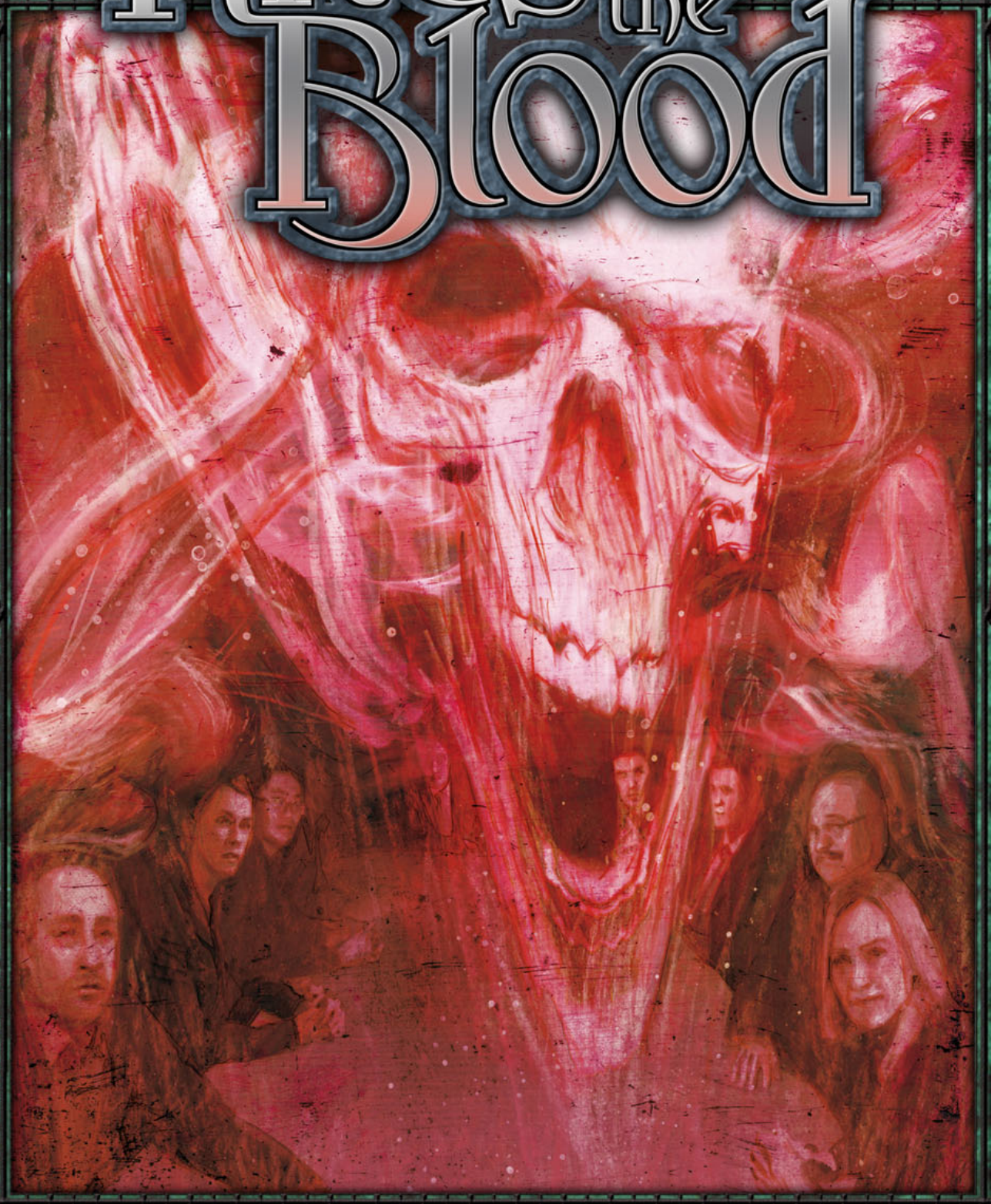
Rites of the Blood

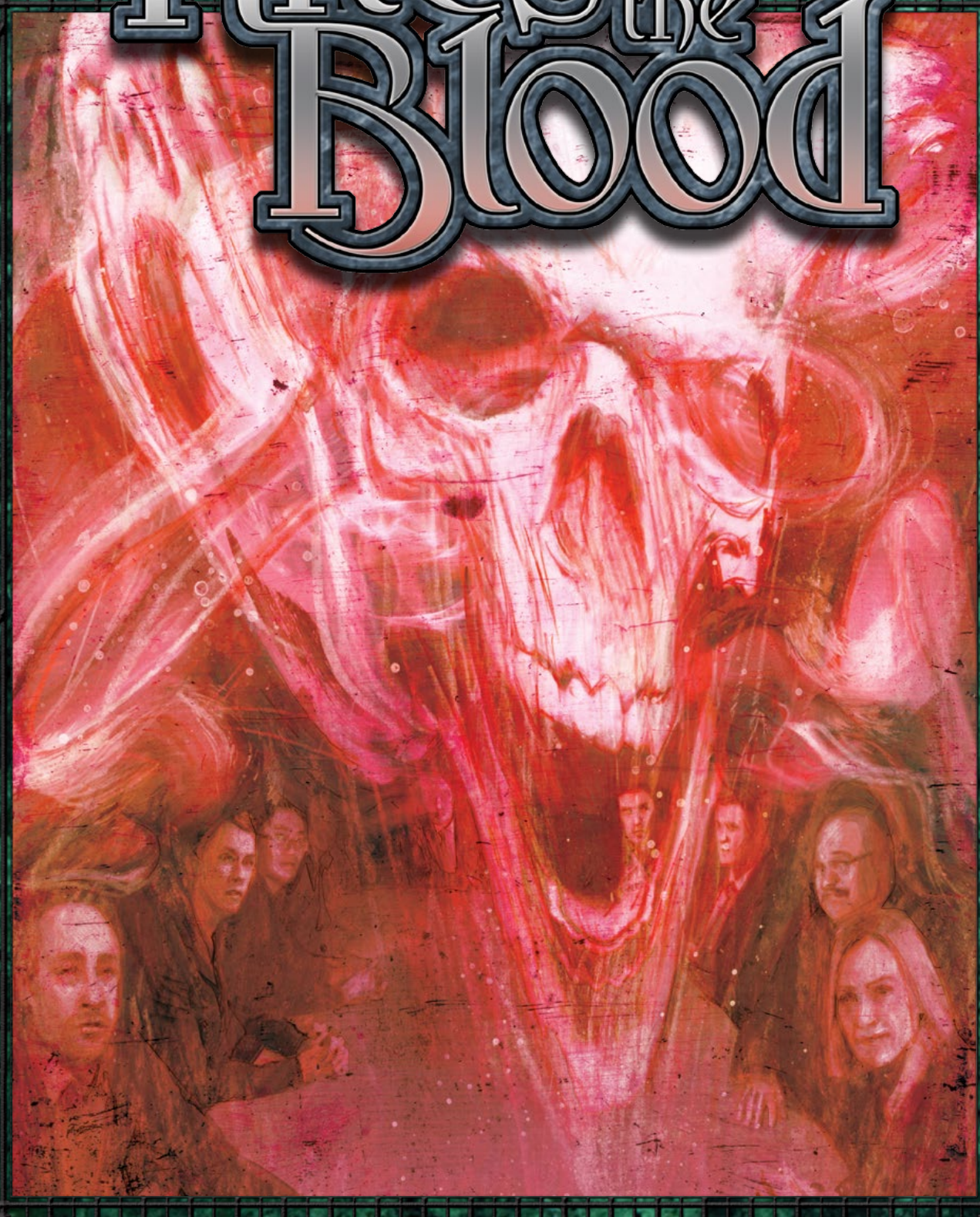


20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

Rites of the Blood



20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

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Rites of the Blood

The Price 7

Introduction 13

Theme and Mood 14
What's in this Book? 15
Lexicon 15

Chapter One: The Ivory Tower 17

History of House and Clan Tremere 17
The Camarilla's Perspective on Thaumaturgy 18
Blood Magic Always Has a Price 19
Positions of Power in the Camarilla 20
The Economy of Thaumaturgy 21
Camarilla Thaumaturges 22
Thaumaturgy Rituals 23
Level One Rituals 23
Level Two Rituals 24
Level Three Rituals 25
Level Four Rituals 27
Level Five Rituals 29

Chapter Two: The Sword of Caine 33

Doctrine 33
Sorcerous Sabbat 34
Koldunism 35
Tremere Thaumaturgy 35
Setite Sorcery 36
Assamite Al-Aziz 36
Necromancy 36
Abyss Mysticism 37
Ritae 39
The History of the Ritae 39
Black Cathedrals 39
Synods and Ecumenical Councils 39
The Auctoritas Ritae 40
The Binding 41
Rite of Contrition 41
Creation Rites 42
High Holidays 42
The Monomacy 43
The Vaulderie 45
The War Party 45
The Wild Hunt 46
The Ignoblis and Faction Ritae 46
Ultra Conservative 47
Orthodox 48
Loyalist 49
Order of St. Blaise 50
Pander 51
Status Quo 51

Chapter Three: The Movement 53

Four Waves 53
Old Skool Sorcery 53
New Age Blood Magic 55
Punk Sorcery 55
Hacktivist Thaumaturgy 57
Magic and the Movement 58
Anarch Blood Magic and the Camarilla 59

Anarch Blood Magic and the Free States 60
The Economics of Magic 60
Anarch Rituals 61
Old Skool Rituals 62
New Age Rituals 63
Punk Sorcery 65
Hacktivist Thaumaturgy 67

Chapter Four: The Independents 71

Assamite Sorcery 71
Style and Substance 72
External Relations 74
Sorcery within Assamite Castes 75
New Rituals 76
Setite Sorcery 77
Style and Substance 78
External Relations 80
Sorcery within Setite Factions 82
New Rituals 83
The Giovanni and Necromancy 85
Style and Substance 85
Expansion of Necromancy 88
External Relations 90
Necromancy within Giovanni Families 92
New Rituals 93

Chapter Five: The Unusual 97

The Inconnu 97
New Versus Antiquated 97
Secrecy 98
Hierarchy 98
New Mechanics 100
Inconnu Thaumaturgy 101
The Tal'Mahe'Ra 102
In the Shadow of the Aralu 102
New Necromancy Rituals 103
Created and Changed Creatures 104
Gargoyles 105
Blood Brothers 106
Savage Creations 107
Tremere Constructs 107
Setite Shabti 109

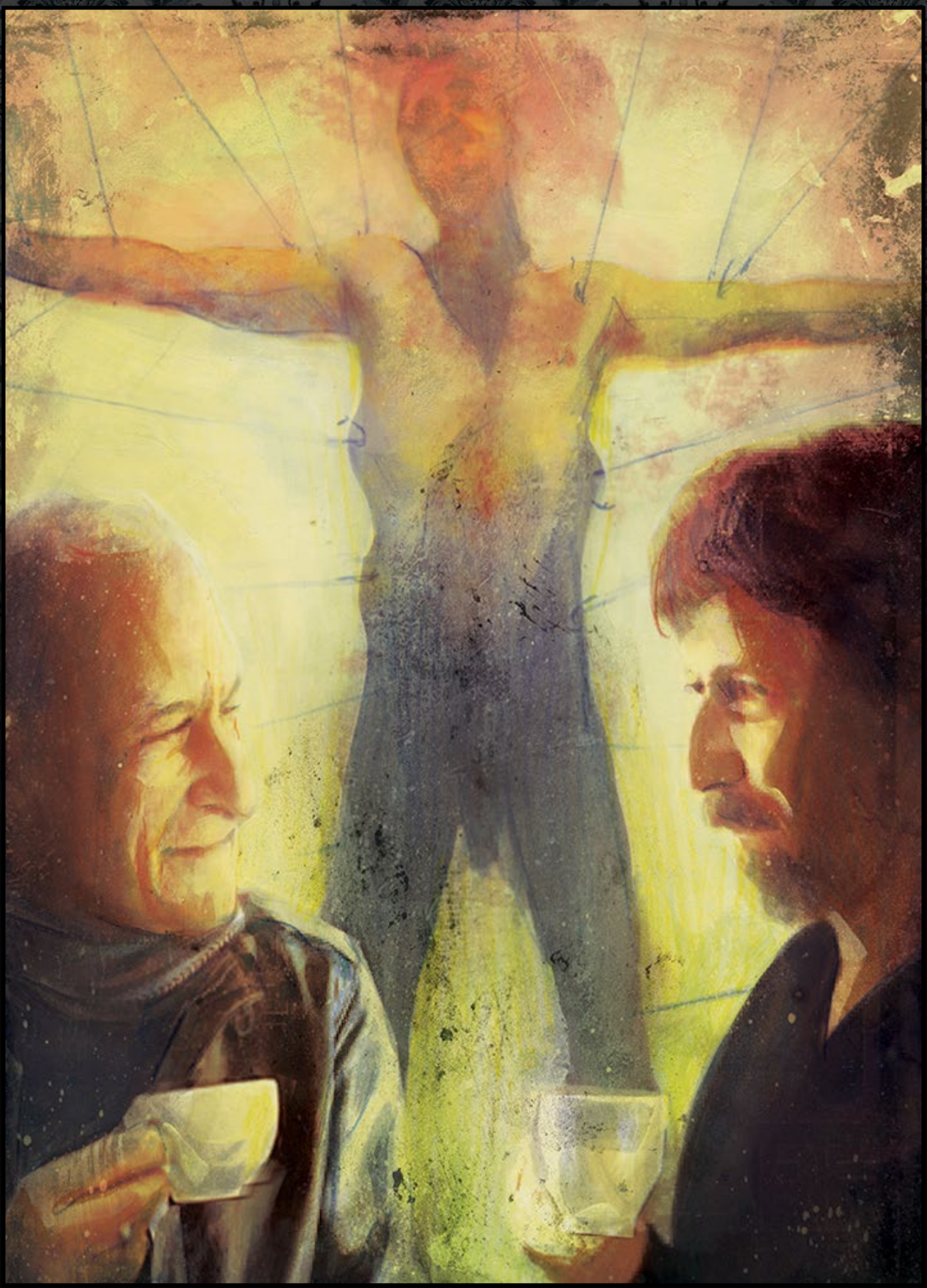
Chapter Six: The Damned 111

The Host of Hell 112
Temptation 112
The Archdukes of Hell 114
Calling the Infernal 115
Bargains, Deals, and Pacts 116
The Costs and Benefits of Infernalism 117
Ritual of Summoning 117
Investments and Gifts 118
The Baali 119
The Veneficti 120
Secrets of the Eldest 120
The Sabbat Inquisition 120
Compromises 121
Heretics 121
Structure 122
Authority 123
Mechanics 124
The Josians 125
In Ancient Days 125
Misfit Archons 125
Structure 126
Authority 126
Infernalists and Heretics 127
Mechanics 127

Chapter Seven: Secrets of the Blood 129

Foundational Principles 131
The Principle of Blood 131
The Principle of Will 131
The Principle of Knowledge 131
The Principle of Identity 132
Principles of Sympathetic Magic 133
Principles of Ritual Construction 135
Learning (and Subverting) Rituals 136
Thaumaturgy Paths 138
Mastery of the Mortal Shell 138
Path of the Focused Mind 139
Path of the Levinbolt 140
Path of Spirit Manipulation 142
Thaumaturgy Rituals 145
Level One Rituals 145
Level Two Rituals 147
Level Three Rituals 149
Level Four Rituals 151
Level Five Rituals 154
Koldunic Sorcery 156
The Way of the Spirit 156
The Way of Sorrows 157
Koldunic Sorcery Rituals 157
Reawakening the Dead Water (Level One) 157
Invoke the Lesser Sign of Power (Level Two) 157
Cowing the Servant (Level Three) 157
Ties That Bind (Level Four) 158
The Inmost Tug (Level Five) 158
Anarch Rituals 158
Flatline (Level One Ritual) 158
Iron Body (Level Two Ritual) 158
Hell's Calling (Level Three Ritual) 158
Ward versus Vitae (Level Four Ritual) 158

Dur-An-Ki 159
The Hunter's Winds 159
The Path of the Evil Eye 160
Dur-An-Ki Rituals 162
Horoscope (Level One) 162
Infusion of Kalif (Level Two) 162
Bull of Heaven (Level Three) 163
Directing Ahriman's Lance (Level Four) 163
Seeing With the Sky's Eyes (Level Five) 163
Setite Sorcery 163
Ushabti (Akhu Path) 163
The Path of Praapti (Sadhana Path) 165
The Flow of Ashe (Wanga Path) 165
Setite Sorcery Rituals 166
Armor of Diamond Serenity (Level One Sadhana Ritual) 166
Craft Gris-Gris (Level Two Wanga Ritual) 166
Dark Thaumaturgy 167
The Fires of the Inferno 167
The Path of Phobos 168
The Taking of the Spirit 170



The Price

"Knowledge always comes at a price. Whether that price is paid in blood, security, or spirit, Vrisa, there is always a cost." *Shick-shick-shick* went the knife along the leather strap, sharpening its blade to an impossibly fine edge. The little old man paused, eyeing the knife's razor point, and then went back to sharpening.

"The first hunt was a Tremere. You can guess why, of course. They say the Usurpers stole Salubri power and Salubri blood — but they took their immortality from the Tzimisce! What is the greater crime, I ask you?" He grumbled. "Revenge was the order of the day.

"Now it seems those fires have cooled. More's the pity." Shaking back a shock of white hair, the old man gave a gravelly chuckle. "I knew their magic when they were humans crawling on the earth like worms on sodden graves. To think, they took Tzimisce *vitae*, our knowledge of the spirits and the energies of the land, and they cocked it all up. Rats in their Hermetic maze." He pulled the knife back and set it with the others. "Such a waste."

Rubbing his moustache with a slender finger, the old man looked at his apprentice. "Are you listening, Vrisa?"

"Does this have to do with the wolves again, Master?" Like a perfect porcelain manikin, the little girl stood poised near the doorway, black hair tumbling down over one shoulder. She wore an immaculate white dress with soft gloves and black patent leather shoes. A velvet bow pulled the curls away from her cheekbones, lending the girl's eyes a strange, sculpted look.

"Wolves?" he gave a snort of disdain. "No, no. This is a different sort of lesson."

"I like your stories about wolves," she continued with an empty smile.

"Wolves are stupid. Piss-headed, short-sighted, can't tell a pool of blood from a puddle of rain." His grumpy tone softened. "You just like to hear the tale of your older brother's cowardice, and how I tricked him into leaving us alone." The girl's smile was unchanging, and the old man waved a thin-fingered hand in the air. "No time for that, Vrisa, no time. Today, we study magic.

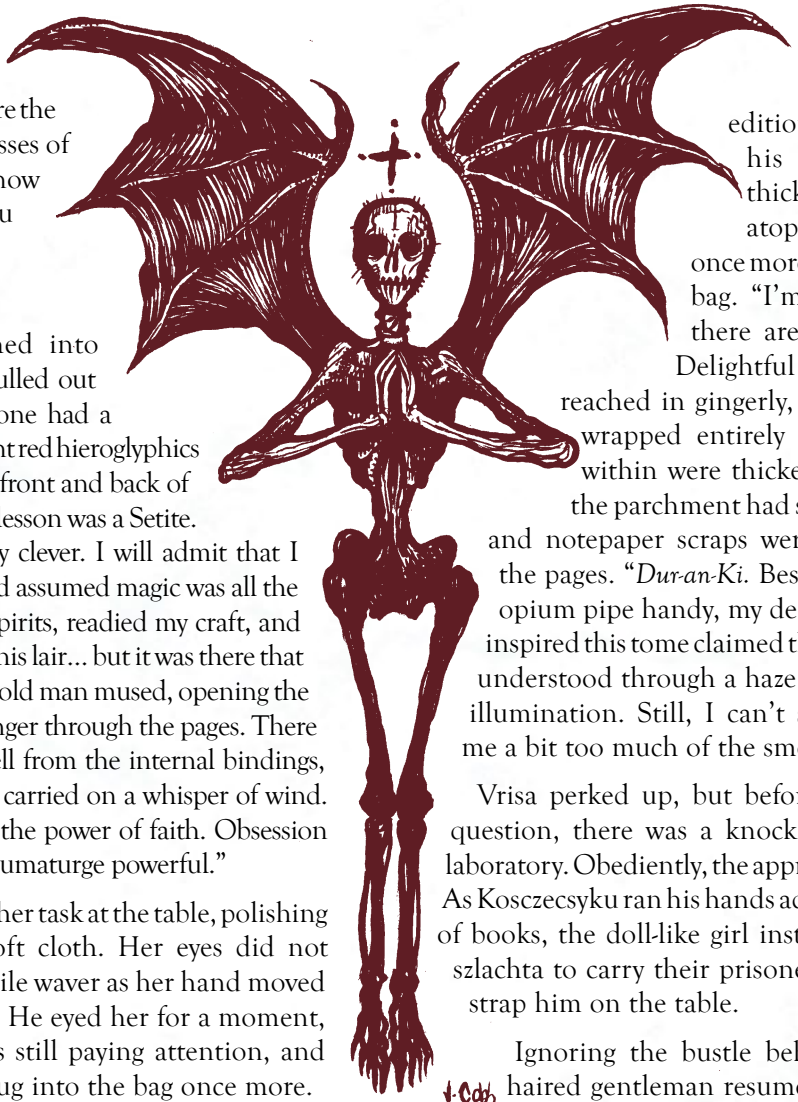
"You will listen closely, my girl. If you do not, I will pull off your arms and legs and turn you into a scuttling spider." His tone was one of quiet amusement, but she stiffened, and immediately focused on his words.

The old man lifted the tray of knives and carried it to the table in the center of the little laboratory. Though the room was made of ancient stonework, the equipment

within was modern, stolen from a research facility in Minsk. "That Tremere," he continued on, "was most forthcoming once he realized what I would do to him if he did not share his secrets. His capitulation did not help him; I did it anyway. Thus, the first book."

Kosczecsyku ambled to his desk and opened his black bag, reaching between the handles to draw out a book with dark blue bindings. The tome was tightly shut, locked by an ornate strap that covered its girth. The old man smiled as he placed it on the shelf, fingers rubbing the spine with possessive pride. "Hermetics. Mathematics. Predictability. Those are the strengths and weaknesses of Tremere spellcraft. Know what to expect, and you will defeat them."

"Yes, *Voivode*."



Kosczecsyku reached into the leather bag and pulled out a second book. This one had a yellowish tone, with faint red hieroglyphics illuminated across the front and back of the cover. "My second lesson was a Setite. Not so tough, but very clever. I will admit that I was unprepared — I had assumed magic was all the same. I conjured the spirits, readied my craft, and hunted the Serpent to his lair... but it was there that I nearly lost him." The old man mused, opening the cover and flipping a finger through the pages. There was a sharp, acrid smell from the internal bindings, the scent of the desert carried on a whisper of wind. "Never underestimate the power of faith. Obsession makes even a weak thaumaturge powerful."

The little girl began her task at the table, polishing each knife with a soft cloth. Her eyes did not move, nor did her smile waver as her hand moved over the implements. He eyed her for a moment, wondering if she was still paying attention, and then shrugged and dug into the bag once more.

"Ah, this..." he said eagerly, withdrawing the next tome. "This cost me quite a bit more than it was worth, to be honest. I had to buy it from a vendor in Italy. Those merchants will sell anything that isn't nailed down — including their souls. Foolhardy... and nearly a waste of effort on my part.

"You see, Necromancy is a form of magic, but it requires an entirely different skill set. They conjure spirits as we *koldun* do, but those spirits are ephemeral, not elemental. Of course, I know that now. A pity for the little Italian fellow that I didn't realize it before, but then again if I had, I'd not have such a comprehensive index of their capacity." Kosczecsyku set a thick tome with a white leather cover beside the others, patting it admiringly as he spoke. "I do wish I had the companion volume, of course, but those seem to be regretfully out-of-print."

"All dead?" Vrisa asked politely, twisting her head to regard him with glittering button-glass eyes.

"So I'm told. I continue to hold out hope for a revised edition." Kosczecsyku ran his hands through the thick shock of white hair atop his head and stared once more into the black leather bag. "I'm always amazed that there are so many. Ah, here. Delightful codex, this one." He reached in gingerly, drawing out a codex wrapped entirely in black. The pages within were thicker, heavier, as though the parchment had swelled over the years, and notepaper scraps were wedged all among the pages. "*Dur-an-Ki*. Best to read this with an opium pipe handy, my dear. The Assamite that inspired this tome claimed their magic is only truly understood through a haze of drugs and ecstatic illumination. Still, I can't stand *kalif*. Reminds me a bit too much of the smell of burning dogs."

Vrisa perked up, but before she could ask her question, there was a knock on the door of the laboratory. Obediently, the apprentice went to answer. As Kosczecsyku ran his hands admiringly over the line of books, the doll-like girl instructed two muscular szlachta to carry their prisoner into the room and strap him on the table.

Ignoring the bustle behind him, the white haired gentleman resumed digging within his bag. He snatched his hand back after a moment, pushing the fingers into his mouth with a guttural curse in Romanian. Wrapping a piece of cloth around his palm, he reached into the satchel again and gingerly snatched out another, smaller tome, dropping it onto the table as soon as the book cleared the mouth of the bag. "Cold as the dickens," he murmured to himself, poking at the text with a pen. He lifted the front cover and watched as frost knitted its way up the slender

cylinder of his writing utensil. "Monçada's children were often so. Eh, what's this?" Kosczecsyku leaned over the table, lowering his ear within inches of the raised leather. His eyes brightened with childlike glee. "The Abyss is whispering again. Such a busybody, that one...

"Abyss Mystics, Vrisa," the old man pulled his pen away and let the cover of the book snap shut. Shaking a cover of rime from his hand, he continued. "The magic that the Lasombra practice is anything *but*. It's not faith, either, strictly speaking, though my teacher kept cursing as though he thought God could hear him. Or maybe he was talking to the Abyss. Hm." Kosczecsyku raised his voice over the commotion of a limp body being hefted onto the table. "Abyss mystics open portals. For all their bragging and posturing, they don't perform real magic. They just open a door. Something else pushes the magic through." His voice trailed away thoughtfully as he stared down at the last book within the bag.

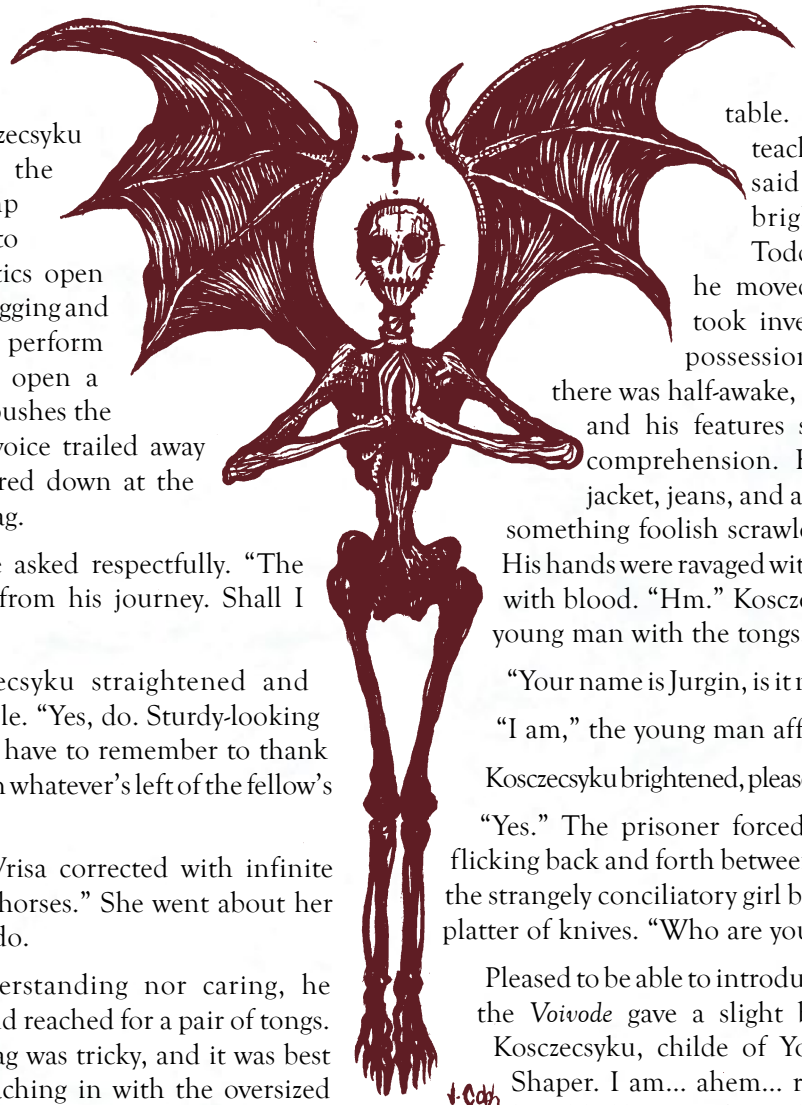
"*Voivode*," his childe asked respectfully. "The teacher is still asleep from his journey. Shall I help him to revive?"

"Hm? Oh?" Kosczecsyku straightened and glanced toward the table. "Yes, do. Sturdy-looking fellow, isn't he? I shall have to remember to thank the Vozhd. Perhaps with whatever's left of the fellow's horse."

"Automobile, sir." Vrisa corrected with infinite care and respect. "No horses." She went about her task without further ado.

"Eh." Neither understanding nor caring, he shuffled to the table and reached for a pair of tongs. The last book in his bag was tricky, and it was best not to provoke it. Reaching in with the oversized tongs, his tongue slipping past the edge of his lips, Kosczecsyku lifted the final book from the bottom of the bag and gently, gingerly, placed it on the shelf beside the others. Vrisa came to stand beside him, holding the platter of glinting blades. She raised an eyebrow. The book was of average size and thickness, the cover a worn and friendly brown with faded gold lettering on the spine. It seemed to radiate welcome, with well-thumbed pages and softly stained corners. There could be no more pleasant-looking book in all the world.

"Never give the infernal a foothold." Kosczecsyku whispered, his voice clipped and hard. "They are never what they seem to be." The book recoiled as he spoke, its friendly presence rippling at his derision. Suddenly, the cover darkened, blotching with unseemly stains, and the red-ribbon bookmark tucked between the pages lolled out like a cadaver's tongue. The old *Voivode* snorted. "Dramatics will get you nowhere," he muttered, placing it on the desk with the others.



The elderly Tzimisce turned toward the stone table. "Ready, is he? The teacher?" the old man said in a surprisingly bright tone of voice. Toddling on light feet, he moved to the edge and took inventory of his latest possession. The man lying there was half-awake, his grey eyes limpid and his features slack with sluggish comprehension. He wore a leather jacket, jeans, and a black tee-shirt with something foolish scrawled across the front. His hands were ravaged with burns and stained with blood. "Hm." Kosczecsyku prodded the young man with the tongs.

"Your name is Jurgin, is it not? Jurgin Shaulis?"

"I am," the young man affirmed.

Kosczecsyku brightened, pleased. "Lithuanian, yes?"

"Yes." The prisoner forced his eyes to focus, flicking back and forth between the little man and the strangely conciliatory girl behind him, holding platter of knives. "Who are you?"

Pleased to be able to introduce himself properly, the *Voivode* gave a slight bow. "My name is Kosczecsyku, childe of Yorak, childe of the Shaper. I am... ahem... recently awakened," he added by way of casual apology. Gesturing toward the girl, "This is my daughter, Vrisa."

The prisoner had begun to tug at the restraints on his wrists. "Why am I here? What are you doing? I am a free member of the Sabbat! My pack is — "

"Your pack is irrelevant. Your magic is all I require."

The man blinked. Kosczecsyku took a small mirror from his pocket, breathing on it and wiping it with his

sleeve before holding it up to their captive's forehead. "No sigil!" Eyes widening with excitement, the old man set the mirror down and took a great interest in the prisoner's hands. "These burns are from *Creo Ignem*, yes? The Lure of Flame?" A terse frown. "How did you manage to harm yourself? Those spells are very specific; the fire always appears two measures above the palm. Did you fail the incantation? "

"Fail? No!" Offended, and not quite cogent enough to resist, the prisoner tugged at his bonds. "To utilize the spell, you must hold a pinch of pine sap between third and fourth finger, touching to it... What are you implying? Am I to be punished?" Anger sparked in the young Cainite's eyes.

Vrisa simpered.

The *Voivode* ignored his prisoner's question, and moved on. Digging through the captive's pockets, he muttered to himself, "He carries no Hermetic implements. Pine sap, you say? Foolishness. Perhaps our information was incorrect... how can we even be sure he is a Tremere?" Kosczecsyku smoothed his white moustache, the smile fading as he pondered the question. "Caitiff, perhaps? If his blood carries no magic, he's of no use to me."

"Caitiff? Wa... wha... I'm not a Pander!" The prisoner yelped, stung.

"Perhaps you've studied the pallid arts of mortals?" Kosczecsyku accused him, waggling the tongs in the other man's face. "Tell me!

Vrisa gave the prisoner a considering stare. "His sorcerous ability proved exemplary in the fight against our Vozhd. Far too powerful to be hedge-wizardry."

Kosczecsyku frowned skeptically. "Its hands are burned."

She tilted her head. "Perhaps it's newly Embraced? Something done *en masse*?"

"Tremere don't shovel. Too dangerous. The fledgeling might get away and seek out the infernal. It's in their nature, you know. Takes proper coddling to keep them from latching onto a demon teat." Kosczecsyku regarded the man on the table with a judgmental eye. "Goratrix always complained that his kin would suckle anything warm and wet."

"How dare you!" The prisoner roared from his captivity, panic and the Beast rising behind his grey eyes. "I am a Tremere, an *antitribu* of the Telyavelic line! Goratrix be damned, my lineage is loyal to the Sabbat. My magic carries the blood of the earth! Let me go at once!"

Giving her master an apologetic smile, Vrisa murmured, "He does seem to be in earnest. If he's *that* certain..."

"Yes. I suppose he'll do. Pine sap, I believe? Blood of the earth, you said? Yours must be an unusual sort of magic." Warming to the idea, the old, white-haired fiend gave his childe a smile. "He'll make an excellent tutor to add to the collection. Telyav, you say? Any connection to the mythical Televelis the smith?"

"Telyavel, god of death, carrier of souls!" the captive roared, lunging up on the table despite the wrist-restraints. "You can torture me, shape me, dominate my mind — go ahead. It's no more than my pack has done in the past. I'll tell you nothing of my magic!"

Kosczecsyku raised an eyebrow disapprovingly. Vrisa promptly stuffed a rag into the man's mouth, then crafted his jaws closed around it. As the echoes faded into peaceful quiet once more, Kosczecsyku patted his captive's chest — and little slivers of bone pressed like needles through the pores, slipping deeply into the Tremere *antitribu*'s flesh. "I know you won't *tell* us, young one." The old Tzimisce's eyes were cold and cruel behind the façade of scattered wisdom.

"You're going to *show us*." He placed his hand on Vrisa's shoulder. "Very well, student. You may begin. Let us see how diligently you've studied our craft..."

• • • • •

Gently, the old man took the book from his childe's white hands. He studied the even stitching and lovely, dappled green leather. Its pages were thin, crisp, and precise, made of stretched-taught tendon and acid-tanned skin. He opened the cover and turned one, feeling the silky rustle of paper beneath a questing

finger. She'd provoked the boy with formidable skill. The book's writing lay in symmetrical paragraphs, precise and even from page to page.

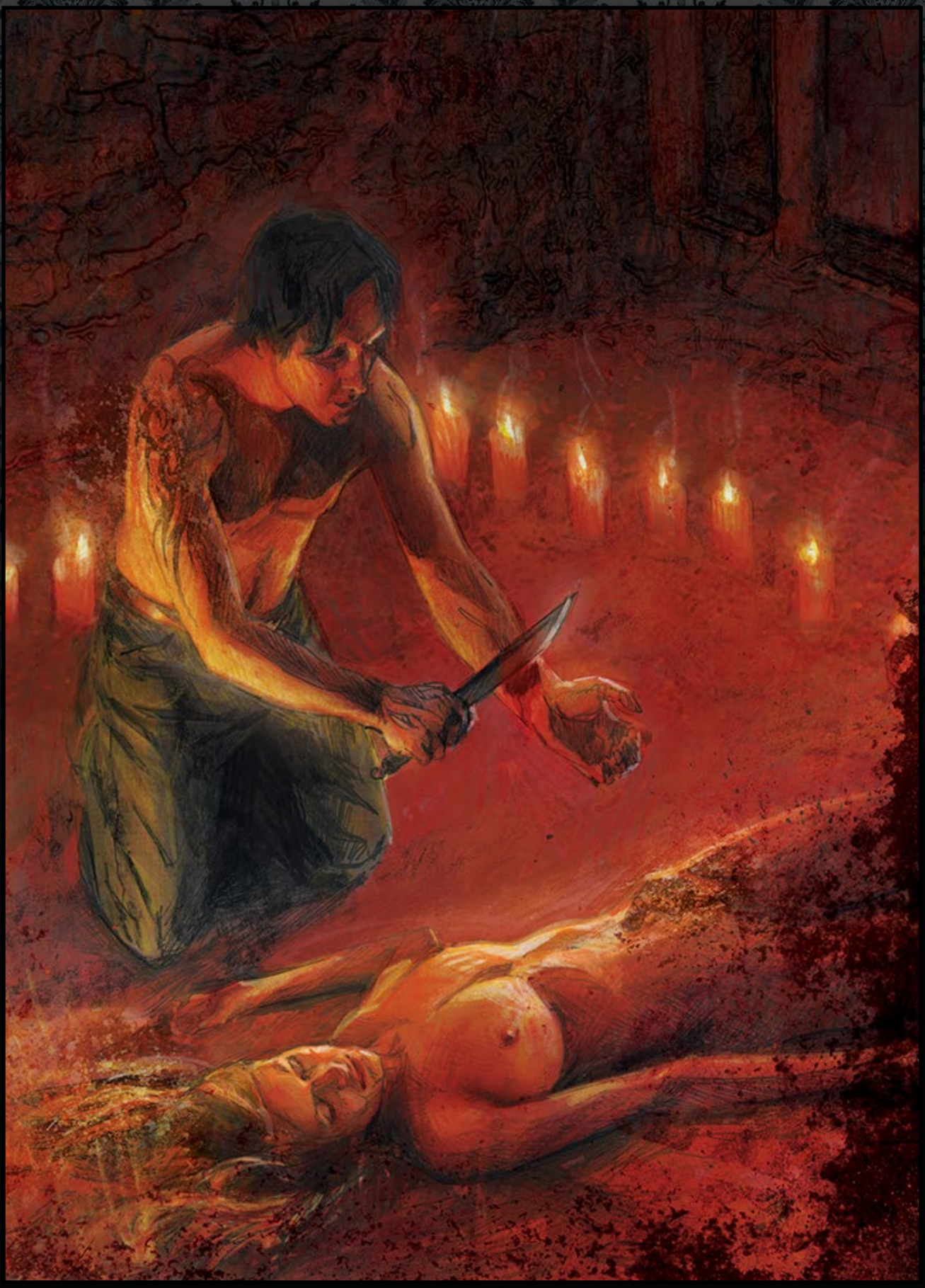
The Telyav's veins wove like a watermark within each parchment page. His bones, no longer of use, were bundled in tidy wicker baskets beneath the operating table. There was no body on the table. The book, every page and every stitch, every smooth curve of ink and every bit of marrow-glue stiffening the binding, all of it had been formed out of a single, contiguous whole. A single—still sentient—creature. Trapped within its pages, the Telyav's mind was a part of the whole, capable of answering questions by text whenever the reader asked.

The only blemish was a small singed portion of the cover's lower right corner; a burn that Vrisa had tried for hours to smooth away, without success. "An excellent attempt, my dear," Kosczecsyku said appraisingly. "A bit more experience repairing fire-damage, and you'll master the process."

"Yes, *Voivode*." Vrisa's button-eyes were hesitant, but she took the old man's compliment gracefully. She would not be tortured for her failure. This time.

"Patience, persistence, and practice," sighed the Voivode, patting her hand. "That's the price of knowledge, my dear...

"A price we gladly pay."



Introduction

Indubitably, Magic is one of the subtlest and most difficult of the sciences and arts.
There is more opportunity for errors of comprehension, judgment and practice than in any other branch of physics.

— Aleister Crowley

Even after centuries of experimentation, the myriad of rituals developed by Kindred across the world are all built upon the same foundation. Whether these rites stem from Thaumaturgy, Sorcery, Necromancy, or stranger practices, they all summoned from the power of blood.

Blood unites all Kindred. Every vampire, regardless of age, needs to consume blood in order to exist. It sustains the immortality gifted to them by vampirism and preserves their undead flesh, granting them the power to wake again each night. It also enslaves them. From blood, shackles stronger than any metal can be forged to imprison them, controlling their emotions and desires. Eventually, it drives every Kindred to ask themselves one question at some point in the course of their existence: How can something as simple as blood generate such power?

No one knows the answer, but this has not stopped Kindred throughout the ages searching for an explanation. Many have reached inside themselves only to find more unanswered questions waiting for them: how does blood heal wounds, how does it power their Disciplines? The most inquisitive find themselves wondering the most dangerous question of all: *what else* can it do?

In the deepest crimson depths of their being, these Kindred find *power*: raw power that waits to be brought to the surface. Through their force of will, these Kindred drag this power kicking and screaming into the open to perform miraculous feats. Rituals have been developed to direct and focus this new force, unconstrained by the structure of the known Disciplines. Only one word can describe this power that has echoed throughout the ages: *Magic*.

Over centuries of experimentation, Kindred sorcerers have expanded their arts in a myriad of different fashions. With each step they take, another path tantalizingly opens up ahead of them, beckoning the way to yet greater feats of magic. Thaumaturgy was developed by Kindred from Hermetic rituals to control and focus these powerful forces. Other Kindred created a wide range of Sorceries that they have drawn from the beliefs of the mortals across the world. Some have blurred the line between religion and power to create an ever-increasing number of ritae. Others have even used their blood to command the spirits of the dead, to make contact with entities in realms beyond comprehension, and to sell their souls to beings that dwell in the darkest reaches of all creation.

