally scoffed at the notion; after all, they themselves couldn't establish a trans-geographical domain even with time-tested political structures. A significant number didn't find it so funny, though, intrigued at the prospect of greater unity and cross-domain security. A few noted elders even switched sides, much to everyone's surprise, on the condition that their expertise on extant political models be recognized and noted for its value in the current effort at Kindred nationalization. The mystical covenants, naturally, offered what assistance they could, seeing the chance to establish their own foundation in a new paradigm.

With the many domains divided internally on how to respond to the Carthian plan, everything proceeded smoothly at first from a complete lack of formal opposition. Safe routes of travel were established along the East Coast, particularly along key railroad lines rented or purchased by some of the rich and powerful new members recently ex-Invictus. Telegraph messages between all domains that had signed on were sent several times daily, keeping leaders in the Movement abreast of everything that happened.

Ironically, it was not the American Civil War that cut the lines of communication. The Underground Railroad helped as many Kindred escape the war zone under the cover of night as had helped slaves escape their masters. It was not anti-Carthian partisans rallying a resistance to throw the Carthian upstarts out of power, because such an assault never materialized. In fact, the mystically inclined covenants undermined the New Carthian Nation experiment in a way with their lack of understanding of what that the new technology represented.

In the end, Kindred just stopped using the secret railways. They stayed in their home domains, and many important Carthians began to debate the point of having this unwieldy collective government by telegraph. New York's parliamentarians argued loudly that they shouldn't have to consult Albany's committee before passing their own local laws, and power quickly shifted back to local governments. By the time other covenants started moving into leadership of some American domains again, the power had shifted back to local government entirely, so help from even neighboring Carthian domains was usually not forthcoming. They had their own problems to deal with.

Just because a coordinated government across multiple domains didn't work out wasn't reason enough for most Carthians to abandon the idea of cross-domain interaction entirely. After all, the ideals of the Movement had already spread to the four corners of the world, so Carthians in different domains could surely benefit from aid that wouldn't be available locally. This willingness to interact over long distances and through modern media is one reason Carthian characters get a discount on the Contacts Merit. That's only the beginning of the benefits Carthians might enjoy in your chronicle, though. Quite a few schemes of cross-domain politics have succeeded where the New Camarilla failed, by pursuing a more limited agenda that wouldn't require popular support.

THE UNDERBELLY

Carthian mercenaries and diplomats (see *Nomads*, p. 37) do more than conquer new domains. Teams of these nomadic Carthians also maintain a network of black market transactions and smuggling operations that not only keeps many Carthian chapters funded, but provides them with weapons and vessels to feed upon as well. In some cases, vampires set up their own new operations, but more often they take over an existing mortal racket and repurpose some of the products and most of the proceeds. The slave trade has always been the favorite form of commerce to any vampire, for obvious reasons. The twin advantages of money and Vitae are an obviously beneficial combination, but tonight the trade has been driven so far underground in most countries that it survives only through use of technology elder Kindred don't even understand. The modernists of the Carthian Movement are the natural exception to this rule, and so they capitalize on the modern slave trade like nobody's business.

Between San Francisco and Tokyo, for instance, many different yakuza families operate scams to draw American women with aspirations of being actresses, models or the like into serving as geisha at nightclubs in Shinjuku. Once there, the yakuza bosses seize the women's passports, and ensure that they become so deeply in debt they become virtual slaves to their employers. The slavery is made literal as the women are forced to sell their bodies to try to make enough money to escape their bonds in a perpetual cycle of degradation. A pair of enterprising young Carthians, Tomio Ojo of Tokyo and John Akamatsu of San Francisco, decided this would be a perfect profit-skimming racket. They send easy

vessels over to Tomio's cell in Tokyo, and the money flows back into Akamatsu's trust fund to support the Movement in San Francisco.

Truckloads of migrant workers in North America are another choice target. Carthian nomadic cadres shepherd loads across the border, smoothing out INS border inspections with the application of bribes or vampiric power. Local chapters in cities near the border, from Texas to California, often call up Mexican cells to place orders for these trucks, sometimes called "meat lockers." Ironically, life often improves for the workers, when they aren't bled dry. The Carthian agents are more interested in setting their new herd up with stable jobs in places they can easily be fed on than in fleecing the poor bastards. Even a minimum wage job is better than what many of these families leave behind in Mexico, and the Carthians often ensure better employment than that. Compared to feeding your family and American comforts, what's a little light-headedness anyway?

Some Carthians are squeamish about this sort of trade. They make very reasonable arguments that this sort of oppression is exactly what the Carthian Movement seeks to end among Kindred, so to perpetuate it among mortals is counterproductive. The Carthians involved in the slave trade simply point out that a vampire has to drink blood somehow, and, besides, it's not really slavery, because the mortals do get paid and have better living conditions than the homeless poor. These dregs of mortal society will never be the great thinkers that Carthians everywhere should emulate, the slavers argue, so the most humane thing to do is provide them with stability and safety, but treat them as the vessels they are.

POWER BROKERS

Carthian grass-roots campaigning manages, somehow, to gather political influence with alarming

rapidity. Experienced Carthians specializing in some aspect of this political maneuvering become valuable assets as advisors on the process. These experts don't always become full-time diplomats, but they often offer advice in consultation. Sometimes an in-person appearance is the only option, so moneyed Carthians from the requesting domain pool funds for an expedited trip to and from the hot spot. Experts to be traded around like this come in many forms, from an experienced protest-rally leader to the Nosferatu with a scarily keen grasp of just whose kneecaps to break to keep a city secure. The arrival of such an expert is sure to stir things up, which is always exciting to the local Carthians. As they are fond of saying whenever they feel something is going well, "Change is good."

Aside from the prestige naturally arising from a position at the helm of a successful Carthian experiment, playing host to the permanent residence of one or more experts who are sought after by Prefects in other domains is a source of undeniable power. A shrewd Prefect loans out his experts when he can, so his fellow Prefects will owe him a debt of gratitude when he needs something one of them can provide. Sometimes, the Prefect goes so far as to impose a draft on Carthian citizens to raise auxiliaries in response to a request for aid from a nearby domain. Troops aren't as valuable as expert advisors, such as a Sheriff who led Carthian troops in securing a city, but troops are far from worthless.

An established Prefect can always call in at least one or two markers from neighboring domains in a pinch, and often will have favors to call on from distant domains if the need arises. This, despite the lack of a coordinated governing structure, makes the Carthian Movement much stronger in areas where several Carthian domains are geographically close to each other.



CHAPTER FOUR: FACTIONS AND BLOODLINES

If you're not with us, you're against us.

Unless you're both. Or neither.

Or either at any time it's convenient.

Confused?

Good. If you weren't, I'd think you were crazy.

Now listen while I tell you who's who and
what's what in this Movement of ours.

— Stacy Rodríguez, Carthian patron

Persecution produced its natural effect on them.

It found them a sect; it made them a faction.

— Thomas Babington Macaulay, *History of England*

Similar to any organization of the Kindred, the Carthians split into their own subfactions, ideological schools and cults of personality. Indeed, Carthian culture is often more diverse than that of other covenants in any given domain. So many different theories and philosophies combine to make the Carthian mindset that a cosmopolitan general outlook often goes hand in hand with the Carthian label.

BROAD-SWATH FACTIONS

Kick over a Carthian rally and the factions spill out like ants from a hill. There are sects, sub-sects, conspiracies, allegiances, covert action directorates, committees, sub-committees, pressure groups and, most common of all, casual groups united by common need or interest. The number of groups within the local Carthian population rarely exceeds the actual membership, but given the Carthian tendency to belong to several non-exclusive ideologies at once, it's not actually impossible. Carthians might belong to a religious group, another group pursuing a specific political goal and

a third group that just likes the same cultural consumables. For example, a Carthian might be a Night Doctor (see p. 33) who wants to worship Ishtar without going so far as to join the Circle of the Crone, and who also attends a theater society (see p. 183). None of these memberships necessarily conflict. They're just part of the busy Requiem of a socially active Carthian.

That said, there are isolated Carthians whose interests are extremely narrow and who belong to one specific faction, or to none at all. To them, the Movement is just a means to their particular, isolated and isolating ends. Unlike the populist Carthians, these isolated Carthians don't see the Movement as a social group, because hermits like this don't want, like or need social groups.

There are, however, broad attitudinal groupings into which even the most withdrawn Carthian falls. If you're in the Movement, you really can't help but have an opinion about the balance between self and others — which is really the central issue of the Movement as a whole.

INDIVIDUALISTS

Individualists, or “solos,” are those who believe that the pursuit of a personal agenda, and guaranteed freedoms needed for that pursuit, are the highest rights any Carthian can claim. Protecting those most sacred rights is the duty of the Movement, indeed its only justification, and the minute a Carthian sacrifices that right for anything, he has betrayed the true spirit of the Movement and become the most foul of hypocrites.

To an Individualist, the question of covenant boils down to the Kindred refrain, “What's in it for me?” The answer is, “The freedom to do my own thing, as long as I respect others doing their own things.” To

solos, the voluntary aspect of duty to the collective is critical. The Individualists always want the right to refuse when asked for help. They'd even like it to be no big deal when they refuse. To them, it should be a decision without pressure, a personal decision of conscience (though convenience is certain to be a factor). Not only should they be able to decline, they should be able to decline without a guilt trip, without social repercussions, without having a negative impact on their own requests for assistance.

Smart Individualists know this is an impossible dream. They recognize that a refusal to sacrifice for the collective, while noble, is nobility with a price

tag, and must be budgeted for carefully by those who don't want to find themselves bankrupt of aid when it's their turn to want or need.

Individualists talk about how resentful assistance is only a little better than no help at all. The realists among them know that "a little better" is still better.

True, staunch solos make up much of the covenant worldwide, but they often occupy only the periphery. They're the fringe Carthians, sometimes the lunatic fringe but more often just the marginalized enthusiasts, hermits and experts in esoteric subjects. An Individualist with rare skills can bargain from great advantage when those skills are needed, assuming she's not already deeply in debt to the Movement. An Individualist with great competence who's often sought may wind up a political force within the covenant whether he wants to or not. (To be fair, many want, and many want but strike a pose of dislike or disinterest.) Solos typically have a few very close companions, with whom they're united by fervor for a quirky ideology. They may have many fair-weather allies, a broad but shallow coalition of the mostly willing established through minor favor peddling. Or they may just be hangers-on who get away with being picky about their company because so few Carthians want them around anyway.

The truly powerful Individualists are those who possess the rhetorical skills, charisma, appealing position or just sheer power to make themselves the center of a cult of personality. When seated on a cushion of adoring followers, a Carthian can be truly comfortable claiming the "lone wolf" position. These demagogues are regarded with great suspicion by the Collectivists, and are often a thorn in the side of the moderates as well.

TWO INDIVIDUALISTS

Dr. Jay Bauser is a typical Individualist. He's Nosferatu, was Embraced for his medical expertise and has used his Carthian contacts to get himself set up with a pretty sweet haven-and-herd combo at a plastic surgery clinic. The chief surgeon is his ghoul. Jay works the anesthesia, assists during surgery and takes care of any loose blood that spills during procedures. He has no interest in the Danse Macabre or the governance of the Carthians. He's interested in finding the physical location of the human soul.

He dislikes being called on for money or blood, actively despises being lobbied politically, tolerates cries for medical help ("They shot my ghoul!") and is cheerfully eager to assist in any endeavors that might shed light on the boundary between the physical body and the metaphysical spirit. Or, at least he'd be eager if anyone had asked him.

Monica Guterrez is an atypical Individualist. For one thing, she's passionately engaged, politically. Her positions over the years have little coherence, except perhaps a strong strain of contrarianism. She was Embraced in the 1940s, she has a decent supply of personal power and an obedient coterie of doting neonates and ancillae (two of them her own childer), but, while she loudly insists everyone has a right to their own opinion, her actions mostly ensure that everyone gets a load of her opinion.

Feminism came too late for Monica. Her first husband was forceful and dominant, and, being a strong-willed person, she resented him for it. When she fled to be with a man who adored her, and whom she could therefore easily manipulate, she despised him for his weakness. Her political posturing is just a mirror of her personal life. She respects only those who disagree and who are equally (or often more) forceful than she is. Those who agree with her are useful, but deserve only to be used. No one knows her past, so no one grasps her motives. This makes her an unpredictable wild card in her domain's Carthian politics, and in the larger Danse Macabre.

COLLECTIVISTS

Collectivists are joiners. They like groups, feel comfortable in groups, believe in the power of groups, and, even when transformed into nocturnal predators with solitary instincts, they still find themselves drawn to groups. In the true spirit of the fasces, Collectivists find they can get a hell of a lot more done when they work together, when they're ordered and organized and scheduled and explained. Going off on your own is fine for per-

sonal interests and hobbies and screwing around for kicks, but if you want something meaningful accomplished, you need to get help. It's only fair, of course, that you also give help.

More than that, the Collectivists pride themselves on being realists. Very rarely in a mortal life can a high-minded ideal be actualized, and in the Requiem it's damn near impossible. They thus regard Individualism as a particularly wily kind of cowardice: solos,

by pledging themselves fixedly to the purest form of their beliefs, by settling for nothing less than 100 percent, wind up with zero when they could have gotten 30%, or 50% or 95%. But rather than roll up their sleeves and get dirty and compromise, they'd rather stay unstained — and impotent.

There are Individualists who accomplish their goals, of course, but these are almost always individuals with rather mean and tiny ambitions. If Collectivists are exasperated by those who do nothing because they can't accomplish everything, Collectivists are positively contemptuous of those who are content to marshal the substantial advantages a Kindred activist possesses — Disciplines, the blood and patient decades or centuries — to accomplish something even a mortal could do. It's like being elected President of the United States and then putting your feet up on the desk after having one small military base reopened in your home state. Sure, it's an accomplishment, but it's a negligible one.

To Collectivists, the core of their Requiems is large-scale political accomplishment. It's all back to mission and position, only the Collectivists write them large to stir the passions of the Movement.

This unifying vision is what gains permanent converts to the Collectivist position. Once inside, the newly-minted joiner often finds that, instead of accomplishing the big goals, he's rewarded with authority and discretion to pursue little goals, often personal ones, while acting in the name of the covenant as a whole. It may not be what he signed up for, but most make do. In the fullness of time, as their Requiems ripen them into cynics, many actually prefer it.

More than other Carthian factions, Collectivists tend to make miles of promises and deliver only inches of progress. The inevitable weakness to collectivizing individuals is a dilution of purpose. Committee-think sets in, quibbling wears away the objectionable sharp edges of a proposal, but often blunts its point as well. The Collectivists pride themselves on convincing one group that half a domain is better than none, while persuading the other group to give up half their domain to keep the half they've got. That's progress of a sort, but it never gets anyone more than half a domain.

Still, that very ability to parley until the situation is palatable to all tastes is what sweeps Kindred into a pro-tem Collectivist alliance. Moderates and even isolationists go along because the project is tolerable, and it'll get them some brownie points with the covenant and because a few staggering steps in the right direction (or what they can convince themselves

might be the right direction) is better than paralysis. Often they go along just because everyone else is.

Being group oriented, organized and desirous of operative power for its own sake, Collectivists are often a faction in authority. It's almost a matter of default: the types of Kindred who seek out positions of authority are those who believe authority (and its unattractive attendant, organization) is useful. Only people who think bureaucracy is going to yield them something, be it personal perks or the accomplishment of a higher ambition, are going to become bureaucrats.

True-blue Collectivists seemingly make up a minority of the covenant of the covenant, but almost every real Collectivist has a position of some authority, or at least an official title, rank, duty or responsibility. They're not always liked or even respected, but they are always connected.

Interestingly, the most powerful Collectivists often lead groups that are structurally and functionally identical to those helmed by powerful Individualists. A charismatic or domineering Kindred with an appealing agenda can assemble an entourage of obedient aides or lackeys who work inside the system instead of apart from it. The only difference is, a Collectivist leader is raging with the machine instead of against it.

TWO COLLECTIVISTS

Orrin Pointer worked at the penitentiary as a mortal and works even harder there now that he's dead. He wasn't a guard or a warden, just an office clerk who filed paperwork and transferred phone calls. He knows how the prison works, though, and how the guards and employees get out while the prisoners are kept in. Now that he's dead, he's very adept at getting Kindred in to feed. Moreover, he's created a subculture within the prisoners who seek the rapture of the Kiss as a relief from the tedium and drudgery of their sentences. Naturally, many are still eager for the experience once they're back on the streets.

His smooth hookup to a big source of free Vitae, along with connections to people who steal stuff or aren't shy about stabbing someone, have made him popular and powerful within the Movement. Even better, he's not a guy with strong political or philosophical opinions. People in power can easily gain Orrin's support because they have perks to give him, and, lacking any strong beliefs, he's easy to convince. Having been on the receiving end of their largesse for decades, he's now worked his way to the Carthian halls of power, all without espousing any particular doctrine at all. The one belief he has developed is that the Carthian Movement is doing the right thing, and that strengthening the Movement is necessary. The Carthians who've been bending his ear for years and years usually start from that position and work

outward. Having been in the echo chamber for so long, it's now Orrin's bedrock.

Kyla Tomlin, on the other hand, is a very bad Carthian. She has secretly pledged herself to the Lancea Sanctum, provides the Sanctified with information about the Movement and is eagerly awaiting the night that she can aid the Lancea Sanctum in breaking the Movement's secular hold on its followers, that they might find the cleansing darkness of Longinus.

Okay, she's not eagerly awaiting the night. Perhaps it's more accurate to say she's willing to accept that night. Although, just as often, it's fair to say she's dreading that night, which is why she doesn't tell her Sanctified associates the most damning information, and why she works doubly hard at her mid-level bureaucrat's position in the Movement and why she asks very little from her

Carthian colleagues and always bends over backward to volunteer them her help. It is why, in short, she behaves like a very good Carthian.

Madwoman? Manchurian candidate? Vessel of a possessing spirit? None of the above. Kyla's contradictions stem from one simple factor: she's torn. She believes in the Lancea Sanctum as much as she can believe in anything, but the Movement is and has been the source of her safety, her food and her ability to get things done. Spiritually, she longs for the Sanctified's beatitudes, even though she knows the suspicion that inevitably falls on a traitor, even a traitor to a good cause. But selfishly she knows that the Movement works, and is working for her, and that her Requiem is far more comfortable as a Carthian in a Carthian domain than it would be as one of the Sanctified in a Sanctified domain.

THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

The middle of the road is home to the remaining population of the Carthians, the Movement Kindred who lie in the wide identity segment between the poles of "I fiercely defend my right to be left alone" and "I can't pretend to speak for the people and therefore convene a quorum." Collectivists pride themselves on being realists. The moderates arguably just *are* realists. They have their individual agendas apart from the Movement, but moderates are willing to compromise their agendas for the group, to a point. Similarly, moderates are willing or even eager to take part in a larger, sweeping action, provided, of course, that said action isn't contrary to their beliefs or doesn't entail great sacrifice and risk.

The balance is all over the map, because this is the thick mainstream of the Carthian Movement. There are some who lean toward the Individualist side, but are separate from it due to a more developed sense of duty, or simply because the ideas to which they're loyal have enough local support that they don't have to be a voice crying in the wilderness. Others are closer to the Collectivist end of the spectrum, but are ostracized from the true inner ring because of outlandish beliefs, incompetence (or the appearance of incompetence) or just because they're blood-sucking monsters (and who wants them around?).

Just for the ease of classification, note that many Kindred who consider themselves Individualists are actually moderates, if you judge by behavior. For that matter, many who call themselves moderates would be called Collectivists by outside observers, particu-

larly if the so-called moderates have got some power and if that outside observer is an Individualist. This does not mean that these labels are masks of hypocrisy or that it's all hopelessly muddled. This just means that the divisions are rarely clear-cut and absolute, and that defining someone's loose political label, from that person or anyone else, is probably less useful than actually spending some time getting to know her.

TWO MODERATES

The night watchman at St. Petronille's School for Girls is not hurting for tender young victims. Jake Murphy walks the grounds three times a night with his flashlight and cap, sits at the front desk and watches the cameras and the one time he did catch some creep trying to break in — well, the cops weren't involved. Other than some hair and a smear of blood on the edge of a marble stair-step, no part of the intruder was ever found.

Jake watches and, every couple of decades, has a Carthian Ventrue manipulate the memories of the headmistress and the dorm mothers and anyone else who'd notice that he's been there for far too long without aging. It's a sweet setup. He's comfortable, has a good nest egg saved and a really safe haven miles away. He knows which girls are light sleepers and which ones are safe to tap (for himself or for needy Carthians).

The only drawback is that he's expected to be there all night, most of the nights of the year. It's a boarding school with a busy summer camp schedule, so there are always "tidbits in the icebox" (as he puts it) but he has little time to attend Elysium or rallies or sit on committees. He has opinions and voices them and shows

some involvement in the Movement, but the vagaries of his schedule (which really means, the fact that the school is his first priority with the Movement in second place) prevent him from being central to the Carthians. He's useful when he can be, just not all the time. When he's useful, that's good enough.

Elia Bossard, on the other hand, is always willing to be useful. About half the time, she actually is.

Elia would be a joiner, a Collectivist, if she could, but she wants too much too soon. The great frustration of every neonate is that any position

you covet is likely to have an ancilla (if not an elder) occupying it with the truculence of a deathless creature inclined toward stasis. Elia is simply an eager newbie who sees no reason that she shouldn't leap into a position of trust and authority. But they're all taken. So she volunteers and helps and puts in the hours and can't understand why she isn't an elder yet. In 100 years or so she'll be a force to reckon with, as long as she doesn't make herself completely ridiculous now by trying to do ancilla jobs as a neonate.

THE CULT OF SELF

Sometimes, a single pebble determines the course of an avalanche. Such was the case when one of the domains to fall in the rapid Carthian conquests of the late 18th/early 19th centuries experienced a trifle more infighting among in the changing of the guard than usual. To observers outside the covenant, the event was generally regarded as trivial, if it was noted at all. To Carthians, it was a defining moment for several major factions that influences many domains even tonight.

THE REVOLUTION

It began in fire, near the turn of the 20th century. The Kindred of the city could no longer stand the mad Prince; many of the elders had even been robbed and humiliated as their fellows' paranoia increased. The city's Carthians were finally able to win over key individuals, and the coup began. The Prince and his cronies were taken in a bloody conflict, and sentenced to destruction by fire. Democracy was instated, and it should have been a great victory. Unfortunately, the paranoia didn't end there. The French Revolution had guillotines; this one had fire.

A group, including some influential Carthians as well as members of the old establishment, took control of the Assembly and continued the state of emergency. First they pointed to Lupine attacks that had occurred during the chaos of the coup, using the excuse to create a security force. Of course, the group ensured the officers were loyal only to them. Once the "werewolves" were driven out of the city, the accusations began. Any Kindred with allies outside the Carthian Movement was targeted, and accused of treason. They were invariably found guilty. The accusations didn't stop when the Movement had become entirely isolated; they only got worse. The tyranny of the majority party was, if anything, worse than that of the former Prince.

A small group of dissenters began meeting in secret, gathering weapons. They let the majority

party's police infiltrate their meetings, feeding them disinformation. When the dissenters were ready, they lured the police forces into a trap and destroyed them. That night, the dissenters stormed the city's Elysium and declared it void. They instructed the assembled Kindred to return to their own havens and territories, and not to attempt to form any kind of government. From then on, they called themselves the Brotherhood of Enlightened Self-Interest. This Brotherhood enforced one law: that no Kindred should dominate other Kindred.

News of this counter-revolution spread like wildfire along the Carthian grapevine, distorted and exaggerated many times over in frightened and excited communiqués. By the time the rumors returned to the original city, the Brotherhood was hearing about something called the Cult of Self, a revolution within the Carthian Movement that was spreading like wildfire. Individualist Carthians across the world took this news as a sign of hope, and pushed for greater freedom, taking the Cult's name as the banner for their campaigns. The idea of continuing revolution gained in popularity again in cities where more conservative groups had taken power. Except for those cities where fighting broke out, most Carthians hailed this news as a wonderful victory for the philosophy that "Change is Necessary."

The initial hysteria and chaos quickly calmed down, with some cities settling into new patterns but most keeping to their old ways. Most citizens of Carthian domains were, if not content, at least more willing to live with the results of the revolution that was already over than to start a new one all over again. The Brotherhood declared loudly throughout the fighting that this was not their intent. Indeed, violent revolt was an idea repugnant to these idealists. Their leader, Frantz Federico, expressed it thus: "We believe in free will to the utmost. Violence is the purest form of domination, and anathema to our beliefs. We would rather impose minor restrictions of freedom than send an-



other Kindred to torpor or Final Death, thereby robbing a citizen of any freedom at all.”

The Brotherhood of Enlightened Self-Interest remains in control of the city they re-liberated. A few other Cult of Self factions may also have succeeded in taking control of their domains, or may be in the process of doing so. A takeover by these groups looks much like any Carthian conquest, except this takeover is waged against a Carthian government by fellow Carthians. Cultists of Self take that appellation because they believe the current Carthian establishment in their city has not gone far enough, either with the cause of change, or personal freedom or both.

Most Cultists fail outright. Drumming up support for such a cause in a domain that already has Carthian sympathies is difficult. The ones that succeed plan for the long term, often advancing their agenda politically instead of militarily. The final objective is a city ruled by no vampire, where each Kindred is responsible only for his own actions.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Most Carthians ultimately see the Cultists’ actions as counterproductive. Even among those who believe strongly in personal freedom, the extreme position that no government should ever interfere invalidates the

modern social models, or simple provision for basic needs, that almost all Carthians favor. Nonetheless, most of the Movement does see the Cultists’ actions one way or another, giving them influence despite the extreme fringe nature of their specific faction.

The primary influence felt here and there through the Movement is as a proverb. The leaders in successful Carthian takeovers often remind each other, half-jokingly, of the French Revolution. Among Carthians, this is slang for the Cult’s coup. The analogy reminds the revolutionaries who speak it that Kindred are even more prone to repeat the evils they depose than mortals are. For the most part, the details are left unspoken; it’s too unsettling. Some members do talk about the details, though. Two other, larger factions have formed from like-minded Carthians with Individualist leanings due to the influence of the Cult: the Solipsists and the Pedagogues.

SOLIPSISTS

Solipsists focus on the Cult’s exaltation of each individual’s self-interest. They borrow their operational philosophy from mortal thinkers such as René Descartes, primarily his *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, source of the famous paraphrased quotation, “I think, therefore I am,” and

his revised version of that statement, “I am, I exist.” The Solipsists’ name refers to a philosophy commonly misconstrued as the belief that the self is the only thing that exists. In fact, solipsism is the belief that the self is the only thing that is certain. Therefore, Carthian Solipsists do not seek certainty in their systems, but convenience. They accept the uncertainty of the world. Instead of preparing for the unknowable future, they arrange the relatively known present to their tastes, and adapt as it changes.

The Solipsist style of government has been described as a sort of mellow chaos, and their leaders as possessed of an eerie, Zen-like calm amid disasters. If a Solipsist becomes Prefect or Myrmidon, as long as she holds that office, there likely will be no such thing as status quo. The policies of the covenant will become subject to constant review, and almost every infraction will become a special case. This free-form, amorphous system of government works well enough while one or more Solipsists remain in charge, but whoever follows after is usually left with what at least seems like an awful mess of inconsistent rulings.

The most common criticism of Solipsism is the resemblance it bears to the whimsical rulings of a fickle Prince. Most Solipsists are able to easily counter this argument by showing their record of compromise and expedient arrangements for all parties, not just themselves. A few who lose too much touch with their Humanity are, in fact, brought down because of their near-despotic rule. Usually, though, the Solipsists do not overstep the bounds of their office, though they may use the authority they do have to convince the rest of the citizens in power to change those bounds.

A more insightful and troublesome criticism levied against Solipsists is a question of their philosophy. Why do they care so much about what others do if they can’t be sure that others exist? Not many of the faction have a good answer for this question. Some laugh it off, denying the philosophical possibility of everyone else existing only in one’s own mind. Unfortunately, that and other dismissive arguments really only hide the lack of a good answer to the criticism. More articulate Solipsists may launch into a long explanation of their philosophy, but this also indicates how troubling it is. The few members of the faction who have held these beliefs since they emerged in the 18th century are usually the only ones able to give concise, insightful answers that truly justify their actions. Of course, due to the nature of the philosophy, these answers are uniquely phrased by each individual, and each Solipsist must find them for himself.

PEDAGOGUES

The Pedagogues, on the other hand, like the example set by the Cult’s counter-revolution, but think it a bit extreme. Members of this faction set themselves up as Devil’s advocates, engaging in frequent public debates with current members of the Carthian government in their domains. The idea is to expose flaws in the system and in the leaders — to force change.

Aggressive speakers are often distrusted, or seen as inciting revolt among the citizens. Permissive Carthian governments, such as direct forms of democracy, are likely to let anybody speak out about whatever they want, and let the chips (and votes) fall where they may. When the agenda of a faction in the government and the call for reform from the Pedagogue are in sync, the speaker may find herself with official license to bring her arguments to the public eye (as public as Kindred ever are, that is). More conciliatory practitioners of debate don’t get any kind of result as quickly, but are consequently less likely to face scorn or exile.

PEDAGOGUES AND BANISHMENT

Occasionally, the result of this Devil’s advocacy is a series of gag orders, arrests and eventually exile, at least for the more inflammatory Pedagogues. Following the trials of their peers, many Carthians of this faction choose exile before they are exiled, to avoid burning their bridges. Some set up a circuit for themselves, finding several Carthian domains to travel between and haranguing the leaders in each once they have a feel for the local issues.

These nomadic firebrands have various nicknames: circuit court judges, traveling preachers, storm crows. These three examples outline the different ways Pedagogues might be viewed in various domains, depending on the outlook of those in power and the attitude of the Pedagogue.

Pedagogues in a single domain, or who travel a common set of domains, will often know each other. A Pedagogue who sires childer will usually teach them about his philosophy, and other Carthians who hear these iconoclasts of the Movement frequently come to respect the conviction it takes to stand out from the masses as these Pedagogues do, not accepting the system quietly. A daisy chain of contacts thus links all Pedagogues who got started by learning from another Pedagogue. Those who simply heard of the faction and started up on their own often run into others of their stripe, thus entering the chain if they exchange contact information. Sometimes, when actual Carthian officials decline

to participate in debates, two Pedagogues will each take up opposing positions and have the debate themselves. Through coordination, the speakers make sure they can keep more domains honest without completely wearing out their welcome.

While many in the Movement look askance at the methods Pedagogues use and criticize the ideas they preach, the practice of pedagogy is regarded as somewhat sacrosanct overall. Freedom of speech and expression is valued highly by most Carthians, and the idea that power comes from the people and the rightness of one's ideals is also persuasive. Most of those in power have themselves grappled with the problem of who will watch over the ones who watch over society, and even if they find the Pedagogues irksome, they often respect the principle. The aphorism "an irritating grain of sand makes a beautiful pearl" often applied to these Kindred, though only so long as they do not actually seem to pose the threat of civil unrest.

THE COLLECTIVIST RESPONSE

On the far end of the ideological spectrum, there are Carthians whose response to the Cult of Self was to re-declare their opposition to selfish and antisocial acts of that nature. In other words, while the individualists became even more self-centered, the Collectivists strengthened their resolve to be community-oriented. Ironically, the supposedly self-centered Movements of the Individualists already described both led their members to contribute more to the community. In similar irony, the community Movement, in response to the Cult, led to increases in personal freedoms. Sometimes this actually involved a regime change, which in turn brought more Individualists into the government, but mostly the changes enhanced the community spirit of their domains in such a way that contributing to the community would no longer be seen as a burden or a restraint.

Across the board, collective-oriented Carthian domains scrutinized their systems and officials, performing major house-cleaning operations. Corruption and needlessly oppressive laws alike became the targets of new legislation, all so Individualists couldn't attack their systems based on such normal accretions of unlife. The citizens of their domains reaped the benefits in more efficient bureaucracies, and a reduction of political infighting. They also felt the sting of witch hunts in some domains, as paranoid officials sought vainly to suppress possible rebellions, but reactionary governments like those usually fomented enough ill will among their populaces to bring about their downfall. Some went far enough to prevent such

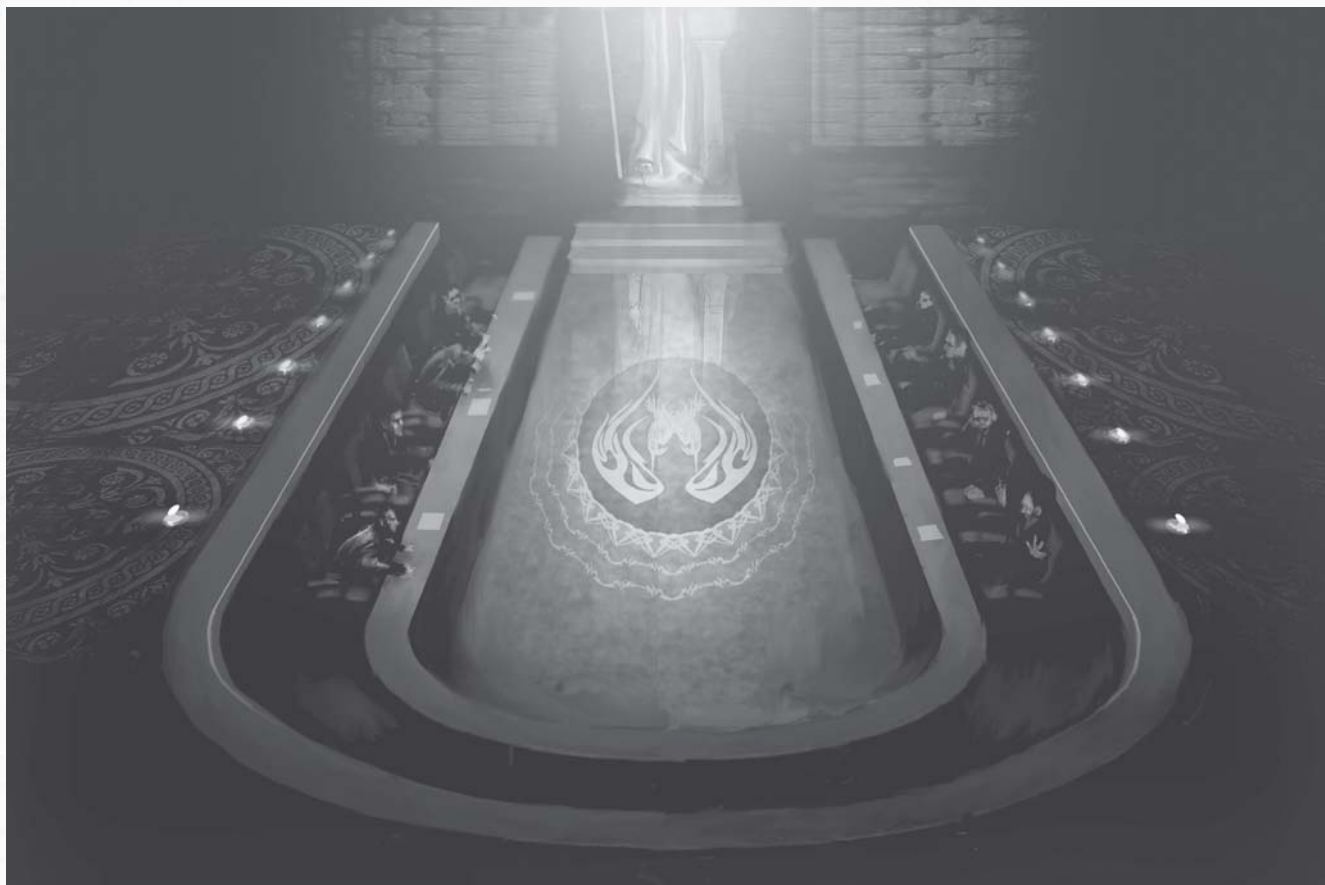
an outcome, though, moving beyond witch hunts to a totalitarian regime. Total suppression of any possible opposition has never been a popular method among Carthians, but those few Prefects who implement it get the expected results. A thorough suppression based on popular participation, similar to that which occurred in Fascist nations during the mid-20th century, provides a reprieve from internal strife so long as there is a common enemy to face.

The Collectivist responses to the Cult of Self incident can thus be divided into four categories: regime change, systemic reformation, denial of the problem and strict crackdown. Each of these responses set important precedents for domains in each category. Serious scholars all agree about the central nature of the individual-to-group dichotomy to the Carthian Movement's experiment, so the way each Carthian domain's government responded to this important ideological event set each domain's general attitudes toward any great concerns in sharp relief. The success or failure of the Movement in each domain would often be decided by the implementation of an effective policy for the relationship between individual Carthians and the Movement as a whole.

SUCCESS STORY: REGIME CHANGE.

One common response to the Cult was, in true Carthian fashion, to simply change. A common proverb in the Movement says, "Don't get attached to your ideas; they're destined to die at the hands of better ones." Those who actually live by this philosophy create somewhat mercurial domains, often throwing out old parts of their system in favor of new things that seem better. In one particular domain, the past few decades had been rocky under a communist system that worked well enough, but suffered from many small problems. The Carthians in charge took the Cult's counter-revolution as a wake-up call, and finally admitted to themselves that they could be doing more than putting out fires.