Regardless of its source, all power corrupts. So, what effect does this tremendous power have upon Kindred? What is the *cost* of magic? And what new mystic powers and twisted capabilities will arise? **Rites of the Blood**

Thaumaturgy and Metaplot

It should be noted that Thaumaturgy and other blood sorceries have been previously examined in two other sourcebooks — **Blood Magic: Secrets of Thaumaturgy** and **Blood Sacrifice: the Thaumaturgy Companion** — and both books were heavily referenced during the writing of this one. These previous sourcebooks have very different focuses, presenting different angles upon the common subject of blood sorcery, and **Rites of the Blood** is no exception to this. **Blood Magic** presented the history and development of such powers, whilst **Blood Sacrifice** explored in-depth the thematic composition of a number of magical practices. **Rites of the Blood**, however, looks at what effect blood rituals (and the larger topic of blood sorcery) has upon Kindred society, as well as what price individual Kindred pay to develop their arts, which can bring a whole new level of detail to your chronicles.

However, astute readers will notice that some events detailed in other **Vampire: The Masquerade** titles are changed or omitted here. This is intentional, a deliberate decision to explore new topics, such as a different look at the Tremere *antitribu* and the continued existence of the True Black Hand. Like the strange and unusual magic these Kindred study, this book is full of rumor and supposition, and it moves around the "metaplot" of *Vampire: The Masquerade* to explore topics most germane to a discussion of blood magic. **V20** set a precedent of a "metaplot agnostic" backstory, but sometimes we slant the material here in a way that contradicts **V20** or other books in the line, so we can dig into the most interesting parts of the rich history of the World of Darkness. Feel free to incorporate whatever works for your chronicle, and ignore the rest.

examines a variety of ritual abilities and powers manifest within vampire blood, as well as the consequences and costs of developing and using blood magic across the various sects and factions of Kindred society.

Theme and Mood

The theme at the core of **Rites of the Blood** is the *cost of power*. Practitioners of magical arts throughout the annals of recorded history, and of cultures from across the world, have been regarded with suspicion and fear. Consequently, many magicians develop their powers behind closed doors and under veils of secrecy. This insular behavior led to an untrustworthy characterization, which has subsequently been applied to the thaumaturges of Clan Tremere for centuries. It is one of the costs they have paid in the development of their precious Thaumaturgy.

But there are far stranger and more dangerous eldritch mysteries that Kindred practice. Priests and sorcerers of the Sabbat develop ritae to bring together and strengthen the Sword of Caine. The Assamites experiment with their Sorcery in order to break the Tremere's Blood Curse. The Giovanni practice Necromancy to destroy the barrier between the lands of the living and the lands of the dead. Infernalists perform diabolic rites to satisfy the terrifying will of their dark masters. The list goes on and on. In each case, these Kindred have to ask themselves which is worse: the cost they pay to learn these arts they need to fulfil their ultimate goal, or living with the prospect of never being able to see that goal realized if they forsake blood magic?

The mood is one of the *occult weirdness*. Not "slightly odd" weird, but off the "deep-end of strange". In some cases, blood magic has existed for millennia. Such practices have survived the rise and fall of civilizations. They were born from beliefs that have faded into history, but still have power in the modern nights. Changes to these ancient arts have had to be made, warping them in ways that have made them something else entirely. Something alien.

These forms of magic are not Disciplines. They are something wholly unnatural that Kindred have been able

to develop using their blood as a conduit to power. The truth is that Kindred who practice blood magic reach inside themselves to perform feats with a power they have *discovered* but in many cases do not fully *understand*. With limitless power awaiting them, it sometimes overwhelms them. It may be a terrible, disturbing force with the power to destroy them indiscriminately, but it is one that fascinates and seduces, bringing them back for more, night after night.

What's in this Book?

Chapter One explores the Camarilla and the Clan that holds the monopoly on Thaumaturgy — the Tremere.

Chapter Two examines the rites and practices of the Sword of Caine, where religion and ritual collide in a crucible of blood.

Chapter Three presents the bleeding edge of experimentation with blood magic that is taking place within the Anarch Movement.

Chapter Four discusses the social and political impact of Sorcery on those Clans that seek to maintain their independence from the Jyhad.

Chapter Five unveils the disturbing and alien practices of those who exist on the periphery of Kindred society — the Tal'Mahe'Ra and the Inconnu.

Chapter Six deals with those Kindred who are willing to pay the ultimate price for blood magic in its darkest form — Infernalism.

Chapter Seven revisits a wealth of magical practices from prior editions of **Vampire: the Masquerade**.

Lexicon

Akhu: School of Setite Sorcery drawn from the beliefs of ancient Egypt.

Apprentice: The lowest rank in the Tremere hierarchy. Members of this rank can be anything from newly Embraced fledglings to wily veterans uninterested in clan politics.

Ashipu: Practitioner of *Dur-An-Ki*, normally an Assamite Sorcerer.

Chantry: A protected charterhouse where Tremere gather to learn and share Thaumaturgy secrets, usually centered in a particular domain under a *Regent*.

Councilors of Seven: The seven highest ranked Tremere responsible for directing Clan efforts in a particular portion of the world.

Demonologist: An infernalist that studies demons and demonic powers as an academic pursuit.

Diabolist: An infernalist that actively summons demons to control or worship them in exchange for power.

Dur-An-Ki: A form of magic that originated in ancient Mesopotamia that Assamite Sorcerers have incorporated into their own practices.

Houngan: Practitioner of Voudoun, applicable under in the context of both *Wanga* and *Voudoun* Necromancy.

Lector Priest: Practitioner of *Akhu*.

Nahualli: Practitioner of *Nahuallotl*, normally of the Tlacique bloodline (Setite).

Nahuallotl: School of Setite Sorcery drawn from the beliefs of Mesoamerica.

Necromancer: Generic descriptor for any practitioner of Necromancy.

Pyramid: The Tremere world-wide hierarchy that controls all of the *chantries* in the world.

Regent: This is the middle management of the Tremere that monitor *Apprentices* and run the *chantries*. (Not the same as the Sabbat rank of Regent.)

Sadhana: School of Setite Sorcery drawn from the Hindu beliefs of India.

Sadhu: Practitioner of *Sadhana*, normally of the Daitya bloodline (Setite).

Sorcerer: Generic descriptor for any practitioner of a form of sorcery (whether it be Assamite Sorcery, Setite Sorcery, etc.)

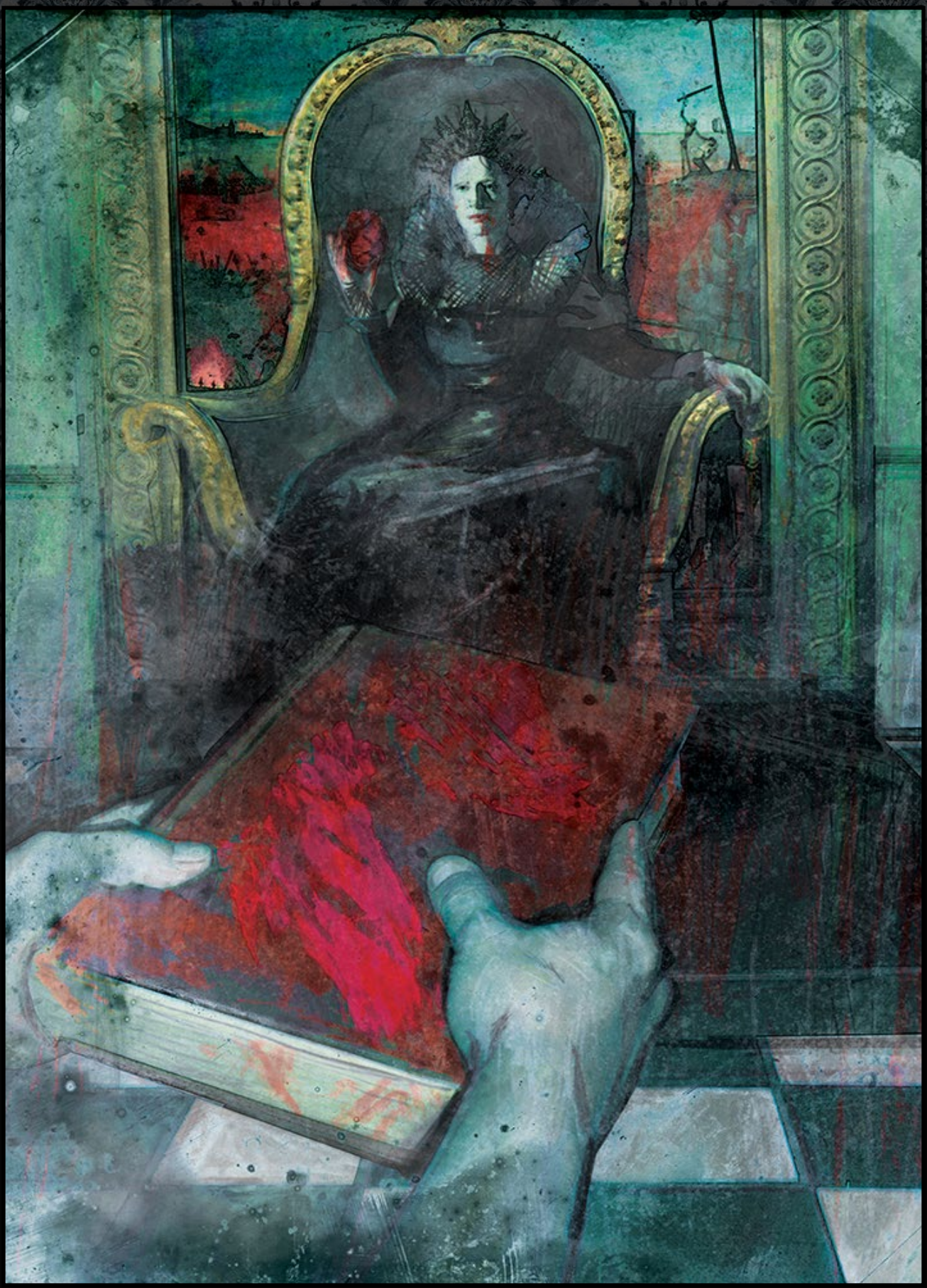
Thaumaturge: A generic (and somewhat incorrect) term for a Kindred that practices blood magic. Sorcerers and Necromancers chafe against the term, but the impact of the Camarilla on Kindred society (and the Tremere on the Camarilla) have led to it being used more and more frequently.

Thrall: An infernalist that makes a pact with a demon in exchange for power.

Voudoun: Also referred to as Voodoo in popular culture. A religion of *Wanga* and also a style of Necromancy.

Wanga: A collection of religious beliefs stemming from the slave communities of the Caribbean (including *Voudoun*). Also, the term applied to the schools of sorcery that stem from these religions.

Wangateur: Practitioner of Wanga.



Chapter One: The Ivory Tower

A sword is never a killer; it is a tool in a killer's hand.

— Seneca

Blood magicians sacrifice a small portion of their mystically-infused vitae to forcibly shape the world according to their will. As long as vampires have prowled the earth, a few have sought to gain powers through the blood that they couldn't recreate via any other method. Centuries ago, blood magic was considered the bailiwick of the fanatical, the mad, and the obsessed. Thaumaturges practiced the secret and subtle art of blood magic thousands of years before a small house of Hermetic wizards usurped the secrets of immortality and elevated themselves to become Kindred.

History of House and Clan Tremere

The Tremere first appeared in Kindred courts as distrusted outsiders and known diablerists. The Carpathian Tzimisce, along with their Nosferatu and Gangrel allies, waged war against the Usurpers and burned down their chantries. Knowing their cause was lost on those Clans, they fixed their sights on worming their way into the graces of powerful Princes across Europe. Patient and crafty, the Tremere began to offer their services as stable, non-threatening blood magicians, always careful to uphold their end of any deal. Each new crisis to the Kindred community provided an opportunity for the Tremere to further entrench themselves.

It took over a century, but they bought their way into acceptance and became one of the Low Clans. Though they were still considered untrustworthy warlocks, few disputed their value and masters of Thaumaturgy. Leveraging this newfound credibility (and the vast amount of boons they had acquired), the Tremere started a vicious propaganda campaign that cast the Salubri as infernalists and soul-stealers, to cover their diablerie of the Clan's Antediluvian. They led the other Clans in a hunt that nearly wiped out the Salubri. Those that knew the truth either looked the other way in order to maintain their alliance with the Tremere, or were too afraid to speak out.

The Black Death wreaked havoc across Europe, killing millions and drastically thinning the blood supply. The Tremere offered a quick and simple ritual to the Princes and the Elders that cleansed the blood of their herds, keeping them safe from the infection. Helping stem the flow of the plague allowed the Tremere to publically

sanitize the image of Thaumaturgy while they swept the more insidious aspects of blood magic into the shadows.

The Inquisition learned to uncover vampires by investigating property records, birth certificates, and notations of christening to uncover shoddy backstories from sloppy vampires. These Kindred had begun to treat the Masquerade (or as it was known then, the Sixth Law of Caine) with disdain. The Roman Catholic Church had long become the cultural center of knowledge of Europe, and their ability to organize across Europe allowed them to quickly process large amounts of information to locate and detain a good portion of the vampire population.

Clan Tremere realized that the methodical nature of the Inquisition could be the very weapon used against them. A lone Tremere apprentice created a ritual that allowed them to hex and harry the massive support structure of paperwork and files required for the Inquisition's investigations. Important writs of authenticity were approved and critical orders of investigation were temporally lost, allowing elders, their property, and their progeny to escape the eye of the hunters. The Tremere used blood magic to scry on the hunters, curse them from afar, and disrupt their operations.

The tide slowly turned as a coterie of elders formed the Camarilla and made the Masquerade the first Tradition of a new sect. The Ventrue flexed their political muscle to enforce the change in Kindred society, the Toreador made the Masquerade socially relevant, but the Tremere paved the way by disrupting the Inquisition through careful use of blood magic.

It took decades for the plan to work, but as the years passed more and more of the hunters died of natural causes. Mortal society turned to science and rejected folklore. By then, the Camarilla had come to rely upon the Tremere as the main suppliers of blood magic. Clan Tremere offered mystical services to the elders of society. Kindred that had the favor of the Tremere quickly had an advantage in the Jyhad, and suddenly everyone that played the game had to be a friend of the Tremere if they wanted to survive; or at least not publicly scorn them.

The Camarilla's Perspective on Thaumaturgy

The formation of the Camarilla signaled the Tremere's true rise to legitimacy. The new sect faced a number of challenges in the early years, and the Tremere leveraged their mastery of Thaumaturgy against these challenges, to spectacular results. They decisively demonstrated their loyalty to the Camarilla by cursing their *antitribu*. Moreover, they played a pivotal role at the Treaty of Tyre when they cursed the entirety of Clan Assamite, preventing them from drinking the blood of Kindred without extreme danger. This masterful feat legitimized Thaumaturgy in the eyes of the Camarilla and placed Clan Tremere in the role of gatekeeper for all Camarilla blood magic. The Tremere took to this role with great gusto, helping the Ivory Tower battle the sect's emerging enemies. Each victory against the enemies of the Ivory Tower further secured the Tremere's place as respectable members of the Camarilla.

Clan Tremere may not have invented blood magic, but they leveraged their Hermetic training to codify and organize blood magic into a stable methodology that quickly made them the undisputed masters of Thaumaturgy. A majority of the Princes of the Camarilla agree that Thaumaturgy (under the watchful eye of the Tremere) has a strong role to play in the security and safety of the Camarilla. This open acceptance grants the Tremere significant autonomy in matters concerning blood magic and a political mandate to handle the uncomfortable business of monitoring rogue blood magicians and other mystical dangers.

The Warlocks take this position seriously, as they know their countless enemies would love to see them dragged back down to the muck. Separated from the protection of the Ivory Tower, they could not stand long against the legion of enemies that seek their destruction. Accepting the Tremere into the fold exponentially added to the Ivory Tower's menagerie of enemies, but the alternative was too frightening to consider. The other founding clans of the Camarilla have a severe deficit of blood magic compared to their enemies.

The Sabbat has always been a terrifying thaumaturgical threat to the Camarilla. The elders remember that it was a small coterie of Koldun neonates that freed their rebellious childer and formed the first Anarch Revolt. The Kolduns were once regarded as the undisputed masters of blood magic in Europe. Their numbers might have since faded, but the memory of their strength and strange powers remain. Who knows what hoary dangers they might unleash upon the Ivory Tower if left unchecked? The Sabbat know just enough blood magic to be considered dangerous, as they stitch together knowledge while painstakingly sifting for nuggets of information from disparate sources. Thus far, the Tremere have blunted any real advantage the Sabbat might possess, but what would happen if the Tremere were to leave the Camarilla?

The Assamites and the Followers of Set have a surprisingly potent number of sorcerers attempting to upgrade and refine their own systems to match the power of the Tremere. These sorcerers are battle-tested and trained to use their abilities side by side with the warriors of their clans. Without the Tremere to counter their attacks, how long would the Camarilla remain the dominant sect in the world?

The recent rise in thaumaturges among the Anarchs has only strengthened the overall political position of the Tremere. The Tremere utilized their Hermetic training to stabilize Thaumaturgy into a careful science, but the Anarchs seem to experiment with wild abandon, mixing methodologies and cobbling together systems at a whim. Who knows what terrors these rash Kindred might accidently unleash upon the world?

Blood Magic Always Has a Price

Naturally, this virtual monopoly over Thaumaturgy has sharpened the jealousy toward the Tremere. Neonates witness the sheer power of the thaumaturges and hunger for such power without knowing the price paid by the Tremere. Elders relish the nights when the Tremere were openly dismissed.

However, the very nature of blood magic means that power always comes at a cost. For the Tremere, that cost must be paid in discipline, sacrifice, and loneliness. Casting blood magic isn't simple or pleasant. The thaumaturge burns through her will or sacrifices the life-essence of others in cruel and dehumanizing rituals that take a toll on her humanity. Thaumaturges that sacrifice their humanity discover that it is more difficult to find allies or companionship as they slide toward the Beast. Often this drives them deeper into their research, obsessed with that which provides meaning to their existence. Those that have survived this crucible are leery of sharing their secrets with outsiders that couldn't possibly be prepared to withstand the terrors and temptations of Thaumaturgy.

The Tremere had to pay a price to join the Camarilla. To be a member Clan of the Camarilla required an illusion of humanity and respectability. Many of their dark secrets had to be swept under the carpet of history. Some of the elder Tremere yearn for the time when they could flex their mystical muscles out in the open instead of being muzzled by their polite facade. One of the gravest losses to this veneer of morality was the loss of their servitor Gargoyles. These warriors battled against the Tremere's countless foes with brutality, but eventually grew discontent to be merely pawns on the battlefield. Some of the Camarilla Clans refused to grant the Tremere membership until the Warlocks freed the remaining Gargoyles and swore to never use their magic to create more of them.

Few outside the Pyramid understand the loss of freedom and lack of identity experienced by a lonely apprentice Tremere as they scramble to make their way in the chantry. To survive, they must surrender all outside ties and devote themselves to the art of Thaumaturgy. Individual will and agenda must often be sacrificed to the Pyramid. This devotion alienates them from other Kindred and fosters an aura of distrust. How can you trust a Tremere that is so dedicated to her Clan? What happens when someone more important in the Pyramid orders your Tremere ally to betray you? What terrible secrets must she be hiding from the Camarilla?

Clan Tremere does not provide their expertise lightly or cheaply. The specific price the Camarilla willingly pays to the Tremere for their dirty work is a permanent seat at the table. The Tremere rarely acknowledge any complaints or accusations in public. They simply remind their allies of the price for their loyalty and support, and let them ponder what would happen to the Ivory Tower should the Warlocks lower their own contributions.

Jealousy over the Tremere's influence in the Ivory Tower quickly turns to distrust, hatred, and scorn. Thaumaturgy is the ultimate advantage in the Jyhad, and the Tremere aren't eager to teach it to other members of the Camarilla. Bitter rivals seethe at the prestige collected by the Warlocks. How dare these Usurpers that stole immortality claim to be a pillar Clan of the mighty Camarilla? Are they true Kindred at all? Each time the Tremere show off a new ritual or power, they gain enemies lusting after their knowledge. The earliest legends of vampire lore suggest that the sin of Caine, the first vampire, was to covet. Perhaps it is in the nature of the vampire to hate that which they cannot possess.

Many in the Camarilla accept that the Tremere might be needed for the moment, but they will never be comfortable with the Warlocks. The Ventrue loudly and publically support the Tremere. Privately, some have started to wonder if the rabid dog they allowed in the house will one day bite the hand that feeds it. Elders may recall that Tremere once turned against the Salubri without cause, and cursed the entire Assamite clan to

prove their power. Why wouldn't they turn their eye toward another if it suited them?

A few grumble quietly about the lofty position of the Tremere, notably the Nosferatu and the Gangrel, but never in public where a Warlock might hear them and take offense. To speak ill of the Tremere carries with it a price of a possible Thaumaturgy embargo. Few are foolish enough to risk the wrath of the Warlocks merely to pointlessly embarrass them and remind others of the Tremere's sordid past. The Nosferatu are watching and taking their time. They are content to collect secrets and wait for the moment of retribution for the sin of the creation of Gargoyle from their dead.

Positions of Power in the Camarilla

Many in the Camarilla actively work to prevent Tremere from holding positions of authority. They argue that Tremere have divided loyalties and cannot be trusted. Elders sometimes maneuver Tremere into attempting to achieve a position of power in the Camarilla to ensure that their own candidate wins the office.

Tremere less practiced in blood magic often see the Camarilla as a secondary means to achieve authority outside of the Pyramid. However, most Tremere see the Pyramid as their primary source of prestige and the authority that can mediate their own access to blood magic. Dedication to rising in the Camarilla requires effort that could be better spent learning the secrets of the universe. Many Tremere simply don't find the effort required to be worth their time.

To rule a domain requires cunning, power, and precious time away from the practice of Thaumaturgy, and thus few Tremere seek the spotlight as Prince. Such dedication to political pursuits is rare and usually only done in an emergency or because the Pyramid demands it. The Tremere that do manage to claim praxis are widely feared for their mysterious arcane abilities. A fortified Warlock Prince, with the support of her local chantry, is difficult to dislodge. Unless she openly displays her powers, her enemies can't account for what she might be able to do. And yet all of the other Clans fret as they wonder what the Tremere Pyramid is commanding their Prince to do.

Many Tremere have found a comfortable niche serving as Seneschal to a strong Prince. This allows them the protection to practice blood magic while allowing them a considerable amount of influence over the administration of the domain. Many elders see this as a return to the days of old, when a sovereign called upon soothsayers and seers before making important decisions. Seneschal blood magicians have the ability to protect the secrets of the Prince while employing a number of different rituals to the application of the agenda of the domain.

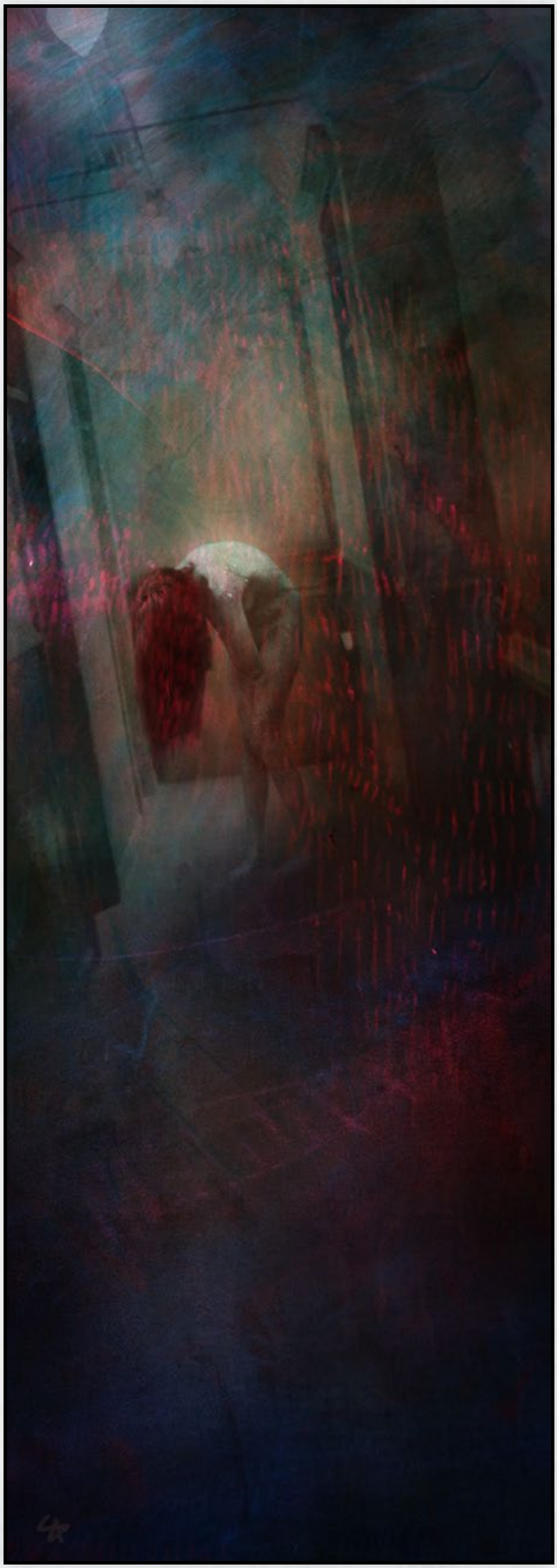
Tremere Sheriffs can ferret out secrets and dangers to the domain. Trust is always an important factor as rumors continue to spread about previous misdeeds of the Warlocks, but few doubt the fearsome mystical prowess that the blood magicians wield. In recent years, it has become fashionable for Sheriffs to employ at least one neonate Tremere as Deputy to serve as an occult investigator for arcane problems that might surface within the domain (a position a few flippant Tremere have referred to as "Dresden," for reasons unclear to the elders). Chantries have encouraged this trend, as it provides apprentices with practical experiences while showcasing the talents of the Tremere.

Some Princes use the threat of Tremere Scourges to frighten neonates into obeying the Traditions. Such Scourges have developed a ghoulish reputation, deserved or otherwise. Such fear is considered a fringe benefit to any Tremere that would deign to accept such a position. The real benefit often comes from the Clan repurposing the position of Scourge to secretly provide new subjects for experimentation in their chantries. As long as the subjects are undesirables such as Caitiff or Anarchs, domain officers rarely take an active interest in how these Scourges dispose of the bodies, as long as it is done quietly.

Surprisingly, the Tremere are sometimes successful as Harpies. Some speculate that since Tremere are already unpopular, those that do have the social acumen to be a Harpy leverage this distaste to their advantage. If they are already hated, Tremere Harpies can unleash their tongues upon even the most sensitive scandal. Some utilize rituals such as Blood Contract (**V20,** p. 239) to ensure that agreements and boons between enemies are honored. Desperate Kindred wanting to ensure that their rivals follow their exact agreements turn to these Tremere Harpies to make the arrangements. Relying upon the Tremere only serves to heighten the resentment. These Tremere are perfectly willing to use their blood magic to enforce boons and punish those that break the dogma of the Camarilla, as it puts them in a position to protect their Clan's interest and severely punish those foolish enough to speak ill of the Tremere.

The office of Archon breaks from the typical pattern concerning the Tremere and Camarilla positions. The Pyramid carefully vets any potential Archon candidate,

especially for a non-Tremere Justicar, for complete loyalty to the Council of Seven. Justicars consider Tremere Archons valuable as agents for investigating occult matters and being able to support their warriors. Some Justicars blood bind their agents, but most Tremere will decline such a position requiring such a restriction, fearing reprisal from the Pyramid. Properly trained Tremere will always have a divided loyalty between their employers and their own Clan, but most Justicars consider it an acceptable tradeoff for an expendable pawn that has access to Thaumaturgy and the occult knowledge of the Tremere. Some even consider it worthwhile to risk minor acts of disloyalty for access to Thaumaturgy. Besides, if Tremere Archons are known to betray their Justicars, the prestige of the entire Clan suffers. Such Tremere Archons must constantly walk a precarious tightrope of obligations.



The Economy of Thaumaturgy

The Tremere hold the monopoly on the most elaborate and versatile system of blood magic known. If they give away their secrets, they lose the power and prestige that comes with the reputation of being the undisputable masters of Thaumaturgy. On the other hand, if they fail to make themselves useful, they will lose the protection of the Ivory Tower.

As might be expected, the Tremere have a number of general guidelines that each chantry follows to help their apprentices walk that fine line. The Regent assigns one of her High Apprentices to monitor the treatment of the Clan by outsiders. Kindred that fail to support Clan Tremere as one of the pillars of the Camarilla are noted and logged. Those that dare to slander or act against House and Clan Tremere are logged on the Black List, which formally bars said Kindred from access to any assistance or benefit from Tremere Thaumaturgy. This list is distributed to other chantries across the world on a monthly basis so that the Clan can track their allies and their enemies.

Tremere are expected to check the Black List before offering thaumaturgical assistance to outsiders. Typically, a thaumaturge will charge one or two trivial boons for casting a lesser ritual (Level One or Two) or a minor boon for a greater ritual (Level Three, Four, or Five). Depending upon the situation, such as an emergency to the domain or when directed by the Pyramid, the Tremere might lower the amount she charges in exchange for public recognition.

Teaching Thaumaturgy

It is rare, but Clan Tremere will often approve the teaching of Thaumaturgy under the following conditions:

- Capturing or destroying a notorious enemy wanted by the Tremere.
- Earning a life boon from a high-ranking warlock.
- The recovery of valuable Thaumaturgy artifacts or notes.
- Exceptional acts of loyalty that serve the Clan as a whole.

Following protocol, a chantry will submit a request to its supervising Lord, who will review the candidate for any history of malice toward the Tremere or troubling behavior. A Regent that submits such a request is judged along with her proposed candidate and may be punished for an under-analyzed candidate.

Once vetted by the Pyramid, prospective students must pay steep costs to the Tremere for instruction aside from personal payment to her instructor. A student must surrender five points of her blood to the local chantry, three of which will be filed with the office of the Lord. In addition, the student must sign a blood contract (see **V20**, p. 239) that expressly forbids the use of any Thaumaturgy against a Tremere in good standing. Some elders of high standing or exceptional favor may manage to negotiate better terms. Occasionally, a devious elder will seek to place high-ranking members of the Tremere in their debt to smooth out such efforts. The Pyramid is usually wise enough to see the long game in such interactions.

Rarely, the Pyramid will allow a Tremere to exchange information about blood magic, such as rituals, with non-Camarilla thaumaturges. Sometimes, ambitious Tremere will agree to work under the table with fellow thaumaturges and hope their fellow Tremere won't discover their secret.

A number of useful Thaumaturgy rituals create mystical artifacts that allow non-thaumaturges access to blood magic without the prerequisite training and sacrifice. Sometimes these trinkets are given as rewards to outsiders that entice them to remain loyal to the Tremere. The downside to handing out these treasures is that another blood magician could use the resonance link inherent in the artifact to strike against the creator via Sympathy and Identity (p. 132-135). If an Apprentice grants her trust too easily and one of her gifts is used against her, the Regent typically sees this as a valuable lesson learned.

The majority of chantries are content to follow a laissez-faire policy concerning their members profiting from blood magic in this fashion, as long as the members do not actually instruct outsiders in the art of Thaumaturgy without permission. It is in the best interest of the Regent to ensure that the local population sees Thaumaturgy as a wondrous gift, and will usually deal harshly with any Apprentice undervaluing blood magic or providing aid to known enemies of the Clan.

Sometimes, thaumaturgical artifacts and trinkets will not sate the thirst of an outsider to learn the art of Thaumaturgy. On rare occasion, an outsider will provide a monumental service to Clan Tremere or show such complete loyalty that the Pyramid will reluctantly grant permission for instruction in the first two levels of Thaumaturgy.

Camarilla Thaumaturges

Being a known thaumaturge within the Camarilla is a double-edged sword. The Ivory Tower stresses the

importance of embracing humanity to protect the Masquerade, and yet those that practice blood magic are often cast (not without some cause) as heartless, merciless monsters.

Tremere have the advantage of training and discipline enforced by the Pyramid, and even those that detest the Warlocks cannot deny the results. Known thaumaturges from other Clans, especially independent Clans, receive intense scrutiny and distrust.

Thaumaturges often have a frightening reputation that they use to their advantage. It is difficult for their enemies to properly estimate what to expect from a direct conflict. The uninitiated have little idea of the scope and magnitude of power that a thaumaturge might possess, and sometimes their imagination gets the best of them. A wily thaumaturge doesn't go out of her way to correct these misconceptions. With skillful selection from among a character's available techniques, a thaumaturge can create the impression of far greater reserves than she actually wields, if she can produce the right effects on a regular basis.

The true strength of a thaumaturge is the discipline to prepare for dangerous possibilities and use rituals that might not at first glance seem powerful. A good thaumaturge comes ready for all sorts of situations, and can unleash the forces she's gathered together in the event of an emergency. Martial-minded thaumaturges compare their preparations to making sure they have extra ammunition just in case the battle goes south.

Remember that a thaumaturge often sees herself as on the way to a position of power most Kindred never conceive. Let the other vampires dream of social reform, political connections, vast wealth, and other distractions; the thaumaturge might some night rebuild the world itself so that none of those things matter. In the meantime, she knows she's a figure of mystery to others, and exploits that to her advantage.

Thaumaturgy Rituals

The foundation of Thaumaturgy is applied versatility. Given enough time to research a new ritual, a thaumaturge can surmount almost any obstacle or create nearly any effect. The following rituals have become more prevalent in recent years. For information about Thaumaturgy rituals and learning them, see **V20,** p. 230.

Level One Rituals

Brand

An enterprising Tremere neonate from Boston once overheard a powerful Brujah named Alighieri wish she could acquire a new tattoo that wouldn't fade away on the following evening. Curious, he made several trips to the local chantry archives and came across references to a ritual used in France to brand criminals. Considering the dark reputation of the Warlocks, this ritual is surprisingly popular amongst neonates of all Clans, especially Anarchs. The Tremere merely smile and collect the boons.

Brand allows the thaumaturge to transmute temporary tattoos and other body modifications received post-Embrace into a permanent state on the vampire's body. The thaumaturge does not need to be present at the creation of the tattoo, but the ink must have been imprinted within an hour of the casting of the ritual. After reciting the proper incantations, the caster must slowly spread an ounce of molten silver over the area of skin tattooed.

Brand was designed to be a punishment, and thus is exceptionally painful. Some Kindred view this ritual as a rite of passage for neonates and a demonstration of their courage.

System: This painful process burns an aggravated level of damage to the area of skin branded. This tattoo may be placed anywhere on the subject's body. Once the damage has healed, the tattoo remains upon the skin, unblemished. Due to the pain, the Storyteller may force the target to make a Self-Control roll to hold still during the procedure.

Chime of Unseen Spirits

During the nascent Camarilla's conflicts with the Giovanni, the greatest danger to the Ivory Tower was the Necromancers' ability to spy upon their enemies with impunity. Clan Tremere created a ritual that would allow them to detect ghost, spirits, and demonic entities.

The thaumaturge must collect the wedding rings of three dead women and melt them to cast a metallic chime. She must chant over the chime over the course of the evening, naming each of the brides once per hour. Once the chime has cooled, it imprints the memory of the ritual in the metal.

Once it is hung in a room, the chime will harmoniously ring a soft warning when in the presence of an unseen spirit, ghost, or devil. Anyone that understands the

mystical nature of the chime and is within earshot may benefit from this warning. This thaumaturgical device will work for a year before the ritual must be recast.

System: Once the chime has been enchanted, it will ring once every time an unseen spirit, ghost, or devil is within thirty feet/ten meters of its physical presence. Otherwise, the chime has been charmed to not ring, even in heavy wind or by manual manipulation. Some powers may block the ability of the chime to detect a specific entity, per the discretion of the Storyteller.

Sigil of Authority

Sigil of Authority utilizes the principle of sympathetic magic to create a link between the known authority of an office and the enforcer of said office, via a mystical sigil. When the Sigil of Authority is revealed to a vampire beholden to the specific office, she immediately knows that the possessor of the Sigil represents and carries the word of said office.

Initially, this ritual was designed by a Tremere Justicar to mark his agents traveling across the globe in his service. Popularity of this ritual spread, and many Princes now issue Sigils of Authority to officers of their court to ensure that new arrivals immediately know and understand who the court officers are of a domain.

System: The thaumaturge methodically cuts a design into the flesh of the willing subject with a silver-tipped blade. This sigil must be at least three inches in diameter and may be placed anywhere on the body of the subject. The design should metaphorically present the authority of the office represented and the meaning easily understood by those that see it. For example, the sigil of a domain's Sheriff might be a star shaped badge or police shield.

The thaumaturge must spend an evening in the willing presence of the Sigil Investor (the vampire that holds the office from which the authority arrives) and the Sigil Bearer (the vampire that will carry the voice of said office) to attune the sigil to the resonance of the office. At the end of the evening, the Sigil Bearer must swear an oath to the office. Once activated, everyone present instinctively knows that the Sigil Bearer lawfully represents the office of the Sigil Investor.

The Sigil Bearer must expose the sigil and expend a temporary point of Willpower to project the weight of authority of the Sigil Investor. Any vampire in her presence must make a Self-Control roll (difficulty 8) or be down three dice on all Social rolls against the Sigil Bearer for the next fifteen minutes. For example, while working undercover, Alice the Archon is surrounded by a pack of troublesome neonates looking for a rumble. She doesn't have time for a long fight, so she flashes the Sigil of Authority on her arm and expends a point of Willpower. The Anarchs must make a Self-Control (difficulty 8) lest they fall under the sway of the power of the Sigil of Authority. If the neonates fail, they are down three dice on any social rolls for the next fifteen minutes.

The Sigil of Authority lasts one year per success on the activation roll, and the Bearer is aware of when it fades. This ritual may be renewed by the Sigil Bearer re-swearing the oath of office.

The authority of the sigil may be revoked immediately if the Sigil Investor expends a point of Willpower. Should this happen, the Sigil Bearer learns this immediately as the symbol cut into her flesh is burned until the symbol is no longer visible. This rejection is painful, and burns an aggravated level of damage into the former Sigil Bearer's flesh.

Level Two Rituals

Eyes of Babel

It is said that after the Great Flood, all of humanity spoke a single language in the shadow of the Tower of Babel, but that the Lord struck down the tower, scattered the people of the world, and divided them with different languages. This ritual leverages the symbolism of that story to grant a thaumaturge the ability to read and speak a language she does not know. She must find someone (Kindred or kine) that knows the language and bind them in chains. During the casting of the ritual, the thaumaturge must pluck out the tongue and an eye of the victim (it must be both) and then consume them. While the ritual lasts, the caster may now speak, read, and write the language in question. Once the ritual is finished, the thaumaturge purges the foreign materials from her system by vomiting the flesh.

System: The duration of the ritual is one week per success on the activation roll. This is a horrific ritual that will permanently maim a mortal (and isn't too pleasant for Kindred, either), and all but the most inhumane Kindred are likely to have to make a Degeneration roll for attempting this ritual.

Preserve

Clan Tremere has collected wisdom and lore from the dawn of antiquity that had been previously protected and preserved by their mortal magic. However, that magic started to fail. A thousand years of collected occult knowledge was in danger of being lost within a few decades if a solution was not discovered. A devoted Tremere apprentice leveraged preservation techniques learned from monks along with knowledge stolen from the Assamites to create a ritual that chantries could use to preserve their research.

Once their precious libraries were protected, the Tremere realized that this ritual could be turned to political advantage. Ventrue were willing to pay boons to ensure that their own secret documents and treaties were preserved for the future. When it became clear that this ritual could be used for other purposes, Toreador clamored for the opportunity to protect their precious paintings, sculpture, and rare first drafts of a perfect poem or symphony.

Rumors abound that the famous Shroud of Turin and a number of other hidden church relics were preserved via this ritual. A number of the faithful amongst the Followers of Set claim that the Tutankhamen sarcophagus has been preserved via the will of Set, but many suspect that an older (and potentially more potent) form of this ritual has been cast over it.

System: Preserve allows the thaumaturge to mystically shield an item from the effects of time and usage. The thaumaturge must lightly coat the item with a point of her blood over the course of a night while chanting the proper incantations. Each success of the activation roll mystically preserves the item for an additional decade. The preserved item remains protected until the ritual expires. This ritual does not create a sympathetic link to the thaumaturge, as the blood used to power the ritual is absorbed completely by the object.

This ritual was designed primarily to preserve documents and texts, but a clever thaumaturge can utilize it for almost any item that can be held in the hand. The targeted item must be made of worked minerals and other natural materials, as artificial compounds (such as plastic) disrupt the ritual. Items that can be preserved include, but are not limited to, artwork, ancient weapons, jewelry, or clothing. This ritual does not make the targeted item invulnerable or even resistant to someone purposely harming it. For example, an ancient roman gladius will remain sharp and in good condition, but will still shatter if used improperly or if someone of sufficient strength attempts to snap the blade.

Seal Egress

Thaumaturges jealously guard their research. Sometimes preserving a secret is as simple as keeping trespassers out of their libraries and workshops. Legend has it that the Followers of Set created the original version of this ritual to safeguard their hidden tombs and the sacred depths of their pyramids where their eldest sleep. Some secret excursions in Cairo gave the Tremere key components to develop their own version.

Seal Egress allows the thaumaturge to mystically seal a room closed to prevent unwanted trespassers from entering or leaving it until the proper passcode chosen by the caster is spoken aloud near the entrance. Some Tremere trap an enemy in a small room and allow him to go mad from hunger.