A citywide meeting of Kindred was called, and a consensus reached: it was time to change. A spokesman was appointed by each faction within the domain, including the other covenants, and together this appointed council worked to create a binding agreement for how the city would operate. The Invictus was allowed to stake its claims, and rule the covenant's territory as the Invictus members saw fit, so long as they respected the law in regards to outsiders. The Ordo Dracul was allowed to have its places of mystic power, the Lancea Sanctum its churches,



the Circle of the Crone its secret rituals and feeding grounds were allotted to everybody. Means for expanding territory based on increased membership were provided for, as well as means to transfer territory if an agreement could be reached. All of the central tensions between the covenants were addressed, and laid to rest by mutual agreement. The proceedings came close to falling apart several times. Tempers flared, negotiations stalled, foul play occurred. Yet the Carthians refused to give up on building a better domain, so they saw it through.

Not only did all the covenants agree to an explicit status quo with regards to territory, but the Carthian traditions of the city were brought to the table. They were reviewed, revised and ratified as binding for all the city's Kindred. The rights of each covenant to self-governance were recognized, as well as the necessity of a common law for all Kindred in the domain. Certain laws were accepted as binding for all Kindred, regardless of covenant: a ban on destruction of other vampires, a strict ban on diablerie, rules for creating progeny and ghouls and judicial procedures. Each covenant appointed a Judge to serve the domain's Primogen Council (herein called a Supreme Court), set up to judge cases based on this common law. Among

themselves, the Carthians reworked their communal system, settling into a more democratic form of communism. As the day dawned, the whole domain slept easier, and the Carthians congratulated themselves on the success of their philosophy of change.

FAILED EXPERIMENT: OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

The worst possible thing to do when you're in charge is nothing. Some Carthian domains utterly ignored the portent of the Cult of Self's counter-rebellion. In one such domain, this spelled doom for the Movement. The local Carthians failed to take notice of the incident, but not so the local Invictus. While the Carthians had successfully enticed many of the Invictus' members away with the promise of reforms after the rebellion, and the chance to strike back at their oppressors, the state of freedom achieved in the domain thereafter was in truth more a state of lawlessness. The Movement was working on reinstating order, but the Carthians' obliviousness to their image as Carthians created an opening for the Invictus counterattack.

The Invictus took the rumor of the Cult of Self, and made sure the rumor spread. The Invictus members especially made sure that versions of the story cropped



up that made quite a few analogies to the current Carthian government. The schemers steeped their fingers in satisfaction when several conspiracy theories sprang to life without their specific efforts — and these the Invictus schemers encouraged ruthlessly. Secretly, they instated a new Prince, and gathered the disaffected to themselves. When the Carthians heard about this, their furious reaction confirmed the picture the Invictus had been painting of the Carthians. They declared war on the First Estate, and called in favors from across the domain. A one-sided battle of influence led to an ignominious defeat for the Carthians. They lost the battle of public opinion, and so their advantage was entirely negated.

Carthian survivors of this incident fled the city, and to this night there is no significant Carthian faction in that domain. The survivors carry with them a powerful lesson: change truly is necessary. They have seen the Movement grind to a halt, and their own domain fall back into the hands of the old power-player. They recognize that it was their failure to adapt that killed them, so for good or ill, they take with them a resolve to meet problems with change. They also received an object lesson in what happens when you try to build a community, but don't sufficiently involve the members. These Carthians' Collectivist leanings became quite pronounced, and their influence on the domains they fled to actually made a big difference, in that they could say with absolute certainty what they had seen fail.

ADVANCEMENT THROUGH FAILURE?

Survivors of failed experiments are likely to gain status in the Carthian Movement if they make it to new domains. They will even be listened to more than those who come from domains with long histories of success. If this seems paradoxical, don't worry, it should seem that way to most. This hierarchy of ideas is a product of the peculiar form of the scientific method the Carthians apply to their great social project. In essence, failure can be verified. It is a definite thing with concrete properties. Success is a long-term thing, with the threat of failure always looming. Thus, firsthand knowledge of a definite way to fail is seen as trustworthy knowledge, and in the Carthian Movement power comes not from what you know, but what the rest of the Movement thinks you know.

SUCCESS STORY: INTERNAL REFORM

Carthians are often highly educated and intelligent, and so the systems of government they design are usually quite good when everyone does her job as

the system calls for. The most common cause of trouble in any Carthian domain is completely unrelated to the chosen system of government. The most common problem is, in fact, the same problem that plagues all the covenants: simple Kindred greed. If mortal vices are enough to topple rulers and nations, even the high-minded Carthians can fall prey when their Beasts tend to multiply those impulses 100-fold. News of the counter-revolution by the Cult of Self, and the general upheaval among Carthians in its wake, opened the eyes of Carthians in some domains to the vices rotting away parts of their systems.

The Prefect of one large city decided that the system was still good, but the wrong people were in positions of power. He met in secret with all the supervisors he still trusted, and devised a plan. Those officials still loyal to their ideals helped each other to identify the ones using their positions for personal gain. The degrees of corruption were categorized as "salvageable" or "lost cause." The salvageable officers were approached first, covertly. These were the ones just taking small abuses, things that "couldn't hurt." They were offered the chance to help reform the city by enticing those guilty of worse corruption into exposing themselves. Many said yes, largely for fear of losing their status, but some through a reawakened sense of duty. Hard evidence of the worst crimes was not long in coming.

Of course, nobody senses a sinking ship as a rat does. When the little rats started eating poison and falling into traps, the biggest one of all decided to take what he could and run. The worst of the lot was, in fact, the city's Sheriff. His crime was rampant diablerie, perpetrated instead of the officially assigned punishment by sunlight or fire on Kindred he pursued. In return for their silence, he bribed most of his direct subordinates with whatever they wanted — their favorite kinds of vessels to feed upon, money, sex, status, information or anything else it took. The newest member of his coterie was targeted as salvageable, but by that time the Sheriff had already noticed the subtle purge the Prefect was implementing. The Sheriff diablerized the neonate before any evidence could be gathered, and fled the city. His subordinates were arrested and tried as accomplices, and all convicted on one count or another. The purge was complete, but the Sheriff was never found. It was assumed he fled the city, perhaps having learned enough guile to survive a flight on foot, explaining why his car was left behind. Some locals worry, though, that he may simply be in hiding, waiting for a chance at revenge.

FAILED EXPERIMENT: WITCH TRIALS

Sometimes, people learn exactly the wrong lessons. When the Cult of Enlightened Self-Interest enacted its counter-revolution, some Carthians inevitably drew the conclusion that the mistake of their comrades formerly in power in that domain was leaving too many of their enemies at large. What occurred in these domains seemed on the surface very much like the internal reform movements previously mentioned, but just below that respectable veneer was a less wholesome intent. That intent would be exposed rapidly as the situation deteriorated into chaos. This sort of failure left many survivors, but was so damaging to the Movement's image as to utterly shatter the Carthians' power in some domains to this very night.

As the Ordo Dracul subtly took the reins of power in one such chaotic domain, a curious young mem-

ber who had several contacts among the Carthians who had disappeared decided to "follow the dragon's tail," in his covenant's parlance, to see if he could discover what caused the sudden collapse of the covenant that had formerly held so much power in the city. He asked around, and took note of which former Carthians left the city and which stayed to make another try at their experiment. Gradually, the picture became clear. Paranoia led to martial law and several executions, which quickly precipitated civil war among the Carthians. The young Dragon wrote a history of the events, focusing less on who did what and instead structuring his writing as a commentary on the Carthian government as an experiment. He concluded that the Carthians' method was flawed because it involved no controls, so tracking which variables affected each other was nearly impossible, and received some recognition for his work.

BODHISATCRACY

The term "Bodhisatcracy" is language hash. A bodhisattva is a spiritually enlightened being who returns to the world of pain and illusion, leaving the bliss of nirvana to free other souls from bondage. The suffix "-cracy" indicates governance, so democracy is government by the people, theocracy is government by the priesthood and so on. Thus, Bodhisatcracy is government by the spiritually enlightened. For Kindred, that means someone who has found Golconda.

Bodhisatcrats, then, are a small group of Carthians who would like to be governed by a mentor in Golconda. If the ideal is a group of loyal followers being led by a Christ-like dispenser of wisdom, the actual practice is necessarily different. Some Bodhisatcrats (sometimes known as "monks") recognize that no one's stepping up to the throne of peace, so they attempt to find Golconda on their own. In the finest Carthian tradition, Bodhisatcrats support one another in their mutual, practical quest to save their souls. They study, they keep one another pure, they even travel when they uncover a promising lead. They understand, on either a tacit or explicit level, that if one of them succeeds, that one becomes the Master and the rest will obey. It's equally understood that once one of them completes the quest, he will guide the others to Enlightenment as well.

The Movement generally respects those monk cadres for their actions, if not necessarily their idealistic beliefs. If nothing else, monk cadres tend to be trustworthy, though maybe a little dour and predictable. Their efforts to retain or achieve spiritual purity give them a lot of potential as "mortal handlers" — high Humanity lets them interact more smoothly with the living. Unfortunately, their ethics often prevent them from leading mortals into anything to perilous, which, to many Kindred means "useful." On the other hand, the Bodhisatcrats' idealism sometimes arises from naïveté, which makes it easy to trick them into luring mortals to whatever doom the manipulator desires. It's a trick that usually works only once, however.

On the other end of the spectrum are monk cadres who have found a master. No vampire has ever proven himself to be transformed by Golconda, but in the history of the Kindred, many have claimed it. Often powerful and always charismatic, these claimants may be genuine, or they may be delusional, megalomaniacal or simply cynics who see a chance to hook some gullible optimists. These leaders range from benevolent, ascetic recluses who lightly guide their followers through riddles and tests, to overpowering preachers who control every aspect of their followers' Requiems similar to Jim Jones or David



Koresh. Some of these Kindred refuse to interact with outsiders. Some claim that just the skepticism needed to demand proof proves unworthiness of salvation. Others welcome challenges and relish meeting them with demonstrations of the physical benefits of Golconda. Of course, since no one's sure what those benefits are, many of these teachers succeed at stringent tests they devise themselves.

The Movement's stance toward these cult leaders is far more reserved than the Movement's attitude toward monks without leaders. On one hand, a cadre led by a powerful and seemingly enlightened Kindred is nothing to scoff at. They have all the motivational advantages that the Acolytes and the Sanctified offer, and that Carthians typically lack. On the other hand, there's rarely any question that, protestations aside, the cadres' primary loyalty is to their master and not to the Movement. Wise masters recognize this and bend over backward to make themselves useful to the Movement — indispensable, if they can manage it. Foolish leaders, or those who just think they're strong enough to go it alone, splinter from the Movement

and wind up leading an unbound coterie or minor covenant that has the hatred of a major covenant.

Nickname: Monks

Covenant Relationship: Because their loyalty is questioned, Bodhisatcrats often go out of their way to be accommodating toward others in the Movement. They're good people to ask for a favor, though some groups proselytize the whole time they're pitching in. In the same vein, they rarely ask for undue support from the Movement, partly because their interests are internal, but also because they don't want to jeopardize their already shaky standing. They're good neighbors, just a bit eccentric.

Appearance: Despite their nickname, Monks almost never wear robes or wimples (unless, of course, they're a cadre with a master and he demands it). They're not interested in drawing attention for their appearance, so they dress as they did when living, or they dress in the urban camo of Polo shirts and flat-front khakis.

Haven: Cadres with a leader often establish a haven together. Some have even bought decommissioned monasteries or convents for their meditations (and be-

cause they're already built to facilitate spiritual exercise). Leaderless seekers are no more or less likely to cohabitate than other Carthian Kindred. Leaderless seekers are, however, prone to lair near seminaries, medieval research libraries or in ethnic neighborhoods relating to the tradition they're pursuing. (That is, if they think Kabbalah is the answer, look for them in a Jewish neighborhood. If they're Buddhists, they're more likely to be comfortable in Chinatown.)

Background: The pursuit of Golconda is an enterprise for the optimistic or the desperate. Some Kindred start off on the quest as neonates, latching on to the idea of transformation as a way to avoid the drain-circling decay they see in the elders around them. Others come to it after murdering their own families, or losing their coterie, or confronting something so alien and evil that the idea "vampires could become decent people" seems reasonable in comparison. The optimists are determined, and they structure their Requiems to avoid distractions and stay on track. Those who seek because of crisis are driven. Ironically, their desperation inclines them to lash out at those who impede their progress in ways that definitely aren't enlightened.

Organization: Cadres with a master are typically strict hierarchies. They may be simple, with the Shining One at the top and everyone else as supplicants jockeying for the master's favor. Or the cadres may be heavily stratified, with tests bestowing ranks and privileges as measures of progress.

Unmastered groups are usually loose confederations of individuals, often on different paths, helping one another to the best extent of their abilities and expecting the same in turn. There are rarely official leaders, though some large coterie elect a figurehead leader. Others just meet once a week for direct-democracy votes. While they're seeking spiritual perfection, it should be noted that the infighting and cliquing that occur in every group are present in these cadres as well, though often pleasantly muted.

Concepts: Brainwashing victim, chewed-up spat-out political operative, disbelieving opportunist, inspired prophet, mad-eyed zealot, neonate naïf, remorseful diablerist, skeptic-turned-believer, spiritual Lancea Sanctum convert, the screw-up no one else wanted

"ONLY SOMEONE SEEKING GOLCONDA DESERVES MY OBEDIENCE."

CARTHIAN ATHEISM

Kindred society is home to many faiths, and the patently unnatural effects of even simple Discipline use argue strongly for belief in the supernatural. The small clique of passionate atheists in the Carthian Movement, similar to those many vampire splinter sects, consider the existence of Kindred to be a powerful piece of religious evidence. These Atheists, however, see it as incontrovertible proof of the non-existence of God.

Most Kindred (particularly the Sanctified) argue that since Kindred have supernatural powers splendidly adapted to the drives of the Beast, there's clearly a source of supernatural powers that bestowed both Beast and powers for a reason.

The Atheists don't always deny this idea directly. (Some do, however. They pick at the notion that Kindred are really that well adapted to survive. The Atheists argue that, by such logic, humankind is designed by God to paint pictures because they have both eyes to see and hands to hold a brush.) More commonly, the Atheists attack the notion that these powers must

come from a single, all-powerful creator. After all, if Kindred are such a great idea, why saddle them with both strengths and debilitating weaknesses? If such powers have to come from a source, why one source? Why not five, one per clan? Why must the progenitor of vampirism be omnipotent — given the squabbling to which his alleged creations are prone, he wasn't clear-sighted enough to create them efficiently. Looking at the hysteria and misery of the Danse Macabre, it's hard to argue for intelligent design.

Those are the arguments the Atheists use against the Sanctified, but the Acolytes get just as much defiance. If a goddess or spirit is omnipotent, why is there more than one? Surely there isn't room in the cosmos for two omnipotent beings. What if they came into conflict? But if they're not omnipotent, just where do they get off calling themselves divine? Isn't it a little more likely that what the Circle is dealing with are spirits — admittedly, spirits with a great deal of power — but limited spirits nonetheless? Sure, they look big



from our pea-sized perspective, but a man looks smart to a dog. That doesn't make the man a god.

The Deniers (as they're often called) are an angry bunch. Many of them deny being angry, but almost without exception, deep down, they are. They are angry at the universe for not being the work of God, but, seeing their dilemma in the stone cold light of the Beast's ugly urges, believing in any kind of All Father who is kind, decent or still marginally competent is viscerally impossible for them. An evil and vengeful deity would produce works that at least made sense and functioned. This world doesn't even have that. Instead, it's a host of contradictions, a muddling struggle of all against all, battling for an ill-defined prize that ends up missing from the pedestal.

No good God would suffer the Kindred to exist. They're parasites who do inevitable physical harm to others, and they're saddled with a Beast who makes them do inevitable moral harm to themselves.

At the same time, no truly sane and evil Devil would tolerate the Kindred, either. For all the misery they instigate and endure, they are ultimately fleas on the

human animal. Entirely mortal inventions such as race slavery and fascism have done more damage than the Kindred ever did or ever could. If vampires are supposed to be a punishing plague, they're sleeping on the job compared to generations of religious fanatics.

That's the Carthian Atheist position in a nutshell: the contradictions of Kindred position prove that the supernatural is as random and pointless as the blind clockwork of mutation-based evolution. The Atheists don't believe there's a rational, scientific explanation for the Requiem. Instead, they insist that the Requiem itself proves that the supernatural is as ignorant and chaotic as everything else.

There is no hell below for the Deniers. Above them, only sky. After them, only oblivion. Therefore, these ardent nihilists live night to night, in the only world they have or ever will have, striving to extend an existence they despise because there is nothing else for them.

The most visible Deniers are anti-theologians who actively antagonize the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone when the Deniers feel they can get away with it. Far more often, they tackle weaker

prey, attempting to disgrace and discredit mortal churches. Armed with Disciplines, Deniers can easily wreck a human congregation. But just as with roaches, there's always a thousand more synagogues and temples and cathedrals and Christian Science reading rooms for every one they stomp.

Behind the shrill attackers, there lurks a much more covert layer. These Deniers keep their beliefs to themselves, but allow their disdain for religion to drive them in their pursuit of mortal political power, the most efficient large-scale, world-shaping tool. Often it suits them to cloak their organizations in religious garb. Being void of faith themselves, they are ideally positioned to rationally analyze cult structures purely as organizations, and articles of belief from an unadulterated marketing standpoint. They build fake cults and send them on crusades against real ones; they nurture martyrs and laugh when they blow themselves up for a Heaven that doesn't exist.

The most elite of these hidden Deniers forge cults, not for mortals, but for their fellow Kindred. In some cases, these Deniers string along their eager followers for decades or even centuries, content that they have found the perfect opiate for intellectually immature undead. In other cases, the Deniers reveal their churches as the frauds they are, basking in the shock of the true believers and loudly connecting the dots for the Acolytes: "As they were fooled, so might you be." These Deniers find hope again at last, wondering if others like them are pulling the strings of Belial's Brood and that, one night, they will be invited to become Devil mentors beside them.

Nickname: Deniers

Covenant Relationship: Atheists are often Movement ideologues. They tend to have highly developed debate skills, or, if they don't, they're loud verbal bullies who press their opinions through the intellectual equivalent of a mugging. Their nihilistic creed bends them toward total pragmatism, which is a useful polestar for steering a group as diverse as the Carthians. They are, effectively, the lowest common denominator, and everyone agrees that it's good to be able to accomplish the goals they set, no matter how varied those goals are. The hard-headed, materialist Deniers are very good at mutilating distractions and ridiculing away philosophical disagreements. Since the Deniers don't believe in divine reward or punishment, they're also good at justifying

any sneaky, vicious or lazy means toward the Movement's stated end.

Appearance: A memorably visible minority of the Deniers are violently punked-out — tattered leather jackets and rivet-studded brows between the Mohawk haircut and the glaring, raccoony eyes. These Atheists are usually also anarchists. Pretty much, they're anti-everything.

Most Atheists, however, are almost stodgy. The men wear sportcoats and slacks and loafers over muted ties and button-down shirts. The women, sensible pantsuits and low-heeled mules, or an earth-tone skirt with a cardigan sweater. As a stereotype, they're finicky about their look. There are sloppy exceptions, but Carthian Atheists tend to be as precise and fastidious in their dress as they are in their arguments.

Haven: While some can't resist the irony of a deconsecrated church (especially if it's been repurposed as something like a pizza parlor) most just look for a haven that's hard to find and as unobtrusive as possible. If you spent your nights picking fights with the Sanctified, you'd want to be able to hide among the crowd, too.

Background: Carthian Atheists are smart or well-educated, and usually both. They're people who value thought and reason above emotion or visceral experience. They'd rather be right than have fun. While this includes some smart autodidacts who never got a chance to go to college (and are therefore bitterly resentful) and some low-to-average minds who overcompensated with graduate degrees (and are therefore defensive about their ideas and qualifications), the most typical Denier was an academic in life. A surprisingly large number were priests, rabbis, nuns, imams or lay ministers.

Organization: The Deniers try to be well organized, but the very nature that leads them to atheism makes them hard to unify. Prickly, argumentative people who always need to have the last word are not team players. The most common organization for Carthian Atheists is a sort of one-vampire-one-vote direct democracy — or, at least that's what they've got on paper. In practice, the most vicious arguer gets his way, with all the other Atheists as demagogues looking for a chance to humiliate the alpha.

Concepts: College student, diablerist looking for an excuse, disgusted ex-Bodhisatcrat, disinterested politician, eerily persuasive madwoman, Embraced teenager, false Kindred prophet, logic addict, loud punk, undercover Acolyte

"THE PASSION OF MY DISBELIEF IS AS STRONG AS YOUR FAITH,
BUT WITH AN ADDED BENEFIT: IT'S TRUE."

SABOTAGE ARTISTS

Political nihilism makes as much sense for Kindred as spiritual or personal nihilism does, and possibly more. After all, what behavior can you expect of a vampire? He's going to drink blood, seduce some mortals into serving or protecting him, probably ruin a couple of lives in fits of misplaced paranoia, likely steal some stuff, kill at least a few times. He might feel bad about some or all of it, but the far safer bet is that he won't, or at least not enough to change (or end) what he is.

Kindred aren't necessarily amoral sociopaths, but walking the straight and narrow is a lot harder when you've got the Beast snapping at your heels. Vampires are often charming, when it suits their purposes, but only a fool would trust one to watch her house or her cat or her daughter while traveling.

If vampires aren't to be trusted individually, what would make anyone think they're more trustworthy in a group? After all, mortals don't need to inflict injury just to survive, but they're notoriously more stupid and more vicious when gathered as a mob than one-on-one. Kindred in groups are far more likely to multiply their iniquities than they are to combine their virtues.

Armed with this staunchly grim assessment of Kindred collective action, a lazy vampire would go independent and console himself with the idea that at least the others aren't fucking everyone over with his cooperation. But lazy Kindred don't often join the Movement.

Sabotage Artists believe it is a moral imperative to make every Kindred covenant clumsy, short-sighted and self-defeating. If the covenants become efficient (the argument goes), they're finally going to do something awful. But if they keep tying themselves and each other in knots, they'll fail to deal any mortal blow to mortal society, and they'll be much less of a pain to all Kindred, joiners or not, as a bonus.

Thus, the Sabotage Artists wreck it. They spy out Invictus interests in a gated community and infest it with rats. They watch as the Lancea Sanctum finds someone who can finally translate the obscure cave markings from ur-Aramaic. Then they kill him. They build fake Wyrms' Nests to lure the Ordo Dracul and then snicker up their sleeves as the Dragons try to figure out why the occult manifestations ceased so abruptly. As for the Circle of the Crone, its loose structure makes a certain degree of disruption easy

(since the Acolytes all disagree somewhat), but, past that threshold, they're actually very hard to sabotage (since they've all agreed to disagree, somewhat).

The only covenant that doesn't receive the Sabotage Artists' malicious attentions is their own, of course. Most sabotage cadres insist that the Movement gets a pass because its lack of a unifying program makes interference redundant. Some outsiders cynically muse that the Carthians defeat themselves so thoroughly that no extra defeat is needed. Perhaps the elaborate rationales are just a whitewash on black, violent hearts.

Of course, all of this seems like a refuge for various malcontents, pointless hooligans and idiots of other stripes. That's not the case, however. The Sabotage Artists are truly working toward a guerilla agenda of hampering the Kindred's self-serving schemes. Anyone who underestimates the Sabotage artists as — or, worse, attempts to join them as — bomb-tossing anarchists of chaos for its own sake is in for a rude surprise. The Sabotage Artists don't truck with stooges, and are ruthlessly effective in their methods.

Nickname: Wrench Monkeys

Covenant Relationship: To the other covenants, the Movement is apologetic about the Wrench Monkeys, rolling their eyes and making sympathetic comments about how hard it is to keep the destructive maniacs on the leash. The Carthians make public gestures of punishment, but just between Carthians, Sabotage Artists are privately celebrated as often as they're publicly condemned. They are the best tool in the shed when you need something stopped, be it a political maneuver, a carefully calculated race riot or a humiliating social power-grab. They're happy to run interference, because interfering itself makes them happy. Whatever your ends, they enjoy it if a good solid screwjob is the means. They're never available to build anything or push an outside agenda forward, but they're great at getting others out of the way. Besides, a smart moderate always likes having unstable extremists on his side: it brings the other side's smart moderates to the table.

Appearance: Sabotage Artists combine the work boots and flannel of a mechanical laborer with the scarves, affectations and bold hair choices of an artist. A certain degree of personal disarray is expected, along with a kind of casual techie vibe. Oil-stained dungarees



are typical, with a multitool on the belt. Many are oft heralded by a faint aroma of WD-40. But prodigiously beaded dreadlocks, thick and vivid makeup or a penchant for animal prints is also common. These guidelines, with many exceptions, apply only to when the Wrench Monkeys are relaxed and in their own element. When they're roaming out to infect and destroy, they wear whatever the sabotage of the night requires.

Haven: Security is everything for a Sabotage Artist, often accomplished by a reliance on devices. They often lair far from feed sites, since they see no percentage in drawing attention to where they sleep. It's inconvenient, but so is being found by the Acolyte whose ceremony unexpectedly got scattered by a misdirected busload of tourists with camera-phones.

Background: Sabotage Artists are often Embraced into the faction for their technical skills, fearlessness and improvisational flair. Others join after becoming so disgusted by Kindred schemes that they're

willing to gamble their own survival for a chance to fuck 'em up (and establish their own reputations doing it). It should be noted that most Wrench Monkeys are headstrong: personal charisma takes a back seat to force of personality and, unless you like five-hour discussions on how to best ruin a diesel engine, social interactions with them are notably specialized. That doesn't mean they can't be sneaky, devious and manipulative. It just means they're focused on purpose and results.

Organization: Typically, only one or two Sabotage Artist coteries form in a domain, even if it's a large one. (If there are two coteries, they hate each other.) Sabotage Artist coteries are usually organized like a dog pack: one "Top Dog" rules by bullying and aggression, maybe physical, maybe verbal. Everyone claims to be equal but is, in fact, anything but. There's constant jockeying for position, as each tries to get high enough in the favor of the leader that he can

"THE PRIMARY SKILL-SET OF THE VAMPIRE RACE IS CORRUPTION.
ISN'T IT ONLY FAIR TO SET THEM TO THE TASK OF CORRUPTING ONE ANOTHER?"

keep the others from stealing his carefully gained (though unstated) status, and simultaneously tries to get enough backing from the others that he can oust the leader and take over.

Character Concepts: Crusading anarchist, gearhead, hacker, passionate bravo, political dirty trickster, punk-rock prankster, rage sublimator, reluctant hanger-on, thief, traitor

THE ANTI-OBSTRUCTIONIST ARMY

The greatest advances of the Carthian Movement began with the untainted innovations of mortal thinkers and scientists. The early nights of the covenant were a sort of golden age of free thought for the Kindred who joined up, a time when any vampire could cast off the fetters of traditional thought and open herself up to the world of possibilities presented by the mortal progressives of the day.

Those nights are gone.

So many Carthian Kindred don't seem to understand that they are creatures of stagnation. They are never going to come up with anything new on their own. They lack the creative spark that mortals are blessed with, and there is nothing they can do to earn it. The mortals are the ones who come up with advanced philosophies and new ways to apply them. At best, vampires learn to accept these ideas and emulate the mortals they come to admire for their originality and imagination. In many cases, the Kindred ingratiate themselves with these mortals, inadvertently poisoning the well with their influence and subtle (or not so subtle) prodding. The gift of the mortal mind is squandered, set to work on the theories that backward Kindred favor instead of the ones the mortal mind would freely discover if left to itself.

In 1935, a number of mortal scientists were slain by Invictus agents in Miami, Florida. The cause was traced back to a Carthian who had made contact with the mortals, meeting regularly with them in order to better learn from their explorations. Worried that the Carthian was recruiting agents for revolutionary purpose (or preparing a mass Embrace), the Invictus Kindred simply dispatched them, ensuring that they could not benefit the Movement.

Sickened by the disastrous effect Kindred influence had on the mortal thinkers of her domain, one Miami Ventrue by the name of Charlene DeSoto took a cue from the rigorous experimental procedure of a favorite mortal anthropologist, and lay down a set of strict rules for interaction with mortals (the "unblemished subjects" of study) in order to prevent further suffer-

ing. She declared that any interference with mortal thinkers was antithetical to the aims of the Carthian Movement, reducing the mortals in question to mere political pawns and confounding their attempts at philosophical exploration by involving them in the world of vampires. Gathering a small coterie of like-minded individuals around her, DeSoto proposed an amendment to Carthian Law in the domain, placing strict restrictions on the interaction of Kindred and mortals. Her amendments were voted down as unnecessarily harsh and a crude overreaction.

Undaunted, DeSoto drew from another mortal source. Inspired by the revolutionary human cells of the Spanish Civil War, she quietly vowed to stop the "toxic tyranny of mortal manipulation," reimagining her coterie as a dedicated military unit. Calling themselves the Anti-Obstructionist Army, the cell operated from the shadows, striking out at any vampire they found to be intermingling their affairs with those of the mortal world. The AOA members were merciless in their pursuit: within three nights, two Carthian ancillae and one novitiate of the Circle of the Crone were destroyed. The message of the AOA was left in the Kindred's havens for all to see: a short manifesto, railing against the "perversion of healthy mortal thought by the corrupt touch of the Kindred."

Immediately called to answer for the crimes of her coterie, Charlene DeSoto was unrepentant. She took full responsibility for all three deaths, protecting the names and identities of her assistants unto her own destruction. Inspired by her martyrdom, the AOA continued its activities in the following nights, striking out at ghouls and vampires alike, working wherever possible to sever their ties with the mortal world. The manifestoes continued to appear, and two or three new Kindred joined the cause of their own accord, finding themselves swayed by DeSoto's writings.

Paranoia overtook the Elysium. The Sheriff was ordered to uncover and destroy every member of the AOA. A harrowing hunt followed, and the ruling Invictus took the opportunity to bring troublesome



Carthians to heel, regardless of evidentiary support. Most true members of the AOA decided to flee, splitting off and heading for distant domains. Some did not survive the trip. Some abandoned the cause when they arrived at their new domains, hoping to renew their Requiem as law-abiding citizens.

Some never abandoned the cause. Their new cities became new bases of operation, and the tracts of the AOA were disseminated again. More were recruited to the Army, and more effective tactics were employed. The AOA became a fully covert organization, in some domains populated by Kindred who never appeared before one another unmasked and were thus unaware of the identities of their own collaborators. By January of 1940, there were four independent cells of the AOA operating within the United States. Before the end of the year, the first European cell was formed in Athens, Greece. Before the end of the '40s, there would be 10 cells scattered across the continent, six more in North America and three in Asia.

THE ISOLATIONIST MANIFESTO: AN EXCERPT

Spinoza and Rousseau, Voltaire and Marx — human beings all, and UNDIMMED in their brilliance. Unstained, they SPOKE to us, and we hearkened to their words because we knew them to be PURE and TRUE. It should not be any other way.

This Movement was founded on a FRANK and TOTAL admiration for the changing ways of the world and our desire to remain a part of it. But keeping pace is difficult for us because we are not creatures of change — we are POISONED by stagnation and we carry it with us. Everything we touch, everything we bring into our long nights is SUFFUSED with it and GRINDS to a halt in our rapacious presence. There are those among us who IMAGINE that they can guide the thinkers of the world, make friends with them and encourage their development. But that encouragement is FALSE, it is DOOMED to fail because of our CURSE and we can't allow it to continue. The world will never grow if we attach ourselves to its brightest and best, dragging them down to our level even if we only INTEND to help.

Our friends and compatriots will not listen to REASON. They are lost in fantasies of life, hoping to recapture their days gone by. But that which is CAPTURED is never FREE and human beings pay the price. If these people cannot be swayed with talk, then we have no choice but to make WAR! DEATH to the TOXIC tyrants over living purity! DEATH to the MANIPULATORS of free thought! We are the ANTI-OBSTRUCTIONIST ARMY, and we are among you!

In time, the tradition of the AOA included one of dissemination of DeSoto's ideals. Every so often, a cell of the AOA would dissolve, sending at least two or three members out to neighboring domains. The Kindred ordered to travel would undertake some pretense of necessity to explain their move, relocating as quickly and efficiently as possible. Since few held ties to the mortal world (as dictated by their beliefs), they found it easier to do so than most Kindred. Some actually chose the rugged, dangerous existence of Nomads, better to spread the word from domain to domain.

The Carthian governments of some domains actually accepted the cause of the AOA as essential to their policy, integrating the AOA cause into their system of laws and putting the AOA to use as a secret police force. Most Kindred in these domains railed against the edict of non-interference, claiming it was too harsh and too unnatural. Eventually, the law was repealed in all but one or two domains, precipitating fierce conflict with the secret members of the Army.

In modern nights, the AOA makes use of every available media in spreading its message to vampires around the world. Dancing dangerously close to violation of the Tradition of Masquerade, coded messages are sent out on the Internet and hidden in the content of DIY, "scene" DVDs traded between Kindred. The AOA has evolved into something of a bogeyman for the Carthians, often blamed for violent attacks that have nothing to do with its aims. Since members of the AOA will rarely step forward to deny responsibility (especially if an attack has left Kindred shaken and fearful), they're an easy scapegoat. They do tend to hunt down those vampires who would shift blame to them, though, and teach those that the AOA catch a hard lesson in respect.

The activities of the AOA are often confused with those of the mysterious and terrifying VII. While individual members of the AOA are happy to hide behind the mistake when they're in dire need, they are quick to deny a link between the two factions at every opportunity. The message of the AOA gets pushed aside when fears of VII surface, and that renders the Army's attacks meaningless. Violence, to the AOA, is a means of elaborating and enforcing their declared intentions, not an end in itself. Indeed, some soldiers may actually step up and claim responsibility for acts of violence that have nothing to do with the AOA, as long as they can tie it to DeSoto's manifestoes.

DeSoto herself is occasionally rumored to be active, despite the clear and absolute statements of the Kindred of Miami indicating her Final Death

before the midpoint of the 20th century. Members of the AOA, declaring that DeSoto escaped the false justice of the Invictus, spread doubt and disinformation at every chance. The AOA say she became an American Nomad, punishing "toxic Kindred" all over the Southern states.

The message and operation of the AOA remains surprisingly close to the dictates of its founder, considering the various Kindred who've taken it as their own. Perhaps her theories were correct, and vampires simply aren't capable of reimagining existing movements without the assistance of mortal creativity.

Nickname: Isolationists. Not a lot of people talk about the AOA in direct terms — the organization is something that most Carthians don't want to admit exists and most outsider Kindred have never heard of. By referring to the AOA as "isolationists," many Carthians are attempting to reduce the AOA's militaristic initiative to another simple experimental ideal, hoping that it can be quietly eliminated before it becomes a more widespread feature of the Movement. Unfortunately, most Carthians are operating under the assumption that the AOA is much smaller than it actually is, assuming that most of the bombastic language of their manifestoes is exaggeration.

Covenant: The AOA is a small organization of like-minded Kindred, ostensibly all Carthian. The AOA allows its members to pledge allegiance to other covenants, so long as service to the covenants in question never supercedes the requirements of the AOA and never prevents participation in the ongoing war against the corruption of mortal emotion and intellect. If a member of the AOA receives conflicting orders, the expectation is that the vampire in question will defy his covenant and serve the needs of the AOA.

Appearance: Night to night, the members of the AOA are indistinguishable from ordinary Kindred. The pressures of disapproval and the psychological advantages of covert operation combine to provide all the motive soldiers of the AOA need to remain unidentified.

While enforcing the views of the AOA on a directed mission, soldiers tend to wear dark, armored or reinforced clothing. They prominently display the symbol of the AOA: a red zero on black field, worn most often as an armband or painted on a jacket. Most of the members of the AOA wear masks or scarves while engaging in their duties so as to avoid identification later on.

The Red Zero of the Army is a curious symbol. Nobody knows exactly where it originated, and it appears nowhere in the manifestoes of DeSoto. Somewhere

along the line, it simply became associated with the AOA as a signature of sorts, and the Zero has spread out with the traveling members of the Army ever since. Some theorize that the Zero actually represents a subset of the Army with loyalties to one another above and beyond the nightly function of the group.

Haven: Members of the AOA take pains to keep their havens as ordinary and unremarkable as possible, ensuring that there is little to distinguish them from the homes of non-members. AOA members try to select locations central to the territories of the local Carthian Movement, making certain that they can quickly and easily respond to a call anywhere within the borders of their purview (and just as quickly make it home afterward to avoid the suspicion of their fellow Kindred). Many soldiers spend quite a lot of time in their havens, establishing themselves as solitary types so as to excuse hour-long disappearances when necessary.

Background: The AOA tends to select from the ranks of established Kindred, very rarely bothering to Embrace a mortal and induct him directly into the AOA. The only mortals who do get selected in this manner are often bitter failures who can subsequently trace their ineffectiveness in life to the interference of meddling Kindred. These vampires tend to become the most fanatic members of the AOA, working fervently to ensure that their former compatriots are released from the shackles of undead obstruction. However, these Embraced are also the least careful, often becoming so dedicated to their cause that they begin to see secrecy as strictly secondary to the enforcement of Kindred isolation.

More often, a vampire who has seen the damage done to mortal development by her counterparts both within and without the Carthian Movement will gravitate to the AOA, eventually approaching a member (if she can find one) or being approached by one for recruitment. Some actually adopt the Red Zero of the cause and begin enforcement without being officially inducted into the ranks. Those who do quickly attract the attention of actual members, and are either welcomed into the AOA or are quite strongly advised against their current course of action.

On rare occasions, a Carthian vampire who fears the AOA will contrive to have his childe join the AOA, hoping to discern the identities of its members and wipe out any cells in the domain. This is a risky proposition, though: Final Death surely awaits the childe if he is discovered, and there is always the possibility that he will convert to a fully loyal mem-

ber of the AOA, betraying his sire and revealing her treachery to his newfound comrades.

Character Creation: Physical Attributes are almost always primary, but soldiers with Mental Attributes as secondary (at least) are usually the most successful enforcers. Skills will vary with the style of operative, but every member of the AOA has some rating in Brawl, Weaponry, or Firearms. Physical Merits are common, most especially fighting styles such as Boxing or Martial Arts.

Faction Disciplines: The AOA encourages the development of Vigor in its members, the better to strike at a foe quickly and decisively. Obfuscate is also a favored Discipline, allowing soldiers to stage effective masked ambushes and retreats in high-pressure situations.

Organization: The AOA operates in small cells of four or five, and each member performs tasks as determined by her skill set and inclination. The founding member of a cell is normally referred to as the Commanding Officer (or CO), and is deferred to in military style. The CO organizes acts of enforcement or sabotage and distributes orders to operatives within the cell. Some cells will designate positions for each member, naming second-in-command Executive Officers (XO), information-gathering Intelligence Officers (IO), equipment-securing Resource Allocation Officers (RO) and deep-cover Covert Operatives (VO).

Regardless of his position, every member of a cell is expected to participate in raids on Kindred who violate the tenets of the AOA. To that end, every member of every cell is trained in some sort of combat ability and equipped with the necessary weaponry (often something concealable, such as a hidden blade).

Operatives of the AOA meet frequently to discuss their activities and their intended targets. There is little in the way of ceremony to these meetings. They are often quick, furtive affairs, as most of the members of the group take pains to conceal their identity, and would have trouble explaining extended, regular absences. Each cell is small enough that members can greet one another with a simple exchange of password and then move straight into the business at hand.

The signals of the AOA change frequently, and are layered with a "verification sign." Every time a signal changes, the verification sign is displayed before and after the new signal. This follows with the display of a new verification sign, which is to be used for the next transaction. Each sign may be transmitted in any number of ways: visually, ver-

bally, through touch or smell. While the system is relatively simple (and could easily be cracked telepathically), it is altered so quickly and so often that keeping up with it would be very difficult for all but the most dedicated spy.

"YOUR TOXIC IDEALS WILL NO LONGER INFLUENCE THE GOOD DOCTOR HARRISON. HE IS FREE TO COMPLETE HIS WORK IN PEACE NOW, A PURE WORK OF HUMAN GENIUS UNMUDDIED BY THE SICK RECURSIONS OF A KINDRED MIND. YOU HAVE ALLOWED YOUR ARROGANCE TO MAKE YOU AN ENEMY OF THE MOVEMENT AND MUST BE ELIMINATED BEFORE YOU CAN DO ANY MORE DAMAGE."

OPPOSITIONISTS

In most cases, Carthians pay respect to Kindred based on individual achievement, not inherited relations or mystic markings. Some vampires find this feature of the Movement more attractive than its political activities and gravitate to the covenant just because they feel that they ought to be able to earn recognition through accomplishment alone. One faction of the Movement, known informally as "Oppositionists," is peopled almost entirely by Kindred of this sort. The original Oppositionists weren't always Carthians, though, and the story of their conversion is an undeniable example of the political wit of the Movement.

In the nights of the late 1960s, the domain of Houston was having serious problems with a quintet of unaligned Kindred. Ignoring the warnings of the Prince, these vampires spent much of their time racing through the streets of the city in a pell-mell contest invented for their own entertainment. Leaping over or smashing through every obstacle in their paths, they flirted dangerously close to a widespread violation of the Masquerade on more than one occasion. Worse yet, these reckless Kindred were all physically powerful and were likely to resist any official attempts to rein them in. Just as the Prince was poised on the edge of ordering his Sheriff into an extremely risky confrontation, a young Carthian Ventrue by the name of Eduardo Ramos asked permission to speak with the troublemakers. He argued that he might be able to bring them into Kindred society, where they might be more easily controlled. Ramos was allowed his chance.

Approaching them after one of their races, Ramos attempted to reason with the troublemakers. At first ignored, he persevered until they delivered him a solid

Concepts: Angry former philosopher, conservationist politician, fanatic saboteur, genuinely concerned idealist, hidden defender of humanity, nostalgic burnout, opportunistic agent of a rival covenant, principle-cloaked bully

beating. Rather than report his failure to the rest of the city, Ramos retreated to his haven and rested, resolving to try again. One week later, he arrived before their next contest, asking permission to participate. The unaligned Kindred let him in, and were surprised to see him keep pace with them in their no-holds-barred competition, even eliminating one of them by knocking her off a freeway overpass in mid-run. At the end of the race, Ramos explained that the unaligned were dangerously close to exile or destruction, and that he and the Carthians could provide them with a way to continue their activities without risking the wrath of the Prince. As it stood now, if they were to defeat the Sheriff in direct confrontation (as, he said, they were sure to do), they would make enemies of every vampire in the city. If they declared their affiliation with the Carthian Movement, things would be different — there would be a political support structure behind them, and the Prince would have to think twice about interfering with their entertainments. Furthermore, Ramos explained that the philosophies of the Carthian Movement supported their activities. As athletes, they were Kindred exploring physical avenues of self-improvement, arguably inspired by the words of such modern luminaries as Vince Lombardi and Yogi Berra. These troublemakers were, in effect, expressing the as-yet unrecognized innovations of a sector of the modern world through their races, but the other vampires were too ill informed to realize it.

The unaligned were wary, but a couple of warnings from the Sheriff brought them on side. Arriving at Elysium one night, they petitioned for entry as adherents of the Carthian Movement. To the delight of the



few Carthians in town, these converts began to repeat Ramos' statements on the philosophy of self-improvement through competition, declaring themselves full and faithful members of the covenant. Enraged by Ramos' manipulations, the Prince ordered the confinement of all five Kindred. As the baffled Sheriff called his Hounds to him, the Carthian Kindred stepped forward and made a statement of support for their newest members. The Prince, who was always relatively tolerant of the Carthian experiment, was faced with a dilemma: condemn them for recruiting the unaligned or include them in his persecution. Frustrated, he stuck to his order, and the Sheriff was soundly defeated. Taking the initiative, the Carthians (with their new soldiers) staged a coup, eliminating the Prince and several of his more powerful supporters. Ramos was installed as the Carthian President of the domain.

Under his rule, the formerly unaligned Kindred were allowed to continue their competitions undisturbed. Several Carthians actually joined in, supporting Ramos' original hypothesis about competitive development. Soon, the more intellectual members of the fledgling group were styling themselves

"Oppositionists," claiming that they were exploring a physically rigorous approach to evolution and achievement through friendly struggle. A manifesto was written and transmitted to several Carthian cells around the world, and the faction was born.

Ramos wasn't the only Carthian strategist to understand the advantage of creating a covenant-sponsored system of sport. Around the world, members of the Movement began putting Oppositionist philosophy to use as a means of recruiting the directionless or uncommitted Kindred of their domains, giving them an outlet for their frustrations and building a force of loyal (or at least well-entertained) followers without directly provoking enemy covenants.

Some Carthian Princes actually went so far as to apply Oppositionist thinking to ordinary domain conflict, insisting that personal grievances be settled in a controlled sport environment, allowing for the satisfaction of a duel with a scoring system that could be more complex (and more forgiving) than that of simple violence. The insistence of these Princes has met with varied levels of success. Some find that their constituent Kindred are perfectly happy settling scores in an arena, while



others discover that the Kindred of their domains will simply attempt to kill one another on the sporting field.

In modern nights, any group of competitive Carthians who subscribe to athletic philosophies and physical expressions of excellence is generally referred to as Oppositionist. Few of these groups (or “gangs,” as they usually call themselves) are truly concerned with political advancement, but many of them are made up of physically capable Kindred — a definite asset to the Movement. Their games may be little more than entertainment to most of the vampires who participate, but the display of muscle involved is often an effective deterrent to potential enemies of the covenant. In a sense, the faction is full of potential soldiers, all of whom are ready to fight for their right to play the games they love.

The strange truth is that the Oppositionist faction actually does attract vampires to the Carthian Movement, and often draws those who would otherwise avoid the organization because of an aversion to intellectualism or political involvement. Many see the games of the Oppositionists as an enjoyable diversion and a chance to gain respect through their individual skill and strength. Around the world, swimmers, racers, ballplayers and all manner of competitive athletes are being Embraced and brought into the Movement by the Oppositionists, building a potent physical force within the covenant.

Some Oppositionist cells have even stepped away from purely physical competition, declaring that all rivalries lead to self-improvement. Drag racing is currently fashionable in some Carthian domains, and stylistic sports such as surfing and skateboarding have made appearances among the vampires of some cities.

Nickname: Contestants. While some know the faction by this blanket nickname, the Oppositionists often divide themselves into local chapters, each choosing and adopting an appellation of their own. There is a unit of the Oppositionists in Buenos Aires calling itself *Los Guerreros*, for example, and another in Manchester that’s known as the *Ardwick Eight*. These subunit gang names are the way most Oppositionists refer to one another — there are very few who would actually call themselves “contestants” unless a vampire was having trouble explaining his group’s philosophy to an outsider.

Covenant: The Oppositionists make no bones about their willingness to accept members of any covenant. The faction technically began outside the Movement, and, although most members eventually join the Carthians, the attitude of a potential

member with respect to the value of competition and the winner’s instinct is more important than his political affiliation or religious beliefs.

Carthian Oppositionists do tend to see the practices of the faction as extensions of Carthian philosophy, and can often be found subtly (or not so subtly) pushing their viewpoint on the other Kindred in their gangs. When Oppositionists form the majority of a gang, the Carthians actually find the customs of the faction do help to recruit potential members to the Movement. Eventually, most Kindred who function in a system that rewards individual capability over reputation and relation will gravitate toward the Carthians, regardless of persuasive attempts.

Those who aren’t members of the Movement usually just see participation in the Oppositionist games as a way to let off steam and occupy their minds during the long nights of the Requiem. Some Kindred become Contestants as part of the *Danse Macabre*, finding new and complex ways to relate to one another through open competition. Some are even assigned to gangs by their elders in an effort to demonstrate the superiority of their heritage. Many don’t realize that they are part of a larger system, preferring to remain oblivious. They may or may not be aware that they are being shown off as a potential force for the Movement.

Appearance: Almost every unit of the Oppositionists styles itself as a street gang, adopting recognizable colors and modes of behavior. The members will proudly display their affiliation, wearing meticulously constructed “uniforms” to distinguish themselves from the rest of Kindred society. The form these outfits take is limited only by the imagination (and the limiting modesty) of the vampires involved. Some simply wear jeans and T-shirts with matching insignia, while others wear painted leather jackets, sport elaborate tattoos or choose more outlandish costumes. Some actually choose outfits that seem ridiculous, hoping that unwary individuals who come across them will foolishly provoke some kind of conflict in response.

Almost all of the Oppositionists take pains to display their physical fitness as well, often picking streamlined or revealing outfits so that their muscular bodies are clearly visible. Those who aren’t as well built will tend to dress in a manner that emphasizes their compact size, implying agility or other advantages.

Those Oppositionists who carry weapons on them tend to choose ones that double as sports equipment for a ready excuse. A skateboard can be just as devastating as a carbon-graphite baton, and is much easier to overlook in ordinary circumstances.

Haven: The Contestants tend to dwell in neighborhood groups, not necessarily in shared abodes, but relatively near to one another so that all can quickly gather when called upon. Those who consistently outperform their companions in competition tend to have well-appointed havens, often purchased with prize money or favors, while those less capable will have smaller, more understated homes. Providing an incentive to improvement and victory, the expression of success through material gain is common to the faction. Many of the members of the faction also come from poor mortal backgrounds, and are naturally attracted to the luxuries they never enjoyed in life.

Contestants like to associate with mortal gang members as a means of maintaining cover (thus, a group of Kindred walking along in colors doesn't seem so out of place), so their havens are usually established in the rougher parts of town. Many take pains to stay near places of exercise and competition such as gymnasiums, arenas and stadiums, just for convenience's sake.

Background: Most of the members of the Oppositionists were or aspired to be athletes in life, continuing the philosophies that were familiar to them before they began their Requiems. They cover the range of activities and levels of achievement: from solitary pursuits to professional league first-stringers, from burn-outs and has-beens to world-class champions. Many are Kindred who never spent their mortal days in competition, but may have wanted to. Some come from poor backgrounds, where the everyday necessities of survival pushed aside the dreams of competitive sport, while others were armchair dreamers, basking second-hand in glories that informed their fantasies.

The rest are vampires who join up with Oppositionist gangs as a means to relieve the sheer tedium of their Requiems, hoping to occupy their minds and bodies with pursuits more engaging than the endless social duck-and-weave of the Danse Macabre. Some disenfranchised Kindred, weary of risking Final Death on the battlefield of rougher domains, join up to demonstrate their worth and achieve success among a crowd that appreciates physical capacity in nonfatal endeavors.

Character Creation: Physical Attributes are primary in almost all cases. Speed, strength, and toughness are what matter most in the Oppositionist games, hands down. Athletics is practically a fetish, and other sport-related Skills (such as Drive, Weaponry and Brawl) are often appreciated.

Faction Disciplines: Vigor, Resilience and Celerity are the Disciplines most valued by the Oppositionists.

Although other Disciplines have application in the competitive practices of the faction, the three basic physical Disciplines are the most direct and the most instinctive. Certain powers, such as Dominate and Majesty, are considered less favorable because of their "unsportsmanlike" application and the tendency of their practitioners to negate competition rather than encourage it.

Organization: Every local chapter of the Oppositionists forms a gang, numbering between two and 12 Kindred. Occasionally, gangs will split into two or more smaller groups for the purpose of extended competition. Although the relationship between these sub-gangs is usually friendly, the occasional split will foster real and long-lasting animosity.

The organization of the Oppositionists revolves exclusively around the organization and execution of contests — physical competitions undertaken as both entertainment and opportunity to develop the undead skills and powers of the participating Kindred. Each gang chooses its own style of contest, usually by simple majority vote. Most begin with just one or two events, eventually adding more as varied Kindred join up. Some prefer contests of individual achievement, such as races or martial arts, while others concentrate on team sports.

Each Oppositionist gang sets its own schedule, but most engage in competition at least once a month, gathering all available members for the event. Some will compete as often as two or three times a week. Together with mortal allies, the gang clears out a space for the event, taking over an arena or strip of land, hidden away from uninitiated mortals so as to protect the Masquerade. Some gangs are not so careful, preferring to run through the city streets, but those who do dance near the edge of Tradition violation, and rarely last long.

After each contest, the Oppositionists refer to a hierarchical system called the ladder, which ranks each member based on his performance. If the gang concentrates its activities on a single sport, the ranking system is relatively simple, but those that engage in a range of varied sports can have extremely complicated systems involving multiple charts and layered-standing tiers. As members move up on down on the ladder, they are accorded more or less respect. Those highest on the list usually receive payment from the rest of the gang after the ranking is complete. These spoils can be proportional to the number of Kindred in the gang, or can simply be arranged by informal bets placed before an event.

Occasionally, a particularly sadistic gang will challenge a group of hapless mortals to a team contest, unleashing the full fury of the Contestants' power upon

them. These chump games almost always devolve into a mass feeding, and the mortals involved rarely survive. On some occasions, one of the mortals in such a game will so impress the Oppositionists that he is set aside for Embrace, but to do so, he would have to survive an almost incomprehensible onslaught of undead might. These exercises are not considered competitive events as much as entertainment, though, and only those Kindred with the strongest stomachs (or the lowest Humanity) are capable of seeing them through to the end.

Most of the Oppositionists spend a good proportion of their time in training and practice. Some gangs choose to organize practice sessions, getting together for scheduled gatherings, but most are less structured, allowing individual members to train as they wish. In-

struction in the use of Physical Disciplines is often provided at the organized exercises, including a range of activities from simple speed training for the enhancement of Celerity to extended beatings intended to provoke the development of Resilience.

Almost every decision made by the Oppositionists is based on majority rule, with a simple vote. The gangs rarely push a political agenda, though, and membership in the faction has little or nothing to do with one's policy preferences in Elysium.

Concepts: Anti-intellectual tough, bare-knuckle boxer, exuberant night runner, fiercely efficient predator, graceful urban acrobat, hellishly hard-hitting ex-halfback, smart-mouthed street racer, stoic swordsman, tactical game theorist, undead waterbaby

"LET'S PLAY FOR IT. COME ON, I'LL LET YOU TAKE THE FIRST SHOT."

PARANORMAL PHENOMENA INVESTIGATION CADRES

To be a vampire is to know that there are things that go bump in the night, monsters in the closet and a whole host of mysterious horrors hiding in the world's shadows. Each covenant of Kindred has its own way of dealing with this, including the inevitable conclusion that there are scarier things out there than the Kindred themselves. The Carthian response is unique: they form committees, bureaus and offices. This practice originated in Germany; in fact, where the *Ordo Dracul* failed to ingratiate themselves with the Nazis (see *Ordo Dracul*, p.27), some Carthians succeeded. Some of the materials seized from Dragon havens made their way into Carthian hands during this time, starting the spread of a Carthian subculture fascinated with the occult. Little came of this fascination, however, and the committees in Germany were disbanded with the fall of the Third Reich.

The idea did not die, however. Lupines and stranger things continued to spark interest in Carthians of various stripes, and the successes of the *Sonderbarereignissebüro* (Bureau of Strange Events) were whispered of in secluded corners where everyone involved knew of the gravity of the world's occult secrets. New offices were created in several different American cities, as well as in Europe, though the original title of these bureaus was dropped in favor of something more professional-sounding to modern ears. Sev-

eral names circulated for the groups, including the derogatory nickname "Ghostbusters," but the official name that became most common was the Paranormal Phenomena Investigation cadre. In more formal speech and writing, the abbreviations PPI, PPI Bureau and simply "the Bureau" are also used.

These cadres have had some notable successes, and some dreadful failures as well. One American team is reported to have successfully laid to rest over 100 hauntings, either by proving them false or actually driving out the ghosts somehow. This reputation is tarnished by several imitator teams, though, who have been known to fake hauntings just so they can "flush them out." This is not a popular scam, though; Carthian urban legend says that one such team was caught by a real ghost, and forced to stand stock-still outside the haunted house until the sun burned them to ash.

PPI cadres often run into other, more quantifiable supernatural archetypes as well, from werewolves to mystery-weaving sorcerers. Wise PPI cadres build these relationships carefully, as dealings with such creatures reveal them for the thinking individuals they are, and not a fear-tainted stereotype. In Carthian domains that host PPI cadres, look to these Kindred to be among the most in the know about the actual habits and affairs of other supernaturals.



Similar to many Carthians, early adopters in the PPI phenomenon have usually published manifestoes. Anybody with Covenant Status (Carthians) may have heard of them. One of the most widely circulated came from a Carthian identified only as Nathan, entitled, “The Necessary Qualities of a Paranormal Investigation Team.” The document makes no specific reference to Kindred abilities, though there are vague references to “extrasensory perception” and a few other points where any of the undead could easily infer the use of a Discipline. Because of the vague nature of the manifesto, no great outcry went up when it was discovered to be available online. (The online version can be discovered with a successful Intelligence + Computer roll.)

In addition to a variety of relatively good, though vague, advice on effective paranormal investigation procedures, Nathan’s document includes a short statement on the value of such investigation: “We have all seen more than we admit of monsters. Many of these monsters are entirely human, but not all. There is a monstrous quality in all of us. We can never overcome

it if we do not seek to understand it. By understanding the outer monster, the inner beast may be conquerable. If a werewolf rages, and can be stopped, perhaps a bane can be found for any man’s rage. If a ghost seeks revenge, and can be placated, perhaps all our differences can be solved. The simple danger presented by the unknown is insignificant compared to the lessons to be learned. If any great work is to be completed in this state, we must overcome all enemies, within and without. This can be done only through understanding.”

The reference to “great work” rather than “experiment” at the end leads some to believe that Nathan may have held at least joint membership in the Ordo Dracul, not an uncommon occurrence at all for early PPI adopters. His moral curiosity is far from the norm, though; mostly the inquiry conducted by these groups is of a more scientific nature, or driven by a specific goal such as making communicative inroads with a local Lupine pack.

Nickname: PPI

Organization: While PPI cadres exist for the benefit of the Carthian Movement, they maintain con-



tacts in the other covenants for obvious reasons. Any Carthian with Status in the Movement and another covenant at the same time often has the PPI's attention, because such Carthians are considered highly reliable sources for the Bureau's purposes. Carthian Dragons are especially valuable, because of the Ordo Dracul's tendency to amass occult knowledge even if it's unrelated to their specific mission of transcendence.

Duties of the PPI usually come in two parts: analysis and fieldwork. The analysts are in charge of case-by-case objectives, but the field teams are self-governing when pursuing those objectives. Both teams tend to be small, topping out at five or so Kindred each. Analysts are more likely to keep ghouls than field agents. Retainers are helpful as extra help, but generally just get in the way of field ops. The two teams sometimes work closely with each other, or sometimes resent each other. Both models work out for different reasons, and each has its own failings. Very close teams tend to make more mistakes, feeling less need to check each others' work. Antagonistic teams, of course, have teamwork problems. Neither solution is perfect, but Carthians are used to experimenting with imperfect systems.

The teams often change themselves up to keep everything fresh, switching members between the field and analysis teams to bring new insight to different problems. The method of leadership varies as well, with teams sometimes functioning as direct democracies within themselves, or sometimes electing a leader. Leaders are chosen based on votes sometimes, but, more often, if one Kindred is chosen to lead, it's because of specialized knowledge important to the current objective. Field teams are more likely to need a leader; analysts have little requirement for quick decision-making.

Appearance: PPI cadres often prefer formalwear in the field such as dark suits, ties and sunglasses, owing to the effectiveness and professional mien such attire suggests. They can even get away with this look, since Kindred have no trouble seeing in the dark. Analysts, on the other hand, usually dress informally except when presenting briefings and conducting debriefings. Depending on the teams in question, they may not even dress up at those times if they don't feel they

need to impress their field team for one reason or another. This can grow out of trust, or a simple disregard for the importance of the field agents' opinions.

Haven: PPI cadres have simple needs. They may lease office space or may have temporary havens in close proximity to cases they investigate. PPI Carthians are generally a paranoid bunch, because the creatures they deal with are often hostile, inscrutable or territorial. Thus, the most popular solution is to find an out-of-the-way, defensible building, and set up shop.

In addition to meeting rooms, personal offices with computers for each analyst and sleeping accommodations, PPI havens should have good storage space. Valuable or not, PPI investigations produce paperwork. Keeping these records is generally considered to be one of the more important parts of the job the PPI agents do for the covenant. If any Carthian in the city is having a supernatural problem outside of Kindred society, the PPI is expected to search their files to help their fellow Carthians with such problems, providing information and possibly even training and direct assistance in methods to cope with the sources. Thus, these files are kept under heavy security. If they are stolen or destroyed, the PPI can expect to lose favor very quickly.

Background: Salient skills are the first thing a nascent PPI cadre looks for when adding members. Most have college degrees or exemplary qualifications in relevant fields of study or activity. Degrees in social sciences and humanities are valued for insight into the stories of monsters passed down by the kine, as well as physical science degrees (especially forensics) for attempting to analyze various kinds of physical evidence. Other degrees might be sought out for people and management skills, or to acquire funding. Of course, the degree of discrimination in a particular city depends on who starts the cadre. The less educated and serious the founders, the less strictly the guidelines are followed.

Concept: Bureaucrat, charlatan, clinical researcher, curious thrill-seeker, erstwhile cynic, outside specialist, religious inquisitive, reporter turned investigator, veteran parapsychologist, wealthy dilettante

"WHOA. GET A LOAD OF THIS!"

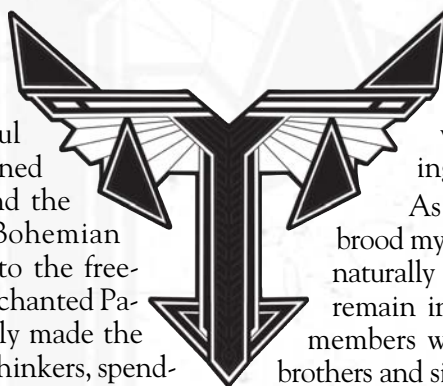
Barjot

"Hey, you can keep your territory and your obligations. I'm not interested in any of that garbage. All I need are my brothers and sisters, and they're always with me no matter what else I got."

One of the smallest and most unusual bloodlines in Kindred history, the Barjot have their origin in late 1860s France, spawned by the fateful meeting of an impressionable unaligned Gangrel named Amaury Jelinek and the early proponents of the mortal Bohemian movement. Immediately attracted to the freedom and defiant wonder of the disenchanted Parisian art community, Jelinek quickly made the acquaintance of several progressive thinkers, spending nearly all of his time in their company. Although he lacked the education and intellectual rigor to hold his own in debate with these mortals, he was endlessly fascinated by their meandering conversations on philosophy, politics and the undeniable truths of human emotion. One night, overwhelmed by the excitement one night's discussion sparked in him, Jelinek struck both of his heroes down and immediately Embraced them in defiance of local law.

Jelinek and his new childer were brought before the Prince of the domain, forced to stand in judgment for his impetuosity. Unwilling to issue a personal order for the destruction of Jelinek (whom he considered little better than a rogue) and noticing that the three Kindred bore a strange, nearly painful aversion to separation, the Prince declared all three exiled, announcing that they could live together in eternal codependence, so long as they didn't do it within the boundaries of his territory. "Jobard," he called them. "Insane."

Dejected and banished, the three began a stint of relatively aimless wandering, moving from place to place with little more in mind than the application of their hopeful musings. They would own nothing, they decided, and they would never put down roots that could not be pulled up at any moment. They had been given the opportunity to exist as they always imagined: free of obligation, free of material concern and the bounds of polite society. As they wandered, they slowly picked up more members, an impassioned Embrace here, a carefully considered selection there. At their peak, the brood numbered more than 20 Kindred. At first identifying themselves as Jobard, they soon adopted a *verlan* slang version of the name: Barjot. The insult eventually became an inside joke,



co-opted by the bloodline and reversed into a proud name. What began as a sad exile turned, within years, into a strangely empowered roving party of outlaw vampires.

As decades passed, the close ties of the brood mystically tightened and solidified, supernaturally forcing the members of the Barjot to remain in one another's company. Individual members who separated themselves from their brothers and sisters became insurmountably anxious, eventually struggling to return to the fold. Some of the original members began to sour on the group, claiming that the proximity of their fellow members soon became a trap more insidious and more frustrating than any of the rules of society. One of Jelinek's original two childer actually committed suicide in the early years of the 20th century, forever traumatizing the rest of the line.

When the line passed through Amsterdam on a journey across northern Europe, they found immediate welcome and purpose in the Carthian Movement there. Realizing that they were nothing less than an experimental society of their own, Jelinek declared himself and his line to be ardent Carthians, formulizing and carrying out an ongoing experiment in anti-materialist communal existence. Received as a charismatic ally, he was made most welcome in the domain and allowed to move freely through the territory. But before long, the reckless tendencies of the Barjot began to annoy their hosts and damage the reputation of the line. Avoiding a potential clash, Jelinek gathered his brood and left the domain.

For decades, they traveled. Brussels, Geneva, Budapest, Prague, Rome — all played host to the Barjot at one time or another, and all rapidly ushered them out soon after. It never helped that the brood spread the word of their own revolutionary brand of Carthianism wherever they went, embellishing the tales in an attempt to convince younger, more impressionable Kindred to join up and throw off the traditions of their elders. Many times, the Barjot were forced to flee a domain before facing charges of corrupting neonates and fomenting rebellion — a thoroughly legitimate claim.

The Barjot were caught in Copenhagen during the Nazi occupation of World War II, and a disastrous at-

tempt to cross the border led to the destruction of three members of the line at once. Never having suffered such a degree of bloodshed before, they were devastated. Jelinek's remaining childe went into voluntary torpor, declaring his intent to sleep "one century for each sad loss." The rest of the line chose to carry his inert body with them in their travels, and have done so ever since.

As soon as they were able, the entire line picked up and left for the Americas, eager to leave the painful memories of Europe behind. First landing at New York harbor, they were quickly turned out by the Kindred of the city and set to wandering again.

In the decades that followed, the Barjot have been up and down the Americas, traveling as far south as Rio de Janeiro and as far north as Anchorage, Alaska. Every so often, they are made welcome in a domain and they stay for as long as they can. Rarely tolerated for long, they eventually move on, looking for a city that can accept their strange ways.

Parent Clan: Gangrel. The founder, Amaury Jelinek, is a vampire of approximately 250 years of age. He still wanders the night with his strange, close-knit line, and is rumored to have spent no more than 10 or 11 years in torpor throughout his existence, a surprising circumstance for a vampire of his age. Jelinek attributes his staying power to the close ties he shares with his blood relations.

Nickname: Jelinenes. The Barjot dislike this term because it suggests a worship of Jelinek that they all deny. While it's true that they tend to dote on him, no one of them is central to the bloodline, they say, and no one of them deserves to be exalted above the rest. On any given night, they are likely to indulge and idolize one of their neonates just as much as their founder.

Covenant: The Barjot identify themselves as Carthians, without exception. The Barjot are a small state unto themselves, and they believe that they should be allowed to determine the parameters of their own government, complete with its laws and customs. Because of their extremely insular behavior and their tendency to wander away, en masse, from any situation that upsets them, the members of the bloodline are sometimes referred to as "Carthian by default." That is to say, they are too organized to be spoken of as unaligned, but they are too unusual and unmannerly to be considered members of any covenant except the Carthian Movement.



The Barjot have flirted with membership in both the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone in the past, participating happily in religious or mystic rituals and readings. The Barjot never stay for long, though, and they rarely bother to learn much from the teachings of either group. It's not that the Barjot are incompatible with them, but rather that the Barjot just don't care enough to take the trouble.

The free-spirited Barjot are simply not compatible with the staid etiquette of the Invictus or the guarded secrecy and long study of the Ordo Dracul. Any members of the bloodline who have made any attempt whatsoever to join those covenants in the past have done so half-heartedly, and have been rejected on every occasion. Even those single members who might be considered for membership are unable to spend enough time away from their compatriots to learn the lessons of these covenants.

Appearance: Considering that wild experimentation and creative expression are the norm for Jelinene Kindred, the mainstream boundaries of gender, modesty and good taste are of no concern. Loose, flowing garments seem fashionable, as are colorful, comfortable fabrics and revealing cuts.

Most of the Barjot refuse to style their hair, often allowing dreadlocks to form (if they have enough length) or taking a *laissez-faire* attitude to their coils. Many are not quite as anxious about hygiene as one might hope, and are dusted with a layer of soot and grime that grows thicker as the years pass.

If the bloodline has a single rule about one's appearance, it is this: nothing should be bought. If a vampire of the bloodline is seen to wear matching suits or manufactured dresses, she's likely to face the jeers of her brethren as a "sell out" or a "bourgeois wannabe." Instead, the Barjot either hand-sew their garments from scratch or patch them together from a collection of found fabrics and otherwise cannibalized clothing.

The Barjot often accessorize with items that are beautiful, but assertively worthless. Cheap plastic baubles, telephone wire necklaces, iridescent Saran-Wrap bracelets — anything that's both eye-catching and easy to find works as Barjot adornment. They may look like crazy people, but they tend to claim that it's a statement on the arbitrary nature of value assignment, and will gleefully defend their choices. The useless is elevated to magnificence in their eyes, and commonly accepted precious items are no better than trash.

Haven: The Jelinenes will dwell anywhere that's free, light-tight and large enough to house all of them. Squats in ruined hotels, waterfront warehouses and abandoned factories are favorites for the bloodline, providing the shelter they require without walling the members off

from one another. Not all of them know how to invoke the haven of Soil, and those who do don't like to isolate themselves from their brothers and sisters.

Wherever they make a home, the Barjot inevitably "decorate": painting the walls with unusual imagery, scrawling poetry and messages on every available surface and scattering toys, swatches of fabric and anything else they choose to entertain themselves with all around. Their havens are often jokingly referred to as "nests" because of this behavior, but many a visiting vampire has been struck by the awful resemblance to an animal's den.

On rare occasion, the Barjot are invited to share the haven of an outsider. Without fail, they leave it as ruined as their own homes, testing the limits of their host's patience with their combined ignorance of common courtesy and absolute disregard for another's privacy. To those who know the Barjot, hosting the bloodline is considered a great (or insanely foolish) act of tolerance and charity. A few French Kindred regularly welcome them into their homes, viewing the inevitable destruction of their property as a kind of penance. Most Kindred, however, are nowhere near as broadminded in their approach.

Background: Those mortals who can both draw the attention of the Barjot and then survive the first few years as Kindred without going completely insane are a singular type: charismatic outsiders and frustrated eccentrics, assured of their own intellectual worth and vaguely (or completely) dissatisfied with mainstream life. They are artists and talkers, rebels and freaks, attracted to the unusual existence of the vampires and willing participants in their commune.

Social and Physical Attributes are considered more favorable for Barjot candidates than Mental ones, and such "friendly skills" as Expression, Socialize, Drive and Athletics are much more appealing to the line than such "unfriendly" ones as Brawl, Weaponry or Subterfuge.

Character Creation: Almost all of the Jelinenes are peaceful intellectuals, many of whom have given themselves over to a free-spirited, hedonistic Requiem. As a result, Mental Attributes are commonly primary (despite the Gangrel weakness), but Social Skills are usually prominent. Material Merits are discouraged, as every member of the bloodline must be prepared to abandon all possessions — either in sharing with one another, or in ridding oneself of material ties to a particular domain. A good number of the bloodline bear the Striking Looks merit, even if it may be hidden under a layer of grime.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Celerity, Protean, Resilience

Weakness: Every member of the bloodline suffers the weakness of the Gangrel clan. In addition, none of the Jelinekes can stand to be removed from the company of his brood. If any one member of the group loses contact (visual, aural or tactile) with any member of the line, he must immediately make a Resolve + Composure roll. Each success he accumulates allows him to remain in place (or moving in his chosen direction) for one turn. As soon as these turns of free action are used up, he must immediately seek out his line-mates, seeking them to the best of his ability. While he seeks the rest of the Barjot, he will lose interest in all other activities, and any rolls to perform actions unrelated to locating and rejoining his family suffer a -3 penalty.

This roll applies only to single members of the bloodline, isolated from the rest. While the other members of the line are likely to become agitated when a member goes missing, they do not suffer the penalty that applies to their lost line-mate. A pair of Barjot apart from their brood likewise will not suffer the penalty, though they certainly feel a pull to rejoin their bloodline as quickly as possible.

Organization: The Barjot move in familial troupes, splitting only rarely into smaller sub-groups. Each member relates (and refers) to the others as brothers and sisters, even when dealing with her sire or childer. There are no distinctions of age or class within the Barjot, and there is no intrinsic value to inheritance. Many Barjot are actually Jelinek's childer or grandchilder, with a few exceptions, and all share the close ties of Blood Sympathy.

Amorous affairs are both common and mercurial among the Barjot. Partnerships are formed, traded and dissolved with remarkable frequency, more as a pleasure game than any serious expression of emotion. Reprehensible as it is to more traditional Kindred, the ready exchange of physical love among the members of the bloodline is arguably one of the factors that help maintain each member's Humanity. Those who seem to be slipping are often subjected to increased attention from their brood-mates, benefiting from their gentle touch and intimate understanding.

The Barjot engage in their own version of the Carthian Chain at least once a week, if not more often, exchanging gifts and items of clothing (often wearing them to the ceremony and removing them just before handing them over) back and forth, occasionally receiving presents that they themselves had given away years previous. The gifts exchanged are appreciated, but there isn't much relevance attached to the relative value. Outsiders often question the Barjot's practice of the Chain, considering that they

define all of their possessions as the shared property of the line. Members of the bloodline invariably respond that the practice of the Chain is about the act of giving and receiving, not about the ownership of the gifts themselves. It is a practice that encourages friendly contact and a union of intent and interest. Outsiders are frequently and happily invited to practice the Chain with the Barjot, demonstrating that the line is willing to surrender items in exchange for the gifts of foreigners as well.

Spending as much time in one another's company as they do, the Kindred of the Barjot often engage in cooperative feeding practice. The joint hunt is surely a joy for the brothers and sisters of the line, but must be horrifying for their targets. The entire line often descends on a small group of mortals, picking a small neighborhood clean in their passing. A definite threat to the Masquerade, the Barjot group hunt often defies the logic and necessity of stealth in Kindred affairs, and the permanent residents of several domains have been forced to clean up the bloodline's mess on more than one occasion.

In a ritual exercise that is extremely unusual for vampires, the Barjot all recall and celebrate their mortal birthdays, throwing wild parties and taking the whole line into the streets for a roving bash. As the night of revelry draws to a close, the honoree is often drawn into the telling of tales, recalling the highlights of his mortal days. Once again, this practice seems bizarre or unnecessary to many Kindred, but it has a definite positive effect on the Humanity of the bloodline's members.