System: To cast Seal Egress, the thaumaturge must spread a point of her blood upon the four walls of the room she wishes to seal and then chant the proper incantation (which can be done outside the room). This ritual is a lengthy process requiring an hour to cast. Each success achieved on the activation roll extends the duration of the ritual by a decade. Seal Egress mystically seals every entrance to the room. Materials from the surrounding walls physically close over any openings into or out of the room, creating a perfect air-tight seal. Trespassers with mystical rituals such as Incorporeal Passage (**V20**, p. 236) or Disciplines such as Spectral Body (**V20**, p. 202) find that this room is mystically protected against their abilities. However, this ritual does not strengthen or protect the walls of said room, and thus it is possible for someone of sufficient strength to simply break through the walls of the room. Ghosts, spirits, and other creatures naturally immaterial may enter the room at will. (To bar such creatures, warding circles are required. See **V20**, p. 234)

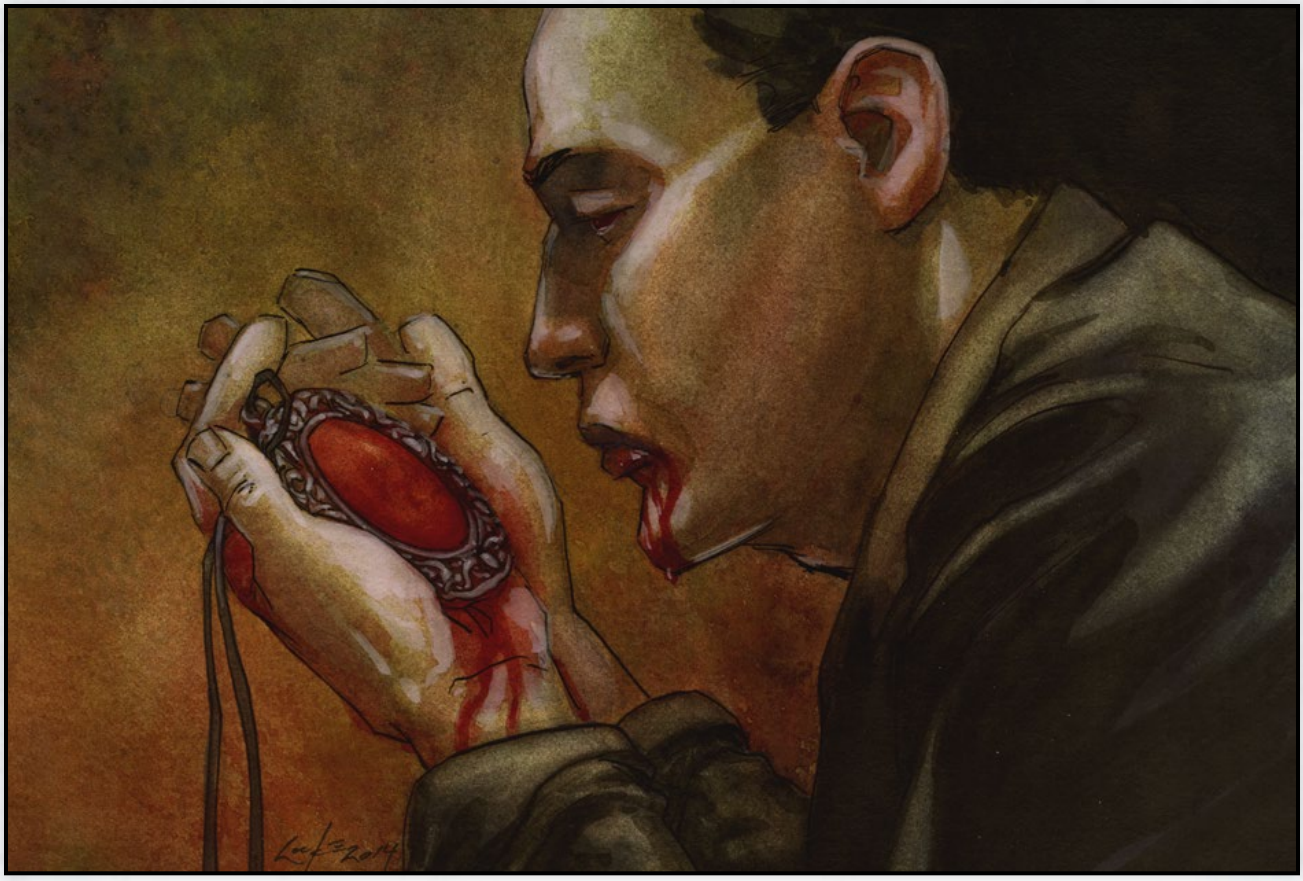
Level Three Rituals

Amulet of Mnemosyne

Careful lies and half-truths are amongst the most common and potent weapons a vampire has in her arsenal in the arena of politics. The right secret whispered at the wrong moment can shatter a sterling reputation and topple plans crafted over centuries. Locking away such secrets takes a good deal of will and a mastery of the art of deception. However, there are Disciplines and rituals that have the ability to pick thoughts from the head of an unsuspecting victim, force her to reveal secrets, or prevent her from lying at all.

A small chantry during the Regency era decided to devote their research to tackling this problem. Truth was a concept too powerful to completely remove from a subject's mind. They could obfuscate or rewrite the memories, but there was always an element of the truth in the vessel. Once the thaumaturges realized that truth could be measured, a solution became obvious. The Amulet of Mnemosyne allows a subject to whisper a secret into the amulet and thus transfer the energy of the truth into the mystical shell.

System: The thaumaturge creates an amulet forged from brass and soaked in a pool of her blood. Next, she must recite the proper incantations over the amulet while



it is resting on an object that symbolizes the truth to the thaumaturge. Finally, the subject (who does not need to be the thaumaturge) must prick her lips, kiss the amulet, and then whisper her secret.

Once activated, this secret is completely removed from the mind of the subject until she reverses the ritual by again kissing the amulet. Memories are completely rewritten to account for the missing information. These new memories are generated by the power of the magic; neither the thaumaturge nor the subject has any control over the specific details.

Should the amulet be destroyed, the secret will return to the mind of the owner.

If a rival thaumaturge discovers the amulet, and knows or researches this ritual, he may attempt to learn the secret it contains. Holding the amulet to his ear, the rival thaumaturge engages the original caster in a contested Willpower roll. Should the rival thaumaturge win, the secret is implanted in his mind. The caster will feel uneasy as though something is wrong, but will not know the root cause as she has forgotten the secret.

The downside of this ritual is that the subject has no idea that the secret exists or that she has hidden it within the amulet. She will act as per her typical personality would suggest, which could cause a number of complications. Ironically, by hiding the secret, the subject leaves herself vulnerable. For example, if the subject murdered the Prince's childe, she won't know to be careful at court or to be watchful that others might have learned her secret.

A crafty thaumaturge will ensure that the amulet is placed in her hands after the danger in passed by mailing it to herself or hiding it away with a trusted retainer with a note written in her own hands. Because of this, any thaumaturge who knows the ritual will flinch anytime she finds an Amulet of Mnemosyne, dreading the secret she might unlock.

Dante's Urban Legend

People love to share urban legends. These dubious stories of modern folklore have limited veracity, but something powering the stories pushes the communities to preserve and propagate them through the generations. Tapping into the power of these stories, the thaumaturge can create a psychically-charged urban legend that discourages visitors to a specified house or location.

The caster recreates a popular urban legend upon the grounds that she wishes to protect. Tales shall arise in the community of something that happened to a friend of a friend recounting the horror of that location, such as a legend about a group of teenagers ambushed by the

hook-man and then anesthetized only to find a kidney missing. Overly excessive uses of this may attract the attention of hunters or malicious supernatural creatures, so this ritual is used with care.

Some believe that this is a minor breach of the Masquerade, as it encourages a belief of the supernatural. However, those that practice this ritual argue that Dante's Urban Legend preserves the Masquerade by pushing away mortals from places they should not be, and upholds the tradition of Domain. A few Princes that have discovered this ritual have limited its use within their domains.

System: The caster must recreate the exact urban legend she wishes to propagate at the location. For example, she might need to steal some kidneys from a drunken mortal or kill a group of teenagers with a hook. Afterwards, she must sacrifice a point of blood to each entrance of the house or location.

Typically thaumaturges are careful to select an urban legend that does not remind others of vampires. Some will cast this ritual on the property of their rivals to make a point. Once the ritual is enacted, rumors will soon circulate among the mortals that the house is haunted or cursed, and therefore should be avoided by anyone with sense. Property values around the "haunted" house will plummet as neighbors move to avoid living next to the house that causes them nightmares.

These mortals rationally disbelieve in the supernatural, but they will feel disturbed by the thought of the location protected by the ritual and attempt to avoid it. Strong-willed mortals may feel curious enough to make a Willpower check (difficulty 8) to attempt to enter the building or area – failure means that they create some excuse to avoid entering. The duration of this ritual is one decade plus an additional year for every additional success achieved on the activation roll.

Translocation of the Vessel

Legends abound of mighty wizards summoning forth items of great power with an incantation and a sweeping gesture. Rumored to have been created by Etrius during the siege of Ceoris when the entire Clan needed to be armed at a moment's notice, this ritual allows a thaumaturge to mystically link herself to a specially prepared vessel via the power of her vitae. By speaking the name of the object in question, the caster may teleport this vessel directly into her hand with a burst of shimmering black light.

System: Translocation of the Vessel requires that the thaumaturge select a vessel to attune to her vitae. This item must be small enough that she can easily lift it with one hand. Examples might include a scalpel, a walking stick, a handbag, a pouch, or a wand. Next, she must soak the vessel in a point of her blood over the course of an evening. The object will slowly absorb the vitae, creating a sympathetic bond between the vessel and the thaumaturge. The caster may sever the link at any time by spending a point of Willpower or if the vessel is broken.

When the caster wishes to have the vessel ready for translocation, she draws a circle of protection onto the ground with purified salt and a point of her blood. This circle must be large enough to completely surround the vessel. Once the vessel is placed into the circle of protection, it can be summoned to the thaumaturge by name, anywhere in the world. The caster must extend her hand, chant the incantation involving the name of the object, and it appears in her hand.

Level Four Rituals

Preservation of the Sanguine Heart

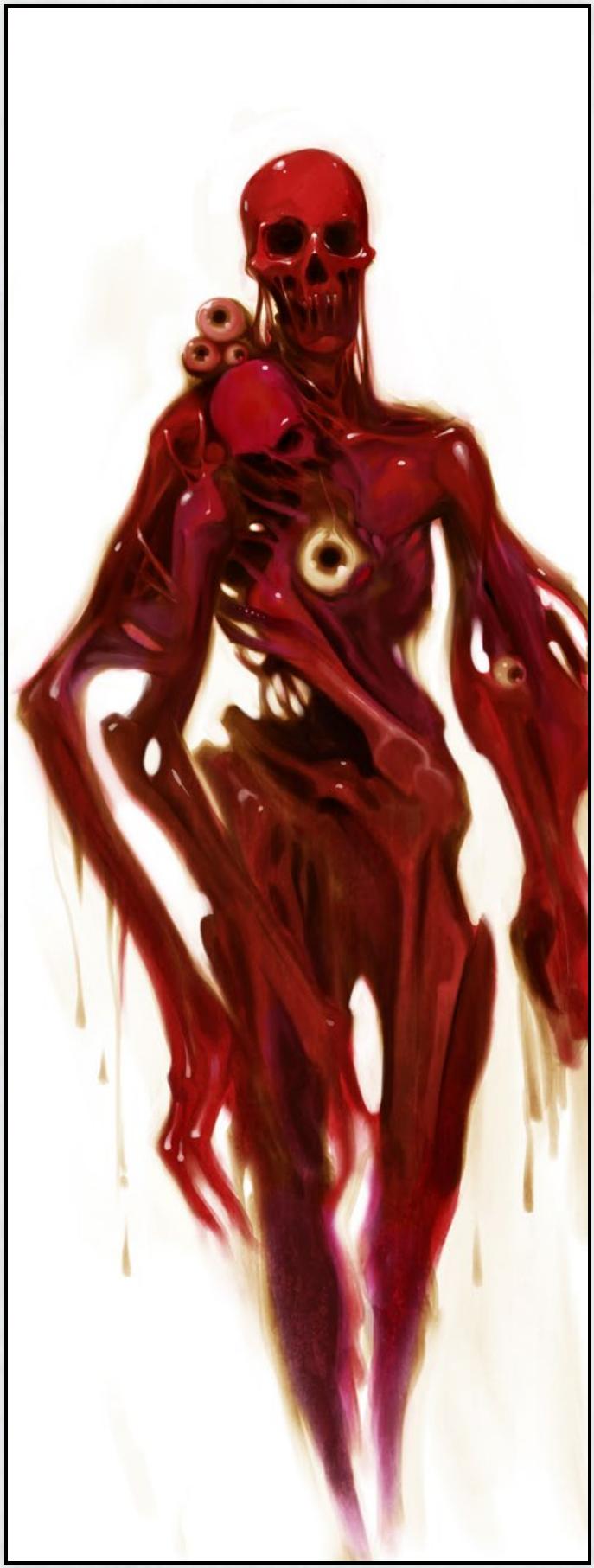
Loyalty is an exceptionally rare commodity, and perhaps that is why so many are willing to rob others of their free will to secure it. Blood bonds are one of the oldest means of control and ensuring loyalty by the elders in vampire society. The Anarchs now utilize many of the same tactics that were once the tools of their oppression. The Sabbat have embraced what once terrified them in their own communal Vaulderie. Agents of the Camarilla often must disguise their allegiances while working undercover for the Ivory Tower in Anarch or Sabbat territory where proving loyalty is often as simple as sharing blood.

Clan Tremere developed this ritual to protect Archons and Sheriffs from blood bonds and the Vaulderie, even if only temporarily.

System: The thaumaturge must anoint the forehead of the target with a point of the caster's vitae and then pass to her a prepared chalice with a drop of mercury. She must drink the metal and suffer one aggravated wound to her internal organs as the mercury covers her insides with a mystical barrier. Afterward, the target is magically protected against being blood bound or the effects of the Vaulderie (including getting the Mark of the Betrayer for some Tremere *antitribu*) for one day per success achieved on the activation roll. This protection comes at a steep price. In addition to the aggravated wound, the target may not receive sustenance from blood without the target willingly canceling the ritual.

Summon the Blood Imp

Mastery of blood magic requires dedication and time away from the politics and socialization of vampire



society. Trust is a rare commodity, especially to a fellow vampire and predator, and certain tasks require a certain delicate touch. This creature was created by a Tremere elder to serve as a clever thief and saboteur. He discovered in his experiments on some Tzimisce subjects that there was a very minute trace of the mutability inherent in vitae, and in that moment received the inspiration for the creation of the blood imp.

The thaumaturge must stitch together the form of the blood imp from the dead parts of animals, inanimate objects, and even human cadavers. This is a personal, individualized process, and rarely will two blood imps look exactly the same even if made by the same caster. (The flesh of a former supernatural creature doesn't work, and attempts to use it with this ritual will automatically fail.)

Once the blood imp has been given the spark of life, it forms its own personality based on that of its creator. The blood imp was created to love the thaumaturge, and will go out of its way to do things that it believes will make her happy. A cruel caster will find that her blood imp delights in tormenting lesser creatures to make its master laugh, while a solemn thaumaturge will find a quiet, thoughtful servant that works subtly and efficiently.

Homunculi are created to be useful and devoted laboratory assistants and so gain their creators' knowledge of Thaumaturgy. Blood imps, however, are made for mayhem.

System: Summon the Blood Imp requires that the thaumaturge stitch together fresh (within three days) corpses of animals and humans into a frightening humanoid creation. The blood imp has an animal cunning and empathic link to its master that allows it to innately understand the needs and desires of its master. Next, the caster must add six points of Tremere blood into the mix and allow it to simmer over the course of three nights.

Such devoted service is not without a cost. The blood imp requires a certain amount of attention lest it turn spiteful. Nothing is more frustrating than an angry blood imp disrupting important rituals or breaking priceless artifacts in a temper tantrum. Blood imps must be fed regularly with vitae and flesh.

A blood imp can fight, but not with tremendous effectiveness; it will nevertheless destroy itself if necessary to protect its creator. It can also push or carry small objects, and makes an effective spy (though it detests being away from its master for long

periods of time). Blood imps are damaged by sunlight and fire like Kindred, and can also be destroyed utterly by immersion in sanctified water.

More information on the capabilities of a blood imp can be found on p.108.

Vigil of the Stone Guardian

Clan Tremere has long utilized mystical servants to protect their havens and laboratories. Vigil of the Stone Guardian allows the thaumaturge to create a mystical sentry to protect a door or gate, in the form of a stone gargoyle door-knocker.

The stone guardian watches over the entry and mystically alerts its master when there is a visitor or trespasser. The thaumaturge may remotely possess the guardian by expending a point of blood. She can observe what is happening through the guardian's eye and speak through its horrific stone face. This ritual does not technically violate the Tremere oath against the creation of new Gargoyles, but some quietly feel that it skirts the spirit of said promise, or at least insults the Clans the Tremere once hunted.

System: To create a Stone Guardian, the thaumaturge must find or create an appropriate door-knocker (with both eyes and a mouth) and then soak it in her blood over the course of three nights. She must then hang it upon the door or gate that will become the new home for the guardian and enact the ritual. If successful, the stone guardian bonds with the door or gate and cannot be removed without being destroyed.

The thaumaturge may remotely possess the guardian by expending a point of blood. Once it is possessed, the caster can observe what is happening through the guardian's eye and speak through its mouth. By expending a point of Willpower, the thaumaturge may attempt (if she possesses the ability) to utilize the first two levels of Dominate, Presence, or Dementation to chase away intruders. The stone guardian may not physically attack or block entry to trespassers otherwise, but it can open the door or gate upon command from the thaumaturge.

Such protection comes at a cost to the thaumaturge. The Stone Guardian requires a point of blood per night to continue its vigilance. If the stone guardian is not fed, it will sleep until reactivated by the thaumaturge with a point of blood.

Level Five Rituals

Mirror Prison

The thaumaturge using this ritual possesses the ability to create a modest prison cell in the astral plane anchored to a specially prepared silver mirror. The caster may then open the mirror portal to the prison cell with a verbal incantation and physically deposit an incapacitated prisoner.

Some thaumaturges use this ritual to create a private space to meditate without distractions.

System: The thaumaturge must polish a silver mirror with a point of her blood and the tears of an innocent child. The thaumaturge must expend a point of Willpower that is permanently absorbed by the mirror.

Once created, the thaumaturge may open a portal through the glass by touching it with a point of her blood. The opening to the mirror prison lasts as long as desired by the caster. Incapacitated prisoners may be passed through with no difficulty, but an unwilling target requires an opposed Strength roll to force the victim through the portal.

Escaping the mirror requires the prisoner to defeat the caster in an opposed Willpower roll with a difficulty of 8. A prisoner may only attempt to escape in this fashion once every thirty days. The cell can comfortably contain up to three individuals. A person inside may not be scried for or be the target of Clairvoyance (or similar powers, at Storyteller discretion). The prisoner needs neither sustenance nor sleep, as she remains untouched by the passage of time.

Should the mirror be destroyed or the thaumaturge wish to cancel the ritual, the stored Willpower point will return to her and any prisoners will instantly be released.

If the caster spends a point of blood and touches the mirror, she can increase or decrease the opaqueness of the glass, allowing the prisoner to see outside of her prison as she wills. If the mirror is clear, the prisoner can appear in the mirror as a floating head to communicate.

Sanctuary

In the 18th century, a religious-minded Tremere developed this ritual, which allowed him to consecrate a protected space and then extend a certain amount of its sanctuary to those that inhabit it with her. The thaumaturge casting this ritual must first find and acquire a building that has not been tainted with violence of any kind (or not in the past fifty years, if it is older than fifty years). Next, she must build a shrine at the metaphoric center of the building that all who visit must be able to see. The exact nature of the shrine depends upon the faith of the caster. Said shrine need not be of a religious faith, but it must represent a concept in which that the thaumaturge places her own faith and belief.

Finally, the thaumaturge must consecrate the building via a sacrifice of her blood and will over three nights.

System: To complete this ritual, the thaumaturge must invest a permanent point of Willpower into the consecration of the targeted building at the end of the three-night ritual. Once completed, the shroud of sanctuary completely envelops the boundaries of the targeted building. All souls, living or otherwise, that are not specifically invited by the caster cannot enter the building. Further, those inside the building are protected against all uses of Animalism, Auspex, Dominate, Dementation, and Presence (and related Disciplines, at Storyteller discretion).

However, this protection does not come without a price. The shroud of sanctuary only lasts as long as the grounds remain consecrated. Any acts of violence committed within the building will immediately taint it, making it impossible to benefit again from Sanctuary. Should the ritual be broken, the caster will immediately become aware of this, as the Willpower point invested into the building reverts back to her.

If the building remains consecrated, the magic of this ritual continues for one year per success from the activation roll. Afterward, the caster must either reinvest the Willpower point or allow the sanctuary to dissipate.

Way of the Wendigo

The Wendigo is a malevolent flesh-eating spirit believed to possess humans that violate the taboo against cannibalism. Once tethered to a human form, the spirit is believed to corrupt the soul until its victim is little more than a beast.

This forbidden ritual was developed by an apprentice Tremere that survived an assault on her chantry shortly before the American Revolution. Badly wounded and depleted to the point of exhaustion, she slipped away to the Great Lakes where she drank from the people that fished and lived there until she began to ritually consume the flesh of her victims. The unknown apprentice noticed that the practice healed her wounds and soothed her will.

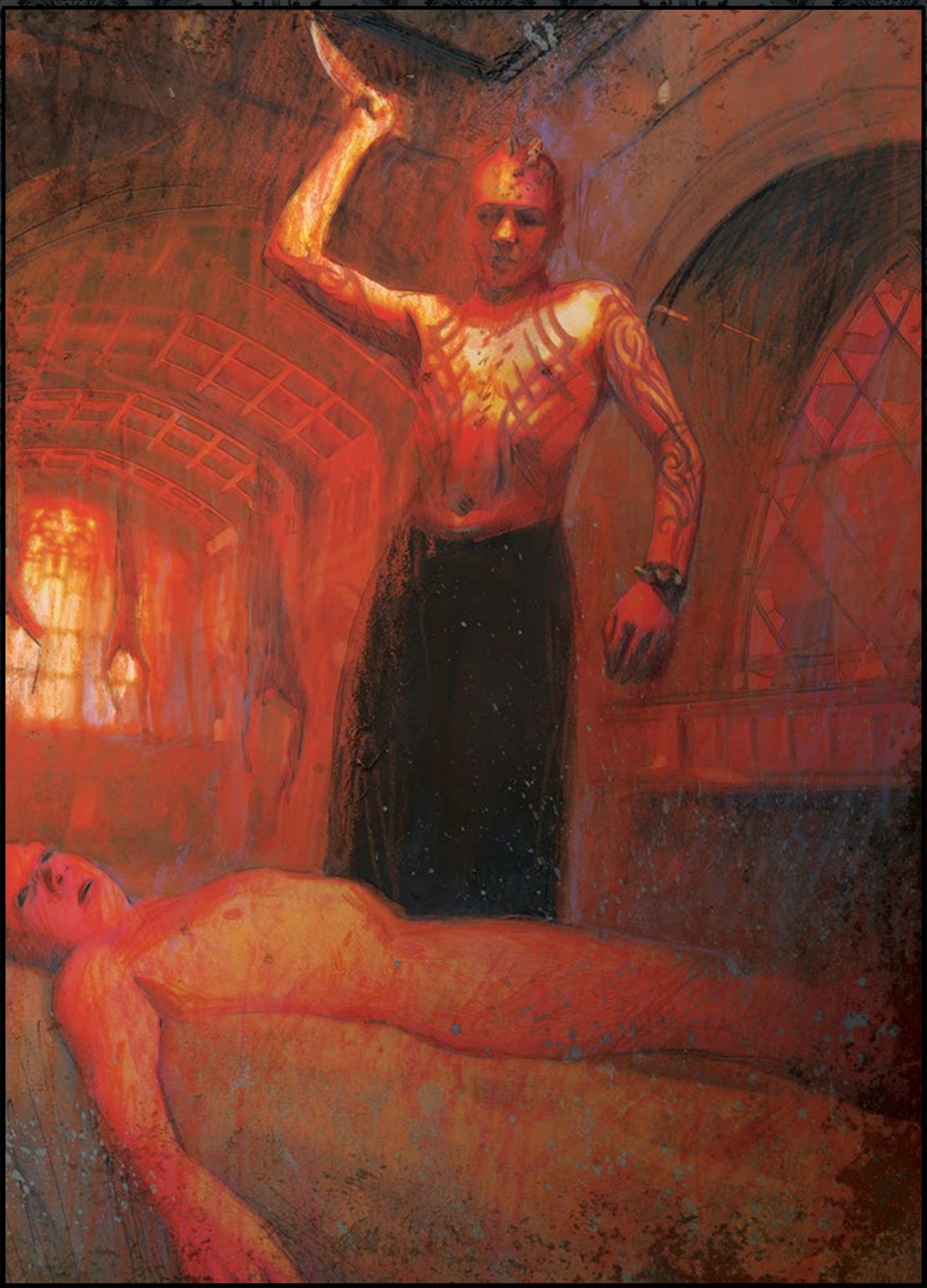
The Way of the Wendigo encourages the thaumaturge to sacrifice not only her own blood, but living flesh to recharge herself from the life essence of her victim. Dark magic such as this always comes at a price to the soul. The Beast grows stronger when fed, and those that follow the Way of the Wendigo are no exception. It is said that the original Tremere that created this ritual fell to her Beast.

System: The thaumaturge seeks out a victim that she believes is an example of a virtue that she admires, such as intelligence, purity, or reverence. She must anoint the sacrifice with oil, sage, and ash during an hour long ritual. At the climax of the ritual, the caster murders the victim with the thigh bone of a hanged man and then consumes his flesh.

Consumption of the flesh allows the thaumaturge to absorb the victim's essence to replenish the needs of her undead body and will. She will feel a rush of drowsiness and will be at -1 to all dice pools for the next hour. However, every ten minutes that the thaumaturge rests, she will regain a point of Willpower and one health level. At the end of the night, if the thaumaturge does not possess the merit Eat Food (**V20**, p. 480), she is forced to vomit up the excess flesh.

This is a horrific ritual where the sacrifice must knowingly endure the knowledge that he is going to die and then be consumed. Such a heinous action takes a toll on the humanity of the thaumaturge, as her mind is flooded with flashes of the victim's life and experiences the agony of her death. The use of this ritual automatically strips a minimum of one Humanity dot from the character's Humanity rating (to a minimum of 2). Additionally, the Storyteller might require a Conscience roll (difficulty 8). Failure means the loss of an additional Humanity point (which can fall below 2), while a botch could well mean the loss of even more.

The use of this ritual requires a Self-Control roll (difficulty 8). Failure means that the thaumaturge has gained the permanent Flaw Addiction: Human Flesh (**V20**, p. 482).



Chapter Two: The Sword of Caine

The ritae are not like your filthy thaumaturgy. They are sacred weapons, holy armaments. To perform the ritae is to practice the religion of Caine.

– Daniel "Red" Amaziah, Pack Priest of the Queens of Mercy

The Sabbat is a church: a cult with dark and murderous beliefs, praising vampiric paragons and vilifying the weak or the humane. These are monsters bound by blood and faith. The membership of the Sabbat must always be prepared for combat, even knowing they fight an enemy they likely cannot defeat. The Camarilla is stronger. The mortal populace grows more dangerous with each passing day. The Antediluvians are beyond comprehension. Still, the Sabbat have one significant strength: Caine is with them.

Vampires of the Sword of Caine need not be zealots, but they must at least give lip service to the Sect's religious doctrine. The Church of the Dark Father does not punish a vampire for questioning religion or expressing skepticism between parable and truth, but it is quick to destroy heresy and vicious against those who reject the glory of Caine.

The Sabbat is not a "dark Camarilla." When the Sword of Caine gathers, it isn't for petty chatter or political *tête-à-têtes*. The Sabbat is more goal-oriented. They come together to celebrate holy days, ordain leaders in religious ceremony, share strategies, train and hone their skills, hear Sermons of Caine, or to prepare for battles. Even their revels hold an edge of desperation. At its heart, the Sect is a morass of hypocrisy: wicked, violent righteousness in a never-ending search for power. A vampire yearns to dominate others, to seize power, to lie, betray and manipulate – and a member of the Sabbat embraces their vampiric nature in every possible way.

Doctrine

"In nomine Caine; et Patris, et Gladius, et Sanguis Sancti..."

A common saying among the Sword of Caine is "By Caine, the Regent, and the ritae." Those three things are the heart of the Sabbat, just as Jesus, the Pope, and the Sacraments are integral to the Catholic Church. The Regent is Caine's heir, general of the Sabbat's holy crusade, and shepherd of their faith. The ritae are proof of Caine's messianic nature, celebrations of the vampiric state, and weapons in their war against the Antediluvians.

At its heart, the Sabbat is an end-times cult. They preach an apocalyptic doctrine about the End Times, and they are fighting a war of *survival*, not conquest. Gehenna is coming, the Antediluvians will rise and feast upon their childer, and the world will end in fire. Courage in the

face of annihilation is a critical component to the Sect's faith. When you have no possibility of success, and no choice but to fight, you must seek aid from something greater. This fuels the Sect's reverence of Caine and their desperate hope he will return.

Several ancient texts comprise the canon of the Church of the Dark Father. *The Book of Nod* is their most sacred tome, known at least in passing by all upstanding members. True scholars also study more obscure scriptures, including the *Erciyes Fragments*, the *Ubar Chronicles*, the *Gospels of Irad & Adah*, the *Codex of the Damned*, and the vedic poem *Wounds of the Night's Sword.* Particularly daring vampires may even research heretical texts such as the *Revelations of the Dark Mother* or the *Canticle of Japheth* (which states that Caine is dead). Add to this the hundreds of prophecies and visions recorded over the centuries, and it is easy to see why few vampires consider themselves authorities on the complete esoterica.

Sorcerous Sabbat

Vampires of the Sabbat practice specific styles of sorcery, including Koldunism, Thaumaturgy, Necromancy, Abyss Mysticism, and of course the ritae. Students of magic are wary and jealous creatures. Their reticence to share knowledge only increases the paranoia and mistrust of other Sect members toward those with Thaumaturgy. Further, Thaumaturgy is not a "true" Discipline, though the untutored may confuse the two. Most versions of *The Book of Nod* state that Thaumaturgy was not native to Caine, so Thaumaturgy and its practitioners are viewed with suspicion by some within the Sabbat.

The Sword of Caine is a scattered Sect, composed of numerous independent packs and small dioceses. Individual packs may go for months or even years without seeing another member of the Sect. Even if practitioners were willing to share magical secrets, the Sect maintains no chantries or repositories of occult knowledge (although individuals do). Each sorcerer works alone. That makes Sabbat Thaumaturgy a difficult and spotty craft, primarily composed of fragments and mismatched parts, jumbled together to each practitioner's liking.

Magic is a piecemeal thing in the Sword of Caine. When one practitioner dies, his notes may be found by another – though not necessarily a vampire with the same tradition of magic. Research is done on the fly, and books seized from still-burning Tremere chantries are as precious as gold.

Sabbat thaumaturges must also deal with the changing winds of the Inquisition, who can declare a ritual or path of thaumaturgy heretical without notice. Decades of research can be seized and never returned. If a thaumaturge is known

to have particular power or piece of information, a pack with different political leanings might work to sabotage or even find an excuse to challenge that individual to Monomacy in an attempt to seize their notes and possessions.

Thaumaturgy is power. Even the most loyal Sabbat are reluctant to share what they know, because it dilutes her control over those abilities. Sharing makes the thaumaturge less prominent, and more of a target to those who envy her knowledge. This reluctance makes Sabbat thaumaturgy even rarer.

Koldunism

Tzimisce koldun claim they practiced magic before all others. Koldunic Sorcery draws upon primal elementalism, enslaving weak spirits or making deals with stronger ones. Foremost among these elemental spirits is the Carpathian entity Kupala, called "the root of all" by the most ancient koldun. Continued relations with this creature have caused significant difficulties, as trafficking with spirits is only a hair's breadth from infernalism. Koldun are watched intently by the Inquisition for any sign of demonic taint.

Koldunic rituals were the foundation for the Sabbat ritae, but the two types of magic are not the same. Koldunism is a practice of calling and binding; a ritus is an exercise of faith. The commonality is that rituals of the Sabbat tap into the spirits of their practitioners to fuel the magic, rather than the spirits of the elemental world.

Despite the Sabbat's adherence to the principles of freedom (for Cainites, naturally), koldun continue to bind spirits and make bargains. Their magic is visceral, primordial, and stoic, melding ancient tradition with the energies of the natural world. It's also extremely rare in the modern world.

Tremere Thaumaturgy

Hermetic thaumaturgy, once solely the province of Clan Tremere, is an exercise of will fueled by the supernatural power of vampiric blood. It is logical and principled, utilizing mathematics and esoteric sigils. Upon their first Vaulderie, a Tremere *antitribu* receives a very painful and notable sigil on their forehead, forever marking them as a traitor to their parent Clan. This mystic rune, called "The Betrayer's Sigil" or "The Mark of the Betrayer," is visible to all and appears as the symbol of the Clan, branded in blood and ash upon the Tremere *antitribu's* seared flesh. It can never be removed.

Thaumaturgy is critical to the Sect, providing numerous methods of both attack and defense. The practice of Hermetic Thaumaturgy, in particular, is among the most developed and ritualistic sorcery, and also one of the most stable. Sabbat who do not trust elemental spirits or Cobra chanting see Hermetic Thaumaturgy as the most standardized – and therefore reliable – magic. Despite the fact that many Clans hate the Tremere, the Sect realizes how critical blood magic is to the Sword of Caine. Therefore, the Tremere *antitribu* are tolerated, even if they aren't trusted or respected.

Despite the advantage they provide to the Sabbat, Tremere *antitribu* still suffer for the sins of their forefathers. They are deeply mistrusted, and discriminated against by Clans who have historically warred against the Tremere. They practice "unnatural" blood magic, and their Clan gained eternal life by stealing it from ancient vampires, not through the gift of Caine. Treason seems to run in the blood of the Tremere, goes the common thought, and it may be only a matter of time before the *antitribu*, too, succumb to their Clan's natural inclinations.

The Telyav

Unknown to the majority of vampires, there are a few Tremere *antitribu* who do not bear the Betrayer's Sigil. Long ago, a splinter bloodline of Tremere faked their deaths and fled the Clan, allowing their superiors to believe the cabal had been utterly destroyed. These Telyavelic Tremere had significant differences in their vitae, and the capacity for native Presence instead of Dominate (see **V20**, pp. 438-439). These differences in their blood allowed them to avoid the mark that other Tremere *antitribu* must bear. However, this means each Telyavelic Tremere *antitribu* has a choice. Most choose to fake the Betrayer's Sigil and use magic openly, pretending to be just like any other Tremere in the Sword of Caine. Some few claim instead to be members of other Clans, offering elaborate excuses

Respect the Players

The hypocrisy of the Sabbat is an integral part of the Sect, but Storytellers should remember that a *player's* faith should never be mocked or degraded. Although Sabbat ritae are modeled on Catholic rituals, the game should be played with out-of-character respect toward real life spirituality of all kinds.

for their knowledge of magic. The bloodline knows that if the Camarilla Tremere discover the Telyav still exist, they will be made a part of whatever vengeance the Clan is planning. Therefore, they must hide their true lineage even from other members of the Sabbat.

These Tremere *antitribu* utilize a more natural form of magic, based on ancient pagan beliefs instead of the more philosophical Thaumaturgy of their peers. Adaptive and cunning, they specialize in fitting incongruent parts together to make a whole. However, their lineage flaw can be problematic, as it causes them to have a disdain and even revulsion toward True Faith, making Telyavelic Tremere seem just a bit infernal. In the Sabbat, any hint of demonic leanings can risk a vampire's unlife to the fanaticism of the Inquisition.

Setite Sorcery

There are many different types of Setite sorcery, from voudoun-like *wanga* to the Egyptian-based *akhu*. The Serpents of the Light, and their parent Clan, the Followers of Set, have put a great deal of energy into the practice of magic, creating a number of radically different theosophies concerning conjuration and enchantment.

The Serpents of the Light reject Theophidian (Set-based) doctrine in all forms. They accept Caine's place as the first vampire, rather than adhering to their parent Clan's beliefs that Set did not descend from the Dark Father. Serpents of the Light believe that through death, one can become a god. If they grow powerful enough, they believe, they can rise to seize rulership of the earth, and control of the spirit-world as well. When a group of militant Egyptian Setites (more than half of whom were Warrior Setites) tried to force New World serpents into accepting their Orthodoxy, they drove a great number of Afro-Caribbean Setites into the Sword of Caine. Because of this schism in doctrine (both magical and theosophical), the Serpents of the Light have a great bitterness toward the Followers of Set, and often seek their parent Clan's destruction.

The sorcery of the Serpents of the Light requires many levels of initiation. A seeker passes through circles of mystery and learns more with each step along the path. The four Serpents of the Light who hold the highest initiation are called the *empereurs*, and these vampires are receptacles of a majority of Cobra wisdom and knowledge. Because of the nature of their initiatory tutelage, Cobras are even more jealous of their magical secrets than most other thaumaturges within the Sect, refusing to share knowledge of their ritual practices even with other Cobras – unless those adherents have passed the proper initiation rites.

Assamite Al-Aziz

Assamite sorcery began in the time of the Second City, and the first derivatives were mortal shamans and magicians from Mesopotamia: Persian, Assyrian, Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonian cultures. Although Assamite Sorcery can have similar end results as Hermetic Thaumaturgy, there are vast differences in philosophy, spirituality, and practice. Most Assamite sorcerers see magic through their spiritual and cultural belief, using trance and meditation to pierce the veil of truth and climb the Ladder of Heaven to magical enlightenment.

The sorcerers within the Sabbat are of a specific splinter of philosophical practice, having fled the Mountain together. They descend from the same small lineage, and thus their magic is unified by dint of having a singular teacher and point of origin. They call themselves Al-Aziz, choosing as their surname the Arabic term for god "the Purifier." These few Assamite sorcerers are also trained to use the drug *kalif*, a hashish mixed with Kindred vitae, to fuel their magic. Whether through ecstatic dance, the ecstasy of pain, or prayer-filled ceremony, transcendent experience is always an integral part of their sorcery.

There have never been many Assamite sorcerers within the Sabbat. They are few in number, and most members of this caste are deeply loyal to the Mountain. The few Al-Aziz must, therefore, be as independent as possible. They grow and hoard reserves of kalif. This also means that the Al-Aziz have difficulty teaching magic, as there simply isn't enough kalif to go around – and very little to waste on unenlightened.

Necromancy

There are very few necromancers in the Sword of Caine. The Harbingers of Skulls, though powerful, are fairly rare. Never particularly forthcoming, these ancient vampires rarely join packs and do not share their magic willingly. Giovanni who turned traitor against their Family during the formation of the Sabbat were almost non-existent, and the presence of the Harbingers has curtailed the recruitment of others.

One of the most prominent Paths of Enlightenment in the Sect, the Path of Death and the Soul, encourages knowledge of Necromancy. The followers of that Path are fanatic about the study of death, and are willing to do anything necessary in order to acquire such information. Despite the Sect's strict interdiction against associating with those who do not believe in Caine (or who serve their Antediluvians), there are plenty of practitioners on this path who are willing to go to great lengths to acquire Necromancy.

Blood and Bane (Level 3 Dur-An-Ki Ritual)

This Assamite Sorcery ritual is native to the lineage of Al-Aziz, and only known to these Sabbat practitioners. It is said that the first member of this lineage created it to assist in her flight from the Mountain of Alamut, and taught it to her childer thereafter. It is a corruption of the ritual "Infusion of Kalif" (pp. 162-163).

This ritual constitutes a powerful hex, causing its target's spirit to deteriorate slowly while under the effect of this spell. Other magical casters can feel when this ritual is in effect, and receive instinctive knowledge of the general direction and distance to the caster.

System: The Al-Aziz must spend an hour in ecstatic dance, chant, and meditation. Using the birth name of her victim and a small token belonging to that individual – a lock of hair, or some item of personal significance – she targets her spell upon that person. The caster must make a Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7). For each success, she reduces the target's level of Thaumaturgy in their primary path by one dot. The effects of this ritual lasts until the next sunrise, or until the caster releases the spell or is destroyed.

Some members of the Sect go so far as to kidnap and blood bind Giovanni, forcing them to teach Necromantic Paths. This is a tremendous danger to the Sect, as Clan Giovanni does not suffer such abuses lightly, and never stops hunting for its missing members. When the Clan discovers that the Sabbat is responsible, the grievance usually escalates into city-wide conflict.

Other practitioners of Necromancy, in an effort to avoid such violent entanglements, make deals with non-Sabbat to learn these powers. Learning Necromancy in this manner risks both accusations of heresy and, potentially, destruction. Among the Sabbat, the study of Necromancy can be dangerous indeed.

Abyss Mysticism

Although the Lasombra are a pragmatic Clan, some Keepers delve into the occult mysteries of their power over shadow. They have learned that Obtenebration rises from a realm at the center of creation — a darkness known as the Abyss. Rumors are that the notorious Lasombra antitribu Lord Aludian Thex was among the first to bring this Mysticism to the Clan, but none are willing to confirm or deny such a charge. Abyss Mysticism is an important tool, but it is also a dangerous one. These mystics are ever in search of dark secrets, terrible truths, and philosophical answers, attempting to unlock the depths of the Abyss. Those who practice these mystic arts are called "The Shadowed," and their prestige among the Lasombra Clan suffers due to their studies. It is not unknown for members of the Kiasyd bloodline to practice Abyss Mysticism, although the Lasombra Clan makes every effort to keep such knowledge away from their curious "cousins."

Abyssal magic summons spirits from another dimension, one which resembles a form of dark purgatory. Such practitioners are enslaving and controlling spirits, but those spirits are unlike anything else in creation, and seem to have no memory of or association with true demonic entities. Nevertheless, the Inquisition has noted their existence, and the practice of Abyss Mysticism. This causes the Lasombra to keep their Abyss Mystics out of the limelight and their abilities unknown to the majority of the Sabbat. The elders of the Clan have seen the suspicion placed on Tzimisce kolduns, and fear the Inquisition's capacity to declare Abyss Mysticism heretical.