Another common ritual for the Barjot is the "crash," a planned outing to a public event (or Elysium gathering). In preparation, the members of the bloodline dress up in "disguise," snagging cheap or free suits and dresses and doing their best to emulate the "normal" crowd. At some predetermined point, they suddenly shred or strip off their outfits, reveling in the relative freedom of their usual garb. This moment of shedding is considered by many a reinforcing of the values of the Barjot, allowing them to exult in a moment of liberation after the hours-long tension of trying to fit in with the crowd around them. It certainly seems enjoyable to those on the outside: the release is accompanied by laughter and song, often drawing the curious attention of the crowd.

Concepts: Atavistic philosopher-poet, easygoing hitchhiker, enlightened communist punk, free-spirited wild child, gentle warrior-gone-soft, manic codependent brat, sleepy-eyed jokester, soothing big sister, talentless avant-garde scribbler, trapped-in-hell introvert

Deucalion

"It's OK. You can't help what you are."

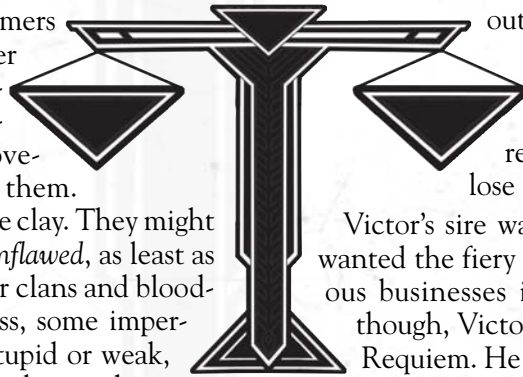
The Deucalion bloodline simmers with rage. Interacting with other Kindred, necessary for night-to-night existence and especially important among the Carthian Movement, frustrates and infuriates them.

They are stone while all others are clay. They might not all be perfect, but they are *unflawed*, as least as far as Kindred go. While all other clans and bloodlines carry some sort of weakness, some imperfection that makes them ugly, stupid or weak, the Deucaliones have only themselves and not their Blood to blame when they fail.

Of course, they usually have to keep these attitudes to themselves. It might be true that the horrific Nosferatu acting as Prince of a domain is worthless, because she cannot even hunt without revealing herself to any mortal who might be watching, but if her Embrace antedates that of the Deucalion's by a half-century then insults are unwise. The Deucalion bloodline isn't good at being patient, but it must be. So the Deucaliones save their vitriol for the targets they can afford to attack — younger Kindred, ghouls and mortal pawns. Just as Americans once felt that one black relative was enough to consider a person "black," the Deucaliones feel that the touch of tainted blood is enough to pass on the weakness.

HISTORY OF THE DEUCALIONES

The Deucaliones are a young bloodline, formed sometime within the last 50 years. The founder, a Ventrue named Victor Spanos, was Embraced during a period of high immigration in New York. Greek by ancestry but American by birth, he watched as Italians, Irish, Greeks and others tried to mix into the "melting pot" of the city. He decided, though, that the "melting pot" was more a bowl of marbles than anything else. The people didn't melt, didn't change and didn't allow themselves to be changed. They clung to their ways, their foibles and their weaknesses. Victor decided that America, despite her flaws, was superior because she had left behind the weaknesses of the Old Country. Victor, in the years leading up to his Embrace, was a constant force against immigrants' rights unless they learned American English (with-



out accent), could work in America and didn't ask for silly things like Catholic or Greek Orthodox holidays. "They have freedom of religion," he said, "but I shouldn't lose money because of it."

Victor's sire was a member of the Invictus who wanted the fiery young man's connections to various businesses in the city. After the Embrace, though, Victor threw himself headlong into the Requiem. He severed ties with the mortals who knew him (killing them, in some cases), liquidated his accounts, arranged circumstances so that he was declared dead and began learning all he could about the clans and the covenants. His sire, disgusted, declared Victor's Embrace a mistake that he would correct, but Victor had already made arrangements. Just under a year after his Embrace, he was on a train heading west.

WHERE?

Victor began his unlife in New York and from there headed west — and that's about as specific as it's going to get. The Deucalion bloodline is prevalent in several American cities, but it's not really necessary to nail down which ones here. (In your chronicle, of course, one of those cities can be the one your coterie resides in and the surrounding ones, if you wish to incorporate the bloodline.)

Nothing says that Victor necessarily needed to start in New York, of course. London has its own issues with immigration, and Victor could easily have fled to mainland Europe. Use whatever locales work for your chronicle, and tweak the bloodline's particulars as necessary.

IMPURITY

Victor had been an avid student of vampirism since the first night of his Embrace. Although not particularly interested in mythology or esoteric lore in life, the notion that vampires had hunted humanity for centuries intrigued him, and he dug into the history of his former people with vigor, trying to find the "cracks" in the Masquerade. History, he found, wasn't

a good source, because so much of it had been sanitized and rewritten to match expectations, one of which was that vampires didn't exist. Victor turned instead to mythology, focusing on the rich lore of ancient Greece.

At the same time, he was trying to find his feet among the Kindred. He had no real interest in joining the Invictus, and the two religious covenants conflicted with his secular view of the world. The Ordo Dracul seemed like a natural fit, and when he arrived in his new home he immediately petitioned to join these scholars. He never gained much status, however, because, whereas most Dragons were interested in studying the occult to further their own understanding of the Coils of the Dragon, Victor was interested in knowledge for his own sake and had no particular desire to "transcend" anything. What's more, as he researched mythology and observed the Kindred around him, he came to a very familiar (for him) conclusion: certain types of vampires were weaker by nature, whereas he and vampires like him were without this inherent weakness.

The Ventrue, he decided, were without intrinsic flaws. The Nosferatu were obvious monsters — fine if one wished to terrorize fairy-tale children, but not conducive to a modern Requiem. The Gangrel could not think rationally, at least not predictably, and this kind of chaotic thought process made them dangerous to rely upon. The Daeva were slaves to their base impulses, and Victor saw that this led to the Daeva either degenerating into madness or becoming mentally exhausted in short order. The Mekhet, of course, had even less tolerance for light than most Kindred. (Victor considered the Mekhet the least of the Kindred, but his disdain was tempered with fear and jealousy over their ability to read minds.)

Above all the clans, though, stood the Ventrue. Victor perceived talk of the Lords being predisposed toward madness as motivated by jealousy and speculation — any vampire might go mad with the weight of years and sin, after all. In his mythological studies, Victor came across the story of Deucalion, the descendant of Prometheus who was one of the last survivors after Zeus flooded the world. Deucalion consulted the Oracle of Themis for advice on how to repopulate the Earth, and was told to throw stones over his shoulder. A race of people sprang up behind him, made from stone (rather than the original inhabitants of the world, who had been made from clay and were thus not strong enough to withstand the sins released from Pandora's box).

This fable sparked something in Victor. He believed that he had found a representation of the Ventrue in the myth. The other clans were made from clay, but his clan was of stone, strong enough to resist sunlight, fire and sin and rise above all other Kindred. Other vampires were impure, by no one's fault but the blood they bore. Victor wrote up a long, accusatory treatise "proving" that the Ventrue should hold



power in every city, though other, “impure” clans would be allowed to hold offices at the Ventrue’s sufferance. He presented this treatise to his superiors in the Order, sure that it would finally be his ticket out of the lower ranks. He wasn’t entirely prepared for the result.

THE CARTHIAN MOVEMENT

The Dragons in Victor’s new city read his proposal and immediately expelled him. “What you should, but probably won’t, understand, Slave Victor,” one of them wrote to him, “is that we are not expelling you from the Order because you are wrong, though you most assuredly are. We are expelling you because you are a failure as a scientist, because you see only what confirms what you have always believed. There are other covenants for Kindred like you, Kindred who refuse to let the world change them.”

Victor read the comments to his treatise and came to the conclusion that he had been wrong to show it to them. Not because he was mistaken, of course, but simply because he couldn’t expect them to accept it. Would old and powerful Kindred acknowledge the truths that he had realized? Of course not, for Victor was not far from his Embrace. He was fighting a battle that would not only prove unpopular with four-fifths of the Kindred in existence, but that also required elders to take the word of a neonate. He therefore decided that his former superior’s suggestion of seeking a covenant better suited to his temperament was a good idea, but he needed a covenant that would listen to the words of a young vampire. In the Carthian Movement, he found a home.

MISSION AND POSITION: DEUCALIONES

Victor evangelized his “Deucalion” mission immediately upon joining the Carthian Movement. Of course, most of the Carthians in the city promptly refused to speak to him again. Some, though (mostly, though not entirely, Ventrue), found his notions intriguing.

Victor’s position, simply put, was that clan Ventrue was inherently unflawed, but that individual members of the clan still made mistakes and possessed character and moral failings. (Victor himself magnanimously admitted to being somewhat conceited, in perhaps the greatest understatement the city’s Kindred had ever heard.) Other clans were inherently flawed, but could aspire to great accomplishments and virtue. They merely had more to overcome.

Most of the city’s Kindred recognized this position as the condescending pap that it was, but enough of the Carthians in the area responded favorably the Victor was able to build up a small power base. He made it his

mission to help the Ventrue remain pure and make the most of their special status, and to help the members of the other clans rise above the impurities of their blood. Over time, strangely enough, he started to do just that. He developed strategies for Gangrel to cope with the lack of cognitive faculty that their particular weakness brought. He helped the Succubi find ways to avoid being put in positions where they had to either abstain or indulge, and he encouraged the Nosferatu to hone their abilities in stealth rather than in engendering fear. (“It’s a useful trick,” he’d say, “but it’s a holdover from centuries past. You want to scare someone nowadays, pull a gun.”) He had nothing to offer the Mekhet, however, claiming that they were a “mud clan” among the Kindred that had somehow managed to survive despite their obvious inferiority. Again, though, he didn’t blame individual Mekhet for being Mekhet, since no Kindred chooses her clan. He simply stated that he couldn’t help them, and advised them to move as far north as possible where the nights lasted longer. When he found that Mekhet in the city had Embraced, however, he became incensed and railed at them whenever he saw them. Being Cursed was something no vampire could help. Passing on that Curse was unforgivable.

This state of affairs continued for several decades, and Victor gained a kind of cult of personality in his city and those nearby. Many Kindred hated him, but those who had actually met him found him agreeable, if a little patronizing. A number of vampires admitted that he had some good ideas for avoiding the bloodborne curses, though they chortled that he had also come across the best way to cope with his own: deny it.

Then, one winter night, a visitor arrived in the city who would send the Deucalion mission in a new direction, and ultimately lead to its status as a bloodline.

A NEW WRINKLE

Like many vampires, Victor had operated under the assumption that only five clans existed. He had heard rumors that “other clans” existed in other countries, but he didn’t spare them much of a thought.

But one night in February, Victor was taking a meeting with a particularly volatile Gangrel, trying to teach her to keep her mind uncluttered even in the face of myriad distractions. He was making progress, he thought, when he heard a knock at the door. When he answered it, standing there was a truly pathetic-looking vampire. She was so thin that her ribs were plainly visible under her shirt. Her hair had fallen out in patches, and although she had not masked her Beast, the Predator’s Taint barely flickered in Victor’s soul. His own Beast saw her as a worm, a parasite not worth the trouble of killing. Victor at first thought

she was a Nosferatu, and invited her in, but after some discussion she claimed to be a member of a minor line consisting only of herself and her sire. Intrigued, Victor listened as she spoke at length of changing her blood, watching in horror as her body changed, losing her facility for strengthening her flesh but gaining the power to flawlessly track other Kindred, even if she knew only a name.

Eventually, Victor asked her what clan she had been Embraced into, assuming it to be Gangrel. He was not prepared for her answer: "Ventrue." Victor flew into frenzy and attacked her, draining her dry and consuming her soul.

Horrified at what he had done (in part because he was afraid he had absorbed her weakness), he contacted every Kindred who would speak to him and asked about these strange "sub-clans." Few knew anything, but a small number confirmed what the unfortunate waif had told him: it was possible for bloodlines to form from the clans.

Victor was sickened at this news. He had held up the Ventrue as the pinnacle of vampiric achievement for so long, but now it was clear that their position wasn't by any means secure. He entered torpor for over a year, and emerged with a renewed determination and a slightly altered mission. It was possible, he conceded, for Ventrue to lose their purity, but he was convinced that a vampire could not alter his blood by accident. Therefore, the choice to join a bloodline was still a choice, and any fallibility among the Lords came from a particular vampire's foibles, not from the Blood. His mission, then, was to determine whether it was possible for other clans to become pure, losing their weaknesses and joining the Ventrue as unflawed Kindred. To that end, he informed his few fellow Deucaliones to begin research, interviews and legwork to find and catalog as many deviations from the five clans as they could.

SO HOW MANY ARE THERE?

What did the Deucaliones find? How many bloodlines have they unearthed? That's really a matter for the Storyteller and the players to decide. If you want to keep the number of bloodlines low, maybe the Deucaliones have only discovered one or two (and maybe they're just a faction of Kindred rather than a bloodline themselves). If you like the notion of Kindred blood being mutable, then the Deucaliones might have discovered any or all of the bloodlines mentioned in **Vampire: The Requiem** and any of the other books that include new lineages (including **Bloodlines: The Hidden** and **Bloodlines: The Legendary**).

What Victor wasn't telling his followers, of course, was that he had plans beyond simple categorization. He wanted to begin his own bloodline. He just needed to know how to do it.

THE BLOODLINE OF THE UNFLAWED

Over the course of next few decades, Victor established a network of information about the various bloodlines. He managed to find members of several who were willing to aid him in his research, and he discovered the arcane process of altering his blood. Reportedly, he even entertained offers from more than one would-be Avus, but he declined these in favor of refining his blood to the point that he could begin his own line. How he managed such potent blood in a short span of time, he has never said, but he undoubtedly committed diablerie more than once during his studies. As the 20th century drew to a close, Victor decided he was ready.

He once again entered torpor, with the intention of emerging with new strength and purity. This time, he remained in slumber much longer — a side effect of his murderous habits over the preceding years. He emerged from his state nearly a decade later, claiming to have seen how to alter his blood in the fevered dreams of the torpid state. "Like clay," he whispered, trembling. "My blood was clay, and when I touched it, it became stone. I am Deucalion, and any who choose to follow me are my children."

Victor immediately set to work on honing his skills, and discovered, to his delight, that he had been given dominion over all Kindred weakness. With a glance or a gentle touch, he could inflict the weaknesses of the lesser clans upon other Kindred. And, he noted with some satisfaction, only the weaknesses of the four flawed clans were within his power. This proved (to him) what he had believed all along — the Ventrue were without blemish.

He invited any Ventrue who had followed him to join his bloodline, and soon thereafter opened that invitation to any Lord who wished to "wash away the stains of the world, and face the Requiem with the fortitude of stone." He received few takers, but those who did join him agreed with his assessment: by becoming Deucaliones, they absolved themselves of whatever foolishness they had committed before that point.

Victor, however, had made enemies, and they did not wish to see him or his bloodline come to power. Within a year of rising from torpor and declaring the Deucaliones a bloodline as well as an ideological faction, Victor Spanos found that someone had put a price on his head. In order to minimize the risk to his bloodline's members, he disappeared, staying in contact only by letters and online transmissions.

DEUCALIONES TONIGHT

The Deucalion bloodline thrives only in a few proximate cities, and its members know and aid each other (the bloodline numbers only a score or so). Despite their exclusionary propaganda, they actively court new members, and are rumored to provide interested Ventrue with the means to quickly strengthen their blood to the point that they can join the bloodline (that is, diablerie). Deucaliones hold positions of moderate power in several cities, but rarely gain enough support to take a title such as Prince or Prefect.

Deucaliones normally have one of three main positions, all inherited from their founder. The first is superiority: the Deucalion works toward the acknowledged superiority of clan Ventrue and the Deucalion philosophy.

The second position is knowledge: the Deucalion searches for knowledge of bloodlines. Interviews with bloodline members are especially prized, as are confirmed reports of strange Disciplines and weaknesses. Some Deucaliones hope to find Kindred who have transcended their parent clan's weakness; other Deucaliones desperately hope that no such bloodline exists, because it would challenge the notion of Ventrue superiority.

The third position is instruction: the Deucalion endeavors to help non-Ventrue Kindred cope with their inborn failings. If potential students can learn to ignore the blinding condescension inherent in this attitude, they can actually learn some useful tricks from the Deucaliones. As mentioned, many Kindred find it ironic that the Deucaliones are so expert in helping other clans manage their problems while never even acknowledging their own.

As his bloodline expands, Victor waits. Rumor has it he somehow changed his face and took the position of Hound or Sheriff in a nearby domain, lurking until he can find out who put the price on his unlife and slay him. Other rumors state that he has already died, and that all of the letters and communications from his bloodline don't go to him but to another interested party, probably the same one who called in the hit. The Ordo Dracul is the most commonly named conspirator, but Victor's sire is another contender.

COPING WITH WEAKNESSES

No, there are no game systems specifically geared toward dodging the clan weaknesses of the Gangrel, Nosferatu, Mekhet and Daeva. The coping mechanisms that the Deucaliones teach are

entirely story-based, and any game effects that they have are up to the Storyteller. Here are some examples, though of the sorts of things that the Skinheads might recommend.

- **Daeva:** The Deucaliones teach the Succubi avoidance. Since indulging in Vice is dangerous on a spiritual level and ignoring Vice is dangerous on a psychological level, the lesson is to avoid being in a position in which indulging is too morally shaky. Deucaliones teach Succubi to enjoy their lascivious (or gluttonous or slothful) habits outside of unlife-or-death situations, and to feed slowly so that accidentally killing a vessel isn't as easy.

- **Gangrel:** The Gangrel suffer from something resembling senile dementia. Since this problem seems inborn and insurmountable, Deucaliones teach the Gangrel how to cope. Note-taking, patience, anger-avoidance techniques and mnemonics are all possibilities.

- **Nosferatu:** What advice a Deucalion can give a Haunt depends greatly on that Haunt's particular problem. Some Nosferatu are simply hideous, and for that there is no immediate solution; all the Deucalion can do is advise honing one's skills at remaining hidden and hope for the best. If the Nosferatu has a more subtle manifestation of her curse, the Deucalion often teaches the same techniques taught to method actors — inventing a persona that can cope with other people and adopting that persona's mindset.

- **Mekhet:** Many Deucaliones are contemptuous of the Mekhet, and the Deucaliones' advice often ends at "stay out of the sun." Some Skinheads attempt to teach the Shadows methods of telling time without clocks (lengths of shadows, position of the moon and so on), but, for the most part, Victor's biases creep through.

Parent Clan: Ventrue

Nickname: Skinheads, though they call themselves the "Unflawed"

Covenant: The Deucaliones are largely a Carthian bloodline, but are sometimes accepted by other covenants, normally the Invictus or the Ordo Dracul. Some Deucaliones act as spies or double agents for the Carthian Movement, but such Deucaliones don't tend to remain secret for very long, as their natural temperament betrays them. Deucaliones who don't belong to any of these covenants tend to be unaligned or founders of their own proto-covenants that they feel sure will one night overthrow the existing Kindred power structure. The Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone don't appeal to the Skinheads as a rule; those covenants' dogma repels the Deucaliones.

Appearance: Despite the nickname, not all Deucaliones were Skinheads or even racial supremacists in life. Many were normal members of whatever society they descended from, and retain that normalcy

as vampires. Most Deucaliones look healthy and fit, but in terms of clothing run the gamut from the height of fashion to last decade's work clothes.

Haven: Deucaliones stick close to their sires or Avuses initially. After Deucaliones are "turned loose," they often try to build up a small, tight-knit group of like-minded Kindred, and often establish a communal haven. Failing that, they usually choose one haven and fortify it beyond all reason. Many Deucalion havens have a "kill switch" that sets the place ablaze or blows it up should escape ever prove impossible.

Background: Not all Deucaliones are recruited from supremacist groups, but most have some sort of exclusionary background in life. Fundamentalist churches, old boy's clubs, neighborhood associations and, of course, racist groups all provide the right kind of mindset, namely, "We are the strong, others are weak by nature." The trick, of course, is making a neonate understand that because a person is black does not make him weak (for instance), because among Kindred, clan is the sole trait that matters. This deprogramming is one reason that young Skinheads remain close to their sires for a time after the Embrace. Letting a neonate Deucalion who was, for instance, a member of the Aryan Brotherhood until his Embrace run wild in Kindred society is a good way to lose a perfectly good child, if he goes mouthing off to the wrong vampires.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Impurity, Resilience

Weakness: Deucaliones suffer the Ventrue clan weakness, not that they'd admit it (-2 penalty to Humanity rolls to avoid acquiring derangements after fail-

ing a degeneration roll). In addition, Skinheads are arrogant in the extreme. To their mind, they don't make mistakes, but are simply subject to occasional runs of bad luck or conspiracy; they can do no wrong. In game terms, while they can still gain Willpower for accomplishing their goals, they *lose* Willpower for failing. The Storyteller needs to adjudicate what constitutes failure. An Intelligence + Occult roll to know an obscure fact that doesn't produce any successes might not be a failure to the Deucalion — he simply doesn't know, and that's no fault of his. Attempting to jump between two buildings and failing, though, should certainly cost a Willpower point (in addition, probably, to some Health points).

Organization: Deucaliones like to keep to their own, especially since they are taught from their Embraces that the only Kindred to be trusted are Ventrue and other Deucaliones. After having been released from their sires' care for a while, though, Deucaliones function much as other Kindred, but Deucaliones always give the Lords the benefit of the doubt. Deucaliones are expected to check in with their sires or (more often) Avuses once a month or so (phone or email is acceptable if they dwell in different cities) and keep them abreast of the news of the area and any discoveries they have made. The sires, in turn, pass this information along to their sires, and so on. In theory, Victor Spanos, wherever he is, receives information from every Deucalion in the world each month.

Concepts: Biased peacekeeper, Kindred genealogist, occult archivist, Ordo Dracul reject, psychologist, rabble-rouser, racist slime, radical leader, rich patron, vampire assassin, vampire-behaviorist

Zelani

"It's time."

No bloodline is exactly prolific. Some consist of only one member, but most bloodlines of note contain at least a dozen constituents. The enigmatic Zelani bloodline only has enough members to form a single coterie — at present. The founder of the bloodline has great, noble plans for its destiny, and, now that the time is right, she encourages the Zelani to rise to their rightful place as the leaders of the Carthian Movement.

HISTORY

No one knows exactly when Lorna Zelan was Embraced. She tells the story often, and most of the details don't change. One night, she says, she was at home nursing her youngest child when a band of Kindred crashed through the door and slaughtered her family, one by one. She went into shock as she watched them pull her husband's head from his body, and doesn't remember exactly what happened to her eight children, but when her vision cleared, they were all dead. The only reason she had been spared was that the leader of this murderous coterie (which she now believes to have been Belial's Brood) had chosen her as his consort and eventual victim. A ghoul servant watched over her while the Kindred took refuge from the sun in her root cellar. The ghoul, however, did more than simply watch her. While Lorna has never gone into detail, she claims that the ghoul lived out every depraved fantasy possible with her that morning. Lorna was so numb by that point, though, that she scarcely noticed.

As afternoon wore on, a neighbor woman came over to check on Lorna, since she knew that the Zelan family had a new baby and many mouths to feed already. She found Lorna pinned under the ghoul on the living room floor, and screamed for help. No one was within earshot, however, and the ghoul leapt up and made short work of the woman. By that time, Lorna had retrieved her late husband's shotgun from its perch over the mantle. She claims it took four shots to kill the ghoul.

Lorna knew the Kindred were in the basement, but she had never heard the word "vampire" before and knew nothing of them. (Lorna also admits to being

illiterate at that point.) Dazed and still in shock, she set about trying to bury her family, and opened the wide cellar doors to retrieve a shovel. The sunlight streamed in and destroyed four of the five Kindred in moments, and Lorna watched, unable to believe her eyes, as the monsters turned to dust before her. When the chaos was over, she found her spade and went to work.

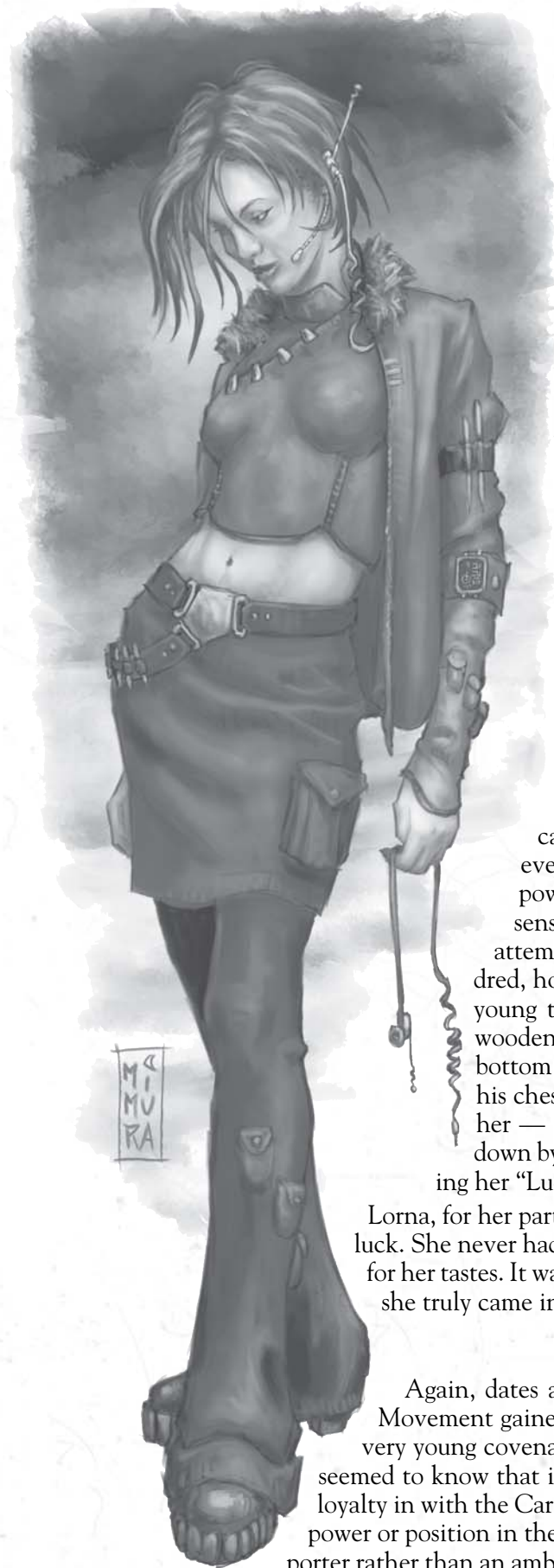
She claims that she was in the midst of burying one of her family when the full horror of what had happened hit her, and she dropped to her knees and wept. She was still crying when the sun set, and the last of the Kindred emerged from the cellar. As fate would have it, the only survivor was the same vampire who had chosen her to be his plaything. He found his intended victim crying over the half-buried corpses of her family, and something — perhaps her face, perhaps the blood-soaked ground — awakened in him the last shred of humanity he possessed. He knelt next to her and waited for her to regain her composure, and then asked what she would have him do, if any forgiveness was possible.

Here Lorna's story varies a bit. She has, at times, claimed that she asked him for the Embrace (which begs the question of what exactly she asked, since by her own admission she had no knowledge of vampires), and, at others, asserted that he cursed her with unlife in a twisted attempt at absolution. In any case, she is very clear on one point — only by forfeiting his life could he gain her forgiveness. So, the depraved vampire Embraced her, and then she tied him to a post and set him on fire.

Knowing that she couldn't keep her new existence secret in her hometown, Lorna finished burying her family and left, soon arriving in "the big city." (She refuses to say which city was her first domain.)

HOW OLD IS LORNA?

Lorna loves telling the story of her Embrace, especially to neonates who think they had a bad time of it. She doesn't vary the story on many points, either, but she never says in what year or even in what century it took place. Given that her blood has enough power for her to form her own



bloodline, though, and that she has never committed diablerie (she says), she must be fairly old. The content of her story also speaks of an agrarian society, but that in itself doesn't give the listener a good sense of zeitgeist.

Add to this the fact that Lorna has, by her own admission, spent a great deal of time in torpor, and it becomes clear that she is either lying or far older than her comfort with modern technology and practices would imply.

PATIENCE AND TIMING

While Lorna is quick to tell the tale of her Embrace to anyone who asks, she doesn't like to talk about her early years among the Kindred. This might be because she doesn't like to date herself, but another reason is probably that she is somewhat ashamed of some of the things that she did. After leaving her home behind, Lorna posed as a prostitute, the better to allow her victims to come to her. She met other Kindred and learned of their society, but became involved only peripherally. One thing she refused to do was enter a mortal's (or even a vampire's) home without permission. People who walked the streets at night were fair game for predation, as far as she was concerned, but the home should be sacrosanct. That this sort of thing had been a staple of vampire legends in some parts of the world for years came as a surprise to Lorna, but she simply took it as evidence that she was in the right.

Although Lorna never joined a coterie and never became involved in the Danse Macabre, she kept abreast of events in her city and gained something of a reputation as a power waiting to happen. The other Kindred in the city could sense a growing prescience in the young Daeva, and one even attempted to slay her in order to be on the safe side. That Kindred, however, timed his attack wrong and ran afoul of a gang of young toughs who felt that attempting to stab a whore with a wooden stake was ignoble. To Lorna's knowledge, he's still at the bottom of a nearby river, the stake intended for her jutting from his chest. That attack was the beginning of a new reputation for her — after word got around that her assailant had been taken down by sheer happenstance, the vampires of the city started calling her "Lucky Lorna."

Lorna, for her part, felt that what guided her was a much greater force than luck. She never had a name for it, and "fate" and "destiny" were too mystical for her tastes. It wasn't until the Carthian Movement arrived in the city that she truly came into her own.

LUCKY LORNA AND THE CARTHIAN

Again, dates are fuzzy, but Lorna admits that when the Carthian Movement gained a presence in her home city, the Movement was still a very young covenant, only recently recognized as any kind of power. Lorna seemed to know that it was going to snowball, however, because she threw her loyalty in with the Carthians immediately. She never attempted to seize any real power or position in the covenant, though, preferring to be known as a solid supporter rather than an ambitious up-and-comer. Once again, many of the Kindred in

the city sensed that she was simply biding her time, and they considered her opinion very carefully when deciding what to do about this new faction.

Could Lorna read the future, or did the fact that other Kindred respected her opinion help her realize her eventual goal? The question is intriguing, but largely irrelevant. The covenant in command of the city lost power, slowly but surely, and the Carthians' ideas took hold. Their style of government was initially a meritocracy, and Lorna, having no wish to compete, sank into torpor. Seeing this, several other influential Kindred either did likewise or removed themselves from Kindred politics in other ways, waiting for "Lucky Lorna" to recover. Her awakening gained a kind of mythical status in the city. "When Lorna wakes" became a general phrase among the city's Kindred, applied to any event that was favorable but wouldn't happen in the foreseeable future.

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

Lorna rose from torpor just under a decade ago, and discovered that though the Carthians still held power in the city, their methods had changed. Now, the system was democratic — all the city's Kindred voted on a leader known as a Prime Minister, and that leader was responsible for making policy and adjudicating breaches of the law. Lorna woke four nights before the elections and threw her hat into the ring, participated in several debates and was elected by a landslide. She seemed to know the recent history of the city as though she had been watching it closely, she was comfortable with the new technology and strangest of all, she had two childer with her who seemed as savvy as she was.

After she took power, she immediately split her attention between doing her job as Prime Minister and propagating her own bloodline, the Zelani. Already her childer have sired other childer and the Zelani have spread throughout the city, acting as Regents of tenurial domains. Some of the city's Kindred accuse Lorna of nepotism, but she keeps an open relationship with all of the city's Kindred inhabitants and welcomes suggestions and criticisms, so such accusations tend to be met with shrugs and statements of "It ain't broke, so let's not fix it." Lorna's reputation and support comes largely from her perceived disdain of keeping secrets, her fair and impartial judgments on Kindred affairs and her uncanny ability to say and do the right thing at the right time.

THE UGLY TRUTH

The fact is, though, that Lorna Zelan *does* keep secrets. She has allies and contacts in other cities that

she never mentions. Carthians all over the country know her name and owe her favors, because they rely on her insights to make important decisions. In fact, her list of correspondents includes members of the Invictus, the Ordo Dracul and even the Lancea Sanctum. Lorna is unique in Kindred society because she is considered a power but not a threat.

Is Lorna a threat? No one knows, but she does have a plan for her city, and perhaps for the covenant as a whole. She is actively courting Daeva of other covenants to join her bloodline, and since her knack for fortuitous timing seems to pass to these Kindred, she will likely have some takers soon. What happens when she has enough followers in the right places? Only time will tell.

SO WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING?

It's up to you. If a player wishes to take on the role of a Zelani Kindred, the player should work with the Storyteller to decide what Lorna has asked of the player's character and what the ultimate goal of the bloodline is. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Power:** Lorna wishes to take over the Carthian Movement in her country, perhaps the entire world, and remake it in her image. Alternately, perhaps she wishes to take over clan Daeva and change it into clan Zelani, phasing out the Succubi and all of their bloodlines over time. This motivation is significantly outside the local scope of most **Vampire** chronicles, but that's not to say it can't happen.

- **Revenge:** Lorna has been waiting decades, maybe even centuries, to strike at the Kindred who murdered her family. Although those Kindred are dead, Lorna has discovered a way to call their souls back and infuse them into the bodies of Kindred who bear her blood. She can do this as many times as she likes, as long as members of her bloodline remain, meaning she can kill them again, and again and again

- **Armageddon:** Lorna doesn't really care about power among the Kindred, she just wants members of her bloodline in as many cities as possible. Lorna is in possession of a lost fragment of the *Testament of Longinus*, one that gives instructions for bringing about a kind of Rapture for the Kindred. Enacting it, though, means that a certain number of Kindred must perform a ritual during an eclipse. That eclipse will take place in 10 years, so Lorna needs loyal Kindred in as many cities as possible before then. Fortunately, she's ahead of schedule. She doesn't really care about the Carthian Movement per se, but figured that the other covenants would be too nosy as to her agenda.

Parent Clan: Daeva

Nickname: None. (The Zelani have not existed as a bloodline for long enough to gain a nickname,

so the Daeva sobriquet “Succubi” is still used to describe them.)

Covenant: All currently existing Zelani belong to the Carthian Movement. Lorna is eager for them to branch out to other covenants, but as only a handful of them exist at all, this hasn’t happened yet.

Appearance: Lorna does not Embrace based on looks or station in life, but rather based on her own sense of who is “right” for the bloodline. Therefore, no real commonality exists among the Zelani.

Haven: Lorna Zelan owns several pieces of property in various parts of her domain, and allows the members of her bloodline to use them at their pleasure. Because of the bloodline’s weakness, having a secure haven where they can bring potential vessels is critical.

Background: Zelani can come from any walk of life. The only requirement for the Embrace is crossing Lorna Zelan’s path on the right night.

Bloodline Disciplines: Celerity, Majesty, Serendipity, Vigor

Weakness: Just as all Daeva, the Zelani have trouble resisting their base impulses. Any time a Zelani has the chance to indulge in her Vice and chooses not to do so, she loses two points of Willpower (as opposed to gaining one by partaking in its pleasures).

In addition, Lorna Zelan bears the psychological scars of her hideous Embrace and has passed her aver-

sion to invading people’s homes on to her bloodline. Zelani are unable to enter a residence of any kind (apartment buildings, houses, even hotels) without an invitation from someone who dwells there. The invitation doesn’t have to come from the rightful owner, but must be issued by a resident rather than a visitor. Until such an invitation is issued, the Zelani cannot cross the threshold into the building. The vampire cannot directly force an invitation (with Dominate, for instance), but can use Majesty to entice one or Serendipity to arrive at the right moment to be invited. If the Zelani enters a building without an invitation or is forced to do so, roll the character’s Resolve + Strength. Each success inflicts one level of aggravated damage upon the character (so it is possible for a Zelani to crumble to dust if she violates this taboo).

Organization: All Zelani are loyal to Lorna, and this loyalty is periodically reinforced by a taste of her blood. If the bloodline’s numbers expand as she foresees, however, she will lose control over its members. She recognizes this, and thus encourages her childer to become active members in their covenants, so they have someplace to belong once the family grows too large for her to oversee.

Concepts: Artist, cab driver, Carthian lawyer, “crazy” street person, drifter, fortune teller, gambler, hotel manager, real estate agent, seductress



CHAPTER FIVE: RULES AND SYSTEMS

Rome.

The Renaissance.

The Age of Enlightenment.

Look at them all, and you'll see
the Kindred in their heyday.

The Requiem isn't mystic —
it's a monument to rational thought.

—Musa, Carthian Night Doctor

*Covenants without the sword are but words
and of no strength to secure a man at all.*

— Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

The core of the Carthian Movement is society. Carthians see themselves as a collective of diverse Kindred, rather than just a diverse collection of Kindred. It's a fine distinction, but a real one, inasmuch as it's an ideology that leads the Carthians to pull together instead of pulling apart in myriad individual directions. The Movement is not a tool that earnest members use to advance themselves. The Movement is a purpose that envelops them and advances everyone within it.

Belonging to a group so centered on synergy has advantages, and if they're not always as flashy as occult conjurations and miracles of Vitae, they're nevertheless reliable and Masquerade-compatible. Even better, the Carthians aren't selling their souls to get them.

CARTHIAN LAW

The Carthian Movement is, on the whole, a secular covenant. While individual members might be interested in the mystical secrets of the World of Darkness, their curiosity tends to be for reasons other than transcendence or piety. Even their own Disciplines usually receive only cursory theoretical interest — as vampires, the Carthians have certain capabilities. The “why” doesn't matter as much as “how” and the “to what end.”

And yet, the Carthians have power as a covenant that is, in some ways, more dangerous than Theban sorcery and more insidious than the Coils of the Dragon. The practice of Carthian Law allows these Kindred to place restrictions on what their fellow vampires may do within their domains. These laws aren't simply tenets, held in place only by say-so and perceived threat of consequence. When Carthians gather, Kindred Disciplines, the hallmark of vampiric existence, falter. And, most of the time, neither the victim nor the Carthians have any idea what is happening.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

Because Carthian Law is a new concept, the reader needs some explanation of what's involved from the

perspective of both the Kindred “using” the Laws and those falling victim to the Laws. Likewise, the theory behind Carthian Law (both within the setting of **Vampire** and in terms of game design) merits discussion.

The following sections explain what the Laws do, who is affected by them and to what degree and why the Laws function. Before reading on, however, understand that before implementing Carthian Law, the Storyteller needs to make a few decisions about how it works and what the limits of the Law are (hopefully with some input from the players). The Laws are presented in terms of possibility rather than fact. Similar to the Carthian Movement as a whole, Carthian Law is still in flux.

PRECEPTS OF CARTHIAN LAW

Carthian Law operates under the following precepts:

- **The herd is outside the Law:** Carthian Law cannot stop a vampire from using Disciplines on mortals. Ghouls are a gray area; in some domains, they might fall under the Law (see p. 174).
- **The people must support the Law:** A Carthian in a domain in which the covenant holds no power cannot enforce the Laws, unless that Carthian is a power unto himself.
- **The Law must be defined:** A domain in which the majority of the Kindred (or just the influential Kindred) are Carthian does not a Carthian domain make, especially with respect to the Law. If the Carthians do not have codified laws, there can be no enforcement. An unspoken or “common knowledge” law doesn't count — the Kindred in the domain might avoid feeding in a particular district for whatever reason, but unless an authority has actually forbidden feeding there, the Laws won't come into play.
- **Ignorance is no excuse:** The Laws affect Kindred in the domain in question whether they know about them or not. However . . .
- **A Law broken in secret is not broken:** A member of the Carthian Movement must actually observe a breach of the Law in order to enforce it.

• **Law must be broken in deed, not thought:** A domain might have Laws against the murder of another Kindred, but using Disciplines to plan the murder does not violate the Law. Only actions that break the Law merit enforcement.

• **The Law applies only to Disciplines:** Skills, Attributes, Merits and Coils of the Dragon are not affected by the Law (the last because Coils are not actively used, they are permanent changes to a vampire's physiology).

Most, if not all, of these precepts have exceptions. These exceptions are discussed in the following sections.

THE LAWS IN PRACTICE

Carthian Law isn't a Discipline, or a form of blood sorcery like Crúac or the Theban rituals of the Lancea Sanctum. The Laws are exactly that — a series of restrictions placed upon the use of Kindred abilities. Individual Carthians can enforce these Laws (often without meaning to), but the Laws grow more potent if more members of the covenant are present.

In many ways, the Laws represent the notion of citizenship so prized in many Carthian domains. A citizen can use her Disciplines freely, or at least, more freely than a non-citizen. A citizen is accountable to the Laws, but is given the benefit of the doubt. A non-citizen is an outsider, and thus cannot act with impunity.

To put this into practice somewhat, consider the following scenario: A Ventrue of the Lancea Sanctum enters a Carthian domain and runs afoul of the city's Myrmidon. The Myrmidon orders the Sanctified Kindred to stand down and submit to a search and an interrogation. The Ventrue, believing himself to be on a mission from God and thus not accountable to such lowly concerns (and believing himself able to take on the Myrmidon and win) attempts to cast the Theban sorcery ritual Blood Scourge. He cuts his palm, wills the blood to come — and nothing happens.

Why did the ritual fail? Because in this domain, Carthian Law is dominant. The ritual that the Sanctified Kindred was attempting to use is *against the rules*, and so it failed. (How this functions in terms of game mechanics is discussed below.) The Sanctified Kindred doesn't feel anything working against him. The ritual felt as though it should have succeeded — he cut his palm in the same way as always, but the blood lash just didn't come. Likewise, the Myrmidon is unaware that she did anything mystical (and, in all probability, doesn't know what the intruder was trying to do, unless she has had contact with the Sanctified and has seen that ritual

in use before). All she knows is that the intruder drew a knife and slashed open his palm as though expecting something to happen.

A vampire in violation of a Law doesn't set off any mystical sense to the Carthians. That is, if a vampire creeps up behind a Carthian and attempts to stake him with a Vigor-enhanced attack, the Law does not protect the Carthian because the Carthian has not perceived the breach of the Law (see the "Precepts," above). That said, a Carthian does not have to know the Law to enforce it, just as a vampire is still beholden to the Law even if she is ignorant of it.

As stated in the Precepts, the Law applies only to Disciplines. The Law stating "Kindred may not creep invisibly through the Elysium, but must announce themselves and obtain permission before entering" would prohibit a vampire from using Obfuscate to sneak in or even using Dominate to force a guard to grant her entry, but would not stop her from simply picking a lock and sneaking past said guard. Likewise, Coils of the Dragon are exempt from the Law because they are permanent changes to vampire, not abilities that the vampire turns on and off. This is why the Laws function on Disciplines such as Resilience and Vigor. Even though they simply enhance the vampire's natural physical prowess, they must be activated by the power of the Blood, and this makes them susceptible to the Law.

WHO IS ABOVE THE LAW?

In the above example, would the same thing have happened if the Ventrue had attempted to Dominate the Myrmidon? What about using the Animalism Discipline to summon a swarm of rats or using Auspex to read the Myrmidon's aura? All of this depends on what specifically the Law states. For instance, if the Law reads "Violence against Kindred is forbidden except in sanctioned duels," using Animalism as described would be prohibited, but using Auspex would not be. Dominate probably would have worked, since the Discipline is not inherently violent. If the Law that was broken reads "New Kindred are powerless until recognized," then no Discipline would have functioned in the Myrmidon's presence. Obviously, then, the letter of the Law is of supreme importance.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

A Kindred entering a new city would do well to learn the political lay of the land no matter which covenant is most influential, and a newly arrived vampire might avoid punishment for an infringement if he honestly

didn't know the rules (and if he was making a good attempt to find other Kindred and learn those rules). As far as the mystical effects of Carthian Law, however, ignorance cannot protect the character. As long as the other conditions are met, the Law's effects take hold.

In cities where the Carthian Movement has held sway for a long period of time, the city has probably undergone a great deal of change as the Kindred in charge take on different mindsets, enact various political and governmental experiments and mimic (and pervert) various mortal institutions. This has an effect on the Law as well. Over time, the Law becomes so dense and arcane that only vampires who have dwelled in the city for many years or who make a concerted study of the Law can hope to fully understand it. Such vampires can sometimes bring to bear the more powerful effects of the Law even without the support of other Carthians. Also, these knowledgeable vampires are able to find loopholes in the Law, allowing them to dodge its effects. These Kindred typically enjoy a great deal of status within the city, but this isn't always the case. Sometimes a cipher, a vampire who attends Carthian meetings but never speaks and is seldom seen outside of these gatherings, actually knows the Law better than anyone else in the city, Prefect or other leaders included. Such vampires are also the most likely to understand that the Law has a mystical effect at all (as stated, most of the time the Law goes completely unnoticed). The Carthian Lawyer Merit (p. 184) represents a character who, no what extent she understands the true nature of Carthian Law, has learned to manipulate it.

INFLUENCE OF THE CARTHIAN

Carthian Law applies only in areas where Carthians have the authority to make and enforce laws over other Kindred. A domain in which the most influential vampires are members of the covenant obviously qualifies, but what exactly does that mean? Certainly, a domain in which a Carthian claims the title of Prince or Prefect, regardless of what means he used to obtain that position, has enough Carthian influence to empower the Law. A domain in which the nominal Prince is a member of the Invictus, but his Seneschal and the true power in the region is Carthian, might also empower the Law. The tenorial domain of a Carthian Regent certainly qualifies, even if the influence of the Law doesn't extend to the larger city domain.

A domain without any formal leader allows for the enforcement of the Law only if some actual tenets have been discussed and agreed upon. As stated in

the Precepts, an unspoken law or one that "everyone knows" (when no one actually said it or agreed to it) doesn't count for purposes of Carthian Law.

What happens, then, when a powerful or influential Carthian travels to another city? Does he bring the Law with him? Normally, no, but if that character is significantly influential, a power unto himself, he might inadvertently impose the Laws of his home domain upon the one he visits. This is an extremely rare occurrence, however, and typically only happens when the visiting Carthian:

- is visiting another Carthian domain, whether or not this domain usually operates under any Laws
- has a great deal of respect in the city he is visiting (City Status •••, at least)
- is widely respected within his own clan (Clan Status •••• or more) and his clan is well-represented within the city he is visiting
- is more powerful than any other vampire in the city by a wide margin (mechanically, the Storyteller needs to adjudicate this, but one possible yardstick is Blood Potency. If the visitor's Blood Potency is more than three dots higher than any of the resident vampires', for instance, the visitor's Laws might affect the Kindred he meets)

GHOULS AND THE LAW

Normally, the Law affects only vampires. Ghouls are a strange case, though. The act of imbibing Kindred blood brings a mortal into the World of Darkness, whether she wants to see the deeper mysteries of that world or not. She is no longer part of the mortal herd, and thus can have a different relationship with Carthian Law than normal mortals. To what extent the Law affects ghouls depends, as with many things, on the wording of the Law in the given area. If the Law states that "those brought under the blood are still mortal, and should be treated as such" then, as far as the effects of the Law go, ghouls are simply mortal. If the Law states "our blood-servants are property of their Kindred masters," then using Disciplines on a ghoul can trigger the Law. Some domains even extend a limited form of citizenship to ghouls, and in such places ghouls can actually suffer the same restrictions on their Disciplines that the local Kindred do.

THE LAW AND THE WORLD OF DARKNESS

Werewolves, mages and any other strange denizens of the World of Darkness do not suffer any restrictions due to Carthian Law. They are not Kindred,



and the Laws are made for Kindred, by Kindred. This has the potential effect of granting such creatures an “untouchable” status — because they are not part of the society, they can act upon it freely, making them good choices as assassins or spies.

This, of course, requires not only finding one of these strange and elusive beings, but making a good impression at the meeting and offering him something worth the effort and danger of taking on such a role in the *Danse Macabre*. Such a feat is impressive and risky, but stranger things, as they say, have happened.



MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

The Carthian Law affects all Kindred, but does not necessarily affect them equally. Members of the Carthian Movement often enjoy a degree of latitude if the Laws appear to support two contrasting actions, and a Kindred acting within an official capacity in a Carthian domain can violate the Laws as necessary to discharge his duties.

For instance, consider the following scenario: a Carthian Gangrel and an unaligned Daeva come into conflict near a busy intersection. The Gangrel started the fight, for whatever reason (it could be something as simple as the Predator’s Taint or the

Gangrel might actually have an agenda). The Daeva, however, activates her Celerity Discipline to flee, dodging in between speeding cars and running away with much more alacrity than any mortal could muster. Both vampires are in breach of the Law, because the Law states “Kindred duels are forbidden except where sanctioned by three citizens” as well as “Kindred may not reveal their supernatural prowess in view of mortals.” Both Kindred are using Disciplines: the Gangrel uses Resilience and Protean to attack the Daeva, and the Daeva uses Celerity to flee. Which one does the Law affect?

In all probability, the Law affects them both. If, however, the Law falls upon only one of their heads, the likelihood is that the Daeva will suffer and the Gangrel will not. Neither of them has a more convincing claim to being “right” under the law than the other — but the Gangrel is a Carthian, and citizenship has its advantages.

If the Gangrel had been acting within a specific office when he attacked the Daeva, perhaps as Hound or Sheriff, he would not be restricted by the Law. This privilege can, of course, be abused, but it can also be revoked.



Carthians might also be exempt from the Law if the Law makes allowance for them. For instance, the Law might read “All citizens may feed at will, but non-citizens must obtain permission.” If “citizen” means “any member of the Carthian Movement,” then even a visiting member of the covenant can feed with impunity. If the domain in question has a measure in place for granting citizenship (and many such domains do), then a Carthian who has not yet obtained citizenship or has had this status revoked can fall victim to the Law.

CREATING THE LAWS

Who passes the Laws of a Carthian domain? As with so many things about the covenant, the answer depends on Carthian domain in question. Laws might be decided upon by an elected Myrmidon, by a group of officials, by popular vote or even by a dictator Prefect. The important things for determining whether a city’s set of tenets has the mystical force of Carthian Law behind it are as follows: Do the Carthians of the city agree to the Laws? Are the Laws codified and specifically stated?

AGREEING TO BE LED

The Carthian citizens of a domain don’t have to respect the Law, follow the Law or even like the Law, but they do have to agree to the Law. This isn’t necessarily a matter of every single Carthian in the domain checking off a list of tenets, however. Consider the following scenario: a Carthian Nosferatu enters the city, slays the current Kindred leader and establishes himself as Prefect. He believes in a system of rule by fear — only he and a few of his closest lieutenants have the right to make the rules, and they enforce them by finding transgressors and torturing them or, in some cases, leaving them out for the sun. The other Kindred in the city can either accept this rather brutal Law or they can leave the city, but remaining in the city and remaining part of the covenant is enough to empower Carthian Law (see the sidebar on “Rebellion,” however).

Of course, if the Kindred of the city elect or agree upon a given leader, the situation is much more palatable. The leader makes rules in whatever manner the Carthians have decided upon, and, because the other Carthians are part of the governing process by dint of choosing who governs them, they agree to the Law. As leaders and policies change over time, the Laws, too, can change.

Sometimes, though, Laws don’t so much change as accumulate. Why this happens is discussed under

“Theories,” below, but the effect of too many Laws in a city is that Disciplines tend to fail even when the Carthians aren’t around to enforce the Law. The Law takes on an agenda of its own, beyond the control or the will of the Carthian Movement. Since so few Carthians are aware of the phenomenon to begin with in this situation, it’s difficult to say what the long-term effects would be to the Kindred in such a city.

CODIFYING THE LAW

The Kindred leader(s) of the domain decide what the Laws encompass, what penalties violations of the Laws carry and under what circumstances a vampire can rightfully break the Law. As with mortal law, this can become complex very easily. It doesn’t usually start out that way, though.

By way of example, consider the Nosferatu mentioned above. A few years after his bloody coup, the Kindred of the city are tired of going about their Requiems in fear and conspire to take this tyrant down. They do so, but afterward only a handful of Kindred remain in the city. Since there aren’t many of them, they decide that any rules of existence for the domain must be agreed upon by a majority of vampires at an annual meeting. At the first meeting, one of the Laws passed is that “No Kindred may feed on another Kindred.”

What the Carthians mean when they pass that law is “Attacking Kindred for sustenance or diablerie is forbidden,” but that’s not what the Law reads, and thus that’s not what’s enforced. Therefore, Kindred lovers drinking each other’s blood in moments of passion fall under the Law’s effects, as do Kindred making deals in which the currency is Vitae. Likewise, a vampire who tries to defend himself against a vampiric attacker by biting and feeding might fall victim to the Law, and in such a circumstance losing access to Disciplines might cost his unlife.

The Carthians probably don’t connect strange failures of Disciplines to the rule they passed, at least not consciously. But a year later, they do amend the rule. Now, it reads “No Kindred may feed on another Kindred without permission.” This would seem to resolve most of the issues, but not all. (Self-defense is still a problem.) Also, even though a majority of the Kindred agreed to the change in the Law, some of them still think in terms of the original rule. The Law has begun to evolve (or mutate, if you prefer). If the cycle keeps up for a decade or more, the original Law may become buried under a heap of amendments, which

may or may not come anywhere close to conveying what the original Law was intended to convey.

What effect does this have on the Kindred of the city? As previously mentioned, they might find Disciplines failing at inopportune moments, only because they have violated some obtuse but literal permutation of the Law. The Law might mutate until it affects not only Disciplines, but also the ability to spend Vitae to heal or augment Physical Attributes. (Yes, this is in contradiction of the Precepts given earlier, but that's the point — the Law might mutate beyond its original boundaries.) Perhaps a ghoul rebels against her master and teaches other mortals about Kindred society and about their rules, eventually yielding an effect that a group of mortal vampire-hunters can enforce the Law as though they were Carthians.

TYPES OF LAWS

The Laws fall under four general categories:

- **Proscriptions:** These Laws prohibit or limit certain types of behavior and encompass the vast majority of Carthian Law. Examples: Prohibition against killing other Kindred, rules limiting where and when Kindred can hunt.

- **Admonitions:** These Laws provide standards of behavior that Kindred are meant to uphold, either at specific times or constantly. Examples: Maintaining the Masquerade, non-violence or abstaining from Discipline use at certain time or in certain places.

- **Privileges:** Kindred who meet certain qualifications can break other Laws or might enjoy boosts to their Disciplines (see below) under certain circumstances. Examples: The Hound can subdue or kill Kindred at will; Kindred citizens can kill one vessel per year with no retribution.

- **Obligations:** Kindred in the domain can be called upon to serve the covenant's (or the city's) interest under certain circumstances. Examples: The Prefect can order a vampire to instruct him or his lieutenants in a Discipline for one month; Kindred with combat experience can be called upon to fend off incursions from other vampires.

Naturally, these categories can overlap a bit, and not every domain has examples of all four types.

REBELLION

Times change, but sometimes those in charge would rather they didn't. So what happens when the domain encompasses two or more groups of Carthians, both of whom set rules? Can the Law be enforced against itself?

The answer is yes. This conflict results in a kind of metaphysical turbulence between the two competing Laws. Where the Laws overlap, they function normally, but where they are diametrically opposed, either or both might be enforced at any given time. This is discussed more fully in a rules context below. In terms of Storytelling, consider that when a rebellion ousts a regime, some vestiges of the former government must of necessity remain if only because it's what the citizenry is used to. The same is true of Carthian Law.

THEORY

Why do the Laws function? How can the decisions of a few vampires united by nothing more than political sympathy and the Carthian name influence other Kindred's ability to use their Disciplines?

Very few Kindred even recognize that this phenomenon exists, and so the Carthian Movement isn't exactly rife with speculation (which is probably just as well, because a great number of the members of all of the covenants, Carthians included, would be horrified to learn about the Laws' effects). As such, the theories presented here are possibilities for you to consider. As a Storyteller, if you wish to bring the Laws into your chronicle as a measurable phenomenon rather than as an invisible effect, these theories might be good discussion points.

DIVINE RIGHT (OR WRONG)

Although the Carthian Movement is, by and large, a secular covenant, that doesn't mean that individual members aren't devout believers in or at least followers of one faith or another. The Laws might work because some higher being wishes them to, perhaps because vampires have the right (or the responsibility) to mystically govern their own kind. This would make for an interesting counterpoint to the Predator's Taint. While one effect urges vampires toward supernatural rage and madness, the other urges them toward temperance and caution. The Carthian Law might therefore be a gift.

Looked at another way, though, the Law could just as easily be a curse. Vampires become their own worst enemies — their Laws can cancel out their greatest advantages. Taken to an extreme, this could create cities where Discipline use, perhaps even feeding on Vitae, violates the Laws and forces all Kindred within the cities' boundaries to either fall into torpor or flee.

In a more secular sense, suppose the Law is a survival mechanism. In times past, when cities were farther apart and didn't contain the same number

of identification and security measures that they do now, adopting new identities, even when dealing with other Kindred, was simple. All one had to do was brave the open road for a time. Now, this is more difficult, and so the Kindred need other methods of protection from one another. This last theory is probably most in keeping with the themes of the Carthian Movement in general.

ALL POWER TO THE MASSES

Vampires are capable of affecting their environments by sheer force of will. Disciplines such as Dominate, Nightmare, Majesty and the two blood sorceries can wreak subtle or gross change upon the world without the vampire having to physically enact those changes. Consider, then, that the Laws are merely a greater extension of these Disciplines, inherent to the vampiric condition. Carthian Law might work because of the mystical power of the creatures behind it. The Law doesn't affect mortals because the Kindred driving it are so focused on their own kind, but if, for instance, the Invictus ever managed to latch on to the same principles, the mortal population of its domains might start following Kindred tenets (or perversions thereof).

This theory speaks to themes of great potential resting in each individual vampire, but growing as the number of Kindred grows. This doesn't have to be inspiring or empowering, however. In fact, given that each vampire is a bloodsucking predator, the notion that 10 vampires are exponentially more powerful and subtle than one vampiric is downright horrific.

SPIRIT OF THE CITY

Vampires might be familiar with ghosts, or at least know they exist, but very few Kindred know that other, more esoteric spirits exist also. According to some beliefs, everything has a spirit — objects, animals, even ideas. With this in mind, that every city also has a soul, the collective life and anima of every living being in that city, shouldn't be surprising.

Every living being — and perhaps every undead being. Assuming that such spirits really do exist and that they can have direct and measurable effects on the world in which vampires dwell, what effects do vampires have upon the soul of a city? Such a spirit might empower Carthian Law. After all, the spirit encompasses the entire city, and thus is theoretically aware of everything that occurs within it, including the decisions that the Carthians make about their Laws. Why would such

a being even be interested in the machinations of the undead? Below are three possible reasons.

- **The spirit cares for the citizens.** The spirit has respect for every being in the city, including vampires. Some city spirits, therefore, intercede on behalf of the undead, since the undead cannot police themselves as efficiently as mortals because of simply lack of numbers. This theory explains why not every city that boasts a Carthian population enjoys (or suffers from) the Law, though this theory doesn't speak to why cities claimed by other covenants don't seem to engender the effect.

- **The Carthians empower the spirit.** Perhaps, in every city in which Carthian Law functions, the resident Kindred open their meetings in a particular way, read from a special passage or perform a particular ritual that the covenant picked up somewhere in its development, and this practice empowered the spirit of the city to enforce its Law. For a more vampiric twist, what if the ritual forces the spirit into this arrangement, binding it to the unlives of the Carthians? If so, is the spirit then neglecting whatever arcane duties it would normally attend to?

- **The spirit's evil twin sees to vampires.** Perhaps the presence of vampires in a city splits the city's spirit into two beings. One continues doing whatever it is that normal city spirits do, but the other acts as a vampire — draining the vitality from other spirits, or even from areas of the city. Maybe this evil twin spirit follows vampires as they hunt. In the process, its involvement with the vampiric community empowers Carthian Law. Again, this doesn't explain why the Carthians in particular are the ones who engender this effect, but one possible reason is that the Carthian Movement actively takes its cues from mortal society, which might get the city spirit's attention (since the city spirit is an embodiment of that society).

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

In this section, the reader will find the game mechanics behind Carthian Law. Many of the permutations from the previous section are discussed herein and given rules and systems, as well as what's involved in "learning" the Laws by spending experience points.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

As stated previously, in order for Carthian Law to apply, the major Kindred power in the domain needs to belong to the covenant and the rules need to be codified (even if individual Kindred don't know them, which means that the Storyteller can make up the Laws and

let the players find them out during the chronicle, or the players can have their characters take a hand in hashing out the rules of the domain, depending on what kind of story your troupe wants to tell).

Using the Laws to stifle other vampires' Disciplines is called enforcing the Laws. Doing so does not require any special effort on the part of the Carthian character (i.e., all enforcement is reflexive). Indeed, most of the time the Carthians aren't even aware that Carthian Law exists. All vampires are aware that Disciplines don't function properly in every single instance, even for elders, just as even an expert marksman might miss a target occasionally. Thus, the fact a vampire's supernatural power sometimes shuts down in a Carthian city doesn't raise any eyebrows at the covenant. In game terms, a Discipline ceasing to function because of Carthian Law is treated no differently than a simple failed roll. In the case of Vigor, Resilience and Celerity, which modify other Traits rather than granting specific powers, the character feels stronger, tougher or faster but simply doesn't gain the benefits.

ENFORCING THE LAWS

In order to enforce Carthian Law, the character must possess at least one dot of Covenant Status

(Carthians). He must also bear witness to a *violation of the tenets of the domain as codified by the Carthians in power*, in which another vampire uses a Discipline and the Kindred of the city are directly affected by the violation.

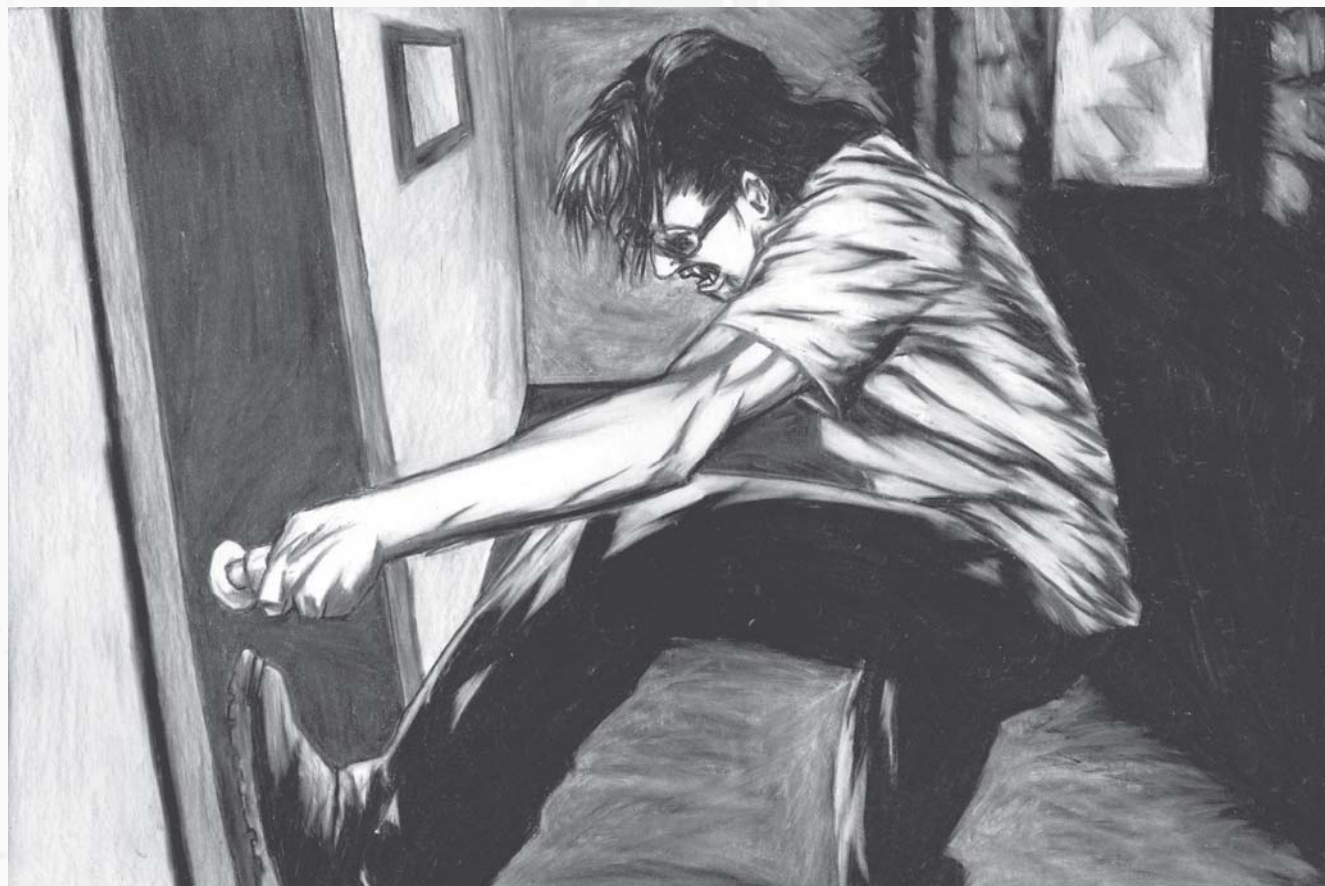
If all of these criteria are met, the player rolls Intelligence + Resolve + Status (Carthians).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Law weakens. For the next month, every enforcement attempt suffers a -1 penalty.

Failure: The Law goes unenforced. No other enforcement can be attempted against that particular violation of the Law. The lawbreaker "gets away with it."

Success: The lawbreaker's successes on whatever Disciplines she used or is using to commit her crime are reduced by the number of successes the player rolled. If the Discipline in question does not require a roll (Protean 1) or enhances other Traits (Vigor, Resilience and Celerity), the Discipline is canceled if the successes are greater than the rating of the Discipline. For instance, canceling Protean 1 only requires a single success, but if the criminal has Vigor 3, a single success still leaves her with access to Vigor 2. In the case of Devotions, the Carthian needs only to match the rating of the lowest Discipline involved.



Exceptional Success: All Disciplines the lawbreaker has used or is using in violation of the Law instantly cease.

The player makes this roll no matter whether he knows that the Law is being violated or not. The lawbreaker has no way to perceive that the witness is the cause of her sudden Discipline failure (because he isn't). Likewise, the witness doesn't know that his presence at the scene had anything to do with the lawbreaker's problems. The effect happens whether the Carthian wants the lawbreaker to succeed or not (which means that a group of Carthians working against the rules can stifle each other's efforts, but see "Rebellion" on p. 177).

PERMUTATIONS

The following rules and systems can be used to further explore and flesh out the Carthian Law. As with the Law in general, these rules are optional, so use the ones that make the most sense in your chronicle.

MULTIPLE CARTHIAN

What happens if multiple Carthians witness the same violation of the Law? The effect is magnified. There are two ways to simulate this. One is simply to have each Carthian present check for the effect and total the successes.

The other method (which works better for large groups or if the Carthians are Storyteller characters rather than player-controlled characters) is to roll only for the Carthian with the highest rating in Covenant Status. Each additional Carthian present adds one die to the roll. The results are then calculated normally.

LAWYERS

As mentioned previously, sometimes the Law grows so arcane and inaccessible that clever

vampires can take advantage of it. This happens only when the Laws are not cut-and-dried (usually in cities that have been Carthian domains for a long period of time). Carthians can take advantage of the Law in one of two ways, and both require the Carthian Lawyer Merit (see p. 184).

First, the character can dodge the Law, using his Disciplines as he pleases no matter what rules he's breaking. This makes the roll to enforce Carthian Law a contested action. The lawyer rolls Wits + Academics + Covenant Status (Carthians). This roll is reflexive. If he wins the action, the Law has no effect.

Second, the lawyer can impose the Law on other vampires in situations when it normally wouldn't apply. The lawyer cannot use this power outside of the domain in question, but can attempt to shut down the Disciplines of another vampire engaged in almost any action. This functions as described above for enforcing the Law, except that the roll is Wits + Academics + Covenant Status (Carthians).

PRIVILEGE HAS PERKS

A vampire acting on behalf of the Carthian Movement within a domain sometimes finds that using Disciplines becomes easier. For instance, a Mekhet searching for a vampire who has consistently broken the Law might enjoy better-than-usual results with applications of the Auspex Discipline.

In game terms, when a Carthian is unequivocally in the right under the Law and is using a Discipline to uphold that Law, the player receives a bonus to the Discipline's roll equal to the character's Covenant Status (Carthians) Merit. If the Storyteller feels this is too much of a bonus, she might require the player to spend a Willpower point for the character (tapping into the power of the Law takes effort, even if the Kindred is unaware of it).

MERITS

SOCIAL MERITS

As a society instead of a hierarchy, the Movement focuses more on finding ways to build from strengths than ways to compare its strengths. In other covenants, someone with a specialized advantage haggles to get the best price for its use, be it the

knowledge of a Crúac ritual, or a connection to the DA's office or simply the brawn required to dish out a beating. The Carthian approach tends to regard these as commodities for communal use, not for trade. Consequently, Carthians spend a lot of time doing what they're good at, instead of muddling through a task that baffles them or trying to get

someone else to do it at unprofitable prices. A Carthian with a chop shop can get rid of that incriminating car for you, without a tedious back-and-forth pissing contest to determine whose sire owes whom a favor. You may never pay him back. But you'll pay back the Movement.

This idea of using the Movement as a central switchyard for social utility explains how the Carthians get so much done, even when there's no formal hierarchy giving commands.

CARTHIAN PULL (● TO ●●●●●)

Prerequisite: Carthian Pull can never exceed a character's Covenant Status (Carthians).

Effect: Carthian Pull allows a character to use a network of associates to accomplish tasks that are beyond his normal means. Because he has sowed some effort by working for the Movement, he gets to reap.

Pull is not quite the same as Status. Status is an index of respect and esteem. Carthian Pull measures how much a character has gotten done, how much she's perceived as doing for the covenant and how much the covenant gestalt feels she deserves. Pull goes hand in hand with Covenant Status, inasmuch that someone who is useful but despised is going to have as hard a time getting help as someone who is esteemed but hapless.

Once per game month, a character with Carthian Pull can apply it to one of the following Merits: Contacts, Haven, Herd or Resources. This represents a fellow Carthian offering a favor or someone otherwise connected somehow to the Movement offering temporary aid to the character.

Example: *Roger has Carthian Pull ●●●. He's got a fine haven, but he's on the wrong side of town and needs to lay low and heal after having his ass kicked in an ambush. Because Roger has some pull among his fellow Carthians, he can call in a favor, substituting his Carthian Pull for Haven. In story terms, a Carthian or Carthian sympathizer offers Roger a place to stay, allowing him to act as if he had Haven ●●● for the night.*

The effects of Carthian Pull do not last more than one night. Carthian Pull can be used to augment a Merit the character already possesses (for example, someone with Contacts ●● and Carthian Pull ● can, once per month, act as if he had Contacts ●●●), though Merits increased in this fashion can't go above 5.

The player may also choose to parcel out the benefits. A character with Carthian Pull ●●● could, say, use it to raise his Resources by two one night and

then, a few weeks later, improve his Haven by one for a night. Whenever Carthian Pull is used, its effective level drops by the amount used for one month.

INTEREST GROUP MERITS

People who share common interests tend to get together and discuss. It's no different for the Kindred. Because these discussions are free-flowing and topical, they keep those who participate sharp, at least in the specific domain being discussed. Carthians in particular tend to be more open and far ranging in their conversations, especially when they're grouped with other Carthians.

Participating in an interest group doesn't necessarily improve your chances of succeeding at a relevant task, but definitely does improve your chances of capitalizing on a success and making the most of it. Typical types of groups follow.

Keep in mind that these aren't formal cells created by any sort of Carthian High Command. They're casual, and while they usually start with the Chain, the discussions aren't necessarily anything that needs to be hidden from any other covenant (or, for that matter, anything any other covenant would care about). These groups are spontaneous collections based on interest for its own sake. The benefits of membership are a byproduct.

The effects of these groups presuppose attendance and attention. The group may be an Internet bulletin board or a monthly meeting at the local pool hall, but ignoring a group for more than a month is likely to diminish its usefulness. Skipping out a lot won't lose the Merit, but does keep it from working until a few more meetings (or posts or discussions) have been used to "reactivate" it.

STUDY GROUP (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Academics ●●

Effect: Often taking the form of a book club based around scientific or cultural texts, the Study Group pursues knowledge aimlessly, based more on what's interesting than what's useful at the minute.

When making rolls with the Academics Skill, characters with this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

CODER CLIQUE (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Computer ●●

Effect: This is most commonly a website or blog where members discuss coding problems, software issues and

other, similar coder chat. While most the members of the group are Carthians, or at least Kindred, they don't discuss matters vampiric or Movement issues, except perhaps in passing. Private questions are commonly handled via encrypted mail, or (if they're especially delicate) through arranged face-to-face meetings. Online is where the vampires go to find out whom to meet with, however. Generally, the system works fine, until a mortal in the group accidentally finds out what his email pals really are — usually because one of the Kindred assumed that everyone involved was Damned.

When making rolls with the Computer Skill, characters with this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

LAB SECTION (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Medicine ●●

Effect: These groups tend to be very small and secretive, as their most common meeting places are morgues after closing time. Kindred discuss, debate, dissect and speculate. Generally, they keep up-to-date on mortal medicine in order to extrapolate applications to Kindred physiology. Sometimes, they even experiment.

When making rolls with the Medicine Skill, characters with this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

CURRENT EVENTS CIRCLE (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Politics ●●

Effect: This is a group that gets together to discuss current events, both mortal and Kindred. These conversations become more and more frank as the members gain trust and confidence in one another. Blabbermouths imperil a group like this, even though the kind of passion that leads to reckless opining can keep such a circle fueled and running. It's always a careful balance to maintain, especially since someone kicked out for indiscretion is likely to be pissed and to have the political ammo to do something about it.