Abyssal Rituals

The following rituals do not adhere to the same rules as other forms of magic, in large part because they build on a Discipline that is not truly a form of sorcery. To learn Abyss Mysticism, a Cainite must have at least one dot in both Obtenebration and one dot in Occult. Such a character may not learn Abyss rituals rated higher than her Obtenebration or Occult score (whichever is lower). Casting Abyss rituals requires a successful Wits + Occult roll, for which the difficulty equals 3 + the level of the ritual (maximum 9). Only one success is required for a ritual to succeed. Should a roll to activate an Abyss ritual fail, the Storyteller is encouraged to create particularly horrible consequences or side effects; the Abyss demands a heavy penance for failure.

Unlike normal rituals, each Abyss Mysticism ritual costs 3 times the ritual level in experience points to learn. All rituals of Abyss Mysticism also have permanent side effects associated with learning and using them, as befits the alien and malignant nature of the Abyss. Under no circumstances do Flaws obtained from these side effects

reward the vampire with bonus or experience points, nor can they be bought off.

Weight of Shadows (Level 1 Abyss Mysticism Ritual)

For the rest of the evening, the caster may concentrate and control naturally occurring shadows, making them move, act, or otherwise obey the caster's commands. So long as the caster takes no other action, she may thus control any shadow that is not currently being controlled by another individual.

System: This ritual only allows the caster to control natural shadows, not shadows created by Obtenebration. Shadows controlled by the caster can gain or lose a small amount of size (thus a woman's shadow could be made look like a man's, but a dog's shadow could not). Only one such shadow may be controlled at a time. The Storyteller is the arbiter of what kinds of shadows are simply too large for this power to affect (such as the shadow of a skyscraper). The effects of this ritual last until the next sunrise.

Side Effect: Shadows are drawn toward the caster, and when not controlled, will attempt to move toward her, even to the point of bending against the light. The caster gains the Flaw Eerie Presence (with the above descriptor) for the duration of this ritual's effects. (V20, p. 495).

Feed the Darkness (Level 2 Abyss Mysticism Ritual)

For the rest of the evening, the caster may feed through the touch of an Arm of the Abyss. Any Flaws or other issues the caster naturally suffers are still in effect: The Arm's absorption of blood can be excruciatingly painful if the caster has the flaw Grip of the Damned (V20, p. 495), all feeding restrictions still apply, and so forth. However, the Arm of the Abyss leaves a deep, black bruise on the subject's body that looks similar to the mark of a feeding leech, rather than the tell-tale sign of a vampire's fangs.

System: The caster must spend fifteen minutes in contemplation at the beginning of the evening, chanting in Abyssal tongues and calling upon the spirits of the Abyss. The effects of this ritual last until the next sunrise.

Side Effect: While the caster's body contains any vitae gained through the use of this ritual, her blood is a dark, blackish color. This causes notable dark streaks where her veins and arteries are near the surface of her flesh.

Abyssal Threads (Level 3 Abyss Mysticism Ritual)

The caster creates a shining, jet-black thread and affixes it to a single target of any kind. The thread stretches through shadow and into the Abyss, to the caster's wrist. If the thread is affixed to a person or creature, at any point during the evening, the individual on either end may tug on this thread, causing a similar pull to manifest on the other end. If the thread is attached to an inanimate object, a tug will manifest on the caster's end of the thread if that object is moved in any way.

System: The individual or item to which the thread is being affixed must be present while the ritual is cast. This ritual takes thirty minutes of casting, during which time the Abyss Mystic draws forth a point of his blood and mixes it with the preternatural essence of the Abyss. By spinning this combined matter upon a skein, the caster forms the Abyssal Thread, and may then attach it as desired. The effects of this ritual last until the next sunrise.

Side Effect: While this ritual is in effect, the cold air of the Abyss circulates around the caster, and may draw unwanted attention. The caster effectively gains the Flaw Cold Breeze for the duration of this ritual's effects. (V20, p.494).

Maw of Ahriman (Level 4 Abyss Mysticism Ritual)

Once a caster has invoked this ritual, her mouth becomes a portal to the Abyss. She may not speak or make sounds, and anyone looking into her mouth will see a deep chasm of blackness beyond instead of the workings of human physiology.

System: The caster may consume anything she can fit into her mouth, eradicating the item (or creature, or part of a creature) utterly by absorbing it into the Abyss. Biting an opponent deals aggravated damage as per a standard bite, but also removes one Willpower dot from the opponent's total Willpower. Willpower lost in this manner may not be regained for one lunar month. The effects of this ritual last until the next sunrise, or the caster may end the ritual at any time.

Side Effect: The caster cannot speak or otherwise use her vocal cords, mouth, tongue, or fangs for the duration of this ritual's effects.

Ahriman's Wight (Level 5 Abyss Mysticism Ritual)

By drawing on the Abyss in time of need, a caster may allow the sentience within the darkness to move through their very spirit and reinforce his flesh.

System: After casting this ritual, the character gains a number of additional "Shadow" wound levels at the "Wounded" health level, equal to his dots in Obtenebration. However, if the character takes an injury that crosses off one of these Shadow health levels, he loses a commensurate number

of dots of Obtenebration as well. Dots of Obtenebration lost in this way return after one week.

Side Effect: While this ritual is in effect, all failed rolls using the caster's Conscience/Conviction are considered to be botches.

Ritae

The ritae are a unique form of magic, powered not only with blood, but also with faith. The Auctoritas Ritae draw on the faith of Caine. Pack Ignoblis draw on the pack's loyalty to one another. Faction Ignoblis Ritae call on political ideals.

Even if a vampire is a disbeliever, so long as she respects the ritual and does her part, the faith of other vampires within the ritae can make up the difference. Of course, doubt becomes more troublesome in smaller groups, where a single participant is a larger percentage of the whole. Small Faction and Ignoblis Ritae are more likely to fail from one disbeliever (potentially causing the ritual to botch, if the Storyteller chooses), whereas an Auctoritas of a hundred vampires might succeed with a dozen skeptics participating.

Ritae are not thaumaturgical, but they are blood magic, and they are affected by things which resist or counter blood magic. Further, when an individual is empowered by an active ritus, that creature's aura shows clear signs of the enchantment; a bloody wash over the spirit that manifests as a blend of sorcery and faith.

The History of the Ritae

Ancient Tzimisce created rituals of tradition to keep the peace between territorial voivodes. These xenophobic vampires developed customs of formal greeting, strict rules of etiquette, and solemn ceremonies of state. Over time, they infused these rituals with magic, the better to force a visitor to keep their promises. As vampires fought against their elders during the Anarch Revolt, young Tzimisce created the Vaulderie in order to shatter the chains of blood. Over the first century of the Sect's existence, Tzimisce koldun and Tremere *antitribu* conceived more Auctoritas.

During the reign of the third Regent, the conflict within the Sect had risen to such a furor that the Sabbat seemed about to dissolve. Calling a quorum of pack priests, Cardinals and his Prisci advisors, the Regent gathered the first ecumenical council of the Sabbat. This gathering, known as the Synod of Orphans, formalized the Auctoritas (or "High Ritae") and separated them from the Ignoblis ("Low" or "Pack Ritae").

Thirteen rituals, including four High Holidays, were selected as Auctoritas. These ritae were canonized by the Regent, and their ceremonies unified into formal practice. Further, it was decreed that no True Sabbat could be refused the right to learn these Auctoritas Ritae, provided the vampire secured the approval of his pack priest.

The Sabbat considers the Auctoritas Ritae to be extremely sacred. Individuals learn the ritae not only because they are useful or expected, but because knowledge of the ritae reflects a certain political ambition. Some priests choose to learn more than their station requires, subtly hinting that they are a political threat to the presiding Bishop or Archbishop. However, simply because an individual cannot be refused the right to learn an Auctoritas Ritae does not mean that he can find a willing teacher for a certain ritus, nor does it imply that politics are absent in this realm. On the contrary, the politics of the Auctoritas Ritae are even more byzantine, because ruling clergy must find reasons and methods to keep young, ambitious priests in their place.

Ignoblis and Faction Ritae are under no such popular acclaim, and are not mentioned in the Code of Milan or any other Sect document. Priests often hoard these rituals, refusing to teach them to others in the hopes of ensuring that their benefits affect only like-minded packs and individuals. Politics regarding the learning of these rituals can be very cutthroat, indeed.

Black Cathedrals

The Sabbat makes great use of religious fervor, and such, has a need for sacred places of worship. Small or nomadic groups create personal locations for pack Ignoblis, and the various dioceses may dedicate specific sites for larger Ritae. A Black Cathedral focuses magic like a prism, allowing priests to perform larger and more powerful Ritae. Black Cathedrals are permanent monuments to the strength and faith of the Sect. The Blood Bath to invest a Regent is a massive and unique rite, and can only be performed in a Black Cathedral. The raising of such a Cathedral is a rare and much-celebrated event. Three currently exist: one in Mexico City, one in Montreal, and one in Bucharest.

Synods and Ecumenical Councils

The doctrine of the Church of the Dark Father is complex and can be labyrinthine. Packs convene from time to time

to discuss these matters, learning from one another and arguing minor issues of theology, philosophy, and ritual practice. These gatherings are called Ecumenical Councils, and occur many times a year, bringing packs together for discussion and interaction outside of the observance of Auctoritas Ritae or the High Holiday celebrations.

On special occasion, word spreads through the Sect that the priests of the Sabbat are being called together to discuss and clarify major issues in a gathering known as a synod. At a synod, significant changes to Sabbat doctrine can occur: additions or alterations to the Auctoritas Ritae, Blood Baths for members of the Consistory, or the founding of a Black Cathedral. Synods are called on rare occasion to solve a major internal issue or clarify the Sect's religious beliefs.

The Auctoritas Ritae

Over the years, the ritae have changed and evolved. Some of the original Auctoritas have been lost. Other prominent Ignoblis have been elevated. The thirteen modern Auctoritas are: the Binding, the Blood Bath, the Blood Feast, the Creation Rites, the Fire Dance, Games of Instinct, the Palla Grande, the Festivo dello Estinto, the Monomacy, the Sermons of Caine, the War Party, the Wild Hunt, and the Vaulderie. There have never been more than thirteen Auctoritas Ritae at one time, though there have been fewer than thirteen at various points in Sect history. Ultraconservatives argue there should never be more than thirteen Auctoritas Ritae, and therefore vehemently resist the elevation of a new ritual unless another is to be demoted in its place.

For a ritus to become an Auctoritas, a large body of pack priests must petition the Grand Inquisitor to consider the canonization of a currently existing Ignoblis. The Grand Inquisitor confirms that the ritus in question has no heretical basis or infernal ties, and also has the duty of concretely unifying the language and practice of the ritual itself. The Inquisition's role is solely to ensure the ritual contains no heresy, no dark thaumaturgy, and no other magic that would harm the ethics and spirituality of the Sabbat. Once this is done, the Grand Inquisitor brings a manuscript containing the ritus in question to a Synod of the Consistory and requests that they determine its value.

Once they have formally been given the manuscript, the Consistory argues the ritual's purpose, function, and benefit to the Sect, and hears priests who wish to speak on the topic of the ritual's elevation (or argue that

Mark of Caine (4 point Supernatural Merit)

Over the course of history, some of these rituals have been lost, either due to the death of Sect members, or because the ritus simply was not as integral to the Sect's survival in the modern world. One of these lost ritae was the Mark of Caine, which offered protection against weapons of faith. As faith has declined in the modern world, the ritus was used less and less, until eventually, priests who know the ritae have become all but extinct.

Some vampires who participated in the lost Mark of Caine ritus were especially blessed, and still bear a faint sign of favor. Such vampires are always old, pre-dating the first Sabbat Civil War, and once had this ritual cast upon them by a powerful practitioner. These vampires have a small, faded mark upon their forehead that resembles the Hebraic letter *tav*.

System: Those who bear the Mark of Caine gain a twisted form of True Faith. They can use the effects of the first dot of True Faith (**V20, p**p. 372-373) – they must use symbols of Caine as "holy symbols." Further, they get +2 dice to resist mortal True Faith. Only vampires on spiritual Paths of Enlightenment can use this Merit – if a Cainite reverts to Humanity or succumbs to wassail, all benefit from this Merit is lost forever.

Auctoritas Ritae in V20

Descriptions of nine of the Auctoritas Ritae (Blood Bath, Blood Feast, Creation Rites, Fire Dance, Games of Instinct, Monomacy, Sermons of Caine, War Party and Wild Hunt) can be found in **V20**, p. 507-511. The Auctoritas Ritae of the Vaulderie can be found separately in **V20** on pp. 288-290. The following material is intended to define the rest of the Auctoritas, as well as provide expansions on previous material, in order to give Storytellers more tools and in-depth information on these important ritae.

it is not worthy). If the Consistory wishes to elevate a ritus to Auctoritas status, they bring the manuscript to the Regent. The Regent makes the final decision as to whether or not the ritus is elevated, and informs the Sect by means of public proclamation.

At the recent Synod of Hounds, such a petition occurred. Priests of the Sect asked that the High Holidays be unified into a single ritus, and a new Auctoritas elevated: the Rite of Contrition. This petition still stands undecided before the Sect, and priests in Mexico City and elsewhere argue the merits of both doctrinal points. As of yet, no decision has been reached.

The Binding

Held on Winter Solstice each year, and usually near water, this rite constitutes a formal renewal of the oath of allegiance to the Sabbat. All True Sabbat are expected to attend this holiday, reaffirming their dedication in a public rite of loyalty. Vampires renew their Vinculum to their brothers and sisters of the Sect, and as part of the ritual, the local hierophant – Bishop, Archbishop, or Cardinal – *must* hear all grievances brought before them on this night. Grievances brought out during the night of Binding are traditionally forgiven, though vampires are petty creatures and may twist the expiation to include only one specific instance of an offense.

The Oath of the Sabbat (which is recited both during the Binding and during a vampire's Creation Rites) is as follows:

"Of my own free will and accord, I, (name), son/daughter of Caine, reject the Antediluvians and dedicate myself to their destruction. I swear my soul to the Sabbat, and damn all those who stand against us. Hear me, brothers and sisters! Your enemies are my enemies. Your victories, my victories. Your blood, my blood. So shall it be, until the end of all things."

System: For one month following the Binding, vampires who participate in this rite gain one additional die to all Virtue rolls when in the company of vampires who participated in the Binding ritus at that same time and place.

Rite of Contrition

The Ignoblis Ritus of Contrition stands on the verge of potentially being elevated to Auctoritas, and some priests

of the Sabbat already treat it as though it were one of the High Rites. This causes a great deal of friction with Ultraconservatives, who have no intention of allowing a "new" ritus to be confirmed as an Auctoritas Ritae.

Contrition allows a humiliated or failed Sect member to atone for their actions. The Contrition Ritus (originally detailed in **V20**, p. 511) allows a vampire to prove their sincerity and loyalty and suffer penance. An insincere Rite of Contrition may still succeed, provided the penitent has enough faith in Caine, but if discovered, such a vampire will almost certainly not be allowed a second chance to atone.

Performing a rite of Contrition is a semi-voluntary act. The penitent vampire requests the rite occur (or is ordered to perform one, and agrees to do so) and gathers in a public location along with her pack priest, the aggrieved, and the pack priest of the aggrieved. No apology must be tendered, but the penitent must clearly and contritely state before the congregation the deed for which she intends to make amends. Thereafter, the penitent's priest will assign an appropriate task, to be fulfilled within three nights (and must be reasonably possible within that time). The priest of the aggrieved may then add a caveat to this task, usually magnifying the difficulty based on whether or not he feels the penitent is truly remorseful. Typically, this addition is something like "...and you may do so using only a pistol" or "...which must be retrieved from the local Prince of the Camarilla."

After the Task of Contrition has been established, the penitent may choose a willing second (typically a member of her pack) who can aid her in the task. The penitent may have no other assistance. If the penitent does not succeed in the task within three nights, or if she receives assistance from any other member of the Sabbat, the ritual fails, and both pack priests immediately become aware of the failure. If the penitent succeeds, she must be forgiven the original transgression.

If a vampire is ordered to perform a Rite of Contrition by a superior, her only options are to agree or to challenge their accuser to Monomacy.

System: If a vampire attempts the Rite of Contrition and succeeds, she is utterly forgiven the grievance she had committed. It may not be brought up again, and no further argument, vengeance, or persecution may occur related to this issue. Though it is certain that vampires do not forget grudges so easily, the appearance of "dropping the issue" must be maintained by those who were aggrieved.

If the vampire attempts the Rite of Contrition and fails, she is stripped of all status, forced to step down from any position, and may not gain dots in the Status background nor the benefits of any title for six months thereafter.

Creation Rites

While a pack priest has the authority to uninitiate any member of his pack, only the Regent, the Prisci, and the Grand Inquisitor can uninitiate a Sabbat member outside of his pack – and even then, only under specific circumstances. The Grand Inquisitor may only uninitiate a Sect member who has been convicted of heresy; a quorum of three Prisci may uninitiate one who proves herself ignorant or endangers the Sect; neither can uninitiate a Regent under any circumstances. The Regent may uninitiate any member of the Sabbat, at his will.

To be uninitiated means simply that the vampire is once more considered "False Sabbat," and does not mean that she is a traitor. An uninitiated Sabbat is still a member of the Sect, and is owned by her pack. That pack has the right to extract a heavy toll on anyone who harms their property without their consent. Uninitiating a vampire strips her of all status and rank, erasing all previous deeds. Such a vampire must be reeducated before again receiving her Creation Rites and becoming True Sabbat. A period of not less than a year and a day must pass during this "reeducation," unless the specific authority who punished the vampire relents and allows the Creation Rites, or unless the Regent specifically and publically pardons the vampire's transgression.

The Wild Hunt, on the other hand, is far more serious than simple uninitiation – see p. 46 for more.

High Holidays

This ritual is used during the celebration of several formal holidays integral to the worship of Caine. The current High Holidays are the Festivo Dello Estinto and the Palla Grande. Some priests of the Sabbat argue that having two Auctoritas Ritae reserved for holidays is excessive (three if one counts The Binding), and that a single ritual could be used to cover both celebrations and also to allow more traditional priests to revisit the older holidays of the Sect.

A High Holiday Ritus occurs within another, more specialized celebration dedicated to the holiday in question. During the Festivo Dello Estinto, there may be ritual sacrifice, bacchanalian indulgence, or gorging, while the Palla Grande is a more restrained vampiric ball with political overtones. Holidays are prominent events and religious celebrations. Unlike Camarilla balls or social salons, High Holidays are bloody, monstrous

gatherings. They allow members of the Sect to revel in their vampiric nature, and educate one another on tactics, Paths of Enlightenment, and the lore and doctrine of Caine. This is not to say there are no politics at the High Holiday gatherings, but they are both more subtle and more brutal than those of the Camarilla.

Palla Grande: The largest and most revered of the High Holidays, the Palla Grande occurs on All Hallows Eve. It is a time to celebrate the history of Caine, and re-enact small plays or pageants comprised of parables from the *Book of Nod*. It is a dark masquerade ball with political overtones, and usually hosts the Sect's yearly Ecumenical Council.

Festivo Dello Estinto: The "Festival of the Dead" occurs during the entire second week of March. The purpose is to revel in being a vampire, provoking one's vampiric nature, and celebrating immortality by laughing in the face of death.

Walpurgisnacht: This festival occurs on the 30th of April, exactly half the year around from the Palla Grande. Walpurgisnacht is the night where the Sect celebrates its founding, telling the tales of Silchester and the Anarch Revolt. It is also the holiday wherein new childer are chosen, dragged before the Sect and Embraced in a public and ritualistic fashion.

The Sacrificial Revel: The Sacrificial Revel, traditionally held in February, is a dark and thoughtful holiday. The Sabbat celebrate their freedom, tell tales of sacrifices made for the Sect in the previous year, and remember those who died for the cause over the centuries.

The Eides of Caine: The central theme of this High Holiday is that of the murder of Abel, and Caine's resulting exile from Eden. It is celebrated in late August, during the time of the first harvests, and is often celebrated through unveiling works of dark beauty, elegantly fleshcrafted masterpieces, or other artistic performances in Caine's honor.

System: Vampires who participate in a High Holiday Ritus replenish their Willpower completely. Further, they receive one additional Willpower point over their natural capacity. This extra Willpower point is kept until spent, or until one month has passed (whichever occurs first). A character may have only one bonus Willpower at a time.

The Monomacy

One of the earliest ritus devised by the Sect, Monomacy has been critical to the continuance of the Sabbat. Its strictures have changed from time to time, adjusted by the Sect's needs or the dictates of a Regent, but the ritus of combat remains essential for unity.

Challenge: A clear challenge is delivered to the challenged party and his pack priest. Only True Sabbat (i.e. those who have gone through the Creation Rites) can either challenge or be challenged. If the challenged has no pack priest, or is not in a pack, they are at a significant disadvantage, and have only three nights to choose appropriate counsel – or it will be chosen for him by the closest Bishop or Archbishop.

Choosing the Arbiter: Next, an arbiter is chosen to preside over the dispute. The arbiter is ostensibly a neutral party (though that may not be the actual fact of the matter, given Sabbat hypocrisy) who judges if the issue is weighty enough to justify the possible death of a member of the Sect, and to determine whether all other means of resolving the dispute have failed.

If the individuals are in the same pack, the arbiter is their pack priest. If the challenge is cross-pack, the arbiter is the Bishop nearest to the challenged by proximity (or Archbishop, if the challenged is a Bishop, and so on). The priest of a third pack, or a Priscus, may serve as arbiter instead, if the individual is acceptable to both parties. If the appropriate arbiter cannot attend to the Monomacy within a reasonable timeframe, she may decline to accept the position, in which case the position reverts to the next most acceptable arbiter under the same terms.

Once an arbiter has been determined, she has a period of one month to decide the appropriateness of the Monomacy. It is her duty to perform a final mediation of the issue, and within their authority to claim that one side is clearly at fault and should instead perform some rite of contrition instead. If the arbiter denies the appropriateness of the challenge, then the Monomacy is ended.

Acceptance: If the challenge is approved as legitimate, then at this point, the challenged party may choose to decline. If accepted, the ritus must occur within one month of acceptance.

If the challenged has significantly more Status than the challenger, he may decline without penalty. "Significantly more status" means 2 dots greater (or 3 points greater if the Storyteller is using the optional Titles rules from **V20 Companion**, Chapter One). If he does not have significantly more Status, then declining the Monomacy means the challenged loses one dot of Status permanently. An individual who declines a Monomacy and loses Status as a result suffers social penalties, as well. That individual may be branded a coward by his superiors, or be investigated by the Hand or the Inquisition for their reticence.

Deciding Terms: Once a challenge is accepted, the terms of the Monomacy must be decided. A Monomacy

is a fight. Tales of Monomacies performed through cozy games of chess or riddles are apocryphal; those are dubious claims in light of the Sect's ferocity and the vampiric nature. Such stories likely refer to Ignoblis duels rather than the Monomacy ritus.

The default terms for a Monomacy are a direct, one-on-one fight within a clearly defined, 30-foot/10-meter diameter circle. A Monomacy is expected to take place at midnight on the evening of the first new moon following acceptance of the challenge, at a location of the challenger's selection. The challenged and the challenger face off within this circle, using ceremonial melee weapons of a type selected by the challenged and provided by the arbiter (the challenged may instead choose "unarmed"). Either party may choose to fight without the weapons provided, if they wish, but they may not use any other weapons. Further, the participants may not have any powers active when the Monomacy begins (though passive powers that cannot be turned off, such as Fortitude, are acceptable).

By default, no one (including the competitors, their packmates, other participants, or the arbiter herself) may interfere, collaborate, or use any powers on the competitors (for aid or bane) before or during the Monomacy; a stricture which is closely observed. After the Monomacy begins, the challenger and the challenged may use any powers they possess on themselves or their opponent. A victor is determined when one vampire either torpors her opponent within the Monomacy circle or drives her opponent fully out of the circle. (Note that both the challenger and the challenged's Vinculi are fully effective during Monomacy.) Any of these terms may be altered by agreement of the two parties and the arbiter, although extreme alterations may cause other Sabbat to be suspicious of the results. A victor is determined when one vampire either torpors her opponent within the Monomacy circle, or drives her opponent fully out of the circle.

Alterations: If the challenger, the challenged, and the arbiter agree, the default terms of Monomacy may be altered. If any one of these individuals does not agree to the alteration, the default terms are the rule. Some examples of reasonable alterations might include a pack-on-pack fight, rather than one-on-one; multiple weapons scattered about the arena rather than one weapon per competitor; specific exclusions such as, "No Presence and no Obfuscate"; or individual inclusions such as, "Only Thaumaturgy will be allowed." Larger scale alterations might include expanding the circle to a five-mile/eight-kilometer radius, causing the Monomacy to become a test

of urban tracking and survival; or fighting while falling through the air after leaping out of a helicopter, and declaring the first one who is beaten to torpor or who "flees" via changing form before he strikes the ground is the loser.

Lastly, the arbiter may add ritual trappings to the ritus, such as requiring a specific number of witnesses or delaying the challenge for up to a month for spiritual reasons, so long as all parties agree. In no case can the arbiter's requirements delay the Monomacy for more than a month. Additionally, only the arbiter may declare a Monomacy null and void, and she may do so either during or after the Monomacy has occurred. Such a shocking pronouncement usually means someone is proven to have cheated during the Ritus, or that someone outside the Ritus has interfered.

Outcome: After a victor has been determined, he may select the outcome. There are three outcomes to a Monomacy: death (including diablerie of one participant by the other), exile from a specific territory, or loss of Sect position (which is replaced via normal means within the Sect, not chosen by the victor). The outcome of death must occur within the circle, by the victor's own hands or powers. If a competitor is ousted from the circle through the use of powers or by other means, the Monomacy ends without death, and the victor may only choose that his opponent suffer exile or loss of Sect position. All possessions of slain losers are given to the winner. If the loser is allowed to survive (either by condition of the outcome or through the victor's mercy), he does not lose his possessions.

A Note on Templars

Templars don't accept challenges or fight in their liege's place in a Monomacy. Leaders in the Sabbat are expected to be capable in combat as well as religious fields. "Capable" does not mean that every Sabbat leader must be a master of physical battle; a vampire may utilize cunning application of her Disciplines to force her enemies out of the Monomacy circle, and never need to raise a hand in her own defense. Combined with the protection of Vinculi and ceremonial bureaucracy to keep challengers away, this can keep a non-combat character in power long enough to develop any physical competence she needs to remain a leader in Caine's army.

Some leaders use their Templars as offensive weapons, with such a Templar usually contriving an excuse to challenge an enemy of his liege and nominating his liege or one of his liege's pawns to any resulting vacant position.

The Vaulderie

Vaulderies are small affairs, not fifty-person monstrosities. Individual Vaulderies are typically no larger than ten to fifteen members. When the Sect gathers *en masse*, they perform many small Vaulderies – between packs, along Clan lines, within factions, or among those with similar personal ethics. It is a matter of politic at such a gathering to decide whom you Vaulderie with first, or whom you avoid, and cunning vampires learn a great deal by watching the ebb and flow of Vaulderie circles over the course of a night.

The War Party

This powerful ritual confers Caine's blessing upon multiple packs for the purpose of hunting a specific, named enemy of the Sect to drink their soul and strengthen the Sabbat. If the War Party does not bring death to that enemy, those involved will suffer great shame. If they are successful, the rewards include Sect status, diablerie, and the benefits of infamy. Some Sabbat members claim to have increased skill during the War Party – no one is entirely sure why, but the warriors of the Sword of Caine aren't arguing with the results.

The effects of a War Party last until the next sunrise. Once a War Party has been cast, the packs cannot turn from their purpose, even if they cannot find their target or there is no hope of victory. In such cases, the packs will literally drive themselves to death, throwing away their lives in increasingly desperate attempts to reach their victim or succeed against impossible odds.

System: In addition to the details mentioned in **V20**, p. 510, all members of a War Party gain three free bonus dice to use in any action that actively pursues or attacks their specific target. When used on a roll, a bonus die is expended and may not be regained. You may use more than one bonus die on a single challenge, but the bonus must be declared before the dice are rolled. As the evening goes by, the vampire's Beast grows stronger, pushing him to more and more reckless acts in its desperation to reach the quarry. Storytellers should encourage players

to portray this, acting more and more reckless as sunrise draws near. A priest can only cast the War Party on a number of vampires equal to three times her permanent Willpower rating.

The Wild Hunt

Like the War Party, this ritus confers Caine's blessing upon multiple packs for the purpose of hunting a specific, named individual; in this case, a traitor to the Sect. This rite may not be used to target someone who is not a member of the Sabbat, and it may only be performed against someone who has betrayed the Sect in a tangible manner.

By the dictates of the ritus, the priest invoking it must publically announce the Bans of the Hunt (a complete list of charges against the accused) and a location. The accused individual has three nights to face her accuser and answer the charges. If the rebuttal is judged sufficient by the Ducti gathered to hear the exchange, the accuser must commute the Wild Hunt into an appropriate act of contrition (or no punishment, if the accused is innocent). If the Ducti judge the rebuttal to be inadequate, then the accused has the final option of challenging her accuser to Monomacy. If she does not give challenge, or if the accused does not arrive within three nights to answer the charges, then the casting of the magical ritual of the Wild Hunt is performed.

There is a big difference between "False Sabbat" (which implies redemption) and "traitor" (which doesn't). A vampire who fails a Rite of Contrition, fails in his duty, or performs some other minor crime, might be uninitiated and refused the Creation Rites for a year and a day (see p. 42). A vampire that betrays the Sword of Caine, reveals Sect secrets (even to Revenants or ghouls), or flees the Sabbat for another Sect is a traitor, and he will be hunted and destroyed with extreme prejudice.

System: In addition to what is detailed in **V20**, pp. 510-511, at the moment the ritual of the Wild Hunt is performed (at the end of the third night), the target gains a mystical, ever-bleeding scar upon her flesh. This scar is usually on the forehead, the back of the neck, or one of her hands; the locations where a vampire is anointed during her Creation Rites. The ever-bleeding mark is in the shape of the Sabbat sigil, and clearly identifies the vampire as a traitor to the Sword of Caine. The vampire will bear this wound until her Final Death, or until she is pardoned — an act which can only be done by the Regent. She loses all Status dots and position in the Sect, cannot benefit from any Sabbat ritae, and all Vinculi to her are immediately broken — although Vinculi she has toward others still remain.

The Ignoblis and Faction Ritae

The Ignoblis are less structured and more personal in nature than the Auctoritas Ritae. They also rely on faith, but can substitute individual loyalty for religious fervor, allowing a tightly-knit pack to perform Ignoblis Ritae even if their belief in Caine is not particularly strong. Most Ignoblis Ritae are created by pack priests and are used to foster pack loyalty. (For more information on the Ignoblis Ritae, see **V20**, p. 511.)

Beyond the pack, the Sword of Caine can be a chaotic and unpredictable environment, as rebellious splinter groups and political factions rise and fall — often leaving little trace of their existence. Others have survived the test of time. These feuding political groups push doctrine and guide the mindset of the Sect. Individuals can swap factions over the years, changing political alliance as their personal beliefs mature or alter. Many Ignoblis Ritae have sprung up among these factions as a result.

Today, the primary political contingents of the Sabbat are the Ultra Conservatives, the Orthodoxy, the Order of St. Blaise, and the Loyalists. Two other factions, the Pander caucus and the Status Quo, have less political power in recent nights. Further, some Sabbat simply don't care about politics. Vampires not affiliated with a faction are known as "Moderates." Most Moderates claim no unifying cause, and therefore Moderates do not have Faction Ritae.

Faction Ritae are used only by members of specific political factions. Like other ritae, these rituals rely heavily on faith to power their magic. Vampires who do not genuinely believe in the principles of a faction cannot successfully take part in that faction's rituals. If a vampire with divergent beliefs participates in a faction's Ignoblis Ritae, the ritual will fail. This makes it nearly impossible to infiltrate another political faction for very long; eventually, the spy will be forced to partake in a Faction Ritus, and will be discovered.

Packs that bridge factions may have members who possess Faction Ritae from multiple factions. Unfortunately, as noted, an individual must believe in the principles of the political group in order for those rituals to function successfully. Such packs often break up, or else unify their political ethics through argument and strong Vinculi. An individual can leave a political faction for another, but in doing so, she loses the capacity to cast any ritae belonging to the faction in which she was previously a member.

Faction Ritae may only be purchased by a member of the Sabbat who has undergone the Creation Rites, who has at least three dots of the Rituals background (see **V20**, p. 117), and who is a member of the political faction, with genuine belief in that faction's political goals.

It takes at least three members of a political faction, working together, to cast a Faction Ritus, but only one of them needs to possess the rite in question. Unless otherwise stated, Faction Ritae may only affect members of that specific political faction.

Ultra Conservative

Members of the Ultra Conservative faction are often seen as stodgy, inflexible, archaic vampires who never fully abandoned the hierarchy of lineage. However, as other groups floundered in recent years, Ultra Conservatives have seized many positions of authority, centralizing command and providing critical coordination for the Sabbat's troops. Ultra Conservatives are excellent commanders in the war against the Antediluvians. Although this faction tends to contain the most hidebound members of the Sabbat, it has also gained a significant number of new and militant members.

Ultra Conservatives favor strong leaders and insist upon intensive training, ensuring that every member of the Sect has the capacity for war. Ultra Conservatives work to consolidate the strength of the Sabbat through strict and efficient hierarchical structures. They recommend the Vaulderie between all packs of a diocese, and are certain that with enough ties of blood, the Ductus position will no longer be necessary. One day, the Sabbat will be a unified nation, abandoning the medieval concept of the cellular "pack."

Irad's Wall

Irad's Wall is an old ritus, recently rediscovered by Livia Yorke of Clan Tzimisce. It is guarded jealously by the Ultra Conservative faction to assure that their plans are unobserved. To cast, the petitioners must cause an area no larger than a single room of 100 square yards/meters to be consecrated with incense and salt.

System: When this ritus is cast, it sanctifies a building or small area for a single night, preventing spirits, wraiths, or astral forms from entering the location. Such entities may attempt to spy on the protected area, but they cannot cross the barrier of Irad's Wall. If a body whose spirit is elsewhere crosses this barrier, the spirit immediately returns to its body – instantly ending powers like Possession, Astral Projection, or Soul Stealing. Characters who leave their bodies while inside of an area secured by Irad's Wall will find themselves unable to leave that area until their bodies cross the barrier. This ritual ends when the sun rises.

The Inquisition and the Black Hand

Although the Inquisition and the Black Hand are technically sub-groups of the Sect, both are exclusive orders which require extensive testing to join. They are not considered "political" factions so much as they are militant orders within the Sect. (More details on the Inquisition can be found on p. 120-125.) Members of the Inquisition or the Black Hand cannot join these political factions or use Faction Ritae (although they can personally and quietly agree with certain political agendas), as those two orders are expected to at least appear politically neutral within the Sect.

Renunciation

The Renunciation is a solemn, formal ritual casting out all previous beliefs and doctrines, and swearing an oath before Caine to be loyal to the Ultra Conservative faction. This ritual (like all Faction Ritae) may only be performed by an Ultra Conservative, but may be cast on any other consenting vampire. An individual who undergoes this ritus is forgiven his previous sins against the Church of the Dark Father, and begins a new life as an Ultra Conservative. This ritus should be performed publicly. The priest who performs this ritus does not have to believe in the petitioner's sincerity; elder vampires of the Sect have long used this ritus to ensure the loyalty of allies who have fled from the Camarilla's ranks.

In order to fulfill the Renunciation, the vampire must swear a formal oath of allegiance to the Ultra Conservative faction. Thereafter, the performing priest stakes the petitioner in a public display of trust in the priest (it does not matter if this is against the petitioner's will, so long as it occurs). While the individual is transfixed, the priest recites a short Sermon of Caine over her unmoving form. When the stake is withdrawn, mythically representing the vampire overcoming death (a symbolic Embrace), the vampire rises and is welcomed into the faction by her peers.

The formal oath of the Renunciation is as follows:

"I (name), pledge to uphold the Sect, its rightful clergy, and its sacred goals, in the name of the Dark Father. Stability through discipline. Unity through constancy. Victory through relentlessness. I will prove my worth. I swear it, upon the altar of Caine."

System: A vampire who has undergone the Renunciation ritus gains a permanent die on all Self-Control or Instinct rolls, so long as she is a member of the Ultra Conservative faction and doing something that upholds the ideals of that faction. A priest who begins the Renunciation ritus but does not complete it (for example, kills the petitioner while they are staked) is considered to have broken the ritus, and will be punished severely by her superiors.

Orthodox

In recent years, a campaign of renewed religious fervor has swept the Sword of Caine. These Kindred advocated a return to the dedication of the ritae and an emphasis on the Priest's position within the Sect (above the more militant positions, such as Ductus). They postulate that the Sabbat has somehow displeased the Dark Father, by turning away from the ritae, relying too much on modern technology, or by allowing heresy to enter the Sect.

This faction's priorities are spiritual, based upon an ideal that the Sabbat's leadership should be solely comprised of the most devout and faithful priests. As adherents of this school of thought have grown more public in their arguments, they have gained a tremendous amount of support from mystics, spiritualists, and scholars of the Sect, and the Orthodox faction was born.

Orthodox Sabbat advocate a greater use of the ritae, more authority for pack priests, and a narrower description of "heresy" – the better to allow the Sabbat to research new and powerful weapons and blood magic for the ongoing war.

Atra Sacramentum

The sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church are considered necessary for a mortal's salvation. So, too, do Orthodox members of the Church of Caine consider the Atra Sacramentum integral to a vampire's unlife. When the Atra Sacramentum is cast, all vampires involved in the ritus must perform a sacrifice of their own flesh, offering reparation to the Dark Father in penance for the sins of their forefathers, the Antediluvians. Typically, the ritus is performed in front of an altar fire, into which each vampire slices a finger or some other small portion of her flesh while offering a prayer for the blessing of Caine.

System: The vampire receives two points of unsoakable aggravated damage when performing this ritual. Healing this wound ends all effects of the Atra Sacramentum. Until the next sunset, a vampire who has participated in the Atra Sacramentum ritus does not suffer the effects of his Clan's weakness. A vampire may only receive the benefits of the Atra Sacramentum once per lunar month, and the ritus's benefits last only for one night.

The Last Rites

The ritual of the Last Rites is typically performed on a vampire who is entering a situation in which he is about to die. This ritual may only be performed by an Orthodox member of the Sabbat, but may be cast on any individual to whom the caster has a Vinculum.

System: To cast this ritual, the Orthodox faction member melts a small bar of silver in a brazier, and the target must press his fingers into the molten metal, taking a point of unsoakable lethal damage. Healing this wound ends all effects of the Last Rites.

If the target of this ritual dies, the caster becomes immediately aware of the death. So long as the death does not include his diablerie, the target's soul may be "reclaimed" by the caster of this ritus by simply willing it to join with her own. Although the caster does not gain any mechanical benefit, it is in all other ways as though she had performed the diablerie upon her companion. In the moment that the soul is "reclaimed," the caster gains a vision from the dead vampire's point of view, allowing her to see the last moments of the target's existence. The effects of this ritual last until the next sunrise; if the target dies after the sun has cleared the horizon on the morning after the ritual was enacted upon him, the caster will not know.

Loyalist

Loyalists were the first to arrive in the New World, and spent a great deal of time among the Native American tribes, studying their shamanistic practices. These influences shaped the Loyalist movement, impacting many of their faction ritae. Even in modern times, Loyalists tend to think more like the plains tribes than European colonists; many are nomadic, valuing freedom and the small tribe of their pack. Even those who settle down put a high value on rule by the will of the community, rather than through the domination of an established hierarchy.

Loyalists insist that the primary foundation of the Sect is freedom, not unity. They are rebellious and young, but unlike the Anarchs, Loyalists do not want to tear down their parent Sect. Instead, they want to see it succeed – through the freedom and independence of each pack. Though they can be contrary, often refusing orders simply to prove a point, most Loyalists genuinely believe in the Sect's cause. They advocate an extremely limited hierarchy, where the Regent is the sole authority above pack Ducti. They accept that under certain circumstances, the Regent might elevate a Ductus to leadership over several packs for the purpose of achieving a task (such as defending territory or reclaiming a domain). However, once that task is done, the *"Ductus Priori"* would step down, relinquishing this temporary authority and restoring freedom to the packs.

Loyalists do tend to listen to the judgment and guidance of the Prisci (some of whom are Loyalists, as it is one of the few positions without hierarchical authority over others), but that respect must be earned by the Prisci in question. In these cases, the Loyalist is not "accepting the authority" of a titular position, so much as being guided by a more experienced Sect member whom she acknowledges as a superior vampire.

Purity of Babel

The Book of Genesis details the story of a mighty city of peace and prosperity, whose heights would reach into heaven and rival even the glory of God. The Almighty struck down that city, even as Enoch was destroyed by the Deluge. So, too, do the Loyalists see absolute unity as another type of slavery, and reject conformity. The Purity of Babel was created by a Kiasyd

A Double-Sided Coin

For some Clans, such as the Nosferatu or the Harbingers of Skulls, the Atra Sacramentum is a significant blessing. These vampires suffer the stigma and agony of a twisted form that cannot be cured with blood or even the use of Vicissitude. Even so, the effects of the Atra Sacramentum can only go so far. Clans with a significant physical alteration as part of their Clan weakness find that alteration lessened – Nosferatu are no longer hideous, and Kiasyd could pass as human – but also lose any benefits granted by their physical alteration. Mechanics which specifically call upon those physical alterations do not function while this ritual is in effect.

known only as "Balthazar" to strengthen the pack, allowing secure communication even within a larger gathering. The fact that public conversations using the ritus tend to frustrate those who do not understand them is just a bonus. Only members of the Loyalist Faction may participate in this ritus.

System: For the rest of the night, those who participated in a specific Purity of Babel ritus (up to ten Loyalists) may choose to communicate with one another in a manner that is indecipherable to all those around them. These vampires have the capacity to literally speak another language, one that cannot be deciphered by any means. Further, this communication does not have to be verbal. The participants in this ritual may signal to one another clearly so long as they can see, hear, touch, or otherwise clearly sense one another, even over video cameras, cellphone or other electronic means, and those who were not part of the individual's ritus cannot gain meaning from these gestures.

Vampires who participate in one Purity of Babel ritus may not decipher the communication of those using a different form of the ritus. This communication is as obvious as any other conversation; only the meaning is obscured.

Calling the Directions

This ritual hearkens back to the Native American shamanic practices adopted by the Sabbat upon the Sect's arrival in the New World. The Loyalist faction had the strongest ties with the native peoples of the Americas, from the tribes to the north to the huge cities of South America, and the rituals and philosophies learned from those shamanic practices still influence loyalist thought.

Calling the Directions is a means of invoking the spirits of the four winds (usually East, South, West, and then North), beckoning these cardinal spirits. By doing so, the participants of this ritual reconnect themselves to the elemental, primal nature of the world, asking to – for a short time – feel as if they are a part of the cycle of the living world. This ritual often involves dancing, drumming, and ecstatic practices.

System: This ritual requires at least four participants, one to stand at each quarter and call specific winds. Participants in this ritual gain a benefit according to the direction they invoke during the casting of the ritus. If there are more than four participants, the additional practitioners may choose which of the four directional points they are assisting, gaining the benefit of that quarter. These benefits last until the next sunrise.

East: The wind of speed and mental swiftness. The participant gains a +1 to her initiative rating.

South: The wind of passion, emotion and breath. The participant gains a +1 to her Humanity aura for purposes of interacting with mortals (or loses all negatives to interaction with mortals, if on a Path of Enlightenment).

West: The wind of wisdom and knowledge. The participant gains a +1 to any non-combat skill, chosen at the time of the ritual's casting.

North: The wind of the mountains and of physical constancy. The participant gains one additional Healthy wound box.

Order of St. Blaise

Through careful manipulation of resources, the Order of St. Blaise take on the task of protecting Sabbat cities in ways most Sabbat traditionally neglect. They are powerful influence mongers and controllers of the mortal world. In general, members of the Sabbat disdain humanity and mortal life. This leads to friction between the Order of St. Blaise and other factions, as the Order's primary purpose typically requires them to maintain their humanity, and to interact with mortals far more than other vampires in the Sabbat.

However, the Order's contributions to the Sword of Caine are unparalleled, and have been unquestionably useful. In these modern nights of cellphone cameras and constant mortal surveillance, the Order of St. Blaise has become unquestionably integral to the survival of the Sect. Still, as much as they are useful and utilized, many members of the Sabbat continue to look down on the Order of St. Blaise, claiming that the vampires of this faction are a little too willing to "play with their food."

Martyr's Eyes

The members of the Order of St. Blaise use this ritual as an early warning system, giving them limited information at range when things go wrong. It was developed by Pyotr Stanislav to use with his army of ghouled animals.

System: When someone who "contains" the vampire's blood (a ghoul or someone with a high Vinculum to her) is truly frightened or demonstrably in danger, the vampire receives a flash of insight. This insight provides only a sense of who is in danger, and a sense of the general cause (being attacked, falling off a building, being chased by police, or seeing a werewolf, for example).

This ritual only needs to be cast once. Thereafter, the ritual's effects are permanent so long as the target maintains a bond of blood (such as the Vinculum or the blood ingested by a ghoul) to the caster. If that bond of blood is ever destroyed, the ritual must be enacted again.

The Blessing of Saint Blaise

Drawing upon Saint Blaise in his capacity as the patron saint of throat ailments, the order uses this ritus to guard against maladies which pass through the throat. The priest begins by consecrating a pair of candles, and presses them in a crossed position to the neck of blessing's recipient. The priest then recites the blessing, "Through the invocation of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr of the Sword, may Caine deliver you from ailments." The recipient is then cured of any harmful effects he may be suffering as a result of having ingested something, and further grants a measure of protection against the harmful effects of ingested substances for the next seven days.

System: If the target has been affected by poison, drugs, or any other ingested substance, the effects of those substances are immediately ended. This includes anything which has been poisoned, diseased, chemically altered, or tampered with, provided it was consumed through the throat.

Further, the ritus protects against the next single ingestion of tainted substances within a seven day period. Note this does not remove the Disease Carrier flaw from a vampire with that Flaw (the infection is latent within the Cainite), but could cure someone who has consumed the blood of an individual who possesses that Flaw. This ritus has no effect on the blood bond or the effects of the Vaulderie.

Pander

After the third civil war of the Sabbat, the Clanless members of the Sect unified behind a vampire named Joseph Pander. These Clanless demanded greater respect for their contributions and a greater share of glory. They fought against the staid beliefs and superstitions of archaic vampires, arguing that Clan had no meaning as to a vampire's potential. In the end, they overcame many of the biases and bigotry within the Sect and earned a place for themselves as a Clan.

In modern nights, many Panders take their prominence within the Sabbat for granted. They pay more attention to other issues, and seek personal power wherever they can gain it. The faction now has a reputation as mercenaries willing to back any cause in the name of personal profit.

One of My Tribe

Devised by Joseph Pander himself, the Renaming Ceremony is based on Native American initiation and manhood rites. This ritual officially adopts a Caitiff (or an individual of any Clan) into the Panders. By spending a full night dancing, drumming, and performing feats of the blood with other Panders, the individual asks for and receives rebirth. She takes a new name and loses all blood-ties to her former Clan, lineage, and Antediluvian, becoming a member of the Pander Clan.

System: By spending a full night in ritual activities with other members of this faction, the target individual, if willing, may cast off the ties of lineage and "become" a Pander. Although his character sheet retains his native Clan, he severs all metaphysical connections to Sire and lineage. Malkavians are expelled from the Madness Network, and any powers that work through the ties of lineage can no longer target him.

Status Quo

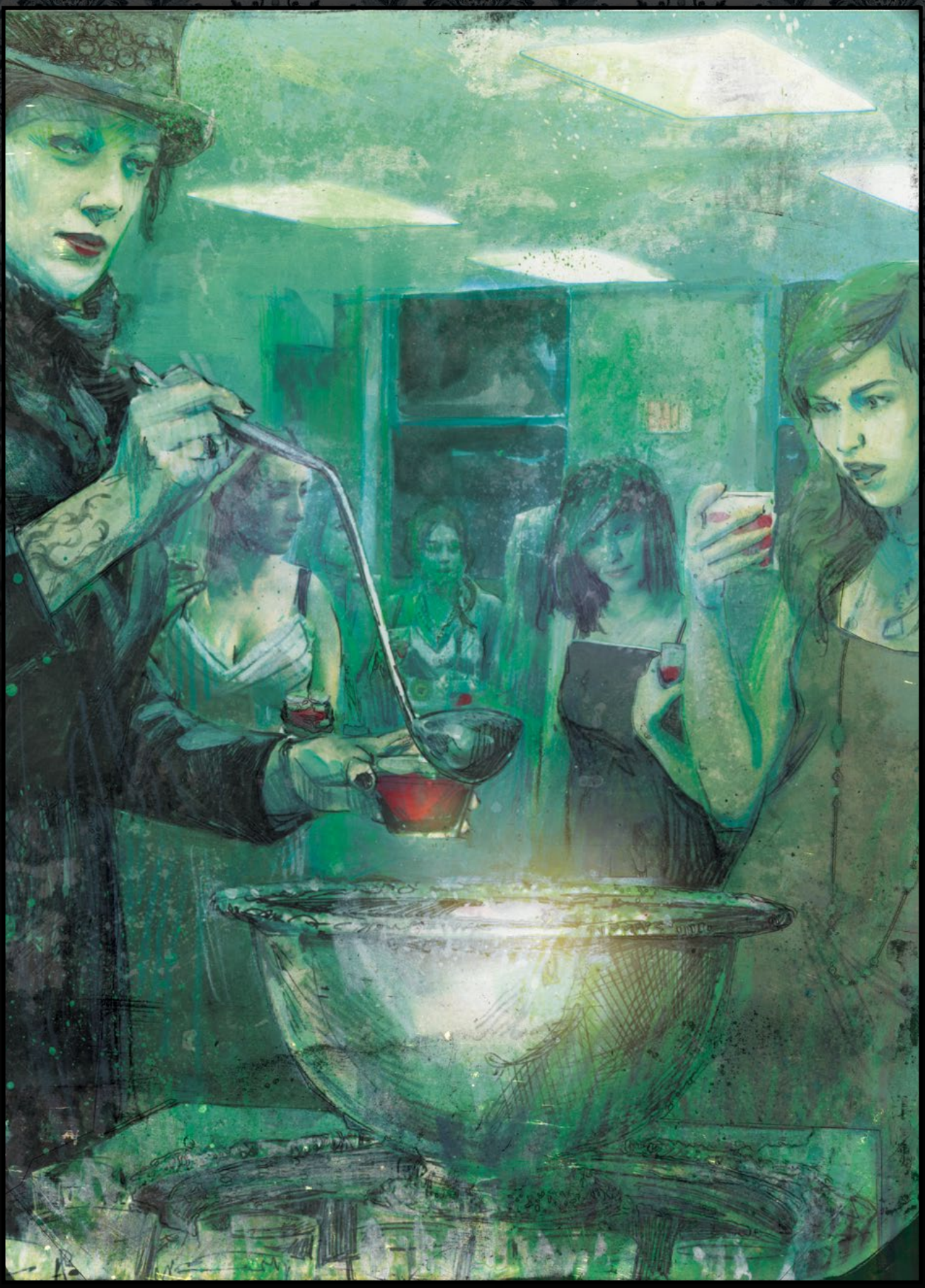
The Status Quo supports the hierarchy and the Code of Milan, and seeks compromise between the other factions so as to ensure the smallest amount of change to the doctrine and practices of the Sabbat. Many members of this faction are older vampires, static and unwilling to learn new things or alter their ways. They often support an existing regime over the upheaval and uncertainty of a new one, preferring to maintain a known (if flawed) precedent over any form of change.

Laurel of Concordance

Members of the Status Quo do not appreciate change, and work to keep the Sect in a state of abiding stasis. They do this by creating consensus, and encouraging others to compromise rather than seek progress in any specific direction.

System: During this ritus, members of the Status Quo enchant sprigs of laurel, which they must keep on their person for the remainder of the night. If an individual loses this material token, the ritual's effects end for that vampire. This ritual may additionally be cast on mortals who have a blood tie to the Status Quo vampire (ghouls or Revenants).

For the rest of the night, all those involved in this ritual gain +2 to any pool for the purposes of mediation, achieving compromise, trying to calm someone out of frenzy, or quieting a state of aggression. This bonus does not apply to pools used with supernatural disciplines.



Chapter Three: The Movement

Undermine their pompous authority, reject their moral standards, make anarchy and disorder your trademarks. Cause as much chaos and disruption as possible but don't let them take you alive.

— Sid Vicious

Unlike the rigid Tremere or the variable but still autocratic ritualists of the Sabbat, the Anarch Movement would seem to be too chaotic an environment for the seeds of blood magic to take root. But magic adapts and evolves and, in the end, finds a way to thrive. For Anarch thaumaturges, the way lies neither in conformity nor passionate obsession. Instead, it comes from eclecticism — from the innate Anarch willingness to try anything so long as there's a chance it will work.

Four Waves

There is no organized body of Anarch occult knowledge. There are no academies or chantries. There is no central repository of knowledge. Like many systems of esoteric thought, Anarch blood magic involves searching out reclusive tutors who are often not eager to share what they know, or finding obscure tomes that are as likely to cause damnation as to bring about enlightenment. Accordingly, there is very little in the way of a coherent philosophy that underpins the practice of blood magic among the Anarchs. That said, an informal parlance has evolved that allows Anarch occultists to at least understand each other, if only to make it easier for arguments to break out. Anarch sorcerers and thaumaturges generally group themselves into one of four somewhat irreverently named schools of occult thought: "Old Skool," "New Age," "Punk," and "Hacktivist."

Old Skool Sorcery

Blood magic of any sort has been incredibly rare among the Anarchs for most of the Movement's existence. In the early nights of the Revolt, a scant few Tzimisce and Assamite Anarchs taught some elements of their hereditary arts to fellow revolutionaries. Both Koldunic Sorcery and Assamite Sorcery had religious components that made their practitioners reluctant to share their lore with non-believers (and made pre-Enlightenment Christian vampires reluctant to study them in the first place). A few very rare Anarchs from other Clans had learned some blood magic from their own sires, hoary elder occultists who studied those arts before the birth of Clan Tremere, who then unwisely passed their lore on to rebellious childer who then used it against them.

After Thorns, the surviving kolduns took their knowledge to the Sabbat (if they didn't flee from Kindred society entirely), many Assamite sorcerers returned to their own independent Clan, and Clan Tremere initiated a quiet pogrom of every Anarch who displayed knowledge of anything even resembling Thaumaturgy. Despite all that, a handful of occult scholars among the Anarchs avoided destruction, hiding from the Tremere and concealing their

occult knowledge against the night when the fires of the Anarch Revolution would burn anew.

Over time, the Anarch Movement largely relocated to the New World to escape the control of their Camarilla elders. There, Anarch mystics who still practiced "the Old Ways" had more freedom to use and pass on their arts. More importantly, Anarchs who were interested in the acquisition of occult knowledge found new possibilities among the Native Americans, among Africans forcibly relocated to the Americas as part of the slave trade, and among indigenous peoples from every corner of the world. After decades of research gleaned from such sources, these Anarch occultists were able to piece together workable equivalents to several Thaumaturgy and Necromancy paths. The modern name of their school, "Old Skool," was originally an insult levied by Punk Tremere in the 1970s, but the venerable occultists adopted it as an ironic marker of their multicultural pedigree. And that pedigree was real — there are a number of Old Skool sorcerers who possess a body of knowledge of spirit magic in many ways superior to that of Clan Tremere, which remains largely ignorant of the potential to be found in the practices it would likely define as "primitive."

What distinguishes the Old Skool from its peers is a sense of reverence lacking in mainstream Kindred occultism (both among the Anarchs and the larger Kindred community). The Anarchs grouped under this umbrella practice a multitude of techniques, ranging from paganism to Wicca to Voudoun to Native American shamanism, but in every case, the Anarch treats his magic not as a path to power (or at least, not *just* as a path to power), but as a lifestyle choice to treat some higher power — gods, loa, Orishas, totems, whatever — as worthy of respect. Accordingly, the Old Skooler performs her magical rituals with an intensity similar to that of a Sabbat priest conducting a ritus. Because like that priest, the Anarch is not just an occultist but a *religionist*, and for all religionists, fervor is the ultimate source of power.

Nearly any Clan can belong to the Old Skool movement, from a hoary Malkavian elder who was once priest of Apollo to a vodouoissant Embraced off of an antebellum Louisiana plantation by an abolitionist Toreador, from a Lakota medicine man brought into the night by a roaming Brujah to a Ravnos who found Asatru while headbanging to Scandinavian black metal. Unfortunately, diversity is not always strength, and there is frequently tension within this school between traditional pagans of all stripes and their neopagan inheritors, particularly when the traditional pagan is a vampire old enough to have actually been a priest or shaman in a pre-Christian culture and he takes offense at modern "best guess" reenactments of nearly extinct practices.

The paths pursued by Old Skoolers are typically those paths which can be interpreted within the framework of

non-Christian religions and Christian offshoots (such as Voudoun). In many cases, the Anarch was already a practitioner of the relevant religious group or folk magic tradition prior to the Embrace and simply adapted his beliefs to his unlife along with the new power of his vitae. Just as often, however, the Anarch finds religion post-mortem in the form of an Anarch cult.

Common Paths: Elemental Mastery (**V20**, pp. 214-215), Green Path (**V20**, pp. 215-217), Path of Mars (**V20**, p. 224), Weather Control (**V20**, pp. 228-229), Path of the Evil Eye (pp. 160-162), Spirit Manipulation (pp. 142-145), and Voudoun Necromancy (Wanga, pp. 165-166).

New Age Blood Magic

Mortals often associate the term "New Age" with trendy California pseudo-religions and images of hippies from the musical "Hair," but the term is both broader and more sophisticated when applied to Anarch blood magic theories. Broadly speaking, New Age practices can include nearly any system of self-development and actualization. Historically, though, New Age is best described as a synthesis of Eastern and Western spirituality, infused with elements of parapsychology and pop science. Mortal scholars among the New Age movement claim to trace its history back to early Hermeticists like Paracelsus (a claim which provokes derision among the Tremere, especially those old enough to have actually met him). More recently they have linked themselves to Victorian Era occultists such as Helena Blavatasky (the founder of the Theosophy movement), George Gurdjieff (founder of the Fourth Way philosophy of self-actualization), and Swami Vivekananda (who introduced the Vedanta school of Hinduism to Western occultists).

Regardless of its antecedents, the New Age movement did not truly take off until the 1970s when the United States experienced a sudden fad for a number of seemingly unconnected alternative forms of spirituality ranging from meditation to holistic health to belief in psychic phenomena, reincarnation and UFOs, all of which the media tended to label as "New Age beliefs." By happy coincidence, the epicenter for this explosion of New Age thought, the American West Coast, was also home to one of the largest concentrations of Anarchs. Naturally, occult-minded Anarchs investigated and infiltrated the New Age movement. The result was a curious mixture of ancillae who entered New Age groups, often just looking for potential blood dolls, and neonates and fledglings who were members of such groups at the time of their own Embrace. Many of them soon realized that, whatever spiritual value New Age philosophy had in general practice, the addition of vitae actually seemed to make many of those practices *work*.

From those beginnings, New Age blood magic spread to every Anarch enclave on the globe. Undeniably quirky (even as vampiric occult philosophies go), the New Age movement naturally draws Malkavians like flies, as well as a significant number of Toreador poseurs who think that being a New Age guru will lend them gravitas. However, the school also attracts a surprising number of Brujah and Gangrel, as its emphasis on meditation and relaxation techniques is beneficial to Kindred who are at heightened risk of frenzy.

The paths pursued by New Agers are usually those paths which can are most easily analogized to psychic phenomena or to the movement's (usually garbled) take on neopaganism. Among serious practitioners, there is a rough parity between those Anarchs who sought out New Age blood magic in a quest for occult knowledge and those who were already members of New Age groups when the Embrace was forced upon them.

Common Paths: Green Path (**V20**, pp. 215-217), Lure of Flames (**V20**, p. 218), Movement of the Mind (**V20**, p. 220), Path of Blood (**V20**, pp. 213-214), Path of Corruption (**V20**, pp. 221-224), Path of the Focused Mind (pp. 139-140), and Path of Teleportation (Praapti or Mercury, p. 165).

Punk Sorcery

Of all schools of Anarch blood magic, Punk magic is the least organized, the least understood, the least repeatable, and the least liked — and its adherents prefer it that way. Among mortals, Punk (first as a musical genre and later as an entire subculture) originated as a means of extreme self-expression and anti-establishment extremism in Europe and the U.S. in the 1970s and 80s. While the socio-political factors that led to the birth of Punk are complex, the driving force was a general sense of nihilism among many young people of the time, arguably a reasonable response to an era when nuclear Armageddon seemed to lie in wait just over the horizon. More specifically, Punk culture was a reaction to the advent of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations, both of which were perceived by punks as bellicose, corporatist, jingoistic, and destructive.

At the same time that Punk was attempting to tear down society and replace it with carefully scripted anarchy, a new way of looking at magical theory would do the same thing to the occult community: chaos magic. In chaos magic, the magician (or "chaote") seeks to change reality not through the repetition of some dusty ritual or through appeals to some impersonal deity, but rather by altering his own state of consciousness. Chaos magic is a syncretic system which pragmatically applies whatever belief systems the chaote

considers relevant to the moment, thus leading to the creation of new and highly unorthodox techniques. The central premise of chaos magic is that belief is an active magical force and that what the chaote actually believes in is less important than the intensity of that belief. In other words, the chaote should essentially have "flexible beliefs," as well as a willingness to consciously choose his beliefs in order to find the most thematically appropriate ones for the situation and then discard them when they are no longer necessary.

Chaotes also place great emphasis on achieving an altered state of consciousness as a prerequisite to working magic. Some magicians achieve this through "inhibitory gnosis" via meditation, self-hypnosis, fasting, sleep deprivation, sensory deprivation, and the use of certain hypnogogic drugs. Other mortal chaotes pursue "excitatory gnosis," a state of transcendent mindlessness achieved through sexual climax, flagellation, dance, sensory overload, or hallucinogens. Another element of magic common to most chaotes is the use of sigils, personalized abstract designs meant to function as a focus for the will of their creator. Some magicians create sigils to function as representations of the spells they seek to create. Others use them as representations for thoughtforms—ideas held by the magician which can be manifested in the world through an act of will.

Both punk and chaos magic were born in Britain during the 70s, and while not intrinsically connected, in the minds of violent young Anarchs looking for any edge in the fight against the brutal repression of the British Camarilla, they were made for each other. Punk Anarchs threw themselves into chaos magic with the same abandon as everything else. Granted, relatively few of them had the occult acumen to master a radically new approach to blood magic (and even fewer of them survived the reprisals of Tremere thaumaturgists who were as offended by their approach to magic as by their political leanings), but those who endured gained both power and the fame that resulted from beating the Tremere at their own game. Now, Punk Sorcery can be found anywhere there is an Anarch with just enough occult lore to be dangerous and with far more daring than sense.

The basic premise of Punk Sorcery is that the caster must first reject the idea that magical premises themselves are important. What matters are the intensity of the sorcerer's belief and the actions and rituals he uses to actualize that belief. Where a chaote might engage in sleep deprivation to achieve an altered state of consciousness, the Punk Sorcerer might force herself to awaken during the day so that the ritual can be performed at noon (even though the normal risks associated with blood magic are heightened by the penalties associated with acting during daylight hours). Where a mortal chaote might ingest psychotropic drugs or engage in Tantric masturbation in order to seek gnosis, a vampiric Punk Sorcerer might design a ritual in which she and a partner feed on a vessel who has taken hallucinogens before feeding sexually on one another at the climax of the ritual. Indeed, many Punk Sorcerers find that the Kiss is an excellent substitute for the sexual aspects of Chaos Magic, with the more reckless (or ruthless) Anarchs deliberately starving themselves of blood so that the risk of hunger frenzy heightens the sexual rush of feeding even more. Some Punk Sorcerers have recently been practicing a curious version of the Straight Edge movement, and focus on ecstasies like this one that are tied to a "purer" expression of the Kindred condition.

Similarly, Punk Sorcerers also make use of sigils in their workings. One common means of designing a symbol

Punk Rituals

The exuberant and iconoclastic nature of Punk Sorcery is most obvious in the school's approach to ritual magic. Generally, rituals work for Punk Sorcerers exactly as they do for everyone else, at least from a mechanical standpoint. However, the actual description of each Punk ritual's working is flavored with the style of the Punk movement and, indeed, with each individual Punk Sorcerer. Adherents of this school mock the Tremere (and most other traditionalist schools) for treating rituals like spell lists from a fantasy role-playing game. When a Punk Sorcerer learns a new ritual, she learns only the general parameters of the ritual's requirements and effect. Beyond that, she is expected to personalize it to her own aesthetic style but also to be free enough and innovative enough to amend it as needed. Rarely does a successful Punk Sorcerer perform a given ritual exactly the same way twice, and it is a poor one who always performs a given ritual the same every time. Those who do often feel themselves slipping into a rut and suffer increasing difficulties in performing such boring, repetitive rituals, at least until the sorcerer comes up with some new and inventive spin to put on it.

involves the chaote simply writing out what he wants to accomplish, eliminating every letter used more than once, and then arranging the remaining letters into a decorative pattern which the chaote then meditates upon. The principle is the same for the Punk thaumaturgist, except that the sigil itself is drawn in the Anarch's own vitae or perhaps even carved into his flesh to be healed only after the ritual's completion.

Easily the rowdiest of all blood magic schools, Punk Sorcery is adored by Brujah headbangers who wish to explore the occult as an alternative means of revolution. Malkavians are drawn to the school's iconoclastic practices, although they and the Toreador must compete to see who can be the most "artistic" in crafting new and shocking rituals. A surprising number of Tremere Anarchs abandon their Clan's Hermetic traditions in favor of this school as well. Having rejected every other aspect their parent Clan's culture and heritage, such rebels consider Punk Sorcery to be the ultimate "fuck you."

The paths pursued by Punk practitioners are often the most unusual and frequently the most violent. The punk ethos is as much a part of the school's heritage as its magical theories, while its utility during fights is why it is in such demand in Anarch domains across the globe.

Common Paths: Hands of Destruction (**V20**, pp. 217-218), Lure of Flames (**V20**, p. 218), Path of Blood (**V20**, pp. 213-214), Path of Mars (**V20**, p. 224), Path of the Evil Eye (p. 160-162), Path of the Levinbolt (p. 140-142), and Voudoun Necromancy (Wanga, p. 165-166).

Hacktivist Thaumaturgy

The latest and perhaps most important development in Anarch blood magic came at the dawn of the new millennium. In the earliest nights of the 21st century, a coterie of Tremere based out of Washington, D.C. collectively pioneered the then-recent development of the Path of Technomancy, having long chafed under the disdain of superiors who preferred more "reputable" forms of Thaumaturgy. They stunned the Camarilla by defecting en masse to the L.A. Free States. Even more exasperating to the Tremere, these malcontents actually managed to steal most of the existing database of Technomancy research before leaving. While the Clan was able to reconstruct their knowledge of Technomancy, it was deeply embarrassing for the Inner Council to acknowledge that, for the first time since the Clan's founding, an outside faction had a superior understanding of any facet of the Clan's signature Discipline.

For several years, the Anarchs did indeed have superior access to Technomancy relative to the Tremere, although in recent nights, the two have achieved a rough parity. As astonishing as the defection and accompanying theft was, Camarilla insiders were even more surprised when Clan Tremere declined to seek the defectors' inclusion on the Red List even after the defectors made low level Technomancy rituals readily available to other Kindred through occult "shareware" programs. The apparent leniency with which the parent Clan has treated these defectors is a continuing source of mystery. (For hints as to the real reason for this "leniency," see **Anarchs Unbound**, pp. 23-25.)

Whither Masika St. John?

One of the most intriguing unanswered questions raised by the technomancer defection is that of the status of Masika St. John, the precocious Tremere credited with the original development of Technomancy. In truth, it was a group effort, but Masika was unquestionably the first of her Clan to consider the possibility of viewing a computer as an extension of its user's will and thus a viable tool for magical workings. Assigned in 2000 to the New York chantry, Masika went completely off the grid after the defection of the Washington technomancer coterie.

To the extent that her superiors in New York have commented at all on Masika's current status, it has been to imply (without stating definitively) that she has been recalled to Vienna to advise the Inner Circle personally on how to respond to the Hacktivist Thaumaturgy movement. On the other hand, "recalled to Vienna" has been a Tremere euphemism for "Final Death" for a very long time, and more cynical observers mutter that the Tremere elders' fears about technology must have outweighed common sense. Other rumors whisper just the opposite — that Masika herself has defected to the Anarchs and that the various "Vienna" rumors are disinformation spread by a Clan humiliated by the loss of one of its rising stars. If Masika St. John has joined the Anarchs, she has been scrupulous in concealing the fact, even from her fellow Hacktivists.

Freed from the constraints of Tremere hierarchy and backed financially by a mysterious cabal of Anarch venture capitalists known as "The Red Question," the defectors (who took the cheeky name "Digital Draculas" as a collective *nom de guerre*) set up shop in Northern California and started a campaign to disseminate information about Technomancy (and other Thaumaturgy paths) to affiliated Anarchs around the globe. Their mode of instruction was twofold: For broad consumption, the Digital Draculas provided a series of shareware computer programs which incorporated powerful thaumaturgic rituals which had been magically inscribed into the very fabric of the Internet itself. By activating these programs, the user could access the Internet in special ways. For example, the Fangbook ritual allows any vampire to hide secret messages and even videos within mortal social media apps, messages that appear mundane to humans but which are obvious to other Kindred.

The second avenue was more direct. By monitoring the Internet habits of Fangbook users, the Digital Draculas can identify Cainites who are both supporters of the Anarch cause and devotees of the occult. The group carefully weeds out the posers, the incompetents, and the Camarilla infiltrators before indirectly contacting those who are serious about learning blood magic that can be used to advance the Anarch cause. Once the target has satisfied the Digital Draculas as to her worthiness, one or more of the coterie will provide instruction into Technomancy and even other facets of "true" (i.e. Tremere-style) Thaumaturgy in exchange for services rendered to the Movement. Invariably, one service required is that the student voluntarily submits to Dominate effects incorporated into the Internet transmissions that make the student incapable of revealing what she has learned under interrogation. Those who complete their training are inducted into an elite world — the world of Hacktivist Thaumaturgy.

Or at least, most Hacktivists will happily claim that they represent an elite culture. Of the four main schools of Anarch occultism, the Hacktivists are the only ones who claim an institutional connection to Tremere Thaumaturgy, and most of them aren't shy about letting members of the other schools know it. There have, of course, been Tremere who self-identify as "Anarchs" almost since Thorns, but very few of them have ever willingly shared their knowledge of Thaumaturgy to those outside their Clan, certainly never to the extent that the Digital Draculas have with their arts. Indeed, Anarch conspiracy theorists often claim that for every genuine Tremere Anarch, there are probably three who have infiltrated the Movement to fulfill some Clan goal, and any Tremere who freely teaches his art to others is probably doing so as part of some baleful scheme that a wise Anarch should avoid. Even tonight, as the Digital Draculas happily offer their lore (or selected bits of it, at least) across the Movement, they find that less than a tenth of the Anarchs they observe are worthy of even being offered the chance to learn, and half of those turn down the offer out of sheer anti-Tremere paranoia.

While the paths available to the Hacktivists represent a decent cross section of the Tremere library, not all paths are readily available. In fact, selections are largely limited to those which had been mastered by the various members of the Digital Draculas at the time of their defection. The coterie has an almost obsessive interest in Technomancy and usually (but not always) requires new initiates to study that as a primary path in lieu of the Path of Blood. The coterie is also inordinately proud of its development of new computer-based rituals, many of which are modernist revamps of traditional Tremere rituals which the coterie aggressively "markets" in place of the original versions.

The Digital Draculas proudly state that they do not discriminate on the basis of Clan or Sect. They're lying. In practice, they are extremely reluctant to train Malkavians and Gangrel in Technomancy, the former because they're either too incoherent or too unpredictable even for Hacktivists, and the latter because they are perceived as being too rustic to properly master a technology-based occult style. Tremere Anarchs rarely receive contact from other hackers prior to an exhaustive examination of their loyalty to the Cause. Ventrue, Toreador, and Nosferatu, however, are all prized as potential students of the art, especially Nosferatu, who are admired by the founding coterie for their Clan's great work in the creation of the original Shrecknet.

The paths pursued by Hacktivists represent a cross-section of the Tremere repertoire. Technomancy is, of course, standard, but many of the Digital Draculas had been devotees of obscure or archaic paths prior to their defection, and these minor paths gain greater currency when they're one of the few things on the menu.

Common Paths: Path of Technomancy (**V20**, pp. 224-226), Path of Blood (**V20**, pp. 213-214), Movement of the Mind (**V20**, p. 220), Path of Conjuring (**V20**, pp. 220-221), Thaumaturgical Countermagic (**V20**, p. 228), and Path of the Levinbolt (p. 140-142).

Magic and the Movement

Blood magic is rarer among the Anarchs than in any other faction. Mastering even the simplest elements of any form of blood magic requires a studious, borderline obsessive personality, a commitment to memorizing vast amounts of

occult information, an appreciation for subject matters that most Anarchs would dismiss as "ancient history" at best, and above all, more patience and determination than are normally found in a Sect that praises impulsiveness and aggression. Further complicating things is the fact that the study of blood magic in all forms is conflated by most Anarchs with the specific study of Tremere Thaumaturgy, and too many Anarchs reflexively dismiss Thaumaturgy as "the tool of the enemy." It doesn't help that Tremere Anarchs traditionally surround themselves with an air of mystery and aloofness and rarely offer to teach their arts to others. The biggest exception to that general rule, the Digital Draculas, has been active among the Anarchs for less than a decade.

The refusal of most Tremere Anarchs to share their information causes many Anarchs to be suspicious of both them and their arts. Many Anarchs are paranoid about Tremere thaumaturgists — their Clan affinity for Thaumaturgy means that they can seemingly learn a dazzling array of strange Disciplines (most Anarchs aren't erudite enough to know the difference between a Discipline and a Thaumaturgy path) in a short time, a source of immense frustration to Sect-mates from less illustrious Clans who are limited to common Disciplines.

Even within the Anarch occult community, there is tension. The four schools are, for the most part, ad hoc divisions based on broad similarities between wildly disparate styles. While the Hacktivists are fairly united, they are also small and insular. The Old Skoolers are frequently at each other's throats over religious differences, while the New Agers fight just as often over arcane philosophical distinctions, usually relating to whatever crackpot idea lies at the heart of each New Age cult. For their part, the Punks fight amongst themselves just to stay in shape.

That said, intra-school divisions quickly heal when there is conflict between schools. Old Skool Anarchs who bring a sense of religious devotion to their magical practices often look down upon other practitioners for their cynicism and lack of piety. Many New Agers are sensitive about the perceived "goofiness" of some of their stranger belief systems, and often become embittered against their peers as a result. Punk Sorcerers routinely deride the pomposity of the other schools and often design rituals for the specific purpose of mocking some facet of "traditional" blood magic, especially that of the Tremere. Finally, the Hacktivists bring an almost intolerable smugness to the table stemming from their status as the school most closely connected to the Tremere and, thus, to "real Thaumaturgy." Needless to say, this subtle denigration of their arts (some of which, in the case of Old Skoolers, *predate* Thaumaturgy) is infuriating to most practitioners outside of the Hacktivist school.

On the other hand, while the inter- and intra-school division sometimes inhibits the practice of blood magic among the Anarchs, competition has also bred innovation and boldness. The brazen impact of the Digital Draculas coterie has lit a metaphorical fire under the older occultists within the Movement, and hoary, old Anarch occultists who have kept to themselves since before the American Revolution now feel themselves motivated to take on new apprentices.

While blood magic is rare among the Anarchs compared to the Camarilla or the Sabbat, those who do study the arts can both provide powerful benefits to the Anarch Movement and secure important benefits for themselves, whether the magician dwells within the safe confines of a Camarilla domain or in the wild and wooly environs of a Free State.

Anarch Blood Magic and the Camarilla

Pursuant to the Convention of Thorns, all self-styled Anarchs who are not actively engaged in violent rebellion against the local Camarilla leadership are deemed to be "members in good standing" of the Camarilla, whether the individual Anarch wants to or not. This leads to an interesting (if unhealthy) relationship between Anarch blood magicians and loyalist Tremere. Clan Tremere has historically gone to great lengths to maintain its near monopoly on blood magic within the Camarilla, and as a group, the Tremere have little incentive to tolerate occultism among the Anarchs. The problem, however, is that *everyone knows* that the Tremere want to maintain a monopoly and want to kill any Anarchs who demonstrate skill with blood magic. This itself would not be a problem except that many Kindred in the Camarilla hate the Tremere precisely *because* they constantly lord their supernatural acumen over everybody else. And in any conflict with a Tremere on one side and a Lick with Anarch sympathies (who just wants to make a few bucks from blood magic) on the other, the Tremere is seen as the asshole. The mere act of suggesting that an Anarch should be forbidden from practicing blood magic (let alone a pogrom against blood magicians) is seen by the Anarchs as proof of Tremere villainy, and the social (and potentially physical) repercussions are often more severe than the cost of letting a minor Anarch magician do what he will.

Thus, in practice, no matter how much an individual Tremere abhors the existence of blood magic among the Anarchs, she generally will refrain from directly attacking Anarch practitioners. Instead, she will be more circumspect, casting aspersions on the Anarch's magical competence

while waiting for some screw-up that proves the Anarch is too dangerous to be allowed to continue. The really smooth Tremere *engineers* the screw-ups. (This only applies to non-Tremere Anarchs; the Clan will not permit public relations issues to get in the way of punishing a defector.)

For their own part, the Anarchs take advantage of the small bit of breathing space they have to provide an alternative to Clan Tremere's magical hegemony. They ply their trades on the sly, offering favors for favors. They provide occult services for desperate Kindred in exchange for some minor service that advances the Anarch agenda in some way. Or they offer them gratis and only ask that the recipient keep an open mind about what the Anarch Movement has to offer versus what the Camarilla doles out. Such Anarchs play a double role in Camarilla territories. On one hand, they can act as gadflies to the Tremere, demonstrating that the rigid hierarchy of that Clan is not necessary to gain occult enlightenment. On the other, they destabilize Camarilla hegemony in general by providing services that the elders can't or won't.

Of course, that assumes that the Anarch functions openly as a blood magician. Many Anarchs within Camarilla domains don't flaunt their occult knowledge. Indeed, they don't flaunt their status as Anarchs, either. Such undercover operatives (known as "chameleons" in the Movement) carefully conceal their status as sorcerers and thaumaturges, so that the authorities are unprepared to see their powers unleashed. Many Anarch rituals are specifically designed to facilitate the functioning of such chameleons, allowing Anarchs to walk among Camarilla vampires unnoticed in order to spread dissension and disorder from within.

Anarch Blood Magic and the Free States

Within Anarch-controlled domains, the situation for a blood magician is at once safer and more precarious. On one hand, the sorcerer generally does not have to worry about the machinations of Clan Tremere. On the other, he is still at risk from rival Anarch sorcerers (who are much freer to act out rivalries than in a Camarilla domain) and even from fellow Anarchs who are just paranoid about blood magic. Whatever its benefits, blood magic *is* a weird, esoteric thing that is nearly incomprehensible to someone who is not immersed into the occult, and that's before you get into the fact that there are four antagonistic schools who disagree on how it all works.

Within the Free States, perhaps half of all Anarch coteries have one "weirdo" — a goth hacker chick, a blood-soaked neopagan, a creepy old hippie, or a violent head-banger who knows a bunch of urban legends — who advises the group on occult matters. In addition, there are maybe a dozen coteries up and down the West Coast whose members are all or nearly all practitioners, the most (in) famous of which are the Digital Draculas of Cupertino. Others include the Maenads (a group of radical feminist Old Skoolers who worship the Malkavian Antediluvian as an avatar of Dionysus), the Unity Brethren (a New Age cult that seeks to use blood magic and advanced Auspex to develop a gestalt intelligence), and Mary's Kids (a band of Punk Sorcery cultists who claim to have bound the urban legend of Bloody Mary into their service).

The all-sorcerer coteries are as territorial and blood-thirsty as any other Anarch coterie, and they typically use combat magic with abandon to make up for any lack of physical prowess. This has led to a grudging respect for the power of these occult street gangs, even as it has heightened distrust for blood magic in general. It doesn't help that Anarch blood magicians have a reputation of "going weird" whenever they misuse their magic. But for all its strangeness, the utility of blood magic cannot be denied. A few Barons and Reeves have even demonstrated proficiency at blood magic, and in doing so, they have improved their standing within the larger Anarch community. Anarch governments are inherently unstable, and a leader with "mysterious occult powers" is one that is less likely to be challenged by every young punk with something to prove.

The Economics of Magic

Like most forms of knowledge, blood magic is a valuable commodity among the Anarchs. Sometimes knowing how to work magic is less important than the details of magic's price. In Camarilla territories, this price is determined by how desperate the client is for a magical solution that doesn't involve the Tremere. In Anarch territories, it is determined by how desperate the client is for any solution at all when there are no Tremere to call upon.

Of course, valuing anything in the often cashless society of the undead is always difficult. It's worse for Anarchs because they can't even seek payment in the preferred currency of the Camarilla: prestation. The Tremere collect debts like rare and valuable stamps, but few will go into debt slavery to an Anarch, and if the favor sought is meant to be kept secret, there's no way to enforce the debt. It's even worse in the Free States, because no one there cares about prestation (or at least they all make a big pretense of saying they don't). Thus, most Anarch transactions are under the table and usually take the form of tasks to be performed in advance rather than favors owed afterwards.

One simple task, of course, is "give me lots of money." There's no strict exchange rate for how much particular

occult tasks may cost. Generally, if you have to go to an Anarch for magic, then you must realize it's a seller's market. All but the most trivial applications of blood magic may cost thousands of dollars, and the highest level rituals may command fees of hundreds of thousands or more, depending on how much desperation the sorcerer can smell on his client.

Absent cold cash, another form of currency is service to the Anarch's coterie, school, or both. Many Old Skool and New Age practitioners insist that those who would seek their services must first participate in their more mundane rites, whether through participating in the activities of the Anarch's cult or simply spending some time trying to exist according to whatever strange religious or spiritual beliefs drive the Anarch. Punk Sorcerers, on the other hand, often refuse to help even fellow Anarchs unless they first prove that they "don't suck," usually by performing some reckless bit of vandalism against an authority figure disdained by the sorcerer. The Hacktivists are more aloof. They will provide ready assistance to Kindred who demonstrate worthiness to enter their hacker cliques. Everyone else typically pays in cash, and usually a lot of it. Hacktivists have expensive tastes.

The services offered by Anarch magicians can be nearly anything imaginable within the confines of the paths and rituals a particular magician knows. Possible services include everything from security to assassination to hexing somebody who pissed the client off. Many blood magicians know special rituals for producing blood-laced intoxicants or liquors that have been alchemically merged with vitae. Several rituals exist to allow a magician to store a magical effect within an object such as an amulet, a scroll, or even a computer program, allowing the client to effectively purchase spells that he can activate at his leisure. These can range from rituals to ward an emergency haven against sunlight to incantations for posting on the Internet without fear of breaching the Masquerade.

Anarch Rituals

Below are some of the many rituals which Anarch sorcerers have either crafted or reinvented in the service of their arts. While each of the listed rituals is associated with a particular school, it is common for Anarch blood magicians to adapt or "hack" the rituals of other schools to fit the themes of their own. Hacking a ritual basically involves figuring out how to remove the auspicious elements associated with the original ritual and replace them with the elements of the Anarch's own school, a process that may take weeks or months and is fraught with potential danger. Auspicious elements are discussed

beginning on p. 134, while the mechanical process of hacking a ritual is discussed beginning on p. 136.