When making rolls with the Politics Skill, characters who have this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

THEATER SOCIETY (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Expression ●●

Effect: No director likes a pale, dead-eyed Desdemona, particularly if she can't make matinee performances. An undead actor going on with the show even after her Requiem begins isn't impossible, but it's challenging. Thus, many of them turn to other vampires. Some domains have complete societies of

Kindred theaters performing Kindred-penned plays that touch on Kindred themes for exclusive Kindred audiences. There aren't many, however. More commonly, performances and troupes are small. Those who want to perform in mortal plays can find few better allies than a Kindred theater society. Providing, of course, that they haven't found bitter rivals there.

When making rolls with the Expression Skill, characters who have this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

DEBATE CLUB (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Persuasion ●●

Effect: Kindred who like to argue get together, have some sort of structured (or unstructured) discussion, pick a topic for the next time and then leave. The topics sometimes concern distinctly vampiric matters, but more often are oriented to more general philosophy, especially political philosophy. Members not only learn facts about a variety of topics, but also learn persuasive techniques that work on any topic.

When making rolls with the Persuasion Skill, characters who have this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

THE RIGHT BAR (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Streetwise ●●

Effect: A group of this nature might be a formalized gang in one city, a group that meets for a weekly poker night in another or just some guys who know the right bar for playing pool and hearing gossip. Characters with The Right Bar Merit hear the word on the street, not because they seek it out, but because they're right on the street there with it.

When making rolls with the Streetwise Skill, characters who have this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

ENCOUNTER GROUP (●)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) ●, Empathy ●●

Effect: The Carthians borrow freely and widely from mortal organizations. One organization from which some borrow is Alcoholics Anonymous. Others were Embraced after the advent of widespread group therapy. If Kindred were in a support group before they died, they almost certainly feel some inclination to get in one after.

Encounter groups for Kindred are scheduled opportunities for vampires to discuss personal matters in what's supposed to be a safe, nonjudgmental and supportive environment. They can discuss practical things

(“How do I keep his wife from finding out?”) and more emotional issues (“I keep getting romantically involved with my — you know — the people I feed on.”) The advice varies widely in terms of actual value, but one side effect of an encounter group is that it can help you learn the signs of real emotional trauma, as well as the tells of incomplete honesty.

When making rolls with the Empathy Skill, characters who have this Merit may reroll 9s as well as 10s.

PHYSICAL MERITS

FIGHTING STYLE: SWARM TACTICS (• TO ••)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) •, Brawl or Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character has been trained to fight cooperatively, as a member of a tactical unit instead of just a lone brawler. Originally developed by anarchist demonstrators to overwhelm armed and protected (but outnumbered) police, Swarm Tactics offer Carthians distinct advantages against battle-Disciplined Kindred or other foes.

Dots purchased in this Merit allow access to special combat maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can’t have “Unexpected Strike” until he has “Feint.” The maneuvers and their effects are detailed below. All can be used with either Brawl or Weaponry.

Feint (•): You may declare that you’re making a Feint, and then roll a normal Brawl or Weaponry attack against a single opponent. If the roll succeeds, it does no damage, but anyone else who attacks that opponent can use Unexpected Strike if he knows how. The opponent is vulnerable until the end of the turn.

Unexpected Strike (••): If you attack someone who has successfully been fooled by a Feint, you can take 9 Again with your attack, even if the weapon you’re using typically allows only 10 Again. If you attack someone who has been fooled by two Feints, you can take 8 Again as well.

MENTAL MERITS

NIGHT DOCTOR SURGERY (•••)

Prerequisite: Covenant Status (Carthians) •••, Membership in a Night Doctor clique (see p. 33), Medicine •••

Effect: The Night Doctors have developed surgical techniques that speed Kindred healing.



Although a vampiric body can't repair itself without the use of Vitae, Night Doctor Surgery can make the job easier, and therefore more efficient.

Performing an operation with this Merit requires access to a fully modern operating room and cutting-edge tools. Due to the extreme difficulty of the techniques, tools give no bonus. They simply make resetting broken bones, stitching together tissue, reconnecting blood vessels and realigning nerves possible, all of which is necessary to ease the effort of the Vitae. In extreme cases, such as severe burns, skin grafts from other parts of the body are employed.

The player of the character performing the surgery makes an extended Intelligence + Medicine roll, with each roll representing an hour of surgery. The doctor needs to achieve a number of successes equal to the number of Health points of damage the patient has suffered (from whatever kind of damage). Once those successes are amassed, the patient has been stabilized. The player then makes one final roll, again representing an hour of surgery. Each success on that final roll turns one point of lethal damage into one point of bashing damage. Alternately, two successes on that final roll can be spent to turn one point of aggravated damage into two points of lethal damage.

Example: Monica has suffered two points of aggravated damage on her arms, but is otherwise unharmed. She goes to see Dr. M for surgery. His Intelligence + Medicine pool is five dice, and he needs two successes to stabilize her. He does it on his first two rolls, so after two hours of surgery he's ready to really attack the problem and start reconstructing her mangled limbs. He rolls again, and this time gets two successes. This turns one of her points of aggravated damage into

two points of lethal damage. If he'd gotten four successes, both points of her aggravated damage would turn into four points of lethal damage. Had he failed his roll, the damage would remain.

It should be noted that many forms of anesthesia don't work on Kindred. Those that do generally require the patient to use the Blush of Life effect to deliberately absorb them. Since Kindred who are willing to undergo surgery are often short of Vitae, this can be a problem. Various solutions have been used, from staking (which has the drawback of inflicting more damage, but which at least keeps the patient still) to Dominate to simply strapping the patient down and stuffing a gag in his mouth.

SUPERNATURAL MERIT

CARTHIAN LAWYER (●●)

Prerequisites: Status (Carthians) ●, Academics ●

Effect: This Merit is applicable only in cities where Carthian Law has taken effect (see p. 172). The character has learned to instinctively manipulate the Law to best suit her. This usually indicates that the character has dwelled in the city for a long time and thus has an intuitive and experienced understanding of the tenets that the city's Kindred have passed, as well as how those tenets have changed over the years. Sometimes such characters were lawyers or scholars in life, but sometimes they are simply people who latch onto Carthian Law easily (which has some interesting implications, depending on what explanation for the Law your troupe uses).

The systems for this Merit are included with the mechanics for Carthian Law and can be found on p. 174.

DISCIPLINES AND DEVOTIONS

The following Disciplines belong to the bloodlines closely associated with the Carthians. Similar to the covenant as a whole, these Disciplines are a diverse lot — the Impurity Discipline belongs to the Deucalion bloodline, which has a noteworthy (if not venerable) history, while the Zelani Discipline of Serendipity has not even been seen outside of that bloodline's home city.

IMPURITY

To the mind of Victor Spanos and his Deucalion bloodline, every vampiric clan is flawed save for the Ventrué. The “impurities” in the blood of the other clans do not and cannot drown out individual will and greatness, but they are there, and thus the greatest Nosferatu, Gangrel, Daeva or Mekhet can never hold a candle to the greatest Ventrué.

The Impurity Discipline allows the user to impose the weaknesses of the five clans upon other Kindred. A practitioner can show other Kindred exactly what it feels like to lose mental acuity as a Savage or fear the touch of fire as much as the Mekhet do. Interestingly, though, these powers do not work on the clan to which they correspond, leading Spanos to theorize that all Kindred (even the Ventrue) carry the “seeds” of these weaknesses within them, and that one such “seed” is fully realized in each of the clans (except, of course, the Lords). Therefore, a Daeva cannot fall victim to the Depraved Succubus power, since he is already a slave to his Vices, but can have the seed of vulnerability to fire activated for a short time and thus suffer the Feeble Shadow power.

As the Deucaliones are a young bloodline, Impurity is a new Discipline and hasn't been fully realized or tested yet. Spanos is under the impression that mastery of the Discipline comes with Stupid Savage. The idea that a higher power that mimics the Ventrue clan weakness exists never occurred to him because, to his mind, the Ventrue don't have a weakness. Likewise, many Deucaliones don't believe that their Discipline affects other members of the bloodline or even members of clan Ventrue, and don't bother attempting it. In truth, however, the Discipline works normally on both (except for the Mad Lord power, which no Deucalion to date has manifested anyway).

Impurity has no effect on mortals or other non-vampiric supernatural beings. In order to use most applications of Impurity, the Kindred must make eye contact with his target, though Feeble Shadow requires touch. Note that in terms of game systems, the powers of Impurity do not precisely match the clan weaknesses. In effect, however, they are very close, and so the Deucalion bloodline can legitimately be said to infect Kindred with the scourges of the clans.

Note: All uses of Impurity gain a +2 bonus if the individual power is turned on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (see p. 162 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). Naturally, this bonus does not apply to the subject's Resistance.

● FEEBLE SHADOW

All Kindred fear the sun and fire, but the Mekhet suffer its kiss worse than most. Victor Spanos always held the Shadows in special contempt for their obvious frailty, and the most basic precepts

of Impurity allow the Deucalion to cause other Kindred to wither quickly under the sunlight.

This power has no effect on Mekhet Kindred or any bloodline descended from the Mekhet.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Impurity – subject's Resolve

Action: Instant

To use this power, the character must touch the subject's skin. To do this in combat requires the player to roll Dexterity + Brawl – the target's Defense. Armor does not apply, but if the target's clothing is covering most of his body, the vampire might need to specify reaching for the face or other uncovered skin, which might impose additional negative modifiers at the Storyteller's discretion.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Deucalion suffers the effects of this power until the next sunset.

Failure: The power has no effect. The character can try again next turn, but the spent Vitae is lost.

Success: The target suffers one additional point of aggravated damage from fire or sunlight, as described for the Mekhet on p. 109 of **Vampire: The Requiem**. The effect lasts until the next sunset.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the Resilience Discipline becomes useless for purposes of “downgrading” aggravated damage from fire or sunlight during this time.

●● OUTCAST HAUNT

The Nosferatu's inborn weakness marks them as monsters, and their Nightmare Discipline cements this. Spanos, however, didn't see their monstrous nature as anything to be proud of. Monsters in the modern world, he felt, needed to be subtle, swift and hidden, rather than advertising their status to anyone in their presence. By activating this frailty in the blood of other Kindred, Spanos found he could turn any vampire into a pariah for a night.

This power has no effect on Nosferatu Kindred or any bloodline descended from the Nosferatu.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Subterfuge + Impurity versus subject's Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

The Deucalion must make eye contact with the target to enact this power.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Deucalion flees in terror from the target and cannot approach her for the remainder of the night. If she approaches him, he must immediately check for Röttschreck. Even if the vampire does not fall into a fear frenzy, he must flee the subject's presence as quickly as possible.

Failure: The power has no effect. The vampire can try again next turn, provided he can keep the subject's gaze. The subject feels a subtle revulsion to the Deucalion, but isn't necessarily aware that he attempted to use a Discipline.

Success: The target exudes an aura of dread, fear and menace for the remainder of the night. In game terms, the Kindred automatically fails any Social rolls made with or against mortals. Intimidation rolls are exempt, and the Majesty Discipline can still be used on mortals but suffers a negative modifier equal to the Deucalion's Impurity rating. Kindred can sense this aura, but don't necessarily feel afraid of the target. (The Storyteller can choose to impose negative penalties on interactions with other vampires if he wishes.)

Exceptional Success: The aura is persistent. The first night, the target suffers as described above. For a number of nights afterward equal to the number of successes the player rolls, the target suffers a negative modifier equal to the Deucalion's Impurity rating to all non-Intimidation or Discipline-based Social rolls. The target can rid herself of this aura by spending a Willpower point each night.

●●● DEPRAVED SUCCUBUS

The Daeva curse was so subtle that it took Spanos many years to notice it. He came to the conclusion that the Daeva might once have been on the verge of shedding their curse, but managed only to personalize it a bit. Instead of losing their flaws, they simply refined them, to the point that each Daeva's individual Vice would prove his undoing. Spanos often warned other Kindred to heed "the lesson of the Daeva," never to assume that they had beaten or escaped their clan's flaws. Only the Ventrue were unflawed, and all the other clans could hope to do was aspire to greatness in hopes of overshadowing their inborn failings. In any case, the lesson of the Daeva was one he was happy to teach other Kindred, if he felt they grew too uppity. A night spent enslaved to one's passions tended to be enlightening.

This power has no effect on Daeva Kindred or any bloodline descended from the Daeva.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Persuasion + Impurity versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

The Deucalion must make eye contact with the target in order to use this power.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Deucalion becomes ruled by his Vice for a number of nights equal to (10 – [Resolve + Composure]). He must enact the Vice once per night, but gains no Willpower. If he fails to do so, he loses one Willpower point.

Failure: The power has no effect. The Deucalion can attempt it again next turn, provided he can retain eye contact.

Success: The target becomes overwhelmed by her own Vice and must fulfill the requirement for regaining Willpower through it within one hour. If she does not, she loses a number of Willpower points equal to the Deucalion's Impurity rating.

Exceptional Success: The effect is persistent. In addition to the effect described above, the target cannot regain Willpower through her Vice for a number of nights equal to the Deucalion's Impurity rating (but suffers no effect for resisting the Vice).

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Target has gained Willpower from her Vice during the current scene.
+2	Target is in a position to benefit from her Vice.
+1	Target has already gained Willpower from her Vice that night.
–1	Target has already gained Willpower from her Virtue that night.
–2	Target is in a position to benefit from her Virtue.
–3	Target has gained Willpower from her Virtue during the current scene.

●●●● STUPID SAVAGE

Victor Spanos respected the Gangrel in a condescending sort of way. Spanos didn't blame vampires for their inborn weaknesses, though he pitied them, and he felt that the Gangrel had the worst curse of any of the clans. The loss of mental faculties was a horrible fate, and Victor often told his Gangrel pupils that he was impressed that they had the wherewithal to remember to turn up for lessons. Spanos

developed the power to levy something similar to the Gangrel's curse on other Kindred, but he seldom used the power, deeming it too cruel to be applied casually. That it sometimes induces the target to frenzy might be another reason he used it sparingly.

This power has no effect on Gangrel Kindred or any bloodline descended from the Gangrel.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Expression + Impurity versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

The Deucalion must make eye contact with the target in order to use this power.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Deucalion cannot clear her head for the remainder of the scene. Extended actions are impossible, and all Mental actions suffer a -4 penalty, as do rolls to avoid frenzy.

Failure: The power has no effect. The Deucalion can try again next turn, provided she can retain eye contact.

Success: The Deucalion muddies the target's common sense and higher brain functions. This makes the vampire short-tempered, confused and (as the

Beast comes to the fore) hungry. In game terms, Intelligence and Wits rolls suffer a negative penalty equal to the Deucalion's Impurity rating, as do rolls to avoid frenzy. Also, the target is considered "hungry" at five Vitae and "starving" at two (see p. 179 of **Vampire: The Requiem**). These effects last until the next sunrise.

Exceptional Success: The effects are persistent. On the first night, the target suffers as described above. After that, all effects fade except for the revised definitions of "hungry" and "starving." This effect remains for a number of nights equal to the Deucalion's Impurity rating.

●●●●● MAD LORD

This level of Impurity is entirely theoretical. Victor Spanos himself might have achieved mastery of the Discipline, but has assuredly never use this application of it. To do so would be to recognize that the Ventrue have an inborn weakness, and that recognition would tear Spanos' mind (and any Kindred's who buys into his philosophies) asunder. Ironically, that is precisely what this power does.

This power has no effect on Ventrue Kindred or any bloodline descended from the Ventrue.



Cost: 2 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Impurity – subject's Resolve

Action: Instant

The Deucalion must make eye contact with the target to use this power.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Deucalion immediately gains a mild derangement for a week following the dramatic failure. Alternately, the Storyteller may choose to exacerbate one of the character's existing mild derangements, making it severe for the one-week duration.

Failure: The power has no effect. The Deucalion can try again next turn, provided he can maintain eye contact.

Success: The Deucalion imposes the madness of the Lords upon the target. Every personality quirk is magnified to horrific proportions, every minor fear becomes a full-blown phobia. Simple derangements are not enough to simulate this; the vampire becomes locked in a nightmare world of his own psychosis. The character might become catatonic, attack everything around him or seem perfectly normal but explode into violence the instant a certain trigger occurs. This is largely a matter of roleplaying and Storyteller input. However, one game effect that is consistent is this: the player cannot spend Willpower points to add three dice a roll or to add to a Resistance Trait. Willpower can still be spent on Disciplines and if other powers or effects (such as the Daeva clan weakness) require them. These effects persist for the remainder of the night, or until the vampire meets Final Death, whatever comes first.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the vampire also gains a derangement. This can be a mild or severe derangement, at the Storyteller's (or player's) discretion. The derangement persists for a number of nights equal to the Deucalion's Impurity rating.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Target already has a severe derangement.
+1	Target already has a mild derangement.

SERENDIPITY

The province of the small and enigmatic Zelani bloodline is the Serendipity Discipline. Etymologically, serendipity is defined as finding riches one wasn't seeking, and also refers to especially

fortuitous turns of fate. The Discipline allows the Kindred to do and say things that take best advantage of timing and circumstance.

Lorna Zelan claims that her bloodline's Discipline isn't a Discipline in the same sense as most others, but is instead a state of mind. She claims that keeping her mind open to the tides of time and causality (she refuses to acknowledge "fate" as a factor) allows her to act only when external, uncontrollable factors are best arrayed for her. Despite this, using the Serendipity Discipline is indeed an act of will for the Kindred involved.

• TURN OF PHRASE

The vampire seems to know the exact thing to say to defuse a tense situation or spark a violent confrontation. Normally, she needs to be part of a conversation for a few minutes before enacting this power, but very skilled Zelani seem to instinctively know what to say.

The character must be capable of communicating with the target to use this power. That is, they must have a language in common. Turn of Phrase functions over telephones and even over non-verbal forms of communications, including instant messaging programs and even written letters (though of course the latter takes some time to have an effect).

Cost: —

Dice Pool: Wits + Expression + Serendipity

Action: Instant

The player can make this roll immediately upon entering a social situation: a conversation, a diplomatic debate, writing a letter and so on. The power doesn't take effect immediately, though (see below).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Whatever effect the character was going for, her words have the opposite effect. A phrase meant to calm an angry comrade might push him into frenzy, while a letter meant to poison an ally against the Zelani's enemy encourages his trust.

Failure: The character receives no bonus or penalty, and must rely upon her raw social acumen.

Success: A number of turns equal to (5 – the character's Serendipity rating) after the initial roll is made, the character receives a burst of inspiration on what to say to achieve her desired result. This can have one of two game effects. The Storyteller can either suggest an appropriate phrase (by passing a note, in private conversation, etc.), or the

player can simply receive a +5 modifier to an appropriate Social roll. Letters, obviously, do not suffer from this delay, as the character can simply wait until inspiration hits to start writing.

Exceptional Success: The character can apply the effects of the power immediately.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Characters are already predisposed toward the Zelani's goal.
-1	Characters are opposed to the Zelani's goal.

•• GUIDED STEPS

Lorna Zelan was not a combatant by nature, but over the course of her career saw her share of violence. Strangely, though, attackers tended to miss her — guns jammed, knives became caught in clothing and opponents stumbled at critical moments. It was this kind of happenstance that earned her the nickname “Lucky Lorna,” but she consistently claimed that luck had nothing to do with it. She knew when it was time to dodge, time to strike and time to run. With this power, the Zelani takes advantages of such circumstances, avoiding danger and harm.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: No roll is necessary. The Zelani can activate this power any time as a reflexive action, but only during a turn in which the player declares a Dodge. The character's Serendipity rating is applied to her Defense Trait *after* it is doubled. All other Defense-based effects, including Merits that alter Defense and reductions for multiple opponents work normally, *except* that the character's Serendipity rating is applied as Defense toward firearms attacks. If the character also has the Celerity Discipline and activates it for that turn, her entire Defense is applied to firearms attacks.

Example: *Lorna Zelan is in a fight with a Mekhet assassin. Biding her time, she activates Guided Steps. Her Defense is normally 3, but as she is Dodging, her Defense is doubled to 6. On top of that, her player adds her Serendipity rating (5), for a total Defense of 11 for that turn. If the Mekhet shoots at her, however, her Defense is only considered 5, since her normal Defense does not apply to firearms.*

Attacks that miss due to the character's augmented Defense seem to fall victim to unfortunate, but completely plausible, twists of fate. Guns jam, attackers (or the Zelani herself) trip, a sudden crack

of thunder startles an attacker into jumping back and so on. Likewise, a dramatic failure on such an attack indicates that the attacker has had a particularly disastrous turn of events. Perhaps he encounters an unforeseen motorcycle as he charges across the street at the Zelani, or perhaps his bullet misses and the ricochet hits him.

••• PERFECT TIMING

The Zelani are known for their uncanny ability to arrive, strike, speak or otherwise act at exactly the right time. They always seem to have an edge over others, simply because the Zelani don't seem surprised by anything. Again, Lorna Zelan's explanation was simply existing in accordance with the universe, but most Kindred reject such ramblings and claim the Zelani simply have the Devil's luck (to which Lorna responds, “Same thing”).

Cost: 1 Vitae or none

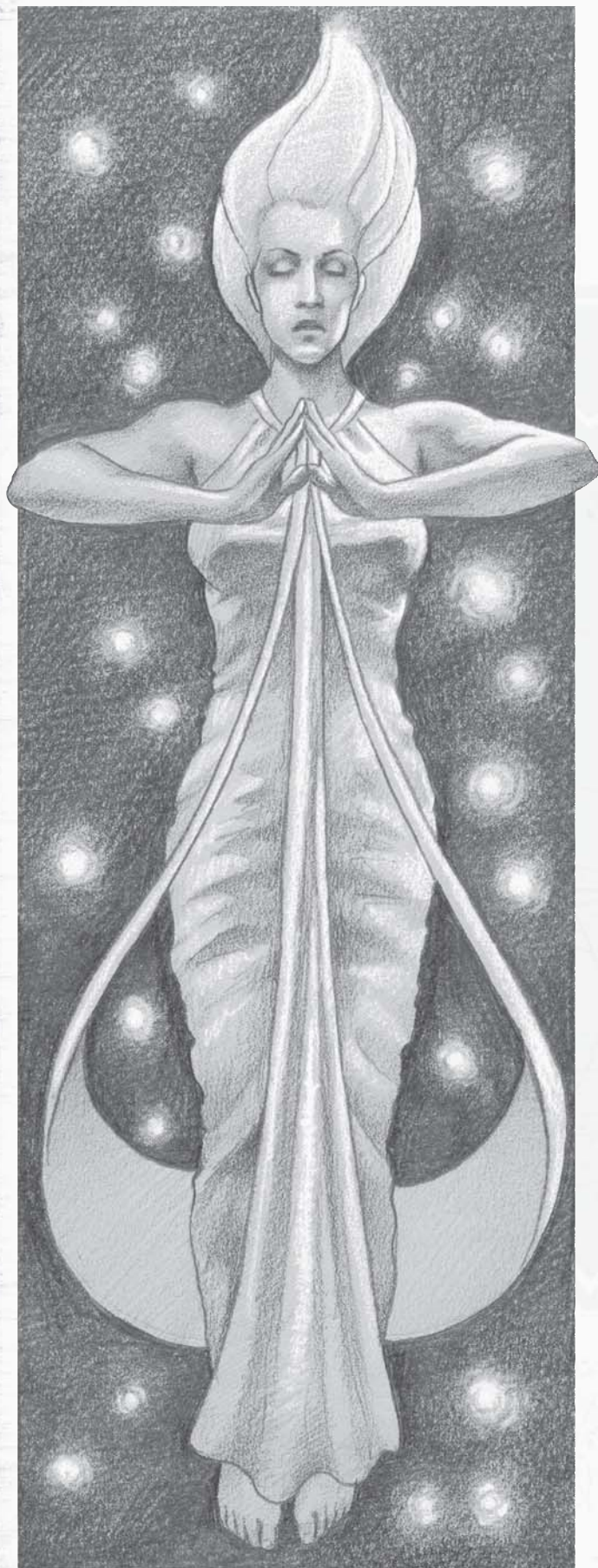
Dice Pool: No roll is necessary. The character can activate this power as a reflexive action at any time, in combat or out. The effects are different, however, when used in a violent situation.

Out of combat, Perfect Timing adds an equipment bonus equal to the Zelani's Serendipity rating to any roll that could conceivably benefit from acting at precisely the right moment. This bonus cannot take the total bonus, including any other modifiers, above +5, however. This power cannot be used for extended actions, and the player must spend one Vitae for the character to gain this bonus. Note that this bonus applies only to rolls in which timing matter. For example, the bonus would apply to an attempt to catch a thrown object, but would not apply to an attempt to interpret a message written in a foreign language.

In combat, Perfect Timing adds the Zelani's Serendipity rating to the character's Initiative score. This has no cost and lasts for the rest of the scene, and is cumulative with any Initiative bonus gained from Celerity or other effects.

•••• PRESCIENCE

One of the things about Lorna Zelan that amazes other Kindred is her ability to learn and assimilate new information almost immediately. Although she is at least an ancilla (and probably an elder), she has had no trouble learning how to use computers, cars and other technology that was not in existence the last time she drew breath. She claims that this isn't any kind of prodigal talent, but simply that



she can “see” the path of progress and be carried along with it. Lorna knows, she says, what she needs to know. Whatever the truth, her bloodline has the same capability — they are much more knowledgeable than would seem possible.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Wits + Serendipity

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character becomes confused and loses access to much of his knowledge. All of the character’s Skills effectively drop by one dot (meaning that Skills at one dot disappear, imposing the normal Unskilled penalty if the character tries use them). These effects last for the remainder of the night.

Failure: The character gains no knowledge, but can attempt to use this power again after the current scene ends.

Success: The character can distribute a number of dots equal to the successes from the roll among any Skills that he does not possess. No Skill can rise higher than 2 in the manner, however. For instance, if the player rolls four successes and the character has no rating in Computer, Brawl or Persuasion, he can give herself Computer 2, Brawl 1 and Persuasion 1 or Brawl 2 and Computer 2, but not Computer 3 and Brawl 1. This knowledge lasts for the remainder of the scene. Alternately, the player can choose to duplicate the effects of the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit for the scene (see p. 109 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Exceptional Success: Instead of temporarily raising Skill ratings, the character can apply successes toward the experience cost of purchasing new Skills. The usual “cap” of two successes per Skill still applies, though, but the character can apply successes toward Skills in which he already has a rating. For instance, if the character has Computer 1 and wishes to buy Computer 2 (normally six experience points), and the player rolls five or more successes for this power, he can apply two successes toward the cost and pay only four. This must occur in the standard flow of the story; this cannot be used during downtime (because there’d be no reasonable way to control how many times the player could attempt to learn in this manner).

●●●●● STARS IN ALIGNMENT

Lorna claimed that no will or action was necessary for her phenomenal good fortune, but this

power puts lie to that. It requires the vampire to spend as much as several hours in meditation, but after that, everything she does seems to succeed, bad luck doesn't touch her and her enemies are well-advised to leave her alone. This power is exhausting, however. Even Lorna doesn't use it every night.

Cost: 2 Willpower and 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure + Serendipity

Action: Extended. (10 successes required; each roll takes one hour.)

The character can enact this power at any time during the night, but must remain in deep meditation the entire time. If she is interrupted, all successes are forfeited and the attempt is considered a failure. She can break off the attempt at any time and simply does not enjoy the benefits. Only one attempt at this power can be made in a given night.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Events are decidedly not going to go the character's way tonight. Every roll the player makes for that night suffers a -3 penalty. The player can make a Wits + Composure roll (subject to that penalty) to notice that things have gone horribly awry and that it would be a good idea for the character to simply stay in her haven, but if this roll fails, she has no idea that the power failed.

Failure: No progress is made toward the goal.

Success: The character makes progress toward her goal. If the player achieves 10 successes, the character has found her rhythm, so to speak, for the night. All actions she undertakes receive a +3 modifier, as do any resistance traits even if they aren't rolled (including Defense). She cannot, however, regain Willpower during this night or for the following night.

Exceptional Success: Significant progress is made toward the goal. As per a normal success, though the character may regain Willpower as normal.

DEVOTIONS

Carthians like Devotions. Not only do Carthians refine and expand Disciplines, they do it outside a framework of symbolism, religion or (for want of a better phrase) lifestyle choice. Crúac, for example, isn't just something you learn, it's a way you behave and believe. Devotions are ideologically neutral.

Lacking a well-developed secret art such as the Coils of the Dragon, the Carthians have turned their fearless curiosity and enthusiasm to the development of Devotions. Carthians are often less secretive with

Devotions than other covenants. Carthians still keep things close to the vest, but a neonate Carthian is, at the very least, more likely to know it's possible to blend Disciplines.

In addition to seeking power for power's sweet sake, Carthians also pursue Devotions out of a perception (correct in some domains, simply absorbed from other covenants' prejudices in others) that there are fewer elders among the Carthians. To offset the brute superiority of those with greater experience, Carthians get devious.

HUSK

(Celerity •, Vigor •)

Some Daeva can't be bothered with Majesty and prefer to feed by bashing and sucking. The problem with this is that the typical rate of extraction, while lovely when you're savoring the bliss of the Kiss, is a bit too gradual when someone might walk by your dark alley at any moment and run off to call the cops. The Husk Devotion (named for what's left after it's used) remedies this problem, as well as offering a decisive edge in a fight — especially against other Kindred.

Cost: 1 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: No roll is necessary.

Action: Reflexive

A Kindred using Husk can draw blood beyond the usual single Vitae per turn. Instead, his flow rate is increased by the lower of his Celerity or Vigor score. Thus, a vampire with Celerity • and Vigor ••• can draw two Vitae per turn (the usual one, plus one for his Celerity). If he had Celerity ••• and Vigor ••, he could draw three per turn. Using Husk negates the Kiss.

If a vampire is drawing three or more Vitae per turn, the act leaves a wound that's too wide to simply lick closed, and if she leaves the victim alive, he needs to make a Resolve + Stamina roll every 10 minutes until he gets first aid. Failing the roll means he suffers another point of lethal damage to blood loss.

This power costs six experience points to learn.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

(Auspex •••, Dominate ••)

Communication is key for political organization, and covert communication is essential for oppositional social movements. Mortal insurgencies have used everything from encrypted emails to blind drops to a

message the recipient had to shave the messenger's head to read. It was to be expected that the Carthians would apply Disciplines to this age-old problem.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Dominate

Action: Typically, reading an item with The Spirit's Touch reveals some information about the item's past, and no one (neither reader nor the object's last possessor) has any input into the vision's content. Message in a Bottle changes that. By holding an item and using Message in a Bottle, a character can manipulate its psychic imprint. Anyone who later uses The Spirit's Touch on the item receives a short vision of the character's choice, about 15–30 seconds' worth.

There are many applications for this Devotion. Securing messages (at least, secure from people without mid-range Auspex) is the most obvious. Planting evidence with false impressions for a rival whom you know can read impressions is more devious. Or, for the paranoid, it's always safe to cleanse important objects so that more meaningful data can't be mined from them.

The message lasts for two years per success rolled.

This Devotion requires 15 experience points to learn.

CLEANSING IMPRESSION

(Auspex •••, Obfuscate ••)

Obfuscate is an excellent tool for keeping people from spying on you, but it's less useful when your property can be convinced to give up your secrets. After all, a secret is only as good as its protection.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Auspex

Action: Instant

With an effort of will, the vampire neutralizes any psychic impressions on any and all objects around her. Anyone who examines an affected item with The Spirit's Touch or any other form of past sensing gets the impression that no one has ever touched it and nothing has ever happened to it. This is distinct from the sensation of simply being *unable* to access the impression, and many seers find this sensation disturbing the first time they experience it.

Once an item has been cleansed, it remains void of impression until something meaningful happens to it — someone other than the cleansing Kindred picks it up, for example. Depending on how strong the vampire's effort is, a greater or smaller number of objects are affected.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Instead of voiding the items, the character leaves a stronger impression. All future attempts to read the items are made with a +2 bonus.

Failure: The Devotion does nothing.

Success: Every unliving object within 10 feet is cleansed of psychic impressions. For each additional success, that radius increases by five feet.

Exceptional Success: As a standard success. The extra successes are their own reward, as they extend the radius.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

IMMUTABLE MIND

(Dominate •, Resilience •)

The moment a Ventrue learns that it's possible to scrub clean memories with Dominate, he almost always has an uncomfortable realization: "That could have been used on *me*!" This is unacceptable, and in the typical Carthian can-do spirit, a Devotion has been developed to cope with it.

Cost: 1 Willpower per scene

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure + Resilience

Action: Instant

While a character is protected by Immutable Mind, attempts to use Dominate on the character are hindered by the character's own mastery of Dominate. If the roll is contested, the defender with Immutable Mind gets to add his rating in Dominate to his attempts to resist.

Example: Travis has Dominate •• and has activated Immutable Mind. When a rival for Carthian office attempts to Mesmerize him, the contested pool is the rival's Intelligence + Expression + Dominate. Usually, Travis would resist with Resolve + Blood Potency, but Immutable Mind allows him to roll Resolve + Blood Potency + Dominate.

This power costs eight experience points to learn.

STALWART HEART

(Majesty •, Resilience •)

No one likes being played for a chump, and this is doubly true of those who are in the habit of playing others for chumps. The Discipline of Majesty is a magnificent chumping tool. It was inevitable that some Daeva would try and turn its powers inward, to maintain emotional integrity, instead of using Majesty to erode the integrity of others.

Cost: 1 Willpower per scene

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure + Resilience

Action: While a character is protected by Stalwart Heart, attempts to use Majesty on her are hindered by the character's own mastery of Majesty. If the roll is contested, the defender with Stalwart Heart gets to add her rating in Majesty to his attempts to resist.

Example: Natalie has Majesty ••• and has activated Immutable Heart. A nosy spy attempts to draw her out with Revelation. The contested pool is the spy's Manipulation + Persuasion + Majesty. Usually, Natalie would resist with Composure + Blood Potency, but Stalwart Heart allows her to roll Resolve + Blood Potency + Majesty.

Stalwart Heart protects even when there's no active roll. With Awe, for example, the user's Presence + Expression + Majesty roll needs to get more successes than the target's Composure. If the target is protected by Stalwart Heart, the persuader needs to exceed Composure + Majesty.

This power costs eight experience points to learn.

DAUNTLESS SPIRIT

(Nightmare •, Resilience •)

Once the Carthians developed Devotions to help resist the lordly scepter of Dominate and the allure of Majesty, it seemed only sensible to find something that worked on the fearsome effects of Nightmare.

Cost: 1 Willpower per scene

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure + Resilience

Action: While a character is protected by Dauntless Spirit, attempts to use Nightmare against him are hindered by the character's own mastery of Nightmare. If the roll is contested, the defender with Dauntless Spirit gets to add his rating in Nightmare to his attempts to resist.

Example: Dirk has Nightmare • and has activated Dauntless Spirit. A bullying elder wants to kill Dirk off with Mortal Fear. The pool is usually the elder's Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare – Composure. Since Dirk is protected by his Devotion, however, the elder rolls Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare – (Composure + Dirk's Nightmare).

Dauntless Spirit protects against contested rolls as well as uncontested rolls.

This power costs eight experience points to learn.

VITAE BLOAT

(Protean ••, Resilience •)

The Gangrel clan is clearly the source of this useful (albeit dangerous and grotesque) Devotion. Developed in the late 1800s by Gangrel trying to get a few steps ahead in the westward expansion of the United States, Vitae Bloat allows a vampire to store more Vitae in her body than it can normally hold.

Cost: 1 Willpower point

Dice Pool: No roll is required to activate this power.

Action: A character must be holding as much Vitae as he can normally contain to activate Vitae Bloat. Once that's done, he can hold a number of extra Vitae equal to his score in Protean. Or, if he prefers, he can hold less.

The vampire suffers one point of bashing damage for each two Vitae held above his standard maximum. These Health points can't be healed while the Kindred is exceeding his normal capacity for Vitae.

Furthermore, his veins and arteries bulge unnaturally, swollen beyond their ordinary capacity. Some Kindred might say the use of Vitae Bloat is a Masquerade risk, if they're inclined to make trouble for its user. Mortal viewers, on the other hand, are likely to assume the bloated Kindred simply has some hideous, disfiguring disease. (Storytellers may choose to assess penalties to Social rolls accordingly.)

Example: Rosalita, with Blood Potency 1 and Protean 2, can usually carry no more than 10 Vitae. Preparing for a long journey across the Mojave Desert (don't ask), she begins with five Vitae in her system when she catches an unfortunate hitchhiker. His first five points of Vitae fill her up, and then she activates Vitae Bloat to take the last two. She takes one point of bashing damage, and is even uglier than you'd expect a casual murderess to be.

This power costs nine experience points to learn.

UNFLINCHING EYE

(Auspex •, Resilience •)

Kindred society is a web of secrets, each more damning than the last. The Carthians engage in an intelligence-gathering arms race with the other covenants. Auspex is one weapon in the arsenal, but it's a weapon with flaws. Unflinching Eye removes one of those flaws.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: No roll is required to activate this power.

Action: Instant

When using Heightened Senses, the vampire is no longer in danger of being disoriented by sudden, loud or intense stimuli as described on p. 119 of **Vampire: The Requiem**. But Heightened Senses shields her only when she's using the first level of Auspex. She may still be forced to make a Resolve roll if she uses Aura Perception, The Spirit's Touch or Telepathy if something startles her, even while protected by Unflinching Eye.

This power costs five experience points to learn.