Old Skool Rituals

Sanctify the Temple (Level One)

The Old Skool Anarchs are usually the most religious of all Anarch blood magicians, although the gods they worship are more obscure than those of most contemporary religions. Regardless, like all religionists, the Old Skoolers prefer to have a place of worship sanctified to their beliefs. The precise form of this ritual varies according to whichever god, spirit, or loa the Anarch serves, but if it's inside a building, the entire space must be decorated to reflect the iconography of the entities worshiped as well as the ritual sacrifice of some kind of animal. Outside spaces such as those used by Kindred Wiccan groups or Voudoun cults require less in the way of decoration but have a greater risk of discovery and desecration by outsiders. Regardless of who or what is worshiped, the results from this ritual are the same — a safe space in which magic can be performed more easily.

System: The ritual lasts for one lunar month but it can be renewed indefinitely. While the ritual is active, the difficulty of all rolls to activate Old Skool paths or rituals performed within the temple space is reduced by -1. The number of successes determines the maximum size of the space which can be sanctified. One success represents a five-by-five foot/two-by-two meter area, such as a large walk-in closet, a secret room, or a tiny grove. Three successes represent a twenty-by-twenty foot/six-by-six meter area, such as the sanctuary of a small church or a large grove. Five successes represents an area of 100 square feet/30 square meters or so, such as a medium-sized church or a small wood.

Haruspicy (Level Two)

Haruspicy was the name given by Romans to the practice of reading omens and portents from the entrails of sacrificed animals, usually sheep or poultry. However, the practice predates Rome by millennia and has been practiced by countless other occult societies since. The ritualist (or "haruspex") must perform the sacrifice in a space purified by the Sanctify the Temple ritual. After slaying the animal and slicing open its belly to let the entrails fall out, the haruspex must douse them with a quantity of her own vitae, cut from her wrists with a ritual dagger. Poultry sacrifices require one point of blood. Sheep or larger animals require two points of blood. If the haruspex is sufficiently ruthless, she can even sacrifice a mortal (almost certainly requiring a Degeneration roll). A haruspex may never perform a reading for herself. She can only do so on behalf of another who must provide some personal item to be incorporated into the ritual sacrifice. Naturally, this also means that the ritual may also be performed on an unwilling and unknowing target through sympathetic magic (see pp. 133-135). The Haruspicy ritual may only be performed for a single target, and only once every seven nights.

System: Each success allows the haruspex to ask one question about the subject's past or present, while two successes may be spent to ask one question about the subject's future. Using a larger sacrifice reduces the difficulty by 1. Using a human sacrifice reduces it by 3. These benefits stack with the -1 difficulty reduction from using a sanctified temple.

Craft Dream Catcher (Level Three)

A dream catcher (well-known to Native American vendors in U.S. tourist traps) is a minor artifact which protects a sleeping person. The ritualist must craft the dream catcher by hand and incorporate tiny bits of hair, blood (less than one point), and spittle from the individual for whom the item is crafted.

System: Once created, the dream catcher lasts for one week per success. As long as the owner has the dream catcher on his person or within five feet/three meters, he gains the following benefits: First, the difficulty for all attacks made against him by spirits increases by 2. Second, the difficulty for all attempts to influence his mind or his dreams while he sleeps increases by 2. Finally, if the owner is a vampire, the difficulty for him to awaken during the day in response to potential danger decreases by 2.

Houngan's Doll (Level Four)

There is a well-known Necromancy ritual for creating an effigy doll (Baleful Doll, **V20**, p. 181), but that is not the only type of effigy that can be created. This ritual is performed just like the Baleful Doll ritual, but while Baleful Doll allows the vampire to inflict actual physical damage to the associated target, it is useless for more subtle effects. For that, the Houngan's Doll is needed. This effigy cannot be used to directly inflict damage on the target, but it will allow the sorcerer to see and hear through the target's eyes, to whisper things to the target that only he can hear, and to inflict physical sensations on him that are not harmful but certainly feel real. Sticking the doll with a pin still hurts the target even if it inflicts no damage. Holding a lit candle near the doll's head may cause the target to suffer Rötschreck. One impudent (and reckless) Anarch famously humiliated a prominent Tremere in front of his Prince and Primogen simply by tickling the doll with a feather during a council meeting.

The thought of a powerful elder rolling on the floor and laughing hysterically was one the Anarch treasured... until her brutal murder a few weeks later.

System: The requirements for constructing a Houngan's Doll are identical to those for the Baleful Doll. However, the Baleful Doll is an instant-use item—the creator fashions the doll, enacts the ritual, and inflicts what damage she can. The Houngan's Doll, on the other hand, lasts until it is destroyed (which has no effect on the target). Once per week, the Anarch may cast the ritual, which begins when he lights a votive candle and sets it afloat in a cup containing one point of his vitae. If the ritual succeeds, then until the fire blows out (usually 30 minutes unless the ritual is disrupted somehow), any physical sensation imposed on the doll is sympathetically experienced by the target. For that duration, the sorcerer sees and hears only what the target does, so he must be careful to leave any tools or implements where they can be found by touch. The sorcerer is blind and deaf to his own surroundings while the ritual lasts.

Skinwalker's Belt (Level Five)

Derived from the Navajo tales of the *yee naaldlooshii*, this ritual allows the sorcerer to craft an item of clothing from the pelt of a ritually sacrificed animal no smaller than a mouse and no larger than a bear. While the pelt endures, the sorcerer may don it and transform himself into a perfect copy of the animal which was sacrificed. Werewolves may still detect the animal as "unclean," and Kindred with Aura Perception may realize that it is somehow "undead," though Kindred are more likely to think that the animal is merely possessed via Subsume the Spirit (Animalism 4) rather than shapechanged. The animal must be killed and skinned at a place purified by the Sanctify the Temple ritual. After the pelt is removed, it must be cured for three nights in a mixture of brine and the ritualist's own blood. The ritual requires one point of blood for animals significantly smaller than human-sized, three points for animals which are roughly human-sized, and five points for animals significantly larger than human-sized. A black bear is the largest animal known to have been used for this ritual.

System: Each success means that the artifact will last for one week before degrading. It can be maintained for another equivalent duration by smearing it with a quantity of the ritualist's blood equal to that used in the ritual that created it.

After the ritual is complete, the player of the ritualist must roll Intelligence + Craft to fashion the pelt into a wearable item of clothing. A failure can be rerolled, but a botch destroys the pelt. However, only one success is needed to complete the process. More successes simply mean that the artifact is more aesthetically pleasing. To use the Skinwalker's Belt, the ritualist must remove all other clothing (including jewelry) before donning the artifact and mutter a brief incantation, whereupon he instantly transforms into a perfect copy of the animal used in the ritual. He cannot use Disciplines in this form (not even physical Disciplines such as Potence or Fortitude), and he cannot speak except to those who have the supernatural ability to speak to animals. He retains his human intelligence and is still subject to frenzy.

The effects of the magic last until he wills it to end or until daybreak. In either case, he instantly reverts to his true form, which can be very bad if he was in a small space wearing the size of a mouse or he is out in the open when he reverts back to a nude male who takes aggravated damage from sunlight. The artifact counts as the equivalent of a lock of hair or a fingernail if it falls into the hands of another blood magician (see Principle of Sympathy on pp. 133-135).

New Age Rituals

Water Walking (Level One)

It is said that masters of Pranayama Yoga have the power to walk across waters without sinking. Whether mortal yogi have that power or not, New Age Anarchs have certainly claimed it for themselves. The magician must close her eyes and quietly recite a personal mantra relevant to the elevation of the spirit over base matter. If her will properly manifests through the ritual, she may walk across water or any other material not normally capable of supporting her weight (such as across treetops) so long as she remains in constant motion.

System: In combat, the successes determine how many turns the New Ager can continue to move without sinking or falling. Out of combat, the effects of the ritual last for as long as the ritualist remains in motion or until the end of the scene.

Blood Crystal (Level Two)

For centuries, crystals have played a part in the practices of the New Age movement. Even today, many mortal New Age adherents believe that meditating on crystals can facilitate healing or provide other beneficial effects; when provided by a New Age sorcerer, *they can*. The sorcerer must place a piece of clear quartz into an earthen bowl full of purified water. Then, she must add her own vitae to the waters and begin meditating over the bowl. Over the next hour, the water will slowly clear again as the vitae is absorbed into the crystal, which will turn a soft pink. Crystals infused in this way have several effects. First, at

any time, the sorcerer may hold a crystal, meditate for a few seconds, and withdraw the stored vitae back into her own body. More importantly, however, the sorcerer may provide a crystal to another for meditation purposes, and if the recipient spends at least one scene meditating on the crystal (for whatever purpose she chooses), the vitae will flow into *her* with the exact same results as if she had drunk directly from him. Many New Age cult leaders use this technique to blood bond potential cultists long before meeting their new servants face-to-face.

System: The number of successes determines the maximum number of blood points that can be stored in a single crystal. The sorcerer can withdraw any or all of his own vitae from a crystal at will. Any other character who handles the crystal and meditates upon it will magically withdraw one point of vitae from it into her own body if she obtains even one success on a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). This includes mortals or even supernatural beings such as Lupines or mages. If the meditating character has suffered any injuries, the blood heals her as if she were a ghoul who had consciously spent blood for healing. A character who meditates on a crystal successfully on three occasions will become blood bound to the crystal's creator (assuming it contained enough vitae). However, while the crystal still contains vitae, it carries a sympathetic link to its creator equivalent to a point of his vitae when in the hands of a rival blood magician.

Enfolding the Believers (Level Three)

Kindred with multiple ghouls often find that jealousy over the regnant's affections can lead to rivalry and conflict, and New Age vampire cult leaders find such discord counter-productive to the enlightenment they seek, hence this ritual. The sorcerer first prepares a quantity of some kind of liquid to which she adds one point of vitae per gallon of liquid. Red Kool-Aid or fruit punch works perfectly well for purposes of this ritual, although "drinking the Kool-Aid" has a sinister connotation in the context of New Age cults that some Kindred choose to avoid. The sorcerer must have her followers drink a quantity of the prepared liquid before leading them in an extended meditation exercise lasting at least one hour. If the ritual is effective, all of the followers acquire what is essentially a secondary blood bond to one another and to the group as an abstract unit.

System: The effects last for one week per success. Each follower still retains his normal blood bound loyalty to the regnant, but he will also experience strong feelings of love and affection to every mortal who participates in the ritual with him, no matter how many that may be. Each participant will also feel a strong sense of loyalty and devotion to the ideals and dogmas of the cult. It is still possible for conflict to erupt if two or more followers express genuine disagreement about the cult's beliefs or the regnant's desires, but if the regnant herself is on hand, such squabbles can be easily resolved. In addition to any other benefits of group loyalty, this ritual can also indirectly benefit the sorcerer herself. For every five people who are under the effect of this ritual and who are present to assist the sorcerer in her other occult activities, the sorcerer gains a +1 die bonus on all rolls pertaining to paths or rituals. This ritual has no effect on Kindred.

Transcending Barriers Through Love (Level Four)

Having transformed common mortals into loyal cultists with his magic, the New Age sorcerer can feed on their devotion and their vitae alike from afar. If the ritual is successful, the sorcerer can recover vitae and even Willpower from one or more of his followers who are currently under the effects of Enfolding the Believers. The ritual requires thirty minutes of meditation on the names and faces of the targeted followers.

System: For each success rolled, the sorcerer may cause one of his followers who is a valid target for this ritual to lose two points of blood, with the sorcerer regaining one point of blood for every two points lost. Alternatively, for every three successes rolled, the sorcerer may cause a valid target to lose two points of Willpower, with the sorcerer recovering one Willpower for every two lost. There is a downside to this latter application, as it immediately causes anyone who loses Willpower in this manner to be freed of the effects of Enfolding the Believers and, worse, free of the effects of the blood bond itself. The ritual can target multiple cultists, but cannot target a single cultist more than once per use. Once a sorcerer has used this ritual, he may not use it again until he has successfully cast Enfolding the Believers on his cult again or until one week has passed, whichever is longer.

The Pursuit of Apotheosis (Level Five)

Few New Age Anarchs know this ritual. Fewer still would ever be so ruthless as to try it. Nevertheless, its existence is a temptation to all who have heard tales of its power — tales that the New Age Anarchs conceal from the other schools and from the greater Anarch community, lest the Movement turn on the New Agers en masse. The ritual begins just like Enfolding the Believers. Indeed, there is only one material difference between that ritual and this one — to the liquid-vitae mixture that must be consumed by the cultists, the sorcerer adds a quantity of poison, most commonly cyanide. To even attempt this ritual automatically costs the sorcerer one point of Humanity.

Such is the price for sacrificing one's own followers in the question for knowledge... or power.

System: The ritual either works or it does not — additional successes do not provide any further reward. For every mortal worshiper who dies as part of the ritual, the player must roll one die against a difficulty of 7. Every success gives the player one experience point that can be used to purchase new or improved traits as per normal experience costs. From the character's perspective, these new Attributes, Abilities, and Disciplines are the result of a momentary glimpse of godhood paid for by the deaths of loyal followers. According to some rumors, a sufficient number of successful sacrifices can also be expended to permanently reduce a vampire's Generation. The truth of those rumors and the number of successes needed to achieve such a feat are left to the Storyteller's discretion. Regardless, however, any sorcerer who uses this ritual finds that her aura becomes streaked with black marks that are indistinguishable from those resulting from diablerie.

Punk Sorcery

Calling Card (Level One)

The Tremere know that Anarchs have duplicated their *Encrypt Missive* ritual (see pp. 145-146), but they are thus far unaware of the unique modifications that Victor Therron, Malkavian anarchist, made to it. The basic application of this ritual allows the sorcerer to leave a message in the form of graffiti which can only be understood by readers who meet certain criteria. The sorcerer's message may be visible to any Kindred, to any Anarch, or to specific individuals. That much is known. What the Tremere do not realize is that the placement matters as much as the message, for if a punk sorcerer uses this ritual to tag a particular location — specifically a place which the sorcerer has vandalized in some way and which belongs either someone he perceives as an authority figure (whether the Prince or the mortal government) or someone he personally perceives to be an enemy — the ritual has a secondary effect that makes it easier to perform other punk magic at the scene.

System: The graffiti message will last until it is removed and its true meaning will be visible to any intended target for that time. To trigger the secondary effect, the sorcerer (and any allies he brings) must actually vandalize the area and then leave a message taunting some figure of authority. This message may or may not have a hidden meaning in it, but it *must* somehow identify the sorcerer, either by his commonly used identity or by a regularly used alias which is known to whichever local authority figures might be expected to visit the scene. For one hour per success, the difficulty of all rituals and path effects executed by the sorcerer within sight of the graffiti is reduced by 1 if the graffiti incorporates an alias or by 2 if it reveals a name by which the sorcerer is personally known by the authorities.

Some punk sorcerers leave hidden messages visible only to specific vampires like the Sheriff or Prince, and then use the benefits provided by Calling Card to cast delayed action rituals as traps triggered whenever he reads the hidden message. The *BFU* ritual, for example, is designed explicitly for this purpose.

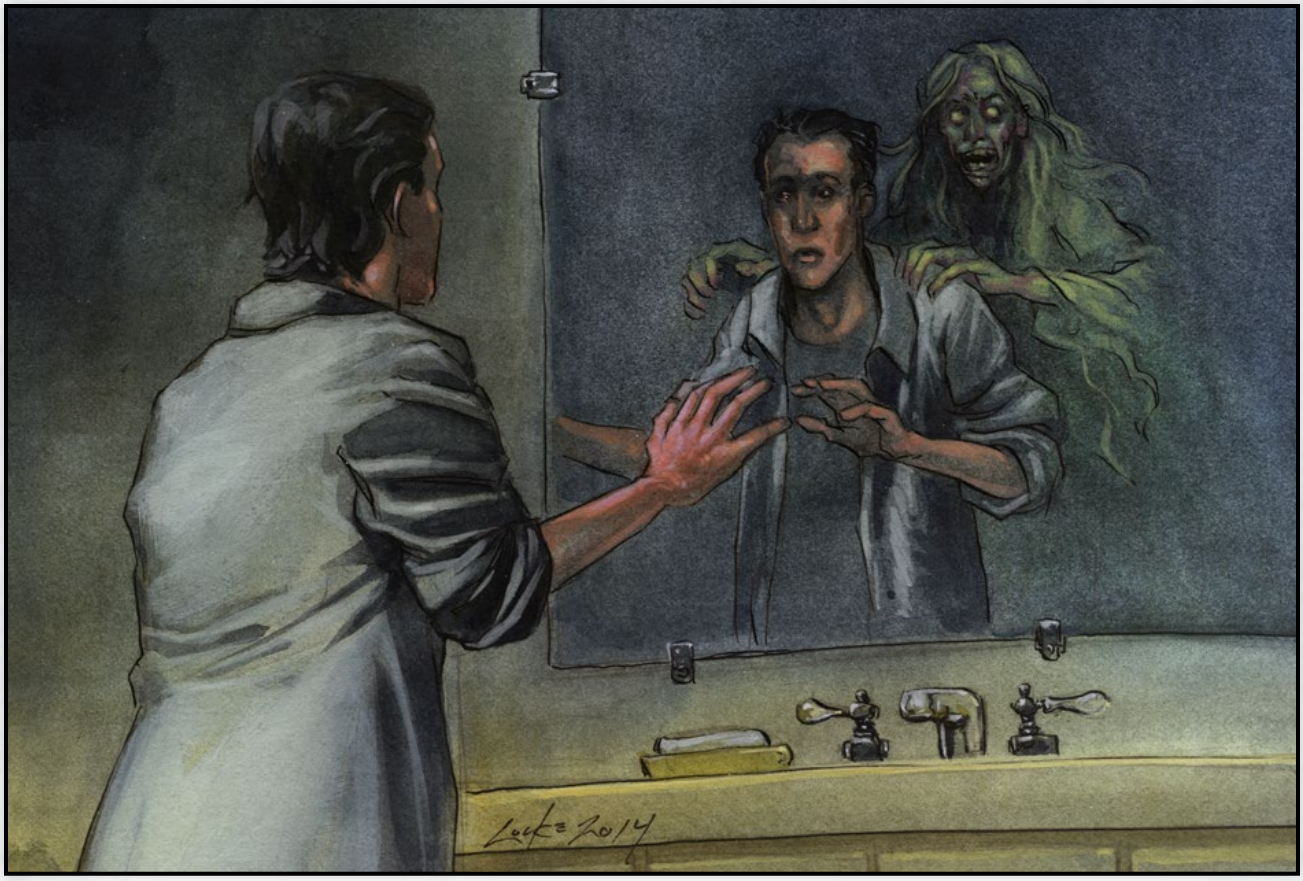
Beat Your Way to Glory (Level Two)

This ritual allows an Anarch to copy aspects of the appearance of a particular mortal — hair color or style, eye color, tattoos, piercings, even clothing choices — by essentially beating them out of the target. The sorcerer may perform this ritual herself or she may perform it through another Anarch by rubbing his shoulders from behind and whispering what to say. The sorcerer must spend one point of blood and make the activation roll whether he is performing the ritual for himself or another. Regardless, the one to be altered must then walk up to a particular mortal with the desired physical characteristics and say "I like your look. I'm taking it." Then, the vampire must punch the mortal in the face.

To complete the ritual, the vampire must render the mortal unconscious through brute force unaided by vampiric powers. In fact, merely speaking the incantation causes the vampire to lose access to all of his Disciplines and prevents him from spending blood for the duration of the fight (or for the rest of the scene if the mortal wins) — Punk Sorcerer philosophy says that a vampire who can't take a mortal in a fair fight deserves to get his ass kicked anyway.

Once the mortal is rendered unconscious, the vampire claims his prize. If he wants to copy the mortal's hair style, he must remove a large handful of the mortal's hair. If he wants eye color, he gives the mortal a black eye. If he wants a piercing, he rips the mortal's piercing straight out of the skin and swallows it. If he wants a tattoo, he damages the mortals tattoo in some permanent way. If he likes the mortal's clothes, he slices them to bits, keeping a few rags for himself.

System: Each success causes the vampire to gain one Appearance-related characteristic of the mortal victim, chosen from hair color, hair style, facial hair, tattoos, piercings, or clothing. When the vampire awakens the next night, he will have those traits (and if appropriate, will awaken wearing a copy of the mortal's clothes sized perfectly to fit him). The ritual will not change overall appearance — the vampire still looks basically the way



he did before, and only superficial traits are changed. Piercings and tattoos appear on the vampire's body in roughly the same location as they were on the mortal's body but adjusted where necessary due to differences in size and build. Clothing will last until destroyed, but all other acquired characteristics become part of the vampire's default appearance.

BFU (Level Three)

The Anarch drafts a message for a specific individual, a message interspersed with a mix of occult symbols and vulgar personal insults. This message can be left behind at the scene of the Anarch's use of the Calling Card ritual in letters ten-feet high, or it can be written with a quill pen on expensive stationary and delivered via courier. Regardless, if the ritual is performed properly, the message fades and is invisible except to the intended recipient. When the recipient reads the message, he becomes so incensed that he has a chance to fall into a rage frenzy. Obviously, this effect primarily applies to vampires, werewolves, and other beings capable of being provoked into a rage state, but even mortals targeted by the message find themselves prone to irrational fury. An innovative sorcerer might well use this ritual for a revenge ploy, such as slandering a mortal recipient's wife as an adulteress and thereby driving him into a homicidal fury. The most common use, however, is simply to embarrass prominent Cainites by provoking them to frenzy at public gatherings.

System: Once the target reads that message, she must immediately roll for rage frenzy at a +2 difficulty. Furthermore, the effects persist, and for the next several nights, she will find that all difficulties to resist rage frenzy are increased by 1. The message itself lasts for one night per success, and if it is not observed by the intended recipient, the ritual is wasted. If the recipient does see it, the increased frenzy difficulties persist for an additional one night per success, even if she sees the message on the last night that it could possibly affect her.

Baron Zaraguin's Sting (Level Four)

A curious syncretic ritual that combines Haitian Voudoun with imagery and ideas drawn from a comic book, Baron Zaraguin's Sting is a powerful defensive ritual. The ritualist must imbibe blood laced with LSD just before sunrise and spend the day in a wooden coffin containing at least ten live scorpions. The visions the vampire suffers during her long day of confinement combined with the stings of the angry scorpions open her mind to communion with Baron Zaraquin, the patron loa of scorpions and spiders.

System: For every two successes (rounded up) rolled on the ritual, the vampire takes one level of lethal damage

from scorpion stings. This damage is unsoakable but can be healed normally. In exchange for submitting to the scorpions' stings, however, the vampire also gains Baron Zaraquin's blessing for one night per success. During that time the difficulty on all rolls to supernaturally influence the sorcerer (such as Dominate or Majesty) or to read her aura or her mind increases to 9. Furthermore, any character who attempts to use such powers against the sorcerer suffers one unsoakable point of psychic bashing damage for every 1 rolled on the attempt. If such a roll actually botches, the damage is lethal and the character also has a brief vision of a giant spiritual scorpion, a manifestation of Baron Zaraguin, as its tail strikes her in the forehead for the affront.

Bloody Mary (Level Five)

One of the darkest rituals in the annals of Punk Sorcery, *Bloody Mary* summons that malefic urban spirit and allows her to possess a mortal vessel in exchange for a period of service to the summoner. The ritual must be performed in a public bathroom, and the mortal vessel must be persuaded of his own free will to participate in the ritual. He need not know what the ritual's ultimate effect will be, and few mortals would participate if they did, but he cannot be Dominated or otherwise compelled to take part. Trickery is perfectly fine, however, and many of those who use this ritual will manipulate mortals through means as simple as telling them about the urban legend and then daring them to risk summoning the legendary figure.

Once persuaded, the mortal must look into the mirror and say "Bloody Mary" three times, while the sorcerer flips the lights on and off in a particular pattern and quietly mouths an incantation that offers the mortal's soul to the spirit in exchange for service. The sorcerer will know the ritual has succeeded when, at one point when the lights are on, the mirror will show the mortal's reflection as well as that of the hideous crone looming behind him ready to pounce. Then, the vampire must turn the lights off again and leave them off until the screaming has stopped.

System: If the ritual succeeds, then Bloody Mary will possess the mortal's body and be bound to serve the summoner for one lunar month. The successes on the roll determine how loyal Bloody Mary is during the length of possession, for she is a spirit of violence and murder and will seize nearly any opportunity to kill while wearing a human host. With one success, she will grudgingly obey any direct commands and will refrain from attempting to harm the summoner in any way, but she will have no real loyalty. With five successes, her instinct is to obey every command without question and to refrain from any activities which might cause problems for the summoner later. If there is any conflict between Bloody Mary's instinct to maim and kill and the needs of the summoner, roll the vampire's successes on the summoning roll. If there are any successes, the player decides what Mary will do.

While Bloody Mary is riding the mortal vessel, she gains the equivalent of Potence 2 and Fortitude 2. She knows everything he knew, and she can impersonate him effortlessly. However, animals are instinctively afraid of any mortal ridden by Bloody Mary, and characters who succeed on a Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 7) find him frightening and off-putting. For children, the difficulty is only 5. Statements from anyone close to the mortal indicating love or affection to him require the player to roll a number of dice equal to the summoning successes (difficulty 7). Failure means that Bloody Mary will frenzy and attack the loved one. When the month of servitude ends, Blood Mary departs, leaving behind a mortal who is irretrievably insane. As noted, this is a dark ritual, and any sorcerer who performs it must make a Conscience roll if his Humanity is two or higher.

Hacktivist Thaumaturgy

CCTV (Level One)

Normally, Thaumaturgy requires either direct line of sight or a sympathetic effect. The Hacktivists pride themselves on eschewing normality. This ritual allows the thaumaturge to use a CCTV camera or even a web camera as a "third eye." The thaumaturge must disassemble the camera, inscribe every inch of it with a mixture of occult sigils and mathematical formulae, and then put it back together (Intelligence + Technology, difficulty 8). Then, she must cut her thumb and hold it against the camera lens until a full blood point has been absorbed by the camera.

System: The ritual lasts for one night per success, and it can be renewed for the same interval indefinitely so long as the vampire can feed additional points of blood to the lens. While the ritual lasts, the thaumaturge can treat the video feed from the camera as if she were experiencing it directly for purposes of targeting people or places with either paths or rituals. If the camera takes the form of a spy camera that is smuggled into an enemy's haven, this can allow for devastating effects. However, the ritual is not without risk. So long as the ritual is active, any other blood magician who obtains the enchanted camera can use it as a sympathetic link back to the thaumaturge as if it were a sample of his own vitae. Even after the ritual ends, a lesser sympathetic link persists (equivalent to a personal possession of the thaumaturge) until the camera is destroyed.

Self-Executing File (Level Two)

The Hacktivist coterie known as the Digital Draculas invented this ritual, and it is the backbone of their agenda for the Anarch community. For centuries, the Tremere have had a ritual called "Inscription" (see p. 150) which allows a thaumaturge to reduce a simple ritual to a written format which can then be unlocked and activated by a non-thaumaturge at a later date. The Self-Executing File ritual functions according to the same principles, but instead of allowing someone outside the Clan to cast a "borrowed" ritual at a time of her choosing, this ritual allows her to install a Technomancy-based ritual directly into a computer. To date, the Digital Draculas have carefully limited the number of techno-rituals which they have widely disseminated to two: "Fangbook" and "Bloodspot." A third techno-ritual — FangChat — is currently being beta-tested and is exclusively available to the coterie's closest allies.

System: To use Self-Executing File, the thaumaturge must first prepare the Technomancy ritual she wishes to disseminate into a computer file format. The Hacktivists and the Tremere technomancers alike use a special programming code that integrates a mixture of defunct computer languages and dead written languages. Using this language, the thaumaturge codes a complete description of the ritual to be transmitted and then reduces it to a .zip file. She then emails the file to the intended recipient. When the recipient clicks on the file to open it, a text box appears that informs the recipient that he has sixty seconds to activate the program by smearing some of his blood onto his right thumb and then placing it over the white box below the text. If the recipient does so before time runs out, the blood dissipates harmlessly, and the program automatically opens and downloads itself into the computer's hard drive. An icon for the associated program appears on the desktop that is visible only to the recipient, and the program itself is an invisible file that cannot be detected on the hard drive by any means other than Technomancy. Every success after the first allows for one additional recipient, should the thaumaturge wish to send out more than one copy of the file.

Telecommunication (Level Three)

Telecommunication is one of the earliest rituals associated with Technomancy. In fact, the insights gained from the creation of this ritual were the very signposts that proved that Technomancy was possible. The thaumaturge must trace a sigil on the screen of a television or a computer monitor. While the ritual lasts, the thaumaturge can see and hear what is near the screen as if he were looking out of it. More importantly, with a thought, he can change what appears on the screen, whether to create a fake news story to deceive others or simply to make his own face appear so that he can converse with watchers.

Sample Programs

Fangbook modifies the user's computer, smartphone, or tablet so that any messages, pictures, or videos she uploads to Facebook, Twitter, or any other equivalent social networking site appear to be innocuous posts such as birthday greetings to random strangers or widely-shared photos or video memes of the day when viewed by non-vampires. With Fangbook, Anarchs may participate freely on social media sites and upload commentary and media that might shatter the Masquerade if mortals were actually capable of perceiving it.

Bloodspot, similarly, is a shareware blogging platform that can only be perceived as such by Kindred. When a Bloodspot page is viewed by one of the kine, she sees only a "Server Not Found" message or some comparable error message indicating that there is no such webpage.

FangChat, on the other hand, is a chat messenger program that capable of finding any Kindred who is online and opening a chat window on their computer which, according to the program's creators, is completely untraceable. Further, the message deletes itself after a couple of minutes, leaving no trace. FangChat has not been widely disseminated, however, and there are a number of outrageous rumors about it (mostly spread by loyalist Tremere technomancers). Some say the program can automatically detect lies by a responding party. Others say that it has a built-in GPS function that can find the haven of anyone foolish enough to respond. Still others say that the program is a vector for delivering Dominate commands.

System: The successes rolled create a dice pool which the thaumaturge can use to either observe through or control the screen at any point over the next seven nights. The player must roll this dice pool either to see and hear through the screen (difficulty 4) or to control what the screen plays for others (difficulty 7). A botch on either of those rolls ends the ritual's effect immediately.

Non-Disclosure Clause (Level Four)

Since their defection to the Anarchs, the Hacktivists have committed themselves to furthering the Movement in the manner that best fits their skills, principally in the spreading of information. In particular, the Hacktivist members of the mysterious Red Question faction (see **Anarchs Unbound** for more information) have spent considerable effort on spreading the philosophy of the Anarch Movement, to say nothing of specific tactical information that aids Anarchs struggling in Camarilla territories. This ritual allows them to do so without fear of exposure or betrayal.

The ritual enchants a text file, which is then encrypted and emailed to another person. When the recipient opens the emails, she receives an offer of secret information that may be of assistance in the spread of Anarch ideals. However, to acquire the information, the recipient must agree to the Non-Disclosure Clause by spreading some of her blood onto her thumb and placing it on a square that appears on her screen (similar to the Self-Executing File ritual). If she complies, the blood is absorbed into the computer, and the entire contents of the text file (which might be hundreds of pages of text) instantly download into her mind.

Only raw data can be conveyed in this way. The ritual cannot be used to help a Kindred learn a Discipline or a ritual, nor improve an Ability. However, the recipient does gain an eidetic recollection of the information that she downloaded. The "non-disclosure" aspect of the ritual comes into play if she is captured or interrogated by someone hostile to the Anarch Movement. The moment that she believes she is in danger of revealing Anarch secrets (regardless of her personal desire to betray the Movement or stay loyal), all of the downloaded information vanishes from her mind. Depending on the wishes of the sender, she may remember nothing of the information at all, she may remember a few details, or she may even remember copious amounts of disinformation that she honestly believes to be true.

System: One success is sufficient to prepare the information to be downloaded by the recipient. Three successes are needed to prepare backup misinformation that the recipient will believe to be true once she is captured and the failsafe is triggered.

Ghost in the System (Level Five)

In these modern times, when the Internet remembers all and government-backed identification is needed for nearly every transaction, it is no longer enough for a newly arrived Kindred to simply dominate the local city clerk into providing him with papers. This exhaustive ritual can takes a week or more to perform (when used to create false identities for Kindred or other supernatural beings), though simple uses directed against mortals may take only a single night. At the conclusion, though, the results can be most impressive. For Kindred, the ritual creates not just a fake ID but an entire paper trail for the target all the way back to his "date of birth."

The false records, to the extent they exist on the Internet, are perfect, and show whatever history the thaumaturge desires. Only personal examination of the actual hard copies contained in dusty filing cabinets will reveal the truth of the target's life. When this ritual is turned against mortals, it can achieve such effects as giving an innocent man a criminal record or cleaning the slate for a wanted criminal, stealing away the ownership of someone's home, or even sabotaging someone's medical records so that a well-meaning nurse actually gives her an unnecessary and lethal injection.

System: The ritual requires an extended Intelligence + Occult roll, with each roll representing one full night spent reshaping the Internet and doing nothing else except devoting an hour or two to feeding. The Storyteller determines how many successes are needed based on the number of "Internet facts" that must be changed in order to achieve the desired results. Changing a single mortal's medical diagnosis or reporting all her credit cards as stolen might require only one or two successes, while creating an entirely new identity for a vampire on the run might require five to ten, depending on how complicated and important the new identity is. Particularly successful uses of this ritual may lead to dots in the Alternate Identity Background (**V20**, p. 111).

Chapter Four: The Independents

We should not be ashamed to acknowledge truth from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples. For him who seeks the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself.

– Al-Kindi

Assamite Sorcery

Very few Kindred in the modern nights outside of the secretive halls of Clan Tremere, know that the Assassins have a history of practicing blood magic that stretches back to the now mythical nights of the Second City. Among the Tremere that know of these strange arts, their interest is balanced by revulsion and fear. It is almost blasphemous to the Hermetic mindset of the Warlocks that such loosely-structured practices can truly be called "magic." However, potent effects spring from these practices—some which bear a striking resemblance to the Tremere's precious Thaumaturgy. This strikes fear into their cold, dead hearts that their supposed monopoly of blood magic might be under threat.

Assamite Sorcery began in the Second City when mortal magicians were Embraced into the Clan with the promise of power and eternal life. These undead Sorcerers acted as interrogators and demon hunters during the wars against the Baali. After the fall of the Second City, the Sorcerers were used to facilitate magical communication across great distances, keeping the Clan unified and organized. Furthermore, they used their arts to protect the herd the Clan cultivated. They nurtured the crops that sustained the herd and continued to strike at the forces that threatened the Clan.

Following the blood curse's being laid upon the Assamites in the wake of the Convention of Thorns, the Clan's leadership turned to their Sorcerers to find a way to reverse the affliction that stands in the way of their divine purpose. Through their older, more versatile arts, they strive to find a way to make this come to pass. It is an obsession that burns long and deep in the hearts of Assamite Sorcerers across the world.

These Sorcerers have subsequently turned their talents to the arts of Dur-An-Ki (Sumerian meaning "Master of Heaven and Earth") to aid them in their cause. A form of magic that originated in ancient Mesopotamia, it has grown over the millennia to incorporate the trappings of numerous myths and religions from across the greater Middle East. Fundamentally, Dur-An-Ki permits covenants to be struck between spirits and sorcerers (known as *ashipu*).

Spirits whom the ancient world once called gods still exist, hidden in the shadows, and continue to aid those who invoke them. It is through these ancient powers, and the covenants with humanity that defined them, that the Sorcerers have made the most progress to date in regards breaking the blood curse.

A Note on Dealing with Spirits

Dur-An-Ki is not another form of Dark Thaumaturgy, nor is it Infernalism by another name. Those who wish to plunder the vaults of such forbidden knowledge will find their desires satisfied in Chapter Six.

These spirits were once worshiped as gods in the ancient world and have not become demons in the modern nights. These spirits help *ashipu* learn the secrets of new Paths and Rituals by the Sorcerer's invoking covenants with them or more powerful spirits they fear to cross. *Ashipu* never offer eternal and exclusive servitude to a spirit they forge a covenant with, as Infernalists do. The Sorcerer is the dominant party in the relationship or, at the very least an equal.

Kalif

Some *ashipu* use a drug called *kalif* to open their minds and access the Ladder of Heaven. The drug is a form of hashish derived from marijuana plants that have been nurtured with vitae (the ritual to create it is on pp. 162-163). Kalif can be taken directly by the *ashipu*, using their blood to force the drug into the body from their lungs. However, it can also be taken by proxy, as when a Sorcerer makes a mortal smoke it and then feeds from his infused blood.

Kalif is a strong hallucinogen, but *ashipu* have learned to direct the path of the hallucinations it induces so that it guides them toward the Ladder of Heaven. In their visions, the Ladder begins as a seemingly endless stairway, far away from the confines of Earth and the laws of geometric space.

The art of growing marijuana fed by vitae is a skill that can take years to master. Not only is it costly in terms of vitae, it is fundamentally unnatural and thus great care is needed lest the Sorcerer accidently kill the plants. Therefore, it is only used by the most dedicated and patient sorcerers. It's also one of the Assamites' most prized and also most closely-guarded talents, and its teaching is closely regulated by the Mountain. (Nevertheless, some faction has stolen the knowledge — see p. 37). Sorcerers strive to ensure that kalif does not fall into the hands of another Clan, as this could potentially mark the end of their monopoly on access to the Ladder of Heaven.

Through the existing covenants and new ones forged with these spirits, Assamite Sorcerers have added an increasing array of magical power to their already formidable arsenal. Furthermore, they have uncovered the existence of the Ladder of Heaven — a metaphysical path rumored to be the entrance to Heaven itself. The Sorcerers now work to ascend the Ladder and break through its eighth gate, past which they hope to find the power they need to shatter the blood curse once and for all. They shall either forge a new covenant with a higher power that will allow them to cast aside the Warlocks' shackles, or they will attempt to take and use that power by any means necessary.

Style and Substance

Whereas the hallmarks of Thaumaturgy are its order and scientific precision, Assamite Sorcery is much less rigid. It draws its inspiration and form from numerous cultural sources and experiments conducted over many centuries: Hinduism, heroic epics, feng shui, Islamic alchemy and astronomy, the high and low magics of Mesopotamia, and the Persian rites of Mithra, to name but a few.

In the case of each rite a Sorcerer casts, the route they take to its completion is comprised of a number of milestones. However, the order and manner in which these are fulfilled is different from one caster to the next, depending upon what cultural source they draw upon to characterize their practices. For example, in one rite, Sorcerers mimic an ancient ritual ceremony of a priest striking the face of the holy king that followed Marduk. Whereas the original symbolism of the holy king's tears was a promise of fertility, the Assamites have repurposed

it for their own practice of blood tithing, allowing them to reap a bountiful harvest from those connected by blood to the victim.

In the course of their more recent practices, Assamite Sorcerers have taken to losing themselves in ecstatic vision quests wherein they map realms beyond imagination that form the ascent along the Ladder of Heaven. In these wild, alien realms, completely removed from the concrete reality known to mankind and the rest of the Kindred world, Assamite Sorcerers have forged covenants with ancient spirits, granting them numerous new Paths of Sorcery as well as discovering more unusual abilities. For example, in one such realm that Sorcerers have named "the Sphere of Mercury," visitors find themselves capable of connecting to the global communications network. Using their blood and the power of their will as currency, they have bartered with and won the support of beings with unknown and (seemingly) illimitable power in hopes of destroying the blood curse. The fruits of these covenants have subsequently been disseminated throughout the Sorcerer caste around the world.

Even the youngest apprentice Sorcerers are taught the intricacies of the ancient power that they draw upon. The first and fundamental lesson that they learn is that all the blood and strength of will they use to invoke these newfound magics does not mean the power is truly theirs. It is a gift channeled from the spirits that the eldest Sorcerers have won the favor of. It belongs wholly to something *beyond*.

If enemies of the Assamites were to learn of the source of this power, it might theoretically be possible for them to try and obtain the favor of a more powerful spirit and attempt to deprive the Assamites of all they have worked for. Secrecy, therefore, is paramount and instilled into the minds of all Sorcerers from the very first night onward of their studies. However, their efforts have not been totally successful.

A small number of Kindred outside of the Clan have learned aspects of Dur-An-Ki, but not Assamite Sorcery as a whole. While these individuals present a thorn in the side to many of the hardline Sorcerers, they begrudgingly accept that the Assamites did not create Dur-An-Ki. The Assamites adapted its practice into the wider arts of their Sorcery, and others throughout the centuries have discovered it too.

These lone Kindred outside of the Assamites do not have the benefit of kalif to be able to easily reach the Ladder of Heaven and realms beyond where they could create new rituals. Thus they have access to a relatively limited set of practices within Dur-An-Ki. This is a small consolation to the concerned Assamite Sorcerers, but

they still worry what would happen if the Tremere were to obtain even the most basic of rituals it has to offer.

Even though sorcery has proven itself to be a unique benefit to the Assassins' arsenal, centuries of study have not yet solved the conundrum of how to break the Tremere blood curse. While many Sorcerers continue to ascend the Ladder in their own way, the more enlightened higher echelon of the caste have adopted a different approach.

In their eyes, they see Thaumaturgy as being the component power that the blood curse was built from. If the Assamites can understand and command that same power, then they may be able to finally attack the foundations of the blood curse, rather than chipping away at the edges. As such, a growing number of pacts have been forged with the most powerful spirit pantheons to replicate the powers of the Warlocks, so that the Assamites might study and understand that which they fight so vehemently to destroy.

External Relations

The Assamites are the most widely feared of the Independent Clans due to their blood-drenched reputation. This fearsome mystique has led to the spinning of many tales and slanderous accusations over the centuries. The Sorcerer caste is more than happy to perpetuate these, as they have helped to mask the Clan's mystical practices.

In fact, few outside of the Clan know that the Children of Haqim indulge in such practices. Fewer still share this information, for fear that they might find themselves the subject of a contract to silence them forever. The Assamites don't know the extent to which the loathed Tremere know of their ways, but the Sorcerers know that the Tremere are at the very least *aware* of the existence of Assamite Sorcery, and that it appears to replicate the effects of their preciously guarded Thaumaturgy, at least in part.