HIVE NEXUS GESTALT

(Auspex ••••, Dominate ••••)

Very few Hive coteries develop the fullest expression of their philosophy, in which every member's mind shares certain aspects with all the others. This is because very few Kindred develop the Disciplines needed for Hive Nexus Gestalt. Those few coteries are, essentially, individuals in their own right while the Devotion is active, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Cost: 1 Vitae per night

Dice Pool: Wits + Socialize + Auspex – the total number of minds in the gestalt

Action: Instant

A single success on the activation roll establishes the link until the nexus member (the “queen” to rude outsiders, “focus” to hivers) next slumbers, gets knocked into torpor or is destroyed. However, there are several restrictions that govern admission into the totality. First, only Kindred can join. Second, every Kindred who participates needs a second-stage Vinculum to every other participant. Any who lack this bond cannot be joined, though the others may fuse without them. Third, all the members must willingly submit to the Devotion.

Once fused, all the components act in concert and participate in each other's thoughts. This has several benefits:

- All members gain a +1 bonus to Intelligence dice pools.
- Members gain a +1 bonus to Skill dice pools if someone else in the Hive has that Skill at a level at least two points higher.
- Willpower is shared out of a common pool.

There are drawbacks to being mentally aware in this fashion, however.

- Whenever any character takes an action that would force a degeneration roll on one of the members, all the members make individual degeneration rolls.

- Members cannot regain Willpower through their Vices unless all members of the Hive have the same Vice. Even then indulgence yields only a single Willpower point to the pool.

- The gestalt may force an individual to perform an action against his will.

This last one is particularly important. Gestalts share their thoughts and beliefs, but that doesn't mean they always agree, no more than a mortal always has an unambiguous opinion, no more than a vampire's Man and Beast always concur. When a majority of the Hive members want one of the bodies to do something, they can attempt to force that body to act, even if the body's owner disagrees. When that happens, the owner rolls Composure + Resolve against the highest opposing Intelligence and highest opposing Resolve. If the body's owner gets more successes, he retains control. If not, the body does the bidding of the Hive.

If there is a tie, in which half the Hive wants an action and half does not, the owner of the body that would take the action decides. Furthermore, any member of the group can break out of the Hive at any time by spending a Willpower point out of the collective pool. So Hives that need to send a member to certain death should make sure their Willpower is completely gone first — though if a Hive is considering such a sacrifice, it's usually because all other options have already failed.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

OCCULTED SPIRIT

(Auspex •••••, Obfuscate ••)

Kindred who can step beyond their bodies are rare and revered. They're highly sought for their infiltration potential, and more highly feared for it. But even a ghost body can be spotted by a canny observer, unless the projector is using Occulted Spirit.

Cost: 1 Willpower dot

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Usually, the ghost body produced by Twilight Projection (see p. 123 of **Vampire: The Requiem**) has the potential to be detected by animals, children or Kindred with Auspex. When Occulted Spirit is activated, the ghost body cannot be detected under any circumstances.

The vampire must first use Occulted Spirit and then attempt Twilight Projection. If the roll to project fails, the Willpower dot used for Occulted Spirit is wasted



(though the dot may be purchased again with experience points as normal). Occulted Spirit lasts until the vampire stops using Twilight Projection.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

BRUTE CANNOT BETRAY

(Animalism ••••, Obfuscate ••)

In the same way that the Occulted Spirit Devotion developed to keep spies using high-powered Auspex covert, Brute Cannot Betray does the same for users of Animalism.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Characters who successfully activate Brute Cannot Betray before using Subsume the Lesser Spirit conceal their influence over a possessed animal from occult detection. This doesn't prevent people from noticing an animal behaving oddly, but Auspex, divination powers and the paranormal abilities of mages, shapechangers and other supernatural creatures have zero chance of identifying the creature as vampire-controlled.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

UNSEEN MASTER

(Dominate •••••, Obfuscate ••)

Just as Brute Cannot Betray and Occulted Spirit are used to protect high-powered Carthian initiates of Auspex and Animalism, Unseen Master protects devotees of Dominate.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Characters who succeed at activating Unseen Master before using Possession cannot be detected as possessors using occult means. That is, no supernatural initiate (be he Kindred, mortal sorcerer or something else) can look at the possessed person, apply a mystic ability and know that the person is possessed. Unseen Master can cloak only the person being personally possessed: a character cannot use Unseen Master on a mortal being remotely controlled by his coterie-mate, for example.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

22 SOLID

(Protean ••, Resilience ••)

This Discipline was developed in 1982 by Dr. Antoine Stockton. A Michigan physician who was

Embraced by a Gangrel with a dying ghoul and more urgency than sense, Dr. Stockton became a Night Doctor. A recalibration of the undead body's resistance to harm was a spectacular yield from his studies of Kindred physiology. He called it "Too Too Solid Flesh" because he was a scholar of the classics. The Carthians using it in the struggle tonight are generally less educated, more modern and inclined to call it 22 Solid.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: This Devotion does not require a roll.

Action: Reflexive

When 22 Solid is activated, it downgrades a number of lethal damage points into bashing. The damage reduced is equal to the user's Resilience. Twenty-Two Solid can be used while standard Resilience is active, but 22 Solid lasts only for a single turn per use. This Devotion does not affect damage already taken, but only new damage inflicted while the Devotion is active. If the character has Armor, apply the Armor first before downgrading damage. If the Armor applies only to bashing damage, the Armor does not protect against damage that used to be lethal before it was changed into bashing by this Devotion.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

BEHIND THE THRONE

(Majesty ••, Obfuscate ••)

Majesty is all about being the center of attention, while Obfuscate focuses on its avoidance. Combining them, then, allows one to direct attention while unobserved.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Majesty

Action: Instant

This Devotion allows a character to activate Awe, and to give its benefits to someone other than herself. If the standard use of Awe puts your character in the limelight, Behind the Throne focuses the limelight on anyone she chooses. This can work just like Awe, only with the benefits accruing to someone other than the Majesty user.

If the person being enhanced is also using Awe, the successes rolled with Behind the Throne are added to the receiver's Awe successes for the purposes of overcoming the Composure of the audience. If used in this fashion, the person at the center of attention does not need to succeed at his use of Awe to gain the perks of Behind the Throne. If

he gets a dramatic failure on his roll, however, Behind the Throne has no effect.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

AVERSION CURSE

(Dominate ••, Nightmare ••)

This Devotion fuses the emotional punch of Nightmare with the finesse and precision of Dominate, allowing its user to create a specific temporary phobia without needing time or privacy.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Nightmare versus subject's Resolve + Blood Potency. (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not penalize the Devotion user's roll.)

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

If the Devotion succeeds, the target becomes terrified by a person, place, object, symbol, concept or action of the user's choice. Mechanically, it's just like the Phobia derangement described on p. 97 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, though writing this Devotion on the character sheet as "Aversion Curse" can make it easier to remember it's temporary.

The curse eventually wears off, but not until the victim has failed a number of Resolve + Composure rolls equal to the successes the user rolled in excess of the victim's Resolve + Blood Potency. In other words, the curse never goes away until it has scared the victim.

Example: Ione puts an Aversion Curse on Scratch, making him afraid of cars. She rolls five successes to activate it, while he rolls three to resist it. He is now afraid of cars. Since it's very hard to get away from automobiles in an urban environment, Scratch has to make a lot of Resolve + Composure rolls. It does not matter how many times he succeeds. He is plagued by the fear until he loses control of himself two times.

The user needs to be in the presence of the target and looking at him to apply the curse, but does not need to speak or make eye contact. A firm mental image or definition of the fear stimulus is needed, however. A vague curse can have unanticipated effects. Making the religious Solomon Birch averse to God might force a roll every time he sees a crucifix. The same aversion, inflicted on an atheist, might only trigger when he's confronted with what he considers the indisputable presence of the Almighty.

It should be noted that while the curse can be triggered by common things ("dogs"), specific things

("Duce Carter") or exacting things ("Duce Carter when he's wearing blue jeans and a white shirt with a mandarin collar"), choosing a ubiquitous trigger such as "air" or "the letter E" is not possible. Vampires cannot be made frightened of blood or feeding.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	The stimulus is extremely specific. ("You are afraid of a red Honda Accord with the Louisiana license plate XMM 211.")
+1	The stimulus is precise. ("You are afraid to use your power of Aura Sight.")
—	The stimulus is uncommon, but not rare. ("You are afraid to use your Auspex Discipline.")
–1	The stimulus is broad. ("You are afraid of blonde women.")
–2	The stimulus is expansive. ("You are afraid to leave your haven.")
–3	The stimulus is something that the character would consider harmless, attractive, cute or otherwise inoffensive. ("You are afraid of kittens.")

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

GUARDIAN VIGIL

(Auspex •, Celerity •, Resilience •)

This Devotion was first taught to a young Carthian by a sympathetic independent elder. He had been a soldier in life, and continued so under different leaders in undeath. Now quite old and quite mad, helping a young soldier keep his watch struck the elder's fancy. The young Carthian took credit for inventing the Devotion after the elder disappeared into the night.

Cost: 1 Vitae per night, or until surprised

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Instant

The user of this Devotion cannot be surprised. The character rolls Wits + Composure (or the appropriate surprise dice pool) normally whenever something he would respond to happens suddenly. If the roll fails, this power takes effect and makes the roll a success. If the roll succeeds, the player may opt to expend the power anyway to automatically win initiative for the ensuing encounter. This makes character's initiative number one higher than the other highest initiative rolled.

After an activation of this power has prevented a surprise or won an initiative contest, the power is used up, and, to prevent any more surprises, Vitae

must be spent again. Only one Vitae may be spent at a time; the power is either active or it isn't. The effects of this Devotion are the matter of an instant's reaction. If additional combatants enter after the power has been used to win initiative, this Devotion does not cause the user to go faster than the newcomers should they happen to roll higher than the user placed with this power.

This power costs 10 experience points to learn.

RHINO'S HIDE

(Protean ••••, Resilience ••)

No matter how good or how fast you are, you will eventually take some licks in combat. A dedicated soldier learns to be tough. That isn't always good enough, though, so certain resourceful Gangrel learned a way to make their skins even tougher.

Cost: 1 Willpower per scene

Dice Pool: Stamina + Protean + Resilience

Action: Instant

Rhino's Hide grants Armor against all attacks (except fire and sunlight) equal to the successes gained on the activation roll. This Armor rating cannot exceed the character's Resilience rating.

This power costs 20 experience points to learn.

FORCED MARCH

(Celerity ••, Resilience ••)

The Carthian Movement has had the need to be adaptive since its earliest nights. The Kindred of the Movement have not always had motorized transportation. Before cars and trucks and planes, this Devotion was a popular method of overland transportation for Carthian Kindred. Forced March has fallen out of favor now that transportation is cheap and ubiquitous, but is still in use by some Kindred. After all, fuel purchases and vehicle repairs can be traced. Foot travel is harder to track.

Cost: Special (see below)

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

Using this Devotion, the vampire can run at the full speed allowed by her Celerity for the entire duration. Each activation of this power lasts a number of hours equal to the vampire's Resilience. Activating this Devotion costs 1 Vitae for every two dots of Celerity the vampire possesses, rounded up. Purchasing this Devotion costs 1 Vitae, activating the Devotion with Celerity ••• or •••• costs 2 Vitae and activating costs 3 Vitae with Celerity •••••.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

REGENERATION

(Protean ••••, Resilience ••••)

Kindred who place themselves in dangerous situations often get hurt, so they need to heal. This Devotion puts badly wounded Carthians back in the fray with speed that's startling even for Kindred.

Cost: 5 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Instant

This power takes as long to activate as it takes the character to spend the requisite Vitae. Each activation of this power heals a point of aggravated damage.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

HAIR TRIGGER

(Quicken Sight Devotion, Celerity ••, Resilience •)

This Devotion is a favorite of Carthian spies and snipers. It steadies their hands for the crucial moment of the kill, which the Quicken Sight Devotion already allows them to pinpoint precisely. The name and development comes from this use, though this Devotion is quickly rising in popularity among any Carthians who think they may see combat.

Cost: 1 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

For the turn when Hair Trigger is active, this Devotion adds a bonus to the user's Dexterity attribute equal to his Celerity. This bonus can cause the attribute to exceed the normal limits Blood Potency places on attribute maximums. Thus, a vampire with Celerity •• and Dexterity •••• would have Dexterity •••••• while this Devotion is active.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.

GIMME 50

(Dominate ••••, Obfuscate ••••)

Kindred in certain regimented or totalitarian Carthian domains sometimes have to follow orders. Conditioning would be a wonderful power for this purpose, if it didn't rob the soldiers of the initiative to fight on their own. Using Obfuscate to hide and dull the effects of Conditioning, some Carthian warlords have managed to create this Devotion for training Kindred to serve as soldiers.

Cost: 1 Willpower per roll

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate versus Resolve + Blood Potency



Action: Extended and contested; resistance is reflexive.

The successes to be accumulated on the rolls for this power are identical to the Conditioning power of Dominate. The effects differ, however, in that the bonus and penalty do not apply to Dominate attempts. The effects apply to any uses of the Intimidation skill (including uses of Disciplines that call for Intimidation to be rolled) aimed at a specific purpose, defined when the subject is being trained. The usual purpose for this is “follow the orders of superior officers.” Thus, superior officers in the subject’s covenant would enjoy the bonus to Intimidation him, while subordinates (or outsiders) would suffer the penalty. The trainee finds the superiors defined by this power far scarier than anything else.

This power does not rob those subjected to it of free will, as Conditioning does; instead, Gimme 50 makes them jumpy. The penalty from this power also applies to any rolls the subjects make to resist frenzy or Wassail. On the upside, the bonus applies to attempts to resist Röttschreck, since the drill instructor may even seem scarier than fire.

This power costs 20 experience points to learn.

ARMY OF ONE

(Auspex ••••, Obfuscate ••••)

Outnumbering an opponent provides tremendous advantages. When it’s not possible to actually have more allies present than the enemy does, a savvy tactician will fake it. Some Carthian Mekhet somewhere along the line took this idea very literally, creating this devotion to make herself seem like an entire angry mob.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Subterfuge + Auspex versus the highest Resolve among all targets

Action: Instant

Each success on the activation roll makes the user seem to have one more person with her, to the perceptions of any or all targets in visual range the user is aware of. These phantom allies have the appearance that all onlookers would most expect, formed of a gestalt of the whole audience’s emotional responses. None of the phantoms conjured by this power will match exactly with any real person. The user of the power is aware of the kind of phantoms she has conjured, so she can play the scene accordingly.

The phantoms can interact with the targets, but not with the physical environment (though objects

held by the targets will appear to interact with the phantoms, to the targets’ minds). The targets will take bashing damage if they believe the phantoms have hit them, but after taking damage a target ceases to be affected by the power. Any target who sees a phantom fail to interact with a physical object, such as by being unable to pick up an object, also ceases to be affected. Those who break out of the power suddenly see things as they are, the phantoms vanishing utterly from their perceptions. This causes them disorientation for one turn, levying a –1 penalty to all actions for that turn.

This power costs 30 experience points to learn.

EXPERIMENTAL DEVOTIONS

Not all new Devotions the Carthians come up with have decades of focused implementation behind them. Some Devotions, while useful, are the result of random experimentation by Carthians testing the limits of their vampiric conditions and abilities. This often results in odd combinations of powers, as a coterie shares the secrets of its clan Disciplines among its members to see what combinations might be developed.

TORPID AWARENESS

(Auspex • or •••••, Protean ••)

In sleep, what dreams may come? The dreams of the Kindred are often distorted and strange. The Carthians who developed this Devotion weren’t interested in the esoteric insights such dreams might offer; they saw the whole affair of sleep as a hindrance. This Devotion resulted from experimentation with Haven of Soil, since that power represented a controlled form of sleep.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Instant

By using this Devotion when going to sleep for the day, a vampire can retain all his senses, essentially “sleeping with his eyes open” and having immediate sensory awareness of the environment around him (such as a bedroom, a basement, a car and so on). This works even in conjunction with Haven of Soil. However, the bonuses from Heightened Senses do not function during slumber.

After purchasing the initial version of this power, an advanced version is also available at Auspex •••••. This version allows the vampire to project his astral form whenever he slumbers, with no need

for a roll. Even when the vampire enters torpor, he retains awareness of his immediate surroundings, though his spirit cannot travel.

This power costs nine experience points to learn the basic version and 30 experience points to learn the advanced version.

SEE THE REFLECTED FORM

(Auspex ••, Protean ••••)

Once the coterie that developed Torpid Awareness had mingled the use of Auspex and Protean, the coterie decided to try other combinations using the Gangrel member's more powerful abilities. What the members came up with could be quite useful in a domain with Lupine problems.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Auspex – target's Composure

Action: Instant

This power reveals any shapeshifting ability possessed by creatures the user views. The alternate forms appear as an alteration of the shape of the creature's aura. For those who can transform into multiple other shapes, this makes it difficult to discern what each one is. For each alternate shape beyond the first the subject may assume, the user of this power suffers a –1 penalty to his roll.

Dramatic Failure: The character draws the wrong conclusion. Sometimes this is obvious, as when a Kindred's aura appears to indicate all the forms of a Lupine. Sometimes it's not obvious, such as when a human-form Lupine's aura appears normal, or when a normal mortal appears to have Lupine forms.

Failure: The subject's aura appears normal, no matter what the truth is. However, since no distortion of the aura occurs at all, the user can tell that the power has failed to activate.

Success: For each success rolled, one alternate form can be perceived for certain. So if four successes are rolled, then all the forms of a Lupine could be viewed in the aura.

Exceptional Success: The insight of this power is gained with just a glance; the action is reflexive instead of instant.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

BLINK

(Dominate •, Vigor •)

This power imposes one-word commands on its targets just as the Dominate power Command, but

unlike Command, the instructions delivered must be physical actions.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate versus subject's Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

The victim's body reacts to the spoken Command (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 124) regardless of her will, nerve responses triggered mystically by the Devotion. The one word command can simply be a body part, in which case that part will spasm uncontrollably for one turn.

This power costs five experience points to learn.

SHOUT

(Celerity •, Dominate ••)

Celerity was the next physical discipline to be combined with Dominate. As would be expected, the power created a quickening effect. Strangely, the power only works when the Kindred user is speaking at full volume.

Cost: 1 Vitae keeps the benefits active for an entire scene.

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

This power allows Command (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 124) and Mesmerize (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, p. 125) to be used as reflexive actions, at the cost of 1 Vitae per activation. Any instructions must be bellowed loudly, or the power fails. Eye contact is not necessary when using Shout, but the target's name must be mentioned if eye contact is not established.

This power costs 10 experience points to learn.

IGNORE

(Dominate • Resilience •)

Only the master of Dominate was able to produce a useful power in combination with Resilience. Once developed, this power granted him an unshakable supernatural will, and an unmatched dedication to purpose.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

Instead of the normal +2 resistance bonus for a Willpower expenditure, this power adds 2 + Resilience to the appropriate resistance Attribute when activated. It can be activated in response to any

effect that would be resisted with Resolve or Composure, including mundane social rolls.

This power costs nine experience points to learn.

SUDDEN STRENGTH

(Celerity •, Vigor •)

Another area of inquiry intriguing to many Carthians is the combination of the physical disciplines. With this combination, a sudden burst of strength is possible by applying the force that Celerity would otherwise use to speed the vampire up.

Cost: 2 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

Celerity may not be activated in the same turn as Sudden Strength. Vigor must be active to use Sudden Strength. This power adds the user's Celerity dots to her Strength dots for the turn.

This power costs six experience points to learn.

IRON MUSCLES

(Resilience •, Vigor •)

The capacities of strength and stamina go hand in hand. This Devotion draws on the character's might to bolster her vitality.

Cost: 2 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

Vigor may not be active at the same time as Iron Muscles. Resilience must be active to use Iron Muscles. This power adds the user's Vigor to his Resilience for the scene, including the increase to Stamina and the additional levels of aggravated damage that may be downgraded.

This power costs eight experience points to learn.

INSTANT ADORATION

(Celerity •, Majesty •••)

The motto of some Carthian Daevas is "Celerity goes well with everything." Almost any kind of power can benefit from a little speed, or a little more speed. Entrancement certainly benefits, allowing the Daevas to enrapture a target with merely a glance.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke.

Action: Reflexive

The use of Entrancement (see *Vampire: The Requiem*, p. 130) becomes a reflexive action if the cost of Instant Adoration is paid. The Kindred need not



even speak with the target; a trill of laughter or a single glance will do. She could also speak her victim's name, or caress his arm or some other gesture that would not take away from the rhythm of conversation, or action. This accelerated Entrancement can be used in combat, so long as the target hasn't been attacked or harmed by the vampire using Instant Adoration.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

ARTIFACTS

The Carthian Movement, as a secular organization, has little or no official interest in mystical artifacts and relics. The value attached to certain items is not based on any imbued power, but rather on the historical significance of the treasure and the force of the argument the imbued item presents.

That isn't to say that Carthians won't kill or die to get their hands on some of the items listed here. There's a lot of prestige attached to owning a particularly moving piece, and some Kindred have made their careers in the Movement by displaying a priceless treasure during their campaigns for power.

STORYTELLER'S OPTION: ENHANCING STATUS

Considering the cultural value of these artifacts to Carthian Kindred, the Storyteller may choose to allow an artifact to enhance prestige among the members of the covenant. A vampire known to be carrying the Karalov Recording, for example, may enjoy an extra dot of Covenant Status (Carthians) so long as the artifact is in her possession.

This advantage should be applied only when the vampire in question is publicly known to possess the item, most usually requiring a display of some sort. The moment he loses the item (or is otherwise unable to produce evidence of his ownership), he will no longer gain the bonus. In fact, losing a treasured item could cause the vampire to lose Status beyond that which was conferred in the first place, making retaining the item more important than acquiring it in the first place.

The suggested Covenant Status bonus is listed with each item in this section. The bonus status should never allow the bearer's Status to exceed five dots.

THE DE GRAAF MANIFESTO

Carthian Status: •

Description: Written in March of 1801, this French document is inked on fine parchment and signed by de Graaf herself. The Manifesto was transported and traded all over Europe throughout the 19th century,

eventually disappearing while in the care of a young Gangrel as she made her way between domains in northern Italy. The Gangrel never arrived at her destination, and the Manifesto was thought to be forever lost.

The Manifesto itself is said to provide an astonishingly clear insight into the nascent philosophies of the Carthian Movement, as indicated by de Graaf's frank and uncluttered expression. Those who have read the document claim that de Graaf's genius is clearly evident in the arrangement of the arguments therein, and that the simple questions she poses throw the rationale of the competing covenants into serious doubt, proving simply and accurately that reason is incompatible with those organizations.

Rumor has it that the Manifesto resurfaced in recent years, and that the vampire who discovered it has already turned a tidy profit from its sale to an eager Carthian scholar. Where that scholar took it and what he intends to do with it is unknown.

Interpretation: Anyone who does read the Manifesto will become keenly aware of de Graaf's intellect and skill at debate. To understand the content, a character must be fluent in French and succeed on an Intelligence + Academics roll. The arguments of the Manifesto can be memorized with an extended Intelligence + Academics roll requiring 10 successes, with each roll representing one night of study. Full memorization of the Manifesto would justify the purchase of a debate specialty for the Politics Skill, or a Carthian theory specialty for the Academics Skill.

THE PRIVATEER'S PISTOL

Carthian Status: None

Description: This polished wood flintlock pistol, while in relatively poor condition, is highly valued because of the powerful impression of rebellion the Pistol conveys to anyone with The Spirit's Touch. By grasping the weapon and activating the power, vampires can still feel an inkling of a desperate battle, provoked by outrageous injustices somehow inflicted upon the original bearer of the weapon. Many who have experienced the sense of righteous rage and overwhelming need for release claim that it is the most succinct summary of the collected purpose and arguments of the Carthian Movement possible.

Those who have possessed the Pistol have taken great care to avoid diluting the emotion imprinted within the grain, and have refrained from repairing or restoring the artifact. As a result, the gun is useless to anyone incapable of feeling the ephemeral marks laid upon it.



The Pistol is believed to have originated somewhere in the Caribbean, claimed by a vampire scouring the harbor where its bearer fell. The Pistol has been traded from domain to domain ever since, most commonly inside a cushioned mahogany case emblazoned with a pair of dolphins.

Interpretation: Successful application of The Spirit's Touch will convey the emotions listed above. An exceptional success will reveal that the Pistol was used to fire the first shot in a mutiny aboard a masted frigate in the midst of a tropical storm, and that the shot brought down the captain of the ship in question. The bearer of the Pistol was gunned down immediately thereafter, and the impression ends there. Those Carthians who have experienced the full impact of the Pistol are divided on its explanation. Some claim that the Pistol is an example that successful revolution requires full devotion, even unto death. Others argue that the Pistol bears a condemnation of violent revolt, demonstrating the futility of politically motivated murder.

ROUSSEAU'S NOTES

Carthian Status: •

Description: This unruly mass of scorched papers is believed to contain some of the early drafts of

essays and deliberations that would eventually become "Discourse on Inequality" — one of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's most famous and provocative works of socio-political philosophy. These Notes display the thought process that went into his conception of man as the "noble savage," an argument defining modern hierarchical societies as an artificial, corrupting force on humanity.

Much of the philosophy of the Carthian Movement is rooted in works similar to Rousseau's, so it's not surprising that Carthians highly value anything of his that they can get their hands on, much less a near-complete set of the rough notes for one of his books. The original papers are said to have been stolen by a Swiss Mekhet shortly after Rousseau's death in 1778, and thus they disappeared into the world of the Kindred.

Every so often, the Notes surface again in the hands of one or another Carthian vampires, often displayed as a means to underscore one's dedication to the Movement before being sold or stolen again. No fewer than three Carthian Kindred have met their Final Death in the intrigues that have surrounded these papers. One Sanctified Bishop is known to have secured them in 1921, and nearly

managed to toss them into a fire before they were reclaimed by members of the Movement.

Interpretation: To read Rousseau's Notes, a vampire must be fluent in French. To fully understand the significance of the statements therein (and how they tie into his published work), a successful Intelligence + Academics roll must be made. The Carthian arguments based on the content of the Notes and whether or not they change the meaning of the "Discourse on Inequality" are so many and so varied that it would be impossible to summarize them all here.

THE KARALOV RECORDING

Carthian Status: •

Description: In 1961, a Nosferatu named Murman Karalov was present in the Elysium of Tbisli during a now-infamous purge of all Carthian and Carthian-allied elements from the domain. Hidden from view, he managed to tape-record a full half-hour of the Invictus Prince's near-incoherent rambling diatribe against the Carthian Movement, including the fatal instructions delivered to his Sheriff and the "loyal and proper Kindred of quality" in the city.

Karalov escaped the purge by leaving his home domain, eventually learning that he was the only Carthian vampire to survive the night. Overcome with grief and rage, he walked into the sun soon after, choosing Final Death over the knowledge that his colleagues and compatriots had all perished without him. His Recording was found and replayed by a clanmate and fellow Carthian, who, upon realizing what he was listening to, quickly grabbed the tape and took it to his allies in the Movement.

The tape was promptly copied and distributed to several Carthian cells across Europe. Many of the duplicates were eventually destroyed (or distorted beyond recognition by repeated playback), but a few have survived to the modern nights. Nobody has bothered to create a mass-distributed version of the Recording yet.

Interpretation: To understand the Karalov Recording, a vampire must be fluent in Georgian. Those who are will quickly feel a chill as the tape unspools: it offers a clear and indisputable picture of absolute power gone mad. The worst potential of the despotic system of the Invictus is realized on the tape in stark, unedited form, and listening to it will often enflame the passions of

those Kindred who have reason to dislike the First Estate. However, the combined effects of age and the Masquerade have distorted the voices on the tape, and some have argued that it may be a staged fake engineered to create an exaggerated picture of Invictus villainy.

THE AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Carthian Status: None

Description: Although not unique — more than a dozen copies are known to be in the possession of Carthian Kindred throughout North America — the original prints of the American Declaration of Independence are still considered valued artifacts in the Movement. Many Kindred see a reflection of their own struggle in the words of the Declaration, and find great inspiration in its wording.

Each copy of the document has been handled so many times that The Spirit's Touch is not likely to produce any reliable results. Several Kindred have claimed that their copy of the Declaration is the "first copy" or the original, but most or all are fraudulent, and verifying whether a copy was the first, 10th or last off the presses is impossible.

In recent years, a controversy has arisen over some of the copies, which have shown slight discrepancies when compared to one another. It is now believed that a coded message may have been hidden in the prints by a person or persons unknown, and that analysis of all the discrepancies might lead to its revelation. No vampire has been able to verify or dispute this claim, since the copies are so widespread (and many are unaccounted for).

Interpretation: To read the Declaration of Independence, a vampire must be fluent in English. The text is no different from that duplicated in countless books and prints, though some small spots and print errors appear to alter certain characters upon close examination. A success on a Wits + Investigation roll would be required to notice these discrepancies. (A +2 bonus is added to this roll if the vampire reading the document has Heightened Senses.) These alterations, while appearing random, do occasionally alter the meaning of certain passages in a manner that is often so appropriate as to suggest conscious interference. Whether they enhance or detract from the Declaration is a matter of personal opinion to those who examine them.

THE BISHOP'S CARICATURE

Carthian Status: •

Description: In 1858, a Carthian citizen of New York commissioned a series of caricatures by one of his mortal allies, asking him to create portraits parodying three prominent Sanctified Kindred in the city. Without awareness as to the significance of his subjects, the artist is said to have created three images so unbecoming and yet so accurate that Kindred viewers were struck dumb with merry amazement. Eventually, the Sanctified vampires in question dispatched their loyal flock with instructions to find and destroy all three images. Two were successfully stained and torn to pieces, but one survived the hunt — the image of the Bishop himself. Insane as it sounds, several Kindred were thrust into torpor in battles over the images.

Hidden away, the image was eventually forgotten by all but the Carthians. They remembered it not just for its humorous effect, but also for the surprising rage it provoked in the Sanctified vampires of the city and the violence that followed. Astonished at the Lancea Sanctum's inability to

endure criticism, the Carthians incorporated spirited mockery into their political arsenal, finding that it often threw the officials of the Sanctified off-balance while enhancing the image of the Carthians among younger vampires in the city.

The Caricature was eventually sold, and has since passed into the possession of several Carthians. Whether or not the Caricature has left the domain of New York is unknown.

Interpretation: The Bishop's Caricature is funny, but in the words of a recent observer, "it's not that big a deal." The image itself is hardly damning enough to provoke conflict, and thus it's valued more as a symbol of Sanctified irrationality than as a propaganda piece. Anyone who examines the Caricature closely will understand that the individual who drew it was especially skilled, and the viewer may actually be able to trace its origin by comparing it to archived political cartoons of the day. Although the Bishop portrayed in the image still walks, nobody has attempted to discover whether or not he still remembers it.



APPENDIX: ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

Here's one.

Pinned under the car.

You believe in the Carthian cause,
don't you, little vampire?

Don't you?

— Brock Mayfield, Carthian enforcer

*We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies.
Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.*

— Henry John Temple, Lord Palmerston

CARTHIAN GHOUL

Description: Before tasting a vampire's blood, this hapless soul was a normal member of his society: middle-income bracket, no special education or training, simply a random person off the street. That was his Carthian regnant's intention — to "freeze" an average person in his tracks and see what even the barest strains of the Requiem would do. The regnant gives the ghouls tasks, of course, so he fulfills a degree of purpose.

This ghoulish creature knows that he is just an exercise, an experiment in social position and zeitgeist, and that the experiment will end one of two ways: either his regnant will Embrace him and complete the experiment or declare it a failure and terminate it. The ghoulish creature knows that his actions help determine which action his regnant will take, but doesn't know what actions correspond to what outcome. He therefore varies between paralytic fear and manic activity, trying in vain to save his own existence.

The ghoulish creature's regnant might burden him with any kinds of tasks, probably errand-running and messenger work, the sorts of things that the Carthian

doesn't want to do or can't do (because they must happen during the day). The ghoulish creature sometimes meets other Kindred during the course of his work, and wonders if they might be able to help him. Not to escape or destroy his regnant, of course, because he has far too much respect for his master for that. He just wants to find out how to please his regnant, to discover what he's doing wrong.

Apparent Age: 21

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Occult 1, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive (Speeding) 1, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Persuasion (Wheeling) 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Vampires) 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Business) 1, Danger Sense, Fleet of Foot 2, Iron Stamina 1, Resources 1

Willpower: 5

Morality: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Sloth

Health: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 11 (with Fleet of Foot)

Disciplines: Resilience 1

OUT-OF-TOUGH MENTOR

Description: Once, she was part of a great experiment. She'll explain it at great length to anyone who'll listen — it was (to hear her tell it) the first action the Carthians of this city really took as a group, and should have been truly monumental. The great experiment should have brought neonates from all around to see how the covenant really worked. The great experiment should have, but it didn't. Everything fell apart.





Why it fell apart is something of a debate. She tells the story differently every time. Sometimes, she says that a massive breach of the Masquerade exposed many of the Kindred in the city and forced them to flee. Sometimes, she says that Belial's Brood struck one terrible night, slaying many of the influential Carthians. Sometimes, she says it was Lupines. No matter who the enemy, the experiment always fell apart in the space of a single night and she is the only Carthian who knows what really happened. In no case was the tragedy the fault of the Carthians, and certainly she bears no responsibility.

Doggedly loyal to the covenant, she would be known as a bygone relic if she weren't so knowledgeable. She knows almost everything about the covenant and its history in the area, and has contacts with Kindred in many of the surrounding domains. She is stringently non-violent, but the Prefect in the city has decreed that she is to be protected from any possible harm. Thus, she is never alone — younger coterie take turns looking out for her, learning from her and trying to imagine what really happened that terrible night so many years ago.

Clan: Ventrue

Embrace: 1902

Apparent Age: 25

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 3, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics (Vampires) 4, Science 1

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Expression (Storytelling) 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Former Students) 1, City Status 3, Clan Status (Ventrue) 1, Covenant Status (Carthians) 3, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven 3, Herd 1, Retainers 5

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Health: 8

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Celerity 2, Dominate 3, Majesty 2, Resilience 2

Derangements: Avoidance, Vocalization

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

PEACEKEEPER

Description: During life, he wasn't great at keeping people happy. He was just good at keeping them from killing each other. A stern glare worked sometimes, other times a quick jab in the kidneys, but he had a knack for making violent folks take stock of what they were doing and, usually, give it a rest.

Taking work as a bouncer seemed an obvious choice. Night after night, he'd pull people off each other, drag



them outside and occasionally break a nose or a finger just to underline the point. He's not cruel, but he doesn't like to say things twice (or once, if he can avoid it).

Then, one night, he tried to break up a fight between a man and a woman. Turned out the woman didn't need any help — she was trying to feed on the man. The resulting melee left the hapless vessel dead and the bouncer bleeding out. The vampire was impressed by his skill and by his judgment. After all, he'd noticed that someone was in trouble, even if years of cultural programming had taken him to the wrong choice as to whom, so she Embraced him.

Now he's an undead peacekeeper. He watches the spots in the city that the Powers That Be (be that Prefect, Council or even a different covenant — he's not terribly choosy about his employers) and makes sure that the Beast doesn't rear its ugly head. He'll try words first, but failing that, he'll bring out the bat.

Clan: Gangrel

Embrace: 1990

Apparent Age: 30s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 1, Stealth (Lurking) 2, Weaponry (Bat) 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Calming) 2, Streetwise 2

Merits: Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Disarm, Fighting Style: Boxing 3, Herd 1

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Envy

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 2

Disciplines: Protean 3, Resilience 2

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

HERD CULTIVATOR

Description: She was majoring in sociology at a nearby university. Her focus was current trends, and more specifically, how the length of time a trend re-



mained popular shrank as communication became faster. It wasn't glamorous, but it was interesting to her. She supplemented her schoolwork with a good healthy dose of partying, but she never really got into the on-campus frat and room parties. Her chosen scene was the parties downtown, where people found some space, set up the sound system and abandoned themselves until the last dancer fell over or the place got raided.

It was at just such a party that she met her sire. He was looking for someone to help him make sense of the rapidity of the world, and after chatting her up a bit and finding out about her fascination with trends and lifestyles, he decided she would be perfect to show him how to survive in these modern times. He had high hopes for her — she would have been a sort of urban planner for vampires, developing areas where the mortals would gather through careful manipulation of the social scene.

She wanted nothing to do with him. He was disturbed on a profound and dangerous level, and his own covenant reeked of trends and beliefs that died years ago and lay rotting in his diseased mind. She fled to the welcoming arms of the Carthian Movement as soon as she could. But the Carthians decided his idea had merit — and after she got used to the Requiem, she couldn't really disagree.

The local Kindred know and respect her work in keeping mortals together and secure, so that the vampires may feed at leisure. When something threatens that security, she needs to investigate, of course, but since she's so effective at keeping the mortals up and partying, she can always find volunteers to help out.

Clan: Daeva
Embrace: 1995
Apparent Age: 22
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (Sociology) 2, Computer 2, Investigation 1, Medicine (Blood Loss) 1, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 1, Larceny 1
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 3, Streetwise (Underground Parties) 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Barfly, City Status 1, Contacts (Partygoers, University, EMTs) 3, Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Striking Looks 1
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 7
Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Greed
Health: 7
Initiative: 5
Defense: 2
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 1
Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 1, Majesty 2
Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

TALENT SCOUT

Description: It used to be that the city was solidly the domain of the Circle of the Crone. The Aco-



lytes were insular to an extreme, though. They interacted only with each other and with their ghouls, and didn't even notice as the political and religious climate in the city became ultra-conservative.

No one's quite sure where the pressure originated. It might have been the churches, possibly City Hall or maybe the governor's office. Whatever institution it was that started the call for a return to "traditional family values," the result was the same. Anything bearing the stamp of alternate lifestyle or non-evangelical faith found itself on the receiving end of mafia-like scare tactics, unsympathetic police and harassment from the leaders of the city. After the sixth incidence of arson, even the hide-bound Acolytes took notice. They tried to solve the problem with their magic, but that didn't work so well. They gathered to cast their spells in a certain building downtown, and some hot-tempered individual found out about a "pagan sacrifice" happening in said building. The flames rose high, and the Circle of the Crone left the city on the wind.

The Carthians moved in a month later. They brought with them a vampire with a keen eye for picking mortals who would survive the transition to the Requiem with their minds intact. The Carthians know that in order to hold power in this city, they need to stay under the radar and work alongside the mortals, not against them. It's going to be a challenging experiment, and for that, the Carthians will need people who know the city and its moral and political climate. The Talent Scout is here to find those people and deliver them to their proper sires. He begins by tailing them, learning their lives and routines, finding out their strange habits and dirty secrets and noting all of this information in his journal. (He doesn't even write in English anymore, preferring a strange and arcane form of shorthand.) Once he makes his reports to the Carthians in charge, he'll kidnap the marks and deliver them to the appointed places. Normally, he leaves thereafter, but if any of the marks interest him he might stick around to see how they turn out.

Clan: Mekhet

Embrace: 1960

Apparent Age: 30s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Psychology) 2, Investigation (Red Tape) 3, Occult 1, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Brawl (Subduing) 2, Drive (Tailing) 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2
Merits: Covenant Status (Carthians) 3, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fresh Start, Retainers (Assistant) 1
Willpower: 6
Humanity: 4
Virtue: Fortitude
Vice: Lust
Health: 7
Initiative: 9 (with Fast Reflexes)
Defense: 3
Speed: 10
Blood Potency: 2
Disciplines: Celerity 1, Auspex 3, Obfuscate 3
Vitae/per Turn: 11/1

EMBITTERED ICONOCLAST

Description: She received the Embrace decades ago, and learned to enjoy her unlife. The Requiem was a constant crescendo, a wave of sound and blood, and she rode it blissfully. She joined the Carthian Movement because her sire told her of the freedom it offered, and for the first 30 years of her existence among the Kindred, she did nothing but revel in the Danse Macabre. She lost count of how many mortals died beneath her fangs, but she remembers the first one, because he was the only one she regrets. As his life ebbed away down her throat, she heard the death rattle and thought, *I don't know his name.*

Simple hedonism couldn't sustain her forever. She found a cause, the cause of Purity. She found an Avus and changed her blood, joining the Deucaliones on

their quest for uniformity and perfection. More mortals died to slake her thirst, but now her vows prevented her from stooping to mere debauchery. Now every mortal who died did so to further a noble cause, and she learned the name of every one.

The night her cause died, she stood ankle-deep in ash, the only survivor of her bloodline in the city. The aggressors were Carthians, but they refused to acknowledge the Deucaliones' superiority. And, horribly, it seemed they were right to do so, since the Deucaliones fell so easily. The victors offered her amnesty, and since she had enemies aplenty, she took them up on it.

She haunts the Barrens now, a specter, a shadow of her former glory. She once had a reputation as a succubus, and then as a paladin. Now her reputation is that of a wrathful ghost, a memory of the city's past that still hasn't faded. Her knowledge of the city is formidable, as is her command of the arts of war, but she can seldom be induced to teach. Some say she's just waiting for the right night for one final battle. Some say she's got a death wish. Some say she carries a list of names — every mortal she's ever killed, save one. If a Kindred could discover the identity of that first victim, who knows how she might react?

Clan: Ventrue (Deucalion)

Embrace: 1898

Apparent Age: Late teens

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 1, Occult 2, Politics (Kindred, Racial) 2, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Stealth 1, Weaponry (Machete) 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Fast Reflexes 2, City Status 2, Covenant Status (Carthians) 1, Iron Stamina 2, Weaponry Dodge

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 3

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Gluttony

Health: 8

Initiative: 7 (with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 4



Disciplines: Celerity 2, Dominate 4, Impurity 4, Protean 2, Resilience 2, Vigor 1

Derangements: Depression, Narcissism, Megalomania

Vitae/per Turn: 13/2

TRADITIONALIST

Description: The Carthian Movement is not the easiest covenant in which to espouse traditional values and practices. In a world obsessed with progress and forward-thinking methods, though, sometimes considering what the past has to offer can be somewhat revolutionary.

Embraced in a quiet town far from any big city, he learned that Kindred needed time to learn the steps of the Danse Macabre, as it were. His sire was experienced, but his mind was going as he neared torpor. He imparted much of his accumulated knowledge to his young childe, and then settled into a slumber from which he has not yet awakened (not to the childe's knowledge, anyway). That sire was unaligned, but explained what he knew about the covenants, and the childe left for the city, looking for members of Invictus.

He spent some time with that covenant, but after an incident that he's loath to discuss, he left and pledged his loyalty to the Carthian Movement. He eschews a position of leadership, but enjoys playing an advisor, and bases many of his words of wisdom on the knowledge given to him by his sire.

The problem is, of course, that he isn't in touch with the modern world and his sire was even less so. The advice works well for dealing with Kindred

(sometimes), but when dealing with mortals, it seems a bit out of place. The Traditionalist maintains that wisdom is wisdom, and with a little creative reinterpretation his little anecdotes can form the basis of a new codex of laws. Sometimes, he wonders if that's what his sire had in mind all along . . .

Clan: Ventruue

Embrace: 1939

Apparent Age: Late 30s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Woodworking) 2, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive (Trucks) 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Expression (Extemporaneous Speech) 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: City Status 2, Covenant Status (Carthians) 3, Meditative Mind, Resources 3

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Pride

Health: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 3

Disciplines: Animalism 4, Resilience 2, Vigor 1

Vitae/per Turn: 12/1

EXPATRIATE

Description: The covenants aren't at war. That's what she was told after her Embrace, as she was still coming to grips with consuming Vitae for all eternity. Her sire said that the Carthians (his faction of choice) and the Lancea Sanctum (of which he spoke highly, but his religious views prevented him from joining) were not enemies and had much to teach each other. And she took comfort in that, because she was first and last a scholar, and the idea of covenants with untold history teaching each other about the past was appealing in a world of blood and horror.

She learned the truth one horrible night, when she returned to her sire's haven and found the Sanctified peeling his flesh from his bones with a device made





of wire and wood. She fled, trying to find the other Carthians, but most of them were already ash in the river. She spent four harrowing weeks between cities. She lost a hand in the sun, starved herself nearly into torpor and finally arrived in a new city that she knew to be the domain of the Carthians.

She was not a warrior before and hasn't become one, but she has definitely become more than a scholar. She is a scout and a spy, and she watches the city's borders for incursions from the other covenants. She knows, intellectually, that one coup does not mean that all non-Carthian Kindred are barbarians, but in the presence of vampires of other covenants, she hears her sire's screams and feels her Beast rise.

Clan: Mekhet

Embrace: 1985

Apparent Age: 25

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 3, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 2, Drive (Following) 2, Firearms (Head Shots) 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Eidetic Memory, Fleet of Foot 2, Haven 4

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 13 (with Fleet of Foot)

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Obfuscate 3

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

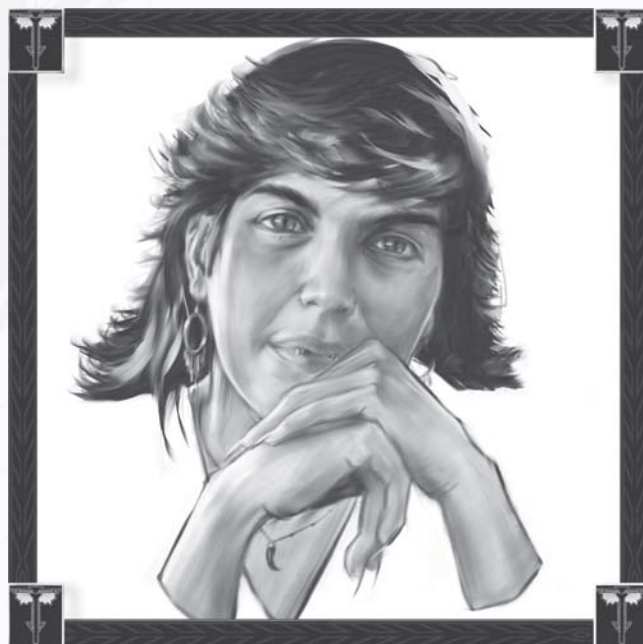
CARTHIAN LAWYER

Description: She doesn't remember her sire or her Embrace. She isn't sure what year she last saw the sun, but then, she's not entirely sure what year it is currently. She doesn't remember her mortal name, only her alias among the Kindred. She doesn't even remember how to talk to mortals. It's been too long.

She does know, however, that the city is alive. Rather, it exists as a vampire does — in a state that fulfills many of the requirements of life yet is not life. She knows that vampires survive at the city's sufferance, and she knows that the city has Traditions of its own.

She knows the name of every Kindred in the city. New vampires find her staring over their shoulders within a few weeks of arriving, but she doesn't threaten them. She doesn't need to. If necessary, she can cripple their bloodborne powers with a glance and a hiss of forbiddance (see "Carthian Law," p. 172).

The Carthians of the city know about her and respect her for her knowledge of Kindred society, but they have no idea of the power she really represents. They



think she is mercurial because it will soon be time for her to sleep. They don't know that she just woke up.

Clan: Nosferatu

Embrace: 1701

Apparent Age: 40s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 4, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Local Legends) 4

Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Stealth (Stalking) 4, Survival 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Rats) 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 5

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Carthian Lawyer, Contacts (Street People, Occult Societies) 2, Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Danger Sense, Retainers (Rat Ghouls) 3

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 3

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Gluttony

Health: 9

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 6

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Celerity 2, Dominate 1, Nightmare 5, Obfuscate 3, Resilience 1, Vigor 3

Vitae/per Turn: 15/3

PLANT

Description: He was quite the libertine in life. He went to college, yes, but really his passion was a self-centered kind of freedom. He wanted to say and do whatever he wanted, and if other people happened to agree, that was great. If they didn't, well, they couldn't stop him from living as he pleased!

He didn't live in a vacuum, though. He had family. He loved them and if anything could crack his snide veneer, it was them. That was how his sire finally broke him.

He isn't sure why he was Embraced, and he's never heard a straight answer from his sire. He knows that when he became a vampire, he fled into the city, eluding his sire for several weeks before the Hound finally found him. He didn't know the particulars of the Requiem, but he'd seen enough movies to have an idea, and a quick trip to the library filled in a few more blanks.

By the time his sire caught up with him, he'd developed a hatred for the older Kindred so profound that even the Vinculum couldn't quite suborn it. "Make no mistake," his sire told him then, "I will have your loyalty." The Plant sneered and spat blood in the vampire's face.

The next night, the sire killed the Plant's mother in front of him. The night after that, his father. He pledged loyalty then and begged for his sire to stop. The next night, his sire killed his older sister.

He had a large family, once. His sire had enough material to continue this torture for a solid month. By the time it was over, the Plant had only a few cousins remaining, and he was a broken wreck of what he'd once been. His will belonged to his sire and, by extension, the Ordo Dracul.

It was only then that he was told his intended function — to hide among the Carthian Movement and discover a few obtuse tidbits of information that the Dragons needed. Once, he would have been appalled, but he doesn't have that capacity anymore. He does as he's told, faking smiles, reciting the same dogma about personal freedom he always has. Somewhat ironically, the Carthians love him for it, but if a spark of his old personality exists within his beleaguered soul, more than praise is needed to revive it.

Clan: Daeva

Embrace: 2000

Apparent Age: 19

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3



Mental Skills: Academics (Philosophy) 2, Computer 2, Occult (Vampires) 1, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Cycling) 2, Drive 1, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Philosophical Debate) 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Covenant Status (Ordo Dracul) 1, Direction Sense, Haven 2, Mentor (Sire) 1

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Pride

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 1

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Majesty 1

Coils of the Dragon: Chastise the Beast

Derangements: Anxiety

Vitae/per Turn: 10/1

MATERIAL GIRL

Quote: "Whatever."

Description: Her sire picked her as a decoration, as protective coloration and as a prop for his twisted feeding schemes. He eventually planned to train her to fetch prey back to him, as he'd seen elder vampires do. In his mind, she would become (like him) a finely sculpted piece of bait, freeing him to evolve into a greater role.



Unfortunately for the sire, he ignorantly Embraced her just as VII was gearing up to smoke out his town. Her development coincided with VII's escalating attacks, inclining her toward the violent style of the Daeva Requiem, rather than the suave. When her sire became a casualty, she shrugged.

Now she's a Carthian bruiser, a scary shell of her cheery old persona. Her role in the clan is, quite simply, "go-to girl when you need somebody torn to pieces." Her fondness for the Husk Devotion makes her particularly effective against other Kindred, and as effective as can be expected against other antagonists. Unfortunately, it's also made her a raging Vitae addict and, on two occasions when she got caught up in things, a diablerist.

She's a slight teen with sprayed-up hair, a tube-top, a miniskirt and a lunchbox purse. Some nights she remembers enough to leave the leg warmers at home. Too much makeup conceals corpse-pallor and eyes that belong on a rabid dog seconds after it has been shot.

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1987

Apparent Age: Late teens

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Grapple) 4, Drive 1, Expression (Dance) 2, Politics 1, Socialize 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Seem Harmless) 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Carthian Pull 2, Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Haven Location 1, Haven Security 3, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Gluttony

Health: 8

Initiative: 5 (7 with Celerity)

Defense: 2

Speed: 11 (33 with Celerity)

Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae: 12/1)

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Resilience 1, Vigor 2, Protean 1

Derangements: Fixation 6, Irrationality 5

Devotions: Husk (see p. 191)

STRIDENT ATHEIST

Quote: "The Testament of Longinus really should be titled *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Mass Murderers*."

Description: She really did believe. Oh yes. She believed and she organized nonviolent protests outside abortion clinics and she held vigils when prisoners were going to be executed. She ran bake sales for the homeless shelter and made sure the church picnic wasn't just 50 families each bringing a desert. She attended services and paid full attention to the sermons. She was in a Bible study group, but, more than that, she really tried to walk the walk. She tried to live a Christian life. She tried because she believed.

Then came the Requiem. Then came one of the Sanctified who was impressed by this humble soldier of Christ and felt that she was a seed, currently locked in a cell of petty good behavior, but one who could, in time, blossom into a mighty oak of righteousness.

Her Embrace didn't pervert her love of God. Her Embrace destroyed it. To her, there is no greater argument against a loving Father in Heaven than the unnatural dead-life of the Kindred. She no longer believes in the soul, or the hereafter, or forgiveness or divine justice and mercy. Instead she believes religion is the cloak that the wicked pull around their cruelty.

She's doing more with her Requiem than just fulminating about false prophets, of course. Her organization skills didn't fade with her faith, and she's one of those essential people who doesn't try to know or control everything. Instead, she just knows the right people to ask.

As it happens, her sire was cast out of the Sanctified, not only for his arrogant Embrace, but for daring to besmirch a good Christian and lead to her downfall. He's

still around, desperate, despised and subtly tormented by his child whenever she can deniably arrange it.

The modest Eddie Bauer wardrobe of her living days as a Christian fits her just as well in the role of strict rational materialist. She's still slender and still has chestnut hair in a ponytail. But the demeanor of slightly tired warmth and good cheer from her living days has decayed into a clenched, humorless fervor.

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1956

Apparent Age: Early 30s

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Academics (History of Religious Atrocities) 2, Athletics 1, Computer 1, Drive 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Appeal to Logic) 2, Politics (Who Owes What to Whom) 5, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 2, Weaponry 3

Merits: Allies (Social Workers) 2, Allies (Libertarians) 1, Allies (Carthian Security Personnel) 1, Carthian Pull 3, Contacts (Philanthropists, Atheists, Teetering Sanctified in Spiritual Crisis, Unbound Nihilists) 4, Covenant Status (Carthians) 4, Haven Location 2, Haven Security 2, Haven Size 2, Herd 2

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 6

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Pride

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 2 (Vitae: 11/1)

Disciplines: Majesty 1, Nightmare 1, Obfuscate 3, Vigor 2

THE BIG BROTHER

Quote: "Big adjustment? Hell yeah. Wanna know when my Embrace really hit home? This is embarrassin', but it was when I realized I'd cooled down an' my crab lice were leaving."

Description: The more formal members of other covenants love to smirk at the big dumb Carthian hick. Even the more formal members of the Movement wince when he strolls into Elysium in his best cowboy boots and Stetson. When he's on the street in overalls and a gimme seed-corn hat? Forget it.



He's hairy and uncouth and vulgar, and it's easy to feel superior to him: a bulky guy in coveralls with an unkempt beard, frizzy hair down to his collar and grease under his fingernails. That's why he's such a critical resource for neonates. Because he might not be smart (though then again, he just might be) and he might not be fashionable, but he's real. When you ask him a question, you get an answer that's straight, no chaser, no hedging, no self-serving grandiose bullshit, no half-lies that mislead you into dependency on him.

The Big Brother is a guy you can ask the embarrassing questions because he's beyond shame, and he's the guy you can ask for help with the serious problems because he's not going to see your problem through the lens of his ambition. He's not bucking for Prince or Harpy or Prefect. He drives a tow truck on a night route. He feeds on hookers and bums and stray animals and anyone he can get loaned from his fellows in the Movement. He sleeps in the forgotten basement of a car-impound lot. He doesn't have a great quest or a spiritual mission: ask him why he's Carthian and he says, "Because they're cool and not dicks."

This isn't to say he can't be a jerk or a pain in the ass. He's got a knack for showing up at the wrong time and saying the wrong thing. He can be forgetful, and he's in the habit of never returning or repaying anything he borrows. But there are a lot of prominent Kindred who give him a surprising amount of slack, because they remember his kindness way back when. Before they surpassed him.

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1977

Apparent Age: 28

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Athletics 2, Brawl (All-Out Haymaker) 4, Crafts (Motors) 3, Drive (Big Truck) 4, Empathy (Neonates) 3, Firearms 2, Politics (Carthians) 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise (Rednecks) 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Allies (Dog Trainers & Breeders) 3, Allies (Teamsters, Taxi Drivers) 2, Carthian Pull 2, Contacts (Mechanics, Animal Control Officers, Cops) 3, Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Haven Location 1, Haven Security 2

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Sloth

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae: 10/1)

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Protean 2

Derangements: Sanguinary Animism 6

MS. FIXIT

Quote: "Yes, the price is high. But if I can't improve your situation, it's either perfect or hopeless. Do you think your situation is perfect? No? Hopeless? Then let's get to work."



Description: By day, she vetted contracts at a manufacturing firm. By night, she filed nuisance lawsuits on behalf of the civil rights movement. But she felt she was losing the fight. Rather than give up, she geared up. She quit her day job, took the pay cut and went to work full time as an attack lawyer for the ACLU.

(This wrecked her marriage. She has never really dealt with that. Her husband is still around, though she's tried to sever all contact. Their daughter recently got appointed Chief of Surgery and still gets cards from Mom at Christmas and on her birthday.)

With the ACLU she had some successes, but the work always seemed as if it was just loss-stopping. She never really made any gains, she just kept Nixon and his cronies from making things worse, for the time being. She wanted real power and kept pushing and prodding and instigating until she found it.

Specifically, she found it when she woke up after a three-day fugue. She was in Atlantic City and she was pregnant and (as she eventually learned) there were photos of her doing drugs and pissing on a US flag and squirming around in an interracial, bisexual three-way. She remembered none of it, but she saw the proof and was told what would happen if she didn't just quit.

She didn't just quit. She kept pushing and it all came out, she kept pushing and it made her a lightning rod for right-wing demagogues, and an embarrassment to her cause. She didn't quit, she was sent away by the people she'd tried to help, the cause for which her life had been ruined.

She was institutionalized for a while. Her psychiatrist was very skilled, and uncovered memories of a woman who walked in shadows and whose moony eyes could swallow the human will entire. She remembered the woman who drank blood and found others, found the Kindred and when she discovered the Carthians she demanded the Embrace from them.

She's been fighting the good fight in death with far more effectiveness than she ever did in life. Her pushy nature and steel-trap mind have adapted themselves to the Danse Macabre, but her first interest is in the molding of human society. This puts her at odds with the great bulk of Kindred, whose interest in mortals consists of feeding and remaining unnoticed, but that's not good enough for Ms. Fixit. She wants to make things better for society, and if that means helping vampires in order to get enough pull, well, she's got the connections and the realpolitik experience to make that happen.

There's an aura of '50s housewife about her that she just can't shake, or perhaps doesn't want to. She has the Barbara Billingsley immobile blonde coif,

the skirt and pearls, the angora sweaters and immaculate fingernails. She looks as if she should be handing a martini to the man in the gray flannel suit, instead of dismantling Invictus corporate cabals because they got in the way of a fair settlement to families poisoned by the Invictus chemical plant.

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1970

Apparent Age: Mid-40s

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

Skills: Academics 2, Athletics 1, Computer 1, Drive 1, Empathy (Bullshit Detector) 2, Expression 2, Firearms 3, Intimidation (Threats of Political Ruin) 3, Persuasion 3, Politics (Ruining) 4, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Dirty Cops, Crooked Judges, Mayor's Aides) 2, Allies (Immigrant Community, Slum Tenants) 1, Carthian Pull 2, Contacts (Media, Financiers, Liberation Theologians, College Intellectuals, Think Tanks) 5, Covenant Status (Carthians) 3, Haven Location 2, Haven Security 3, Haven Size 1, Resources 3, Retainers 3

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae: 10/1)

Disciplines: Dominate 3, Majesty 1, Resilience 2

THE COUNSELOR

Quote: "How do you feel about that?"

Description: A vampire who fears encroaching madness is a very lonely creature. He can't turn to his fellow Kindred — displaying weakness can, at best, result in a loss of esteem and trust, even if the reaction is an uncommon pity. More likely, his fellow predators just pounce. Telling ghouls is an even worse idea, as their first reaction is probably an excess of sympathy, all fawning advice, masking a secret hope for reward. Telling a mortal is the cleanest choice emotionally, but by far the messiest, considering the Danse Macabre.

The answer found by the counselor's sire was: you tell a mortal, then Embrace her so she can't tell any-



one else. He found the calmest, most detached, emotionally resilient psychiatrist available, became a client and then lived out the secret fantasy of many psych patients by killing his analyst. Bringing her out of death and into the Requiem was just a necessary final step.

To the surprise of everyone involved, this plan worked out well. The sire achieved relief from his symptoms, though it took quite some time. As part of the process, the analyst convinced him to release her (he'd been keeping her isolated in a country manor), arguing that he would be able to trust the advice of only a free and disinterested counselor, not one who was constantly angling for escape. The pair have parted ways, and the Counselor has found a niche in the city, making an uncomplicated emancipation from her sire in order to meet in person the Conscription she corresponded with as a neonate. A fresh-minted ancilla, she continues her work ministering to the Carthians (since they're about the only Kindred around trusting enough to show weakness) as well as her explorations of the Beast's motives.

Having dropped 30 unwanted pounds during the Embrace, she's now slender and severe. Her dark hair sports one dramatic white stripe, an effect muted by her tight bun hairdo. She wears skirts of varying lengths from the knee to the ankle, blouses ranging from white through muted pastel colors and shoes with no more than a two-inch heel.

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1981

Apparent Age: Mid-40s

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

Skills: Academics (Psychology) 4, Animal Ken 2, Empathy (Recognize Defense Mechanism) 4, Investigation 2, Medicine (Psychiatry) 3, Persuasion 4, Science (Neurology) 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge (Inscrutable) 3, Survival 1

Merits: Allies (Invictus Ventrue, Sanctified Ventrue, Ventrue Acolytes) 1, Carthian Pull 1, Clan Status (Ventrue) 2, Covenant Status (Carthians) 2, Haven Location 3, Haven Security 3

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 7

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Pride

Health: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 1 (Vitae: 10/1)

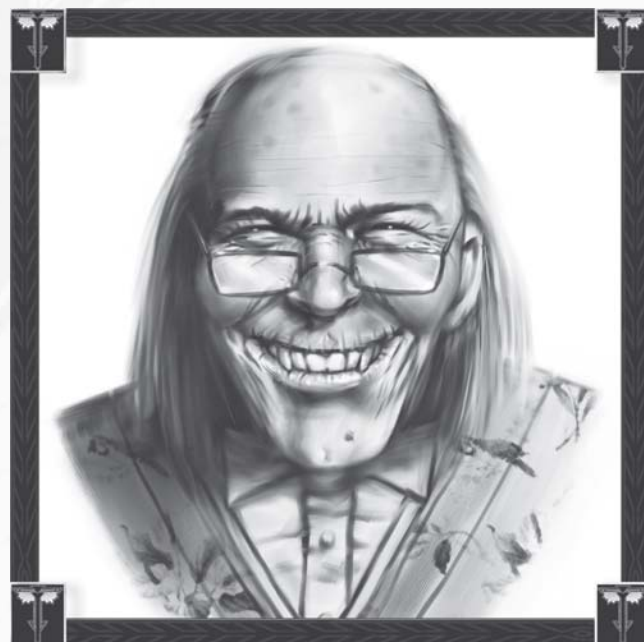
Disciplines: Animalism 1, Dominate 3

THE CHARMING ELDER

Quote: "Is it so very difficult to believe that I am not trying to gain anything from you?"

Description: His life was, in one way or another, all about drink. It's ironically appropriate, then, that he has entered a lengthy Requiem.

He grew up in California before it was fully settled, and his family's farm depended on the rains and the



ivers. That dependence ruined them, and they had to give up their plot and go back home in disgrace. His grandfather was well-off, but gruff when he was sober and an absolute monster when drunk. He was drunk often.

Leaving home as soon as possible for a job on the railroads, he settled in tending the bar car. The railroads were then a curious non-place, where people of all classes traveled and mingled. The interactions between people who could never meet anywhere else become more unlaced and interesting when lubricated by liquor.

Genial and easygoing, he became a favorite of the grifters and con men who used the railroads as private hunting preserves, and often provided some subtle aid in return for good tips. This association proved his undoing, as a Daeva Kindred needed a man on the inside in order to get a very thorough revenge on a big con group that had taken him. Only the Vinculum could provide sufficient loyalty and, when vengeance was complete, the Daeva decided this charming bartender would make a fit companion.

For decades, the Charming Elder was his sire's aide, lure, confidant and (when needed) janitor. He saw firsthand what happens to Daeva who lose themselves in their lusts, and quietly decided that path would not be his. When his sire was killed in an earthquake, half of the Charming Elder mourned desperately. The other half was grateful for freedom.

Tonight, the Charming Elder provides his mild comments to Carthian meetings and extends his protection to the Movement's neonates. He is Master of an Elysium and a Harpy of great influence, primarily because his censure is so rarely applied. He operates, of course, from a bar. Most nights, he still mixes drinks and talks with the drinkers, offering them a sympathetic ear and a warm smile.

He's handsome, in an unmemorable way, well dressed, in timeless buttoned-down shirts of muted hues. He seems kind, without presenting the slightest sign of true involvement.

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Carthians

Embrace: 1903

Apparent Age: Early 30s

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

Skills: Academics 1, Athletics 2, Brawl (All-Out Attack) 5, Drive 1, Empathy 4, Expression (Com-

passionate Speech) 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Persuasion 4, Politics 4, Socialize (Mixology) 5, Stealth 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge (The Big Con) 3, Weaponry 2

Merits: Allies (Carthians, Daeva, Acolytes) 1, City Status 4, Clan Status (Daeva) 3, Contacts (Sanctified, Heavy Drinkers) 2, Covenant Status (Carthians) 3, Haven Location 3, Haven Security 3, Haven Size 2, Herd 4, Resources 4

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 5 (Depression 6)

Virtue: Compassion

Vice: Sloth

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 3 (Vitae: 12/1)

Disciplines: Majesty 5, Vigor 5

GHOUL ON THE VERGE OF OBSOLESCENCE

Quote: "Sure, I can do that for you! I can totally do that for you!"

Background: Here's an object lesson in why it's a bad idea to make a ghoul of a mortal with political influence. It worked great for a while — about a decade, in fact. But people at the courthouse started commenting on how well preserved he was just about the same time a few Assistant District Attorneys began comparing notes about how he'd smile oddly and put a hand in his pocket every time he caught sight of grisly crime scene photos. He disappeared and changed



his look and wasn't as useful for his domitor, who had problems of her own that led her to try to end her own Requiem. Her loyal Ghoul saved her — in fact he's built her a shrine and, in the middle of it, she rests in a glass coffin modeled after Sleeping Beauty (according to a couple curious Mekhet who went snooping around the domitor's old haven).

While she's in torpor (and it's probably going to be a long one), he needs a way to stay unaging so he can be there when she wakes up. That means Vitae, all that he can beg, borrow or steal. His Vinculum to his mistress keeps him from forming a new obsession, but his addiction is quite enough to keep him fawning, sniveling and doing any kind of Carthian shit-work that keeps him going.

The joke is, he's like the village slut — everyone's had his turn. But the Ghoul has kept his finger on the court system pulse, he's slightly lower maintenance than a personal ghoul and he's pathetically eager to do even the most debasing tasks. Moreover, it's occurred to more than one Carthian that if they don't cool his jones, some other covenant — one eager for a description of which Carthians are asking for what daylight chores — probably will.

Description: Unnaturally ruddy, sweaty, desperately hearty. A back-slapping political hack, all washed up in a suit with shiny elbows, still handing out cheap cigars.

Storytelling Hints: You used to be really good at manipulating people, and every now and then your old insight snags you a clue. Mostly though, you're lost in a fog of desperation, addiction and shame.

Abilities:

Cadge, Wheedle and Pester (5 Dice) — He used to get his way with charm and authority. Since he lacks those now, he uses more annoying methods.

Office-Hours Bureaucracy (4 Dice) — Despite his twitchiness, distraction and grief, the Ghoul can accomplish simple tasks such as filling out a police report on a stolen car or negotiating a bank loan in someone else's name. The day after he's received Vitae, he gets a +1 bonus to this dice pool.

Scout the Policyscape (5 Dice) — He'd like the Kindred to think he provides his accurate overviews of local political issues by talking to his connections. In reality, it's mostly the newspaper. But when the Ghoul reads the paper, the aldermen's names mean everything because he was their patron when they were fresh-faced volunteers.

OCCULT ICONOCLAST

Quote: “*The Circle, the Order of the Crone and the Lancea Sanctum do not think about these matters be-*

cause they cannot. Individuals within those covenants do such thinking, but each mind is as alone as mine.”

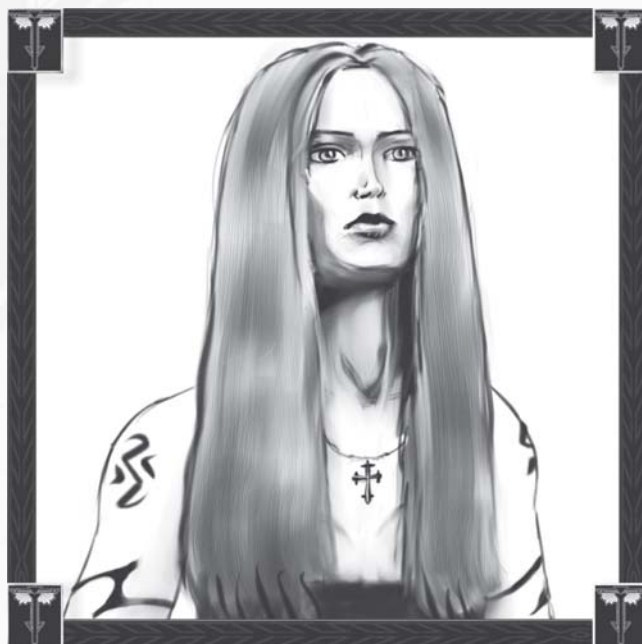
Background: Judging from the familiar way she speaks about Crúac, Theban sorcery and the Coils of the Dragon, she must have been in some other covenant before the Carthians, or possibly several. She nearly got blackballed from the Movement for being aloof and unhelpful, until someone asked for her advice on dealing with a local werewolf posse. “Tell them your blood makes good bait for pain-spirits,” she said.

Now her role is clear: she is the Carthian's regional occult expert, a position that doesn't have much competition from the Movement. If she practices blood sorcery (as opposed to simply having an encyclopedic knowledge of it), she isn't teaching anyone. At least, not openly.

As her renown has grown, she has extracted greater concessions from the Movement. She now has a vast herd, a fortress haven and little need to suffer fools gladly. Those who want her aid, pay. Carthians pay steep fees. For everyone else, her prices are little short of agonizing.

Description: If you saw her on the street, it would take you a second glance before she scanned as human. The outline's the right shape, but she stands still more like a mannequin. Her hair is a tangle of gray and white, while her nails are naturally brown-black, pointed like talons and hard as a rhino's horn. She smells of rotten oleander.

Storytelling Hints: You look down on other Kindred the way Kindred look down on ghouls. They may be useful to you, but only if you expend the



effort to instruct them exactly and discipline them profoundly. This is only worth doing for tasks you can't complete yourself.

Abilities:

Maltese Falcon (—) — Her function in your stories is to provide clues about the occult, as well as devices, rituals or hints that get players past supernatural barriers that are otherwise impenetrable. Since this is a function that shouldn't be left to chance, there's no dice pool: you, the Storyteller, decide if she can help the characters and will.

The Occult Iconoclast is here as a tool to make stories more interesting, not as a skeleton key for the characters to leapfrog hurdles. She should never just hand them what they need to accomplish their goal, *gratis*. Instead, she should equip them with the painful rite, or the one-time device that requires something obscure and dangerous to obtain to power it or the reference to a book that she doesn't have but which will yield the answer once the characters steal it from a local Nosferatu. In other words, she's not there to solve problems, but to show the characters how. At worst, they can exchange one problem for another.

TURNCOAT TURNBUCKLE

Quote: "Don't talk to me about sacrificing for the Movement. I've sacrificed everything I am."

Background: He's been around forever but doesn't seem to have done anything, ever. He's pleasant and civil and knows everyone, though no one seems to know him very well. He gets all the inside jokes



without making any himself. He's seen at Sanctified services now and then, when he's not at open Acolyte gatherings. He shares some business contacts with members of the Invictus, and sometimes attends scholarly lectures with people from the Ordo Dracul.

It's not that no one's thought, *He could be a plant from another covenant*. People have. Just about everyone, from every covenant, has thought that. But while no one trusts him with anything important, his veneer of trust has made him a useful back-channel between all the covenants. Things that can't be openly discussed are negotiated, deniably, with him as the remove between. But of course, his real loyalty is to the Carthians. He swears that on the Movement.

Description: Cloudy gray eyes over pearly gray teeth set in ashy gray skin and wrapped in a silken gray suit.

Storytelling Hints: You don't bond with the characters over Carthian matters, but over their record collection or their taste in cars. Similarly, you don't associate with a Lancea Sanctum priest because you're faithful, but because you have the same tailor or because you were in the same fraternity when alive (though, admittedly, decades apart).

Abilities:

Social Broker (5 Dice) — His primary function is to politely and pleasantly liaise between members of covenants on matters that are (genuinely or ostensibly) not covenant business at all.

Social Espionage (4 Dice) — Somewhat more suspicious is his ability to gather information through, from or about other covenants. With a success, he gets a straight answer. With a failure, he says what the other covenant wants you to hear.

ZEN MENTOR

Quote: "If all life is an illusion, the feelings of a Kindred must be the illusion of an illusion."

Background: Something scored those deep lines of sorrow all over her face, something before the Embrace, back when feelings could still leave their mark on flesh. Whatever tragedy befell her, she won't speak about it but often speaks around it. No details, but she tells how the pangs of her life prepared her for what followed it.

A student and teacher of Zen Carthianism, she instructs both those who wish to subdue the Beast to make peace with their Requiem, and those who



seek to control it in pursuit of their own goals. “Everyone has a path,” she says. “I can’t pick your path for you. All I can do is help you walk it without stumbling.”

To Carthians who don’t study with her, she seems to do nothing. She sits in her ashram and calls mortals to her like a preying spider, even as Kindred come and submit themselves to her wisdom. Carthians who do study beneath her say she does more for them than anyone else from the Movement ever has, without ever asking for repayment.

Description: A slight woman Embraced when in her 50s, with red hair turning gray. Her eyes seem, by turns, as warm and compassionate as a new mother’s, or as blank and pitiless as the sun.

Storytelling Hints: You are calm, blank and gnostic. You won’t go out of your way to help anyone or to revenge a hurt, because your Way is all that really matters to you.

Abilities:

Create a Tranquil Atmosphere (5 Dice) — If nothing else, the décor at her meditation center is conducive to relaxation and focus. She can also, if asked, provide books, koans and mantras. Some of them seem to work, for receptive students.