Consequently, the Tremere have been waging a covert war with the Assamites for decades, trying to learn what secrets they can about these mysterious ways. However, it is a war of attrition, with few hard facts obtained by the Warlocks. They have heard whispers of the arts of Dur-An-Ki from ancient Mesopotamia, but have learnt more about it from mortal academic sources than they have from the Assamites themselves. Because of this, Sorcerers generally keep dealings with the Camarilla at arm's length. The influence of the Warlocks runs deep within the Ivory Tower, so Sorcerers take all possible steps to avoid putting themselves at risk of exposure.

A similar code of conduct is prevalent among Sorcerers that deal with the Sabbat. The Assamites once thought that dealing with the Sword of Caine was a better option than dealing with the Camarilla, but when it was revealed that Tremere *antitribu* were present in the Sabbat's ranks, they reconsidered. Rather than take a chance that these Warlocks have truly turned their backs on their former brethren, the Sorcerers prefer to take the skeptical approach. The infestation of the Tremere in the Ivory Tower might be just as prevalent in the Sabbat for all they know, and present just as potent a threat to the Assamites.

Rumors do occasionally surface of Assamite *antitribu* Sorcerers that actively practice their arts in the Sword of Caine. This is a matter of debate and concern amongst the Sorcerer caste. These Assamite *antitribu* Sorcerers, should they be captured by any Tremere *antitribu*, could herald a potential disaster for the Clan. However, their interaction with the Ladder of Heaven must surely be limited due to a lack of available access to kalif from the Mountain. As such, this mitigates the Sorcerers' concerns to a degree. But then why do these rumors continue to surface?

Looking beyond the two largest sects of the Jyhad, many of the Sorcerers tonight know little of the Tal'Mahe'Ra. However, the eldest Assamites speak of a war that erupted between the Clan and that shadowy Sect many centuries ago, though a ceasefire has held ever since. As time has passed and paranoia has grown in the modern nights, voices are raised about what should happen if the whispers about this Sect turn out to be true — that they wish to push the world toward an Armageddon of their own orchestration. If that is the case, and the rumors of the Sect employing magical powers far stranger than any of their own — or even those of the Tremere — are true, then the Assamite Sorcerers might be called upon to become the front line in a conflict worse than the dark nights of the Second City.

As for the other Sects, the mystic practices of the Assamites have made little impact upon relations with the wider Kindred world. The Anarch Movement, as far as the Sorcerer caste can see, concerns itself more with politics than mysticism, and the motivations of the secretive Inconnu are largely unknown to them. The other Independents for the most part continue not to interfere in the business of the Children of Haqim, so knowledge of their sorcery has spread only minimally to them via second-hand sources in the Camarilla and Sabbat. The Giovanni, if they are interested in these strange arts, have yet to make any move to acquire it for themselves, focusing more on their unwholesome Necromantic practices.

The Followers of Set have their own magics and have cast curious eyes upon Assamite Sorcery from time to time. Given that Assamite Sorcery has taken inspiration

from numerous cultural influences, just as the Setites have identified the different masks of Set from around the world, the mages of the Followers of Set are curious to learn if Assamite Sorcery could in fact be another manifestation of Set's power on Earth. To date, they have not successfully discovered the true nature of Assamite Sorcery or Dur-An-Ki, but their avid speculation continues.

Sorcery within Assamite Castes

The Assamites are divided into three castes that serve different functions within the Clan.

The Warrior caste is the most visible to those outside of the Clan, being the martial and most active of the castes. It is usually the most populous of the castes as well. The Viziers are the Clan's scholars and seekers of knowledge. They note that while Haqim was originally a warrior, he became a scholar, and his brood was one of artisans and sages. As such, the Viziers carry on this legacy. Finally, the Sorcerers are those who practice the arts of Assamite Sorcery, and are the actively mystical wing of the Clan.

The term caste rather than faction applies because these three groups are very hereditary in their structure and in some ways resemble Bloodlines within the Clan. Each new Assamite is Embraced directly into a caste, dictating the nature of the role they will play for the Clan. However, should a Warrior or Vizier learn Assamite Sorcery (which is possible, though rare), the Sorcerer caste always immediately (and sometimes forcefully) adopts them in order to put their talents toward breaking the blood curse.

These individuals are looked down upon by those Embraced into the Sorcerer caste as they are outside of the hereditary hierarchy, doomed to be forever at the bottom of the power structure. Furthermore, they are generally shunned by their former caste for walking down a path they should have known would have resulted in their ejection from their former role. It is little wonder that this situation rarely arises.

Warriors

A growing number of voices are being raised among the Warriors over the course of the last century that question the strength and commitment of their Sorcerer brethren. Centuries have passed since the blood curse fell upon the Clan, and the Sorcerers have very little to show for their efforts. Certainly, the Sorcerers may talk of making progress, of ascending higher up the Ladder of Heaven, but none of this has had any concrete effect upon the blood curse itself, which all of the Clan would be able to feel and reap the benefits of. As such, it appears to the front line of the Clan that the Sorcerers are only serving themselves; increasing their magical arsenal with new-found knowledge and the occasional ritual that has at best a niche benefit in the grand scheme of the Clan's cause.

Many Warriors won't settle for anything less than the shattering of the blood curse, and with every decade that passes without that night coming, the desire to force the Sorcerers into finding a new method by which to achieve their goal grows. Indeed, it has been said on a number of occasions among the Warriors that if the Sorcerers had shown as much dedication to their mundane weaponry as they had to their "arts," the Sorcerers could have stood a good chance of having slain every Tremere that walks upon the Earth.

Regardless, the Warriors begrudgingly refrain from interfering in the endeavors of the Sorcerers. However, there may come a time when the centuries of impatience finally boils over into an uncontrolled fury between the two castes that can no longer be contained.

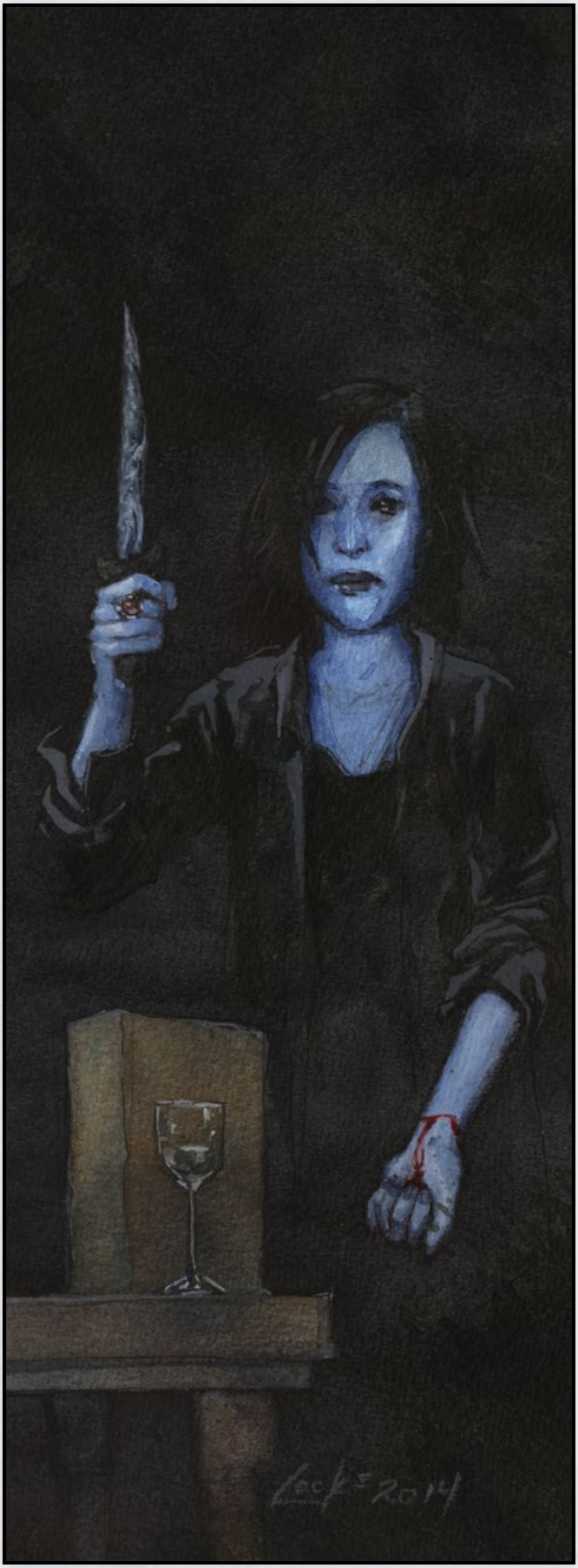
Viziers

With their sight unclouded by the Warriors' growing anger, the Viziers believe that Sorcery presents a clear threat to its users: the danger of the Sorcerers losing their way.

For centuries, the Sorcerers sat at the Station of Ultimate Rapture, believing they had stormed Heaven itself, only to find it was a barrier preventing them from reaching their true goal. Along their continuing ascent, the Sorcerers have told of the wonders they have seen, and the Viziers have seen the growing desire for power in their brethren's eyes. They have been blinded once in their quest, so could it be that they have been blinded again?

Some Viziers worry that given the absolute power the Sorcerers hope to achieve, absolute corruption might follow if they do not learn the value of wisdom on the ascent to its acquisition. Therefore, many Viziers who work alongside the Sorcerers find themselves adopting the role of a moral compass for their brethren, pointing them back on course toward their correct goal.

By and large, the Viziers have faith in their brethren, but are always at hand to provide them with assistance. Sorcery is seen as being the practical application of the hidden knowledge the Clan has unlocked. It is a great and wondrous tool that they believe will ultimately set the Clan free from the blood curse, but one that needs to be used with a clear and focused vision.



Sorcerers

As a loosely organized meritocracy, the power in the Sorcerer caste resides with the most magically adept. This sets them all in natural competition with each other for superiority. Among the elder Sorcerers, there is a degree of resentment that the caste has historically been of a secondary concern within the Clan. In the nights of the Second City, they served alongside judges, and protected the herds that fed the wider Clan. Despite this, they have never felt themselves treated as leaders or decision makers in the wider Clan, and have grown resentful.

Many have taken the quest to shatter the blood curse as a challenge not only to strike back at the Tremere, but also to prove to the Clan that they are worthy of more respect. If they succeed, their arts will have proven to be the greatest weapon in their long history. Assamite Sorcery will have purged the Baali and the destroyed shackles of the Warlocks alike.

New Rituals

Rite of Reclamation (Level One)

All Assamites on some level accept the possibility that one night they might fall in battle. If that fateful night should come, Assamite Sorcery has provided a way that the Clan can reclaim what is rightfully theirs. By standing on bare earth under the open night sky, the Sorcerer asks for his blood to be transported back to the Mountain upon the moment of his final death. Here, under the ceremonial supervision of fellow Assamite Sorcerers, the blood becomes one with the Heartblood of the Clan, rejoining the blood of Haqim from which it is ultimately descended.

System: The effects of the ritual last until a number of sunrises pass equal to the number of successes rolled during the casting. When the Sorcerer reaches Final Death, all of his blood seeps out through his pores and is claimed by the earth, mystically transporting it to Alamut. If the moment of Final Death comes as the result of being diablerized, the would-be diablerist feels all of the blood gained from the Assamite clawing its way out of her, causing a number of lethal damage equal to the successes rolled in the casting of the ritual. It seeps through her pores and is sucked into the ground. The diablerie is still considered successful, but no blood is gained from the act, which could provoke a hunger frenzy check.

Blade of Smoke and Shadow (Level Two)

Ever since the nights of the Second City, the Assamites have fought against demonic forces. Mundane physical weapons normally have no effect upon such ephemeral beings, but Assamite Sorcerers have long-known the secret of enchanting a blade so that it can strike demons.

The Sorcerer first obtains an obsidian dagger with an iron handle. This may be prepared by the Sorcerer or otherwise obtained — the significance is in the composition of the weapon rather than the method in which it is created. Next, she prepares a chamber where no light can naturally enter. This ritual must be cast in complete darkness, or it automatically fails.

The following must be present in the chamber, but can be real or depicted in any way the Sorcerer chooses: a collection of water, representing the primordial ocean, and a block of hardened clay, representing the Sumerian Tablet of Destinies.

The Sorcerer invokes the name of the Sumerian hero Marduk in any way she desires, as long as she is calling upon his aid to strike at the forces of Tiamat, the forces of chaos and darkness. While chanting, the Sorcerer lets the blade taste her blood.

After ten minutes of invocation, if the roll is successful (which also incurs one lethal damage from the bloodletting), the ritual is complete. The obsidian blade becomes completely insubstantial, leaving only the handle solid. The blade now appears as a slowly swirling column of smoke extending from the handle but generally retaining its former shape. It remains in this fashion until a number of sunrises pass equal to the number of successes rolled. Afterward, the smoke dissipates and the obsidian blade is gone forever (thus requiring a new blade to be obtained for a new casting).

System: Given that the enchanted blade is now insubstantial, it cannot be used in conjunction with Quietus powers such as Baal's Caress. However, the blade can now strike at incorporeal entities such as demons, ghosts, and spirits when they enter this plane of existence. It passes harmlessly through solid objects and flesh, and thus may be used to strike at possessing entities without damaging the host. Importantly, the enchanted blade may be used by anyone, not just the caster, and the user does not need to know Assamite Sorcery to benefit from its properties. All users do damage with the blade against demons, ghosts, and spirits as though they were fighting a normal, physical opponent.

Bound by Oath (Level Three)

Mithra is the Zoroastrian angelic deity of oaths and covenants. By recreating his legendary bull-slaying, Assamite sorcerers can confer his blessing on an operation against a single target.

First, the Sorcerer ritually cleans an underground chamber and positions a bull which will be sacrificed. The Sorcerer and participants gather over the bull and chant the name of a single target for one hour. Each participant then smears a point of their own blood on the blade of a two-handed sword. In unison, the participants chant the target's name one last time and the Sorcerer plunges the blade deep into the throat of the bull to complete the ritual. As one, the participants kill the bull, and as one, they vow to kill their target.

Not all the participants need to know the ritual in order to take part, only the presiding Sorcerer. In order for the ritual to be cast, it must have at least two participants and no more than seven.

System: When the participants make an attack in unison against the selected target, a number of them (equal to the successes achieved in the casting) can propel themselves up the initiative order to act one round before the target. For example, four Assamites are attacking a target. The target acts on initiative 10, but three of the Assamites roll initiatives of 9, 9 and 7 respectively. Two successes were achieved in the casting, allowing two of the three stragglers to act on initiative 11 instead. The third remains on their original initiative order. The ritual only grants its benefit if all of the participants (including the Sorcerer) actively engage their target at the beginning of the combat.

In addition, each participant in the combat has a bonus (equal to the successes in the casting) to any Alertness rolls for that scene. The effects of the ritual last until the following sunrise, or until the end of the first combat against their target, whichever comes first.

Setite Sorcery

Setite Sorcery is a curious magical phenomenon. It has elements from across the magical spectrum, though its implementation has a largely ritualistic, religious format. That said, "Setite Sorcery" is a bit of a misnomer. The term implies a singular practice, but Setite *Sorceries* would be more apt, as it is actually a collection of different practices from Followers of Set around the world.

No matter what form of Sorcery they practice, all Setite Sorcerers ultimately strive for the same goal.

Each faction and bloodline of the Followers of Set that practices Sorcery has their own mask of Set that they revere as the driving force behind their magic. Through practicing them, they are drawing upon the Dark God's power to weaken the forces that imprison the Setites in this world so that they can take a step closer to becoming Gods, as Set commanded. Thus, Setite Sorcery is the direct manifestation of Set's power in the world. At least, that's their argument.

Followers of Set strive to free themselves from the bonds and rules of the mortal world. While these chain them, they will never become gods like Set himself. To enlighten others to the wisdom of Set's teachings, they strike out against the lies taught by other religions, the laws of governments, and the worship of wealth and luxury. These indulgences are just a few of the tools employed by the Aeons, the jailers of humanity, who would seek to bar the way to any who strive to achieve Godhood.

Setite Sorcery is one of the Clan's most useful tools to aid in this endeavor. Many of the effects of Setite Sorcery share similarities with Thaumaturgy, though they were practiced many thousands of years before the Tremere came into existence. One of the prime examples of this is the art that allows Setite Sorcerers to command the weather. In ancient Egypt, the weather patterns influenced the regular flooding of the Nile and thus in turn affected crop production. To control the weather was to control the crops, and therefore to control life itself. If the Sorcerer could thus become as a God, then surely the witnesses to this miracle might find the way to enlightenment one day themselves.

While the world in the modern nights has changed in ways that would be incomprehensible to the minds of those in ancient times, the purpose of the Followers of Set has not. The Clan just has to find new ways of employing these ancient tools to achieve the same results.

Style and Substance

As the Followers of Set have slithered across the globe, they have found that the best way to preach their doctrine and philosophy in certain lands was to use parallels to each culture's indigenous myths and legends. In many of the religions around the world, Setites found Gods that bore a striking resemblance to their own Dark God, and proclaimed that these were in fact "masks" of Set himself.

In each of the schools of Setite Sorcery, the Sorcerer draws power directly from the particular mask of Set she believes in. Each school is characterized by the religion to which that mask originally belonged. The different schools are detailed below.

New Background: Blasphemous Shrine

As discussed below, Lector Priests must have desecrated the corpse of someone buried according to traditional ancient Egyptian practice. These corpses are kept as offerings to Set and are the means by which these sorcerers channel his power into the world. As such, they are usually placed in shrines dedicated to Set and adorned with his iconography. Within this Blasphemous Shrine, the Lector Priest can perform powerful Akhu rituals, amplified by the proximity to the source of their power.

The more dots in the background, the greater the connection the desecrated corpse has to Set. Mechanically, this background grants a number of bonus dice to the casting of Akhu rituals equal to the number points in Blasphemous Shrine. However, this only applies to rituals cast in the shrine itself.

As an optional rule, a Storyteller may insist that a Lector Priest has to have at least one dot of Blasphemous Shrine to represent the desecrated corpse offering to Set, without which they cannot cast Akhu.

Akhu

Akhu (pp. 163-165), the most widely practiced school of Setite Sorcery, resembles ancient Egyptian religion. The god Set to the ancient Egyptians was, among other things, the God of Storms. A practitioner of Akhu therefore erects a symbolic lightning rod through which she can attract a bolt of Set's lightning to power her subsequent rites. However, in order to attract Set's favor, she must make an offering to the Dark God that will please him greatly. The accepted way to achieve this among practitioners of Akhu (known as Lector Priests) is by following the instructions laid down by Set himself in *The Book of Going Forth by Night*.

A Lector Priest obtains the body of someone who has been buried in accordance with traditional ancient Egyptian practice (which is increasingly difficult in the

modern nights) and desecrates the corpse, thus plunging the deceased's soul into eternal torment while it resides in Osiris's dominion of the Western Lands. This serves a multitude of purposes. The soul in eternal torment disrupts the hold of Osiris on his afterlife dominion by showing the power Set commands in his followers. This blow against his ancient enemy pleases Set, and he channels his power to the Lector Priest. This show of Set's power, furthermore, exposes the lie that is Osiris's promise of eternal life in the Western Lands a little more; these dead shall not find paradise; they find only an eternity of torment.

The Book of Going Forth by Night is an inversion of *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*, commonly known as the *Book of the Dead*. Just as the shackles that bind the unbelievers will be corrupted and ultimately destroyed, revealing to them the truth of Set, the structure of Setite rituals are corruptions (or perversions) of ancient Egyptian practices. These rituals make their targets more susceptible to the corruption and manipulation that is ultimately for their own good.

Wanga

A number of new religions were created when the variety of tribal beliefs of African slaves mixed with European Christianity during the colonization of New World. These new faiths fascinated the Serpents of the Light as much then as they do now. Even though there were fundamental differences in several of these beliefs, many shared at least a degree of common ground. Voudoun, Santería, and Palo Mayombe, for example, all feature communions with spirits that are the personification of various aspects of the world. The worshippers of these spirits could channel their power if the correct offerings and sacrifices were made to them.

The power they wielded became known among Serpents of the Light as Wanga (pp. 165-166). Many Serpents of the Light became practitioners of Wanga because, even though they had turned their backs on Set himself, they knew a powerful tool to help in their own quest for Godhood when they saw one. Many of the Cobras employ the trappings of Voudoun in their practices, which they perform in such a way to emphasize the nature of the power. Cultivating an aura of mystique and dread is characteristic of most *wangateurs*.

Stylistically, and much to the frustrated confusion of the Tremere that have heard of this Sorcery, Wanga rites are a blend of both Path and Ritual practices. Many powers that have been labelled as Paths have ritualistic components that they require to be successfully cast, and many rituals require little of the effort that a normal thaumaturgical ritual would require. This is the weakness of the Tremere: they try to codify any new form of magic they discover as just another branch of Thaumaturgy. In some ways, Wanga shares more with Assamite Sorcery than it does with Thaumaturgy, in that it requires the invocation of specific spirits to be successfully cast. Little wonder then that many wangateurs are able to replicate the effects that normally compose the Path of Spirit Manipulation (pp. 142-145). It is also no surprise that Voudoun Necromancy (pp. 87-88) shares many thematic and stylistic similarities with Wanga. After all, it is the same religion they draw upon, although the two focus upon different aspects in different ways.

The Serpents of the Light are widely known to use the Voudoun practices of Wanga to place curses on their enemies and the enemies of those they protect. That said, the Cobras will curse *anyone* if they are paid enough for their services. While on the surface it appears that they are mercenary in the practice of their arts, this does not stop them from having the same faith and devotion that the other schools of Setite Sorcery have.

Sadhana

Upon reaching India, the Followers of Set found elements of the Hindu religion that they could exploit to convert Kindred to their cause. Practitioners of Sadhana (known as Sadhus, p. 165) are predominantly drawn from the ranks of the Setite bloodline known as the Daitya. These Setites follow Shiva, who was derived from the god Rudra, a storm deity, and thus identified as being a mask of Set. Believing themselves to be demons in flesh, the Indian Setites see it as their mission to overthrow the gods and take their power for themselves.

Sadhana is the exertion of mind over matter. While it could be argued that their power comes from within as opposed to being channeled from the Dark God, it is their faith and devotion to Shiva that grants them the focus that allows them to direct this power. Without this, it is argued, they would simply lose themselves in meditation. Without Shiva, they would have no power, and thus it is all attributable to the Dark God in the end.

Given the focus upon the power of the mind, the powers of this school manifest in ways that resemble the more "psychic" Paths of Thaumaturgy (Movement of the Mind, Path of Conjuring, etc.), but the way in which they are cast is significantly different. Their doctrine teaches that the material world is an illusion (and thus merely another barrier to Godhood installed by the Aeons). Through sheer force of will, a Sadhu can manipulate the cosmic illusion to make magical things happen.

In addition, much as karma teaches that every deed demands an equal and opposite compensation, the rites

that comprise Sadhana require a degree of sacrifice before a bounty can be harvested. Blood sacrifices are cast into a ceremonial fire, which the Sadhu has to brave. While some practitioners of other schools find this act grounds for concern, claiming the method of practice to be disharmonious with the arts of the Clan (citing the inherent Setite aversion to light and fire), others argue that such a weakness is just another barrier that should be fought against in the ongoing struggle to achieve Godhood. Just because the other schools do not fight against it and indulge in that particular sensation does not mean that it presents any theological opposition to the ideology of any other form of Setite Sorcery.

Nahuallotl

Nahuallotl is derived from the philosophy of the peoples of Mesoamerica. The Tlacique bloodline believe they are descended from Tezcatlipoca, a deity with many facets. Among them is a connection with darkness and the night sky which identified Tezcatlipoca as a mask of the Dark God to the wider Setite world. Through Nahuallotl they call upon the power of an array of Gods from across the Mesoamerican pantheons to enact their will. The Gods answer their call, but in accordance with the practices of the religions that worshiped them, the Gods demand sacrifice —blood sacrifice.

Given the heavy reliance upon blood sacrifice in Mesoamerican beliefs, it is only natural that practitioners of Nahuallotl are capable of manifesting effects similar to those of the Path of Blood. By offering the appropriate ritual sacrifices to the relevant Gods, the Nahualli can replicate other Thaumaturgy Paths: Lure of Flames, Weather Control, etc.

Whereas other schools may be employed with subtlety and tact to achieve their ends, this is without question the most violent and destructive of the schools within Setite Sorcery.

External Relations

In stark contrast to the Tremere's secrecy, the Followers of Set flaunt the fact that they have access to magical power. It furthers their cause to show other Kindred that they wield the power of the Dark God made manifest on Earth. However, while they are happy to promote the *effects* of their sorcery, they are less inclined to reveal the *means* through which it is accomplished, lest they alienate their more sensitive potential converts. As masters of deceit,

The Tlacique

Just as the Followers of Set claim to be descended from the Egyptian god Set, the Tlacique claim to be descended from Tezcatlipoca. There is common ground between the two deities (darkness, the night sky, winds, hurricanes, etc.) that brings them into harmony with the wider Clan. Indeed, before the arrival of the Spanish in Mesoamerica, the bloodline ruled over the mortals as Gods, mirroring the goal of many Setites around the world.

Nevertheless, the chief concern that many Setites have about their Mesoamerican brethren is their inherent Clan disciplines. Unlike Serpentis-wielding Setites around the world, the Tlacique display the art of Protean instead. If Set, albeit through another mask, Embraced the founder of the bloodline, why should he have changed the blessings he imparted upon his followers?

Unfortunately, following the near-genocide of the bloodline conducted by the Camarilla and the Sabbat shortly after their arrival in the New World, the eldest of the bloodline no longer exist to provide a definitive answer to such a question. Instead, young Setites can only speculate and wonder if they have mistakenly adopted some obscure and dangerously ambitious Gangrel bloodline.

Cairo

The true state of Cairo's Chantry has not yet been revealed to the Tremere, but it serves as the perfect example of why the Warlocks should be wary of getting close to the Followers of Set.

Sylvia Kilver, the acting regent of the Cairo Chantry, is a member of a secret order within the Tremere called the Eye of the Serpent. These Warlocks worship the image of the serpent for its magical significance and perfection of form. Having learned of Akhu from the Setite Sorceress, Kahina, Sylvia has been giving away increasing amounts of the Tremere's secrets to learn the power for herself.

The Eye of the Serpent have encouraged Sylvia to continue to learn as much of Akhu as she can, especially as Sylvia believes it has shown her the way to develop an entirely new path of Thaumaturgy she calls "The Soul of the Serpent." Only time will tell if the heavy cost Sylvia has paid has been truly worth the grasp the Setites now have on the Chantry.

it is not uncommon for adept Sorcerers to perform grandiose public spectacles of chanting and praying before unleashing the effect of a ritual cast sometime prior. Thus, when others attempt to copy their exploits word-for-word and in every detail, and fail, the Sorcerer consoles them that it is because they have not yet earned Set's favor... but she can *help*.

As awareness of Setite Sorcery in its numerous forms has increased, it has prompted a variety of reactions. It is safe to say that the vast majority of Kindred society does not trust the Followers of Set. Unsurprisingly, Setite sorcery has finally attracted the attention of the Tremere. Though in the past their method was to study what they saw, trying to codify it in a manner that they could understand. So far, the Warlocks have only dealt with the Setites at arm's length. The Setites, naturally, attempt to entice the Warlocks, inviting them in for a closer look so that they might truly understand what it is they are so obviously dying to comprehend. The Warlocks have thus far resisted temptation, keeping themselves and their secrets just out of the Setites' reach.

As the practices of the Serpents of the Light have come into the open across the Caribbean and the southern United States, their Sabbat brethren have taken notice. Though Setite sorcery has proven to be extremely effective in destabilizing the mortal influences of their Camarilla opposition, this has not stopped murmurs from the Sabbat Inquisition. While the Cobras quite clearly state that their power is not of an infernal nature, which is supported by the adherence to Voudoun, the fact that they deal with spirits

means that the Inquisition often turns its gaze upon the Serpents of the Light. The Inquisition claims that they have the best interests of the Cobras at heart and are keeping an eye on them merely to make sure that they maintain their dominant position in their dealings with the spirits. To date, no action has been taken — at least not publically.

As to those outside the Jyhad, the Serpents of the Light and the Followers of Set have both been approached by the Giovanni, specifically in regards to Wanga. It has not escaped their notice that a number of stories have been circulating about the origin of this particular school of Setite Sorcery. One particular story the Necromancers have heard is that the art was actually taught to the Serpents of the Light by Papa Zombie, a member of the Samedi bloodline. Given that the powers of Thanatosis resemble those of Necromancy, just as Wanga outwardly resembles Thaumaturgy, the Giovanni are interested in learning more about Wanga in the hope it might shed some much sought after insight on the nature of Thanatosis. Given the fraught relationship between the Samedi and the Giovanni, the Necromancers believe they have more luck in getting these answers from the Setites than the Stiffs.

The Necromancers have attempted to gather information from both the Serpents of the Light and the Followers of Set. The Giovanni, exercising caution, continue to probe where they can in an effort to gather even the smallest scrap of information a wangateur might give away as a freebie in an attempt to further draw them in. Eventually, they hope, a stockpile of enough scraps might amount to something more substantial.

Potentially the most dangerous reaction to Setite Sorcery comes from a very old threat. As word has slowly spread about Akhu, a foe the Setites long thought vanquished, has turned its cool gaze upon them. The Children of Osiris are enraged by the followers of the Dark God bragging about their power being derived from the unending torment they inflict upon the dead in the Western Lands. These souls should, by all rights, be in a serene paradise under the protection of Osiris. This has led a growing percentage of the remaining Children of Osiris to turn their attentions more toward disrupting the machinations of the Setites rather than pursuing Golconda (for the time being, at least). Such a direct attack on Osiris will not be tolerated.

Currently, the Children of Osiris exist only in a small number of temples scattered around the world. The Setites' verbal attack on Osiris might yet serve to be the impetus that finally unites the Children of Osiris as a whole into a cohesive body.

Sorcery within Setite Factions

The Cohort of Wepwawet

The Cohort is an example of Setite fundamentalism. It is dominated by Setites that claim to be led by Wepwawet, the warrior childe of Set and Egyptian god of war. In recent decades, they have fanatically tried to force Warrior Setite doctrine (the "true and ancient Theophidian doctrine") upon other factions and temples so that they fall in line with the Cohort's own orthodox views. The subsequent backlash created the Serpents of the Light. Consequently, the Cohort have decided to embrace a number of different tactics — albeit reluctantly in many cases.

While the majority of the Cohort focuses on trying to achieve tangible victories against the servants of the Aeons, such as the Society of Leopold, a small handful of the Cohort's membership has taken to learning Akhu. The comparatively subtle ways of Akhu may be counterpoint to the normally visceral methods of the Cohort, but it is a gesture that has not gone unnoticed by other factions. The Cohort hopes that this will rebuild its connection to the wider Setite community. Once they have built up enough goodwill with their brethren, they hope to continue their campaign of unification under the banner of Wepwawet — but perhaps with more subtlety.

Scandinavian Setites

Where the Setites have found masks of Set operating in other religions, they have usually had few problems in converting new members to their cause and later enlightening them in the use of the Dark God's power. In some cases though, while the mask may be present, new converts have a hard time swallowing the mystical trappings of rites pertaining to another religion. This is exactly what happened with the Setites of Scandinavia.

The followers of the Midgard Serpent readily accepted that their deity could take multiple forms across the world. However, the idea of practicing Egyptian rites, in the form of Akhu, was a completely alien concept to them. No matter how much the Egyptian Setites tried to show their new brothers and sisters that the power of the Dark God was truly theirs for the taking, it only resulted in distancing the two factions of the Setite community. The Scandinavians retreated into their own methods but subsequently had very little success with them. If they had taken the leap of faith and embraced the alien culture that the Egyptians offered them, maybe they would have been able to make more tangible gains in the region. It might yet prove to be of aid to their cause, if any of the

Scandinavians takes the necessary steps, or even develop their own sorcery. To date however, none have done so.

Cult of Taweret

The Cult believes that they are descended from Taweret, childe of Set, Goddess of fertility, childbirth and, importantly, black magic. These Followers of Set view all schools of Setite Sorcery as their birthright to possess, and their duty to use. The Cult has the greatest concentration of Sorcerers in the overarching Setite community, with perhaps the exception of the Serpents of the Light.

In addition to supporting their fellow brethren in their efforts against the Aeons, the Cult pushes itself and those they deal with to the extremities of sensation in their quest for transcendence. If the normal practices of the Setites are akin to blades, Setite Sorcery to the Cult is the razor sharp scalpel that allows them to cut deeper. Drugs and other vices can only take them so far; sorcery can take them all the way.

As the Clan has expanded across the world and identified more masks of Set being worshiped on the darkest peripheries of society, the Cult of Taweret has been there to guide and instruct their Sorcerers in the nature of these dark arts. Where they have discovered new converts with their own mystical practices, such as in the case of the Daitya, the Cult have made all possible efforts to learn these new rites. They would be turning their back on the duty laid upon them by their founder if they did not seek to bring more power under the Cult's wing.

Thus, growing numbers of the Cult scour the world looking for more mystical converts that can increase their magical knowledge. Any who stand in their path learn the hard way that they are as fanatical about the acquisition of new Sorcery as the Cohort of Wepwawet are in their promotion of orthodoxy.

Sisterhood of Sekhmet

The Sisterhood is an all-female coterie that founded a Gehenna cult as a way to lead Camarilla vampires to Set and undermine the great sect. They set out by recruiting female vampires who disliked what they saw as the glass ceiling of a male-dominated Camarilla. However, the Sisterhood's methods have caused some degree of friction with other Setite factions. This is due to their lack of focus on Set himself, neglected in favor of an emphasis on Sekhmet. While they are ultimately still a true part of the wider Setite community, it is the path they have chosen to walk that makes some of their brethren raise an occasional eyebrow — especially when the true Dark God fades from view.

To date, only a small handful of the Sisterhood have attempted to embrace Setite Sorcery, because its practice has proven disharmonious with their doctrine. Even though Set is acknowledged as Sekhmet's consort by the Sisterhood, the fact that magic should come from him and not from her was a point of contention. Sekhmet's name is derived from *sekhem*, meaning *power*, so why should she not be the one providing this gift to her followers? The Sisterhood is attempting to present Sekhmet as a mask of Set to try and satisfy this controversy, but for now Setite Sorcery plays virtually no part in the workings of the Sisterhood. Once it incorporates Setite Sorcery into its operation, then relations with the wider Setite community will be considerably strengthened.

Cult of Typhon Trismegistus

At first, one may think that the Typhonists would have a similar struggle incorporating Setite Sorcery into their practices. After all, the Cult promotes itself as being devoted to gods of the Roman pantheon, not Egyptian. However, it has been surprisingly easy to build a bridge between their methods and Setite Sorcery.

Over the last couple of decades, the Typhonists have set up pit-fights that have brought them a considerable amount of money as well as a large number of new converts. Those invited to the nearby Setite chapels are enlightened as the war that underpins their existence is explained to them — the battle against the Aeons, and between Osiris and Set, from which Sorcery springs. Drawing upon the support of Mars, even if they don't make reference to him being a mask of Set, converts a lot of the pit-fight's blood-thirsty audience to the Dark God.

The Cult has a relatively modest number of Sorcerers that are out-numbered significantly by Warrior Setites. The Sorcerers they have though, driven by the desire to take the fight to the Aeons, are very passionate in their practices. They embrace Sorcery as a potent weapon to use in their cause, while earning the favor of their patron deity (and through him, Set) at the same time.

New Rituals

The Word of the Dark God (Level One)

Many Sorcerers, upon learning the foundations of Setite Sorcery, wish to appease the Dark God further and bask in even more of his favor. What better way than to fulfill his direct command?

Taking a corpse (perhaps a mummy desecrated in the process of obtaining Akhu or the body of a Nahuallotl

Typhon's Brew (Level One)

Most preparations of Setite alchemy begin with this magical, vitae-laced beer. A Lector Priest who does not know how to create Typhon's Brew can forget about pursuing further knowledge of alchemy. This beer sustains ghouls as if it were true vampiric vitae. Vampires can drink it, too, with similar results.

By itself, Typhon's Brew has no other properties. It cannot be used to Embrace a mortal, nor to blood bond. The brewing process negates this aspect of vitae.

System: Brewing the Typhon's Brew takes a full lunar month, beginning and ending at the dark of the moon. For every gallon brewed, the alchemist includes one blood point's worth of his own vitae. The brewing process multiplies the vitae, so that a ghoul can gain one blood point per quart of the magic beer. Vampires, however, gain only one blood point per gallon consumed — the same rate as in brewing the beer. For vampires, the beer's magic is limited to the fact that they can drink it at all without heaving it up seconds later. They can even get drunk on it (and may suffer a hangover later).

sacrifice), the Sorcerer kneels above its head and prays for guidance from the Dark God. The caster offers a point of blood into the mouth of the corpse and, upon the completion of the ritual, the corpse whispers a name from its dead mouth. This is the name of a person Set wishes to be corrupted. If the Setite is successfully in corrupting this individual, the act will earn her further favor from the Dark God.

System: This is purely a narrative device for the Storyteller to take advantage of, with no other mechanical benefit. As an optional rule, Storytellers could employ the tasks set by practicing this ritual as tests to complete before being granted access to higher levels of Setite Sorcery. Otherwise, the favor of Set can manifest itself in any way the Storyteller desires.

To Lace with Hidden Nectar (Level Two)

Many of those that have sampled Typhon's Brew (see sidebar) often find themselves coming back for more. The ability to drink as though they were alive once again is something that has a great appeal to some Kindred, and thus it is something that the Followers of Set have been able to exploit to great effect.

System: This ritual relies on the Sorcerer being able to brew Typhon's Brew to begin with. The Sorcerer brews a batch of the drink as per normal for the ritual, and casts To Lace with Hidden Nectar on the last night of the full month of the process. She then invests again the same amount of blood in the mixture as at the start of the process, and spends an equal amount of Willpower points. Any vampire who drinks a gallon of the brew loses the same amount of Willpower points (spread evenly over the following hour) as he becomes rapidly intoxicated. This has proven to be a remarkably useful tool for manipulating inebriated Kindred.

Rings Like Chains (Level Three)

Turquoise was believed by many ancient civilizations to be prophylactic in nature, protecting those that wore it. Perverting this belief, a Setite Sorcerer can craft jewelry that actively does the reverse. The Sorcerer takes a large piece of turquoise and bathes it in a point of his blood for an entire lunar month. At the end of this period, the stone becomes red like jasper. He then cuts the stone in two, and incorporates each half into a separate piece of jewelry, inscribing the name of an intended target upon both stones. This can be any form of jewelry, not just rings as the name of the ritual suggests, although these tend to be the most commonly produced items. One piece is given to the intended target, while the other stays with the Sorcerer.

System: As long as both the Sorcerer and recipient are wearing the items of jewelry, when the intended target next partakes of an addictive substance (drugs, alcohol, Vitae, etc.), the Sorcerer becomes aware of it and has the choice of making them both become automatically addicted to the substance in question. The effects of the ritual fade after this first instance, whether the Sorcerer activates it or not. This provides a Setite Sorcerer an immense amount of leverage over a given target, by creating a new vice for him to exploit.

The Giovanni and Necromancy

Necromancy, the art of communion with the dead, has had many names, and was practiced by ancient civilizations long before it was adopted by Kindred. Tonight, it is known as the signature discipline of Clan Giovanni. However, it is an art that has taken many forms and been used to satisfy many purposes over the millennia.

Across the ancient world, Necromancy was originally a tool employed to honor ancestor spirits. In those times, it was believed that honoring the dead would facilitate the ancestor spirits' blessing the endeavors of a family or giving aid in times of need. There are those of Clan Giovanni that make reference to the family having their own ancestor spirit that has watched over them since the nights of Ancient Rome. It is a spirit that even Augustus himself pays respect to. The Giovanni call this spirit *Dis Pater,* after an early Roman god of the underworld.

The art of Necromancy evolved. Necromancers, no longer willing to wait for a spirit to give its blessing upon an endeavor in its own time, began summoning the spirits on their own terms. For the first time, Necromancers became the dominant party in interactions with the dead. They would summon, and the wraiths were compelled to obey.

Before the rise of Christianity, Necromancy had been widely accepted as a legitimate practice. Soon afterward, it fell into disfavor, becoming known as *nigrimancy* or "black magic." The Roman ancestors of the Giovanni (the Jovians) continued to practice these arts in secrecy throughout the ages. Even as the centuries passed and their name changed, they still honored *Dis Pater* and, in return for their devotion, Dis blessed the family with riches. It was only then that they came to the attention of Kindred, specifically the Cappadocians. The founder of the Clan, Cappadocius, had been practicing similar arts for centuries, seeking the answer to the riddle of death itself: What comes after life? What really happens at the moment of death? Is there something better beyond this world? While religions have sought to provide their own answers to these questions, Cappadocius wanted proof rather than promises. Cappadocius saw Necromancy as the means by which he could obtain these answers.

It was the discovery of the concept of the Endless Night that changed how the family viewed Necromancy. Until then, money alone equaled power, and Necromancy had made the family rich. The Endless Night, however, promised that Necromancers would become akin to gods. As the Giovanni considered themselves to be the most powerful of all Necromancers, they would therefore become the most powerful of the new gods. The Clan now uses these practices to gather the one hundred million souls it needs to make this nightmare become a reality.

Style and Substance

Necromancy, much like Thaumaturgy, is a Hydra-like beast comprised of many Paths, and occasionally new ones emerge from the shadows to join them. Each Path draws its practices from a particular belief or set of beliefs about the nature of death, resulting in Necromancy's being composed of a wide variety of styles and faiths.

The major belief systems are discussed here, but this is by no means an exhaustive list. Clan Giovanni and its many minor families have travelled far and wide. These are simply the belief systems that the majority of Necromancers draw their power from.

Incompatible Beliefs?

Given the wildly different beliefs that some civilizations have developed about the nature of the afterlife, it's reasonable to assume that Necromancers would have trouble in reconciling the practices of one religion with another. However, there is a basic framework that underpins all Necromantic rituals, and it is here that some degree of common ground can be found.

All Necromancy rituals use components representing three key concepts: the authority of the Necromancer, so that they can exert their power over the wraith; the imprisonment of death, so that the wraith knows its place; and an item that identifies the wraith in question, which is usually a Fetter. Symbols of authority can differ from one culture to another, but it is the differences in the perceived nature of death and the afterlife that vary the most. As such, Western Necromancers that use their own symbolism to summon a soul that believes it has gone to Mictlan, the Aztec underworld, find the connection to the wraith to be disjointed or incomplete. Likewise, a *houngan* using Voudoun rites will have a similar difficulty in trying to summon a soul that believes it resides in Diyu, the Chinese realm of the dead.

However, it is not impossible. Metaphorically speaking, the Necromancer could be issuing commands to the wraith in a language it doesn't necessarily understand, but with enough hand gestures and modification of tone, she can at least convey the basic intent of her command.

Mechanically, Necromancers conducting rituals with trappings relating to beliefs different to those of the wraiths they are attempting to summon suffer a +1 penalty to difficulties on those Necromancy rolls. The

+2 penalty associated with Ghiberti Necromancy when inexperienced Necromancers deal with *abombo* (African wraiths) supersedes this rule. Purchasing specialties in the relevant faiths negates the associated penalty.

The following table outlines which paths and rituals from **V20** (p. 159-184) are commonly accessible to different Necromancers from across the globe. This is not an exclusive list prohibiting one Necromancer from learning the arts of another, but rather an identification of those arts most commonly associated with each Clan and bloodline.

Necromancer	Path Rituals
Giovanni	Sepulchre Path, Ash Path, Bone Path, Call of the Hungry Dead, Eldritch Beacon, Insight, Eyes of the Grave, The Hand of Glory, Puppet, Din of the Damned, Ritual of the Unearthed Fetter, Tempesta Scudo, Peek Past the Shroud, Esilio, Grasp the Ghostly
Ghiberti	Cenotaph Path, Ash Path, Call of the Hungry Dead, Eldritch Beacon, Eyes of the Grave, Occhio d'Uomo Morto, Puppet, Din of the Damned, Ritual of the Unearthed Fetter, Peek Past the Shroud, Grasp the Ghostly
Pisanob	Sepulchre Path, Ash Path, Ritual of the Smoking Mirror, The Ritual of Pochtli, Divine Sign, Ritual of Xipe Totec
Harbingers of Skulls	The Corpse in the Monster, The Grave's Decay, Path of the Four Humors, Insight, Minestra di Morte, Eyes of the Grave, The Hand of Glory, Tempesta Scudo, Cadaver's Touch, Peek Past the Shroud, Chill of Oblivion, Esilio, Grasp the Ghostly
Nagaraja	Vitreous Path, Ash Path, Bone Path, Call of the Hungry Dead, Eldritch Beacon, Insight, Minestra di Morte, The Hand of Glory, Occhio d'Uomo Morto, Din of the Damned, Tempesta Scudo, Dastone Diabolico, Chill of Oblivion
Voudoun Necromancers	Bone Path, Sepulchre Path, Knowing Stone, Two Centimes, Blood Dance, Nightmare Drums, Baleful Doll, Dead Man's Hand

Western Necromancy

Given the Giovanni's Roman roots, it's no surprise that the Greco-Roman depictions of death and the Underworld should feature prominently in their rites. This is evidenced by the names of their rituals (e.g. Chair of Hades, Circle of Cerberus, etc.). Furthermore, given that Giovanni Necromancers are more numerous than their counterparts in the Clan's minor families, it has become the most visibly practiced form of Necromancy in the modern nights.

It is the belief of Western Necromancers that mankind was meant to command nature. Necromancy is the magical extension of this belief into the lands beyond natural existence. Kindred achieve this command over the dead more easily than mortal Necromancers due both to their dulled emotions and fundamental connection with death. Wraiths feed on emotions, and thus Kindred present less power for them to draw upon and use against their summoners.

The Giovanni's command over Western Necromancy stems from ancestor worship begun by their forefathers, the Jovian family of ancient Rome. The Clan is, first and foremost, a family. Necromancy was simply the tool that the family employed to overcome the obstacle of death that would have sought to separate members of the family from the wider whole.

Wraiths are maintained by emotions and a connection to the material world. Necromancy serves as a lifeline for Giovanni wraiths, tying them to the lands of the living, lest they lose their connection and fall into the depths of the underworld. Thus the Giovanni use their power over the dead to further the interests of the existing family and give the wraiths a connection to the lands of the living so their existence can continue. This relationship works well for those on both sides of the Shroud.

Aztec Necromancy

Death was a prominent feature of the Aztec beliefs. Multiple Gods were connected with the concept of death and the Underworld that awaited the soul (*tonalli*) after its passing. Indeed, the manner of a person's death determined her destination in the afterlife. For example, warriors that died upon the battlefield were destined for the rising sun, whereas mothers dying in childbirth were destined for the setting sun. In addition, those that drowned or were struck by lightning went to Tlalocan, a paradise ruled by the Gods. However, the destination of the majority that died in the Aztec world was Mictlan, the Underworld that existed to the far north, ruled by its King and Queen, Mictlantecuhtli and Mictecacihuatl.

Given his role, Mictlantecuhtli is a name that appears frequently in the incantations of many of the Pisanob family's rites. What many also find apt is that Mictlantecuhtli was often depicted as a skeletal figure, splashed with blood — very much like the appearance of the Pisanob themselves.

Despite the degrees of separation between Western and Aztec philosophies, as well as other Mesoamerican cultures (also seen in Nahuallotl — p. 80), Necromancy provides several points of common ground.

The Aztecs regarded skeletal imagery as depictions of life and fertility. The juxtaposition of these concepts against death that the imagery naturally conveys is not unlike the act of breaking taboo in Western cultures. Thus, the Pisanob's own appearance, and the style of their rites, are both elements that they can draw power from.

One Pisanob ritual (the Ritual of the Smoking Mirror, **V20**, p. 178) features the use of an obsidian mirror, but this is not the only rites to rely upon this particular piece of equipment. Obsidian mirrors were seen as devices that could be used to gaze into the Underworld and communicate with its denizens. These mirrors were seen as a symbol of rulership in Aztec society, to the point where they had a God of their own — Tezcatlipoca, the Smoking Mirror. Divinations and rituals using obsidian mirrors were said to impart the wishes of the Gods to the rulers of society. Thus, they make perfect symbols of authority with which Aztec Necromancers can command wraiths.

Like other rites stemming from their culture, Aztec Necromancy is highly ritualistic, relying heavily upon ceremony and preparation. Without these elements in place, the power of the blood provides a partial substitute. Necromancers deprived of the equipment they require to perform these rites in the traditional fashion suffer a +2 difficulty increase, although this can be overcome for a scene by spending a Willpower point.

Voudoun Necromancy

The relationship between Voudoun Necromancy and Wanga (pp.165-166) is very much a parallel of that between Necromancy and Thaumaturgy. Where the former focuses purely upon the aspects of death, the latter seeks to embrace all the concepts under the purview of the faith.

Voudoun as we know it today began in the Haitian slave communities where the religions of the West mixed with tribal African beliefs to form something wholly new. *Vodouisants* (practitioners of Voudoun) believe in Bondye, a creator God. The loa are spirits that serve Bondye. Each loa governs a particular facet of nature. Practitioners direct their acts of devotion toward those loa connected with death. Chief among this handful of spirits is one that has been sensationalized by Hollywood, and the name of which has been adopted by the Stiffs: Baron Samedi.

The Giovanni don't know for sure what connection, if any, there is between the Samedi bloodline and the loa. However, the name "Papa Zombie" has appeared in recent investigations, and the Giovanni believe this is someone who might have answers. Efforts are underway

to learn more from the Serpents of the Light, who also deal with Voudoun practices in the Caribbean.

The concept of magical sympathy (see pp. 133-135) is something that underpins a great deal of Voudoun rites. For example, a well-known tool of American Voudoun is the voodoo doll (otherwise known as a Baleful Doll, **V20**, p. 181). Made from components taken from the target (possessions, body hair, etc.), it is said that anything done to the doll manifests upon the target.

Eastern Necromancy

Examination of anything in Southeast Asia has been notoriously difficult due to the ill reception that many Kindred have received from the mysterious vampires that haunt this part of the world. The della Passaglia, through marrying into Beijing families in the course of their financial activities throughout the region, have won a begrudging acceptance that no other faction of Kindred society has yet achieved. It has allowed them to examine the arts of Eastern Necromancy first hand.

Similar to practices in the West, ancestor worship has been conducted in the region for millennia. Living families build shrines to the departed that serve to focus their prayers. For example, they burn ghost money at these shrines that then appear beyond the Shroud for the departed to use as currency in the afterlife. As such potent connections to the spirit world, these shrines become Fetters by default, and thus they are instrumental in many Necromancy rites.

As the della Passaglia explored the region, they realized that death is treated differently by the myriad mortal cultures there. This diversity attracted other Necromancers before the della Passaglia arrived, particularly the Nagaraja. When the della Passaglia finally turn their attention to examining the concept of the cycle of death and rebirth in the Hindu culture of India, they fully expect to find the Nagaraja are already ahead of them once more.

African Necromancy

Africa is perhaps the most culturally diverse continent on Earth. Naturally, each culture has its own portrayal of death. The result of this diversification, and the resulting collision of philosophies, is that the very composition of wraiths is fundamentally different in Africa. This leads to obstacles other Necromancers find difficult, but not impossible, to overcome.

The wraiths that haunt the African continent are comprised not of two but *four* distinct aspects. First, there are light and dark aspects that correspond roughly with those of Western wraiths. Then, there exists the Dreamself (the emotional presence of the soul upon the world) and the Heartlife (the soul's connection to our world via their Fetters).

For example, in the beliefs of the Yoruba people (which form a noteworthy part of the population of West Africa), death is seen as a transition from one state to another and not necessarily the end of life. Life continues in the next world, which is separate from this one. As with other necromantic traditions, ancestors play a large part in the relationship between the living and the dead in Yoruba beliefs. Ghosts are treated with reverence and respect when encountered by the living, rather than with fear.

The Ghiberti family, with their roots in western Africa, has long had the opportunity to examine this belief structure and adapt their style of Necromancy to accommodate it. As such, they do not suffer the same mechanical penalties to their practices that others do (as outlined in "Incompatible Beliefs?" pp. 85-86) but it is a teaching that they have extended to few outside of their ranks, so they have been able to maintain their monopoly on Giovanni affairs in the Dark Continent.

Expansion of Necromancy

In terms of its practice, the core of Necromancy shares many hallmarks with classical theurgy. A Necromancer summons a being (in this case, a wraith) to control, just as a theurgist would summon a spirit and attempt to bind it to her will. By extension, it could be argued that Necromancy is not far from the more spiritual Paths of Thaumaturgy.

The Warlocks may have demonstrated that their Hermetic practices cover a much wider spectrum, but the Giovanni have found that Necromancy can approach death from multiple angles, each with its own powerful effect. Thaumaturgy has leapt forward over the centuries with the generation of new Paths covering a myriad of differing themes, whereas the Giovanni have demonstrated that anything within the purview of death is within their grasp. Ghosts, the underworld itself, corpses... it's a far longer list than just the word "death" might first imply.

Necromancers historically have not generated new Paths and rituals as easily as the Warlocks (as painfully evidenced by the length of time it took the Pisanob and the Ghiberti to develop the Ritual of Pochtli), but they do create them. Their formulaic approach has allowed them to construct their own way of creating the effects of other death-related powers, and it has served them since the nights the Giovanni family were first brought under the wing of the Cappadocians.

New Level Four Necromancy Ritual: Summon Ethereal Horde

Based upon accounts of the Telyavelic Tremere's ability to summon temporary hordes of ghostly combatants, the Giovanni have been able to partially replicate the power previously known as the "Army of Souls." The Necromancer chants a prayer to the dead while standing in the center of a circle made from the ground-up remains of a cremated corpse, the coffin in which it was buried, and the headstone of the deceased's grave.

System: At the end of the chant, if the ritual is successful, the number of successes rolled determines how many drones (mindless ghosts, rather than full-blown wraiths) the Necromancer can summon. These ghosts appear as ethereal images of warriors long dead. Although they can not materialize fully in the physical world, they can use their own powers to hurl objects or frighten away attackers, in defense of the Necromancer. The ghosts return to their rest at the next sunrise.

Thaumaturgy

Some of the Giovanni's most proficient Necromancers attempt to learn Thaumaturgy at some point in their studies. Many of these would-be thaumaturges seek out the arts of Spirit Manipulation (pp. 142-145) to complement their prowess with Necromancy. The scholars and researchers of the Clan have focused their attention on trying to find any evidence of other Paths of Thaumaturgy that the Giovanni could benefit from possessing. Some years ago, following a resurgence of paganism in Lithuania, word trickled back to the Giovanni that some Tremere in the area were attempting to rediscover (or resurrect) a lost Path of Thaumaturgy.

Sielanic Thaumaturgy was a practice taught among the Telyavelic Tremere that never spread very far beyond their ranks. The Giovanni believe the Telyavelic Tremere and their arts have passed into history (see pp. 35-36 for a different perspective). However, sketchy and incomplete records of Sielanic Thaumaturgy still exist, and through significant investment, the Giovanni researchers now possess some of them.

From what they have learned, Sielanic Thaumaturgy, or at least one Path of it (the Path of the Shadow World) concerned itself with the dead and the Shadowlands, using the thaumaturge's own body as a conduit with the world of the dead. This philosophy immediately intrigued the Giovanni as it resonates with the foundations upon which the Ash Path is built.

While the Warlocks concerned themselves with rediscovering the intricate mechanics of the Hermetic practice, the Necromancers wanted to know exactly what the Path of the Shadow World *did* and not *how* it did it. With their goal in sight, they could begin to attempt to recreate its effects with Necromancy rituals.

Some of the evidence of effects they uncovered mirrored existing capabilities of the Sepulchre and Ash Paths. One power though, referred to by the Telyavelic Tremere as the "Army of Souls," was not an effect the Giovanni could yet perform. Thus, the Necromancers set about trying to replicate this effect. They succeeded, somewhat.

It is unknown whether or not the Giovanni have discovered all the information that remains of the Path of the Shadow World. In the hope that more secrets await them, the research continues.

Thanatosis

Many Giovanni have wanted for a long time to uncover the origins of the Samedi and their terrifying gift of Thanatosis. To that end, they have attempted to learn what they can about the enigmatic Stiffs from the Serpents of the Light. While these endeavors have yet to harvest any significant results, experiments conducted behind the scenes are showing the first signs of success.

The effects of Thanatosis that the Giovanni have been able to record are those that are inflicted upon others rather than via the Stiff itself. In each case, decay, disease, and death (as the natural extension of these) characterize each effect. Therefore, experimentation has sought to find a way to replicate these effects. This experimentation has subsequently confirmed that Thanatosis is *not* Necromancy at its core, as some first suspected. Thanatosis certainly resembles Necromancy in its effect, but the Giovanni are certain that they would have been able to replicate its effects faster if it had been true Necromancy.

It has only been in the last few years that successes have been made, in which two of the documented

New Level Two Necromancy Ritual: Thanatos' Caress

The first recorded success recreating the effects of Thanatosis with Necromancy was this ritual. First, the Necromancer obtains a rotting corpse. He then proceeds to bathe, symbolizing his ritual purification. Then, he lies down upon the corpse, not necessarily to indulge in necrophilia (although the act will not interfere with the ritual), but to cause the corpse to break open and fall apart. Finally, once the Necromancer is covered in rotting, decaying flesh, he consumes the heart of the corpse (or what remains of it) and the ritual is complete.

System: Until the next sunrise, the Necromancer may perform a single use of "Putrefaction" upon a target (**V20**, p. 471), using the same systems as outlined for the original power.

New Level Four Necromancy Ritual: Point of the Needle

This ritual was discovered by Voudoun Necromancers that were already adept at being able to create Baleful Dolls (**V20**, p. 181). By taking a needle that has been previously stabbed into a Baleful Doll, the Necromancer immerses the needle completely in blood under the light of the moon for a whole night. Upon successful completion of the ritual, the blood turns to ash and the needle develops a red tint.

System: Until the next sunrise, the Necromancer may perform a single use of "Withering" upon a target (**V20**, p. 472), using the same systems as outlined for the original power, but with a prick from the needle replacing a touch attack.

effects of Thanatosis have been recreated. It is hoped by these pioneers of Necromancy that the Giovanni might eventually be able to do with Thanatosis as their Elders once did with the Cappadocian powers of Mortis. Given that they are examining the phenomena from a distance, without the aid of its practitioners, it might be a long time in the making. However, they are confident they will eventually find a way.

External Relations

From their position outside of the Jyhad, the Giovanni have been able to focus their efforts without significant interference. There are moments, however, when they skirt close to the interests of the Sects and other Independents. The unsavory truth that they have come to realize is that the Giovanni are not the only Necromancers of the modern nights.

When Clan Giovanni replaced Clan Cappadocian, they were known as "Devil Kindred" because of their unsavory pastimes. The Promise of 1528 helped to alleviate some concerns about how this transition occurred (indeed, the Promise itself was viewed by some as nothing less than the Camarilla's tacit approval of the genocide of the Cappadocians), but it did not eradicate the rumors and slander. It was widely believed that the Giovanni were meddling with forces they couldn't hope to understand. The same is still said by many even now.

The Camarilla believes that while the Giovanni clearly have their own agenda, they do not present enough of a threat to tip the balance of power in the Jyhad one way or the other. Although their financial exploits can sometimes bring them to the attention of certain Ventrue with claws in the arena of big business, it is the Tremere that show the most interest in the Giovanni. Just as many Necromancers reach a point where they seek to learn Thaumaturgy, many thaumaturges come to seek Necromancy. The Giovanni don't want to give away enough of their secrets to compromise their monopoly on power over the dead, but they know that they won't learn Thaumaturgy without giving *something* up in return. Given that wraiths are the Giovanni's most valuable asset, they rarely (if ever) teach Paths that would give the Tremere control of the unquiet dead. Instead, they use the first few levels of the Bone Path as their currency

to obtain Thaumaturgy. A precedent was set in Cuba some years ago when a Pisanob taught the first couple of levels of the Bone Path on three separate occasions to different Tremere and learnt the basics of three different Thaumaturgy Paths in exchange. They recognize that this tactic will only get them so far, though. To get access to the higher levels of Thaumaturgy, they will have to part with something big. The idea of a Tremere being able to perform Soul Stealing still makes Giovanni Elders shudder.

The Sabbat is a different story. A few years back, an entire branch of the family got wiped out in northern Mexico by the Harbingers of Skulls, who suddenly became a clear and present threat to the Family. The Pisanob have been fighting the Skulls and their Sabbat brethren ever since, in a battle across Latin America that has ground to a stalemate. Of paramount concern to the Giovanni is that the Harbingers are an enemy that also possesses Necromancy. If a Giovanni is collecting souls in an area to send back to Venice, the likelihood is that if a Harbinger is nearby, they will hear about it as word spreads among the wraith community. Therefore, extreme caution is recommended for those members of the family acting in Sabbat-held territories, especially as reports of Giovanni Necromancers being kidnapped continue to surface. The same warning applies to those who employ a large number of wraith servants, because spotting their presence and having information ripped out of them by a Harbinger will invariably bring about the same result.

Beyond the Camarilla and the Sabbat, a fair number of relationships with other Kindred factions have also been underpinned by Necromancy. Whereas the Giovanni have an active interest in the Samedi due to their practice of Thanatosis, the Nagaraja are also firmly in the Clan's cross-hairs because of their deathly arts. Thankfully, the bloodline is relatively small, but it is proving itself to be a thorn in the side of Clan Giovanni, especially in Camarilla cities where a Nagaraja is present. The Nagaraja are not above selling their services for payment in flesh (alive or dead) to remove ghostly problems from given areas, which can be counterproductive to Giovanni operations. In an effort to find out more about the bloodline and to see if they can be bargained with to not interfere with the Clan, the Giovanni have discovered a connection that some of these Necromancers have with the Tal'Mahe'Ra. The Giovanni have known of the existence of the Tal'Mahe'Ra for some time, but only know a little about the mysterious Sect. They have heard rumors of a base of operations in the Underworld, and some Giovanni Elders are of the opinion that something should definitely be done about this problem.

Necromancy within Giovanni Families

Giovanni

The central reason that any Giovanni practices Necromancy is that it is ultimately for the empowerment of the family as a whole. With every soul that they collect, they bring their ultimate goals one step closer. For them, Necromancy has always been in their blood, ever since the nights of ancient Rome. However, there is a degree of contention among some of the family concerning their ultimate goal — bringing about an Endless Night by destroying the barrier between the lands of the living and the dead.

Few Giovanni claim to know with certainty what form the Endless Night will actually take. While some can't wait for it to arrive soon enough, others are patient and cautious. Wraiths have been abused by Necromancers for hundreds of years. To suddenly have the barrier that separates the worlds drop opens a door that swings both ways. There is going to be a lot of anger unleashed by the unquiet dead who will suddenly have the ability to strike back without the Shroud to stop them. Certainly, the most powerful Necromancers are going to have strength to hold back many of them, but *all* of them?

To address this concern, the Elders preach a simple line: the young Giovanni should increase their studies and learn how to hone their powers, so that when the time comes for the Endless Night, they will be ready. Others advocate for at least some degree of reparations to be made to the dead in order to partially offset the eventual onslaught. These Necromancers advocate moderation in their dealings with wraiths, using the minimum amount of force to get what they want from them. By treating wraiths with a degree of respect, the Giovanni seek to lessen the number of wraiths that would seek vengeance on Necromancers. Usually, the Giovanni get what they want from wraiths when adopting this time-honored tactic.

Pisanob and Ghiberti

Relations between the Pisanob and Ghiberti families have also been growing over the last few decades. The Pisanob needed help in combating the threat presented by the Sabbat and the Harbingers of Skulls, as well as to offset pressure directed at them from Venice to increase their tithe output. To this end, they joined forces with the Ghiberti to produce the Ritual of Pochtli (**V20**, p. 180) which is managing to keep the Giovanni Elders off the backs of the Pisanob — for the time being.

The Ghiberti and the Pisanob are perhaps the most adept pioneers of modern Necromancy. To date, the Ghiberti is the only minor family of Clan Giovanni to have developed its own complete Path of Necromancy (the Cenotaph Path — **V20**, p. 166-168), and the Pisanob have crafted a significant number of Necromancy rituals. Both families tend to keep their creations closely guarded, though, only letting certain powers filter out to the wider Clan every so often in order to appease the Elders. However, as relations between the two families have increased over recent years, they are both becoming more willing to share their ritual creations with each other.

The Ghiberti family does this very deliberately. They are intent on controlling the African continent when the Endless Night comes, so that they will have the greatest concentration of Necromancers that are able to control the African wraiths. The Pisanob have always been very territorial, remaining almost entirely in Latin America. Their focus on ceremony means that they don't necessarily focus much on Paths, but instead have developed many more rituals in their pursuit of power. These rites are the sacred manifestation of their belief in the gods, and thus they keep their secrets to protect the purity of their faith. However, through their endeavors with the Ghiberti, they too can develop a stranglehold on their precious homeland when the Endless Night comes.

The creative focus of the two families coming together has been exactly what they both needed to spur on their own developments of Necromancy. The Ghiberti are creating more rituals to accompany their Cenotaph Path, while the Pisanob take the lessons of experimentation taught to them by the Ghiberti and use these methods to create more rituals.

Rosselini

Whereas the Pisanob and Ghiberti are driven to develop Necromancy to control their territories, the drive of the Rosselini is derived from nothing less than raw passion itself.

The Rosselini are often looked upon by the other Giovanni families with a certain degree of caution. Many distance themselves from the sadistic lengths that the Rosselini go to in order to command wraiths. Where the debate continues among the main Giovanni family about the level of force Necromancers should employ when dealing with wraiths, it simply falls on deaf ears when directed toward the Rosselini family. Their rationale is that wraiths should fear the Necromancer as much as possible. Having mastered the art of subjugating wraiths through sheer terror, the Rosselini are now among the most proficient of Necromancers, second only to the

Giovanni family itself. For now, tyranny and fear are tools that they employ very effectively to control the dead.

The sickening truth behind their excessive brutality toward the dead is that they *like* it. Once, when the family was still mortal, it saw itself as being in competition with the Necromancers of Venice (the then-mortal Giovanni) for supremacy over the realms of the dead. Much like a jockey whipping his horse to go faster, the Rosselini pushed the wraiths in their command harder and harder in an effort to get ahead of the Giovanni. Over time, this original intention has been lost and perverted. Now, the practice of Necromancy, while it is horrific to those who hold to Humanity, is nearly an aphrodisiac for the Rosselini. The act of transgression of social laws and convention and the freedom to do as they wish and obtain power from the act, are the most liberating and soul stirring experience they can hope to achieve in their existence. They seek to indulge in it as much as possible. Unsurprisingly, many of their most gifted Necromancers find themselves walking the Path of the Bones, like their Giovanni cousins. Others, who are blinkered in their indulgence of their sadistic arts, often crash and burn in a spectacular fashion. More than one has been torn apart by a horde of Spectres that they have generated through their own sadistic torture.

Della Passaglia

The della Passaglia have adopted a much more scientific approach to their study of Necromancy. They have a unique position in Kindred society, based in their residence within the Underground City beneath Beijing. Here, they can observe the East and West, with one foot in each world. Having been primarily trained in the arts of Western Necromancy, they have embraced Eastern philosophy over time as they have entrenched themselves in the Middle Kingdom.

The teachings of their Giovanni cousins told them why the practice of Necromancy is so important. In going to the East, they sought to corner influence in a region as yet unclaimed by Kindred society. While they have been able to establish a foothold in the lands of the Asian Kindred, their greatest achievement has been their findings about the nature of death in the Middle Kingdom.

The della Passaglia practice their Necromancy very clinically while still holding to Humanity, rather than adopting the Path of the Bones. Many of their most adept Necromancers liken their work to a scientific experiment. Necromancy to them is the tool with which they examine the consequences of their actions upon the lands of the dead. While they don't fully understand the context of what is happening in the East, the Elders of Venice hope that the della Passaglia have not "gone native." They keep regular communications open, nominally to encourage them to send their tithe on a regular basis, but also to make sure they don't forget who their masters are and on which side of the East-West divide they truly belong.

New Rituals

Word of Insight (Level One)

Necromancers in the Classical Era called forth the spirits of the dead to gain insight upon the future. It is believed that one of the Premascines, Antonius Giovanni, preserved this ritual to the modern nights, and modern Necromancers still perform this form of divination. The Necromancer travels to a known haunted location, or a place where the barrier between this world and the next is known to be weaker. There she sets up a triangle comprised of three items that represent her own past, present, and desired future. An incense burner is positioned and lit in the center of the triangle. The Necromancer calls upon the spirits present to grant insight into events yet to come that will enable her to reach her desired goal.

System: Upon successfully casting the ritual, smoke billows from the incense burner and a myriad of ghostly faces can be seen within. Each face mutters or whispers a word or phrase, each one overlapping, making a cacophonous din. The vision and the voices fade after a few seconds.

The future is a wide, changing sea of possibilities, so at the outset, the Necromancer must specify a particular subject that she is enquiring about (closing a successful deal, obtaining a particular item, overcoming a certain problem, etc.). The Necromancer doesn't necessarily find the voices coherent or understandable, but when the ritual comes to fruition, she experiences a moment of clarity and knows what the message meant.

Mechanically, this insight allows the Necromancer to re-roll one failed action later on in the same night the ritual was cast, as long as it is in direct pursuit of the future she divined. She foresaw this failure, and potentially knew how to avoid it. If she fails the second roll, she still fails, realizing the insight just a moment too late.

Draining the Well of Life (Level Two)

Many Necromancers keep wraiths as their personal servants. Whether they control them with an iron fist or a velvet glove, it doesn't change the fact that wraiths need to feed, just like Kindred. However, while the Kindred feeds on blood, the wraith feeds on emotion. Whether used as a practical tool to empower his servants, or as a reward for loyal servitude, by casting this ritual, the wraiths in service to the Necromancer can partake

in their masters' feeding by drinking from the wave of emotion generated by the Kiss.

The Necromancer gathers his wraith retainers and spirit slaves around the intended victim, and then carves the names of his ghostly servants into the flesh of the victim. Once this is complete, he begins to drain the victim dry. For some Necromancers (the Giovanni and the Nagaraja, for example) the act of feeding is not pleasurable for the victim, and they are gripped by intense pain. For others, the Kiss works as normal and generates an intense wave of euphoria. It is the intensity of the sensation that is important here, not whether it is considered positive or negative; the wraith gets to indulge all the same. Terror or euphoria sustains them equally well.

System: Upon successfully casting the rite, the Necromancer gains all the blood he would normally obtain from the act of feeding from the victim, and each of his ghostly companions may replenish each of their Passion Pools by the same amount (ignoring any excess — see **V20**, p. 385). This is ultimately an act of murder and should therefore prompt a Humanity check. As such, this ritual is therefore practiced more often by those on a Path of Enlightenment (such as the Path of the Bones) that would not object to such an act being committed.

Tempest Prison (Level Three)

In order to pay the tithe of souls that Venice demands, many Giovanni Necromancers previously bound wraiths to a set of objects and sent these to the Mausoleum. However, as the demands of the Elders become greater, some Necromancers have sought to find a more effective way of transporting greater numbers of wraiths in one shipment. The Tempest Prison was their solution.

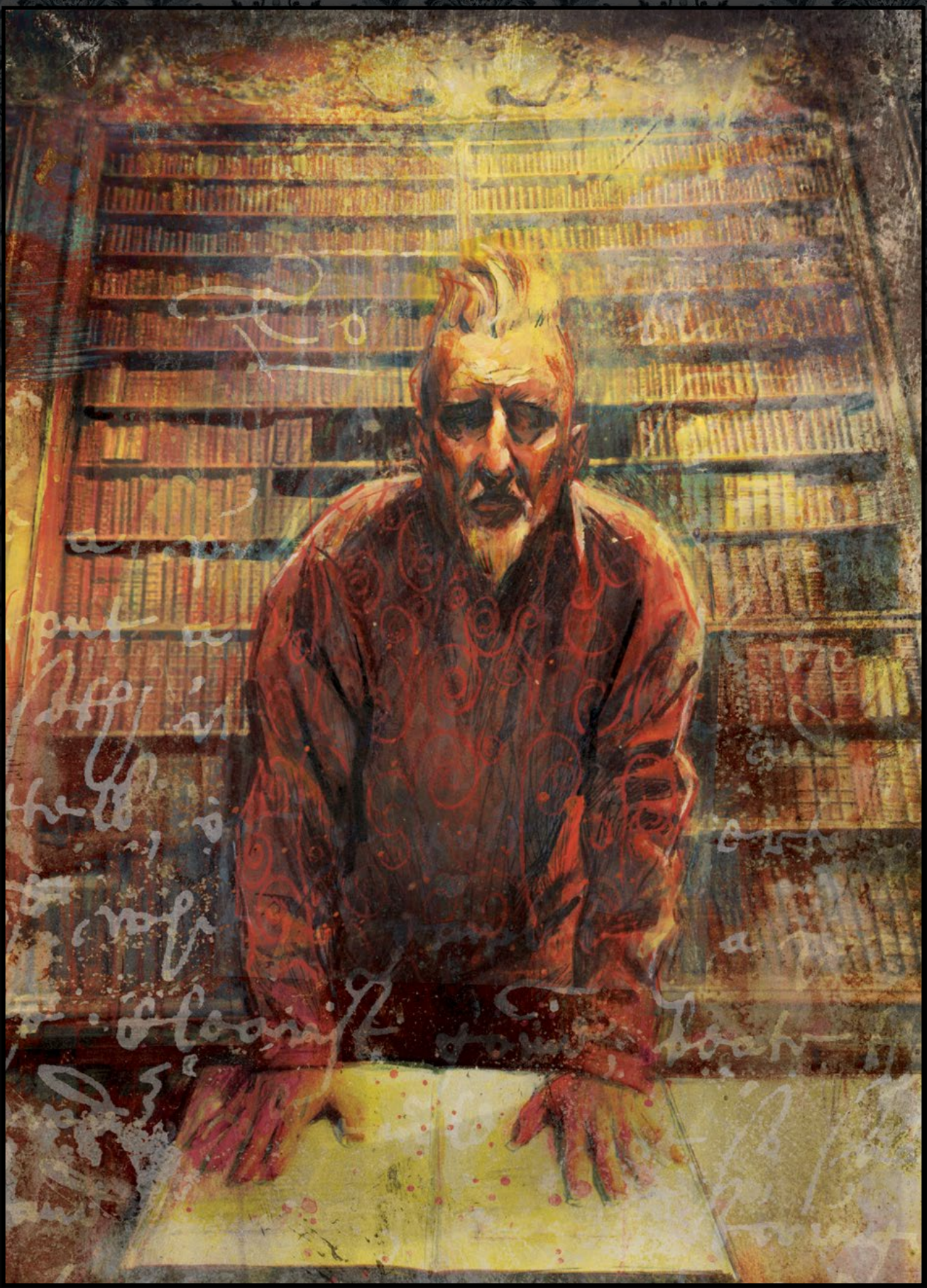
The Necromancer first obtains a large, glass container (such as a gallon glass jug) and takes it to a graveyard. She then buries the sealed jar in the earth above a grave of someone that died prematurely, or by violence, or in some fashion that meant they stood a good chance of creating a wraith upon their demise (which may require a bit of research prior to casting). The Necromancer then laces the ground with blood as she chants, calling forth the power of the storm that rages deep within the lands of the dead.

System: Upon completion of the rite, the ground shudders for a moment to indicate its success. Digging up the glass container, it is now full of a swirling purple and black mist, in which can be seen occasional flecks of light, like miniature lighting. When the Necromancer opens the bottle, any wraith in line of sight of the container

must make a Strength test (using their Strength stat as it is when in the Shadowlands) against a Difficulty of 6 plus the number of successes gained upon on the casting of the Ritual. This test is repeated each round until the wraith is out of sight of the container, or it fails and is sucked immediately into the vortex (which does not leave the container).

The Tempest Prison can hold a number of wraiths equal to five times the number of successes rolled in its activation. It also lasts for a number of nights equal to five times successes rolled, after which time, the vortex subsides and the wraiths are released. This may also be ended prematurely by simply smashing the container (which may lead to suddenly dealing with a storm of angry wraiths).

The Tempest Prison does not necessarily need to be wielded by a Necromancer after it has been created. It requires a Necromancer to create it, but not to use it. Indeed, many Giovanni who are called upon to rid an area of ghostly interference lend their employers such a container to collect the troublesome ghosts. They then "dispose" of the ghosts elsewhere. In these cases, both sides of the deal get what they want.



Chapter Five: The Unusual

The name of the path is Golconda
And those who seek it with a true heart may yet gain salvation,
Though they walk in the night like demons
And bear the curses of a thousand angels.

— The Promise of Rafael to Caine, Erciyes Fragments

The Inconnu

The Inconnu are an enigmatic, secretive group of Kindred. Too small to truly be a sect, they are really more of an elaborate coterie or scholarly society. They have existed since ancient times, and are known to modern vampire societies as researchers, antiquarians, scholars, and above all, outsiders who refuse to join any sect or take part in the Jyhad.

It is the purpose of the Inconnu to escape the Curse of Caine through attaining a mystic state of enlightenment known as Golconda, serving primarily to transmute themselves rather than to affect others. Golconda is a very personal goal, and each path is unique. These scholars may not agree on the way to achieve it, or even on what it will mean if they do, but they work together in the desperate hope that salvation is still possible for those willing to sacrifice everything — even themselves.

New Versus Antiquated

The Inconnu are an ancient group whose culture has shifted and changed with the evolution of spiritual philosophy in mortal society. The oldest among them stand by their religious beliefs, while those of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution practice more scientific methods. Younger Inconnu may focus on technology or modern viewpoints, even considering the possibility of spiritual possession to explain the so-called Curse of Caine.

There are several dominant philosophies among the Inconnu. The oldest ideology contends that even as Caine was cursed by God, so salvation must be achieved through ultimate faith. The Seekers are those members of the Inconnu who struggle to achieve Golconda through faith and mysticism, advocating a spiritual enlightenment. They believe that one achieves Golconda through faithful dedication to one's humanity, continued penance for wrongdoing, and a material transubstantiation of the soul.

A newer branch of belief call themselves Purifiers, in reference to scientific purification of the body. The Purifiers believe that one must study the curse as a disease, using modern technology and logical research. These Inconnu study vampiric anatomy and biology rather than seeking a spiritual answer. Purifiers seek to pick apart

Your Mileage May Vary

The Inconnu are one of the most mysterious groups in the World of Darkness. Their membership — and, indeed, their true purpose — is deliberately kept indistinct. As such, this material is intended to present only one potential interpretation of the Inconnu. Perhaps more than any other element in this book, Storytellers are encouraged to utilize only those details that will benefit their individual chronicles.

the hows and whys of the Kindred condition in order to discover some applicable antidote to its negative effects.

A third and more radical faction of the Inconnu are the Immaculate. The Immaculate believe Golconda can be reached only by embracing one's vampiric nature and seeing it through to its logical conclusion. They often abandon Humanity entirely, stepping onto a Path of Enlightenment and rising to perfection on that path. Typically, such a creature follows a path of faith — many Immaculate are adherents to religious or spiritual Paths such as Metamorphosis (**V20**, p.331).

The modern age brought a new philosophy, adopted by younger (relatively speaking) members of the Inconnu. These vampires see their state as a type of possession, wherein a foreign spirit (the Beast) has physically entered their bodies and affects them against their will. These Inconnu are called the Haunted, and they fight against the Beast as though it were a separate, sentient entity. The Haunted believe that they must starve and weaken the Beast, abusing it at every opportunity. They do not accept the vampirism is a sin, or that they are cursed. They believe instead that they are inhabited, and must find a way to torture, destroy, or eject the spiritual passenger before the Beast consumes them.

Secrecy

The promise of the angel Raphael is recorded in the ancient scrolls, and is part of the compiled text of the *Book of Nod*. Saulot, progenitor of the Salubri, based many of his beliefs on that legend, and attempted to seek Golconda "both in heaven and in the utter east." The Inconnu began as a coterie, or many small coteries, united only in the belief that such a state was possible. Rumors abound, but only a handful of vampires have ever claimed to reach enlightenment.

It is difficult to be an Inconnu. They do not congregate frequently or in large numbers, they are often hunted, and his beliefs are considered heresy by many. Sharing information can help others seek Golconda, but knowing such lore indelibly labels that vampire a danger. Further, there is always the risk that a student will one day use his knowledge for evil ends, falling to infernalism or wassail. Those who are not worthy must not be taught.

Members of the Inconnu police themselves, dealing cruel punishment on those who betray their secrets or rashly share the knowledge of Golconda. Such traitors are hunted down by the rest — usually by members of the Immaculate, whose quest is not compromised by destroying those who lose their way. Even when Inconnu personally trust one another, a vampire must think twice before revealing hidden lore. It could mean her companion's death — or her own.

Hierarchy

The Inconnu organize themselves generally as a collection of individuals. Lone members known as Monitors watch over a city or area, while others search for lost knowledge or track down rumors of Golconda. As a small society, the Inconnu do not have the membership to double up or work in cells. Every agent must be capable of independent thought and activity toward the group's goal.

The Inconnu have a joint leadership known as the Council of Twelve. These scholars, primarily ancients (some of whom studied with Saulot himself), are said to be among the most knowledgeable vampires in the world. They meet in secret, rarely sharing their knowledge with one another, and typically interact with other members of the society by extremely secretive means. The Council of Twelve is said to have a library that contains every blood magic and necromantic ritual known by vampires. They go out of their way to collect such information in the hopes that by studying blood magic, they can unlock some of the more subtle secrets of the Kindred condition. One of the Twelve is said to be a Setite ritualist whose mastery of Thaumaturgy is second to none and is rumored to be able to cast every ritual in the library. He is considered something of a living archive, and his wisdom is closely guarded by the other members of the council.

Monitor

A Monitor watches the actions of other vampires, reporting on their behaviors and keeping a record of

The Rule of Three

The Inconnu have three edicts that may not be broken, and which are taught to every member during their initiation. Promises are given, expectations are made clear, and the new initiate makes a pledge to keep the secrets of the Inconnu. Members of the society who go against these promises are cast out, shunned, and forsaken. If they particularly endanger the Inconnu, they might have their knowledge of the coterie, or of Golconda stripped from them — assuming the vampire is not simply destroyed.

Separation: An Inconnu must remain apart from the Jyhad, taking no action to further others' goals and choosing no side.

Secrecy: An Inconnu must keep secrets, revealing the mysteries of Golconda to none but the most worthy, and betraying the sect to none.

Solidarity: Members of the Inconnu have few allies, and find it difficult to trade in boons lest they be drawn into the Jyhad. They must be able to rely upon one another, regardless of philosophical differences, when in need of shelter, aid, or insight.

activities, Disciplines, behaviors, and any other relevant statistics for future study. These vampires usually choose a domain, Clan, or area of expertise, studying that one topic relentlessly. Monitors are expert at hiding their presence, and keeping their task secret from other Kindred in their domain. Some Monitors prefer to be lost in the crowd. Others rise to positions of prominence in their area. Regardless of their personal politics, their first priority is to gather information and discover a path to enlightenment.

Monitors are expected to locate and report on inceptors of new Disciplines or thaumaturgic paths, and to barter and trade for thaumaturgic rituals or other knowledge on behalf of the Inconnu. When that fails, it is a Monitor's task to gain the information by whatever means is necessary, and ensure the knowledge is recorded by the society. In exchange, extremely competent Monitors are brought before the Council of Twelve and taught thaumaturgic rituals to assist them in their labors.

Steward

An Inconnu Steward is a receiver of knowledge, both receptacle and defender of the gathered wisdom of the Inconnu. These vampires coordinate small meetings of the Inconnu, keep letters and records of various attempts at Golconda, and provide asylum for those members of the society who are being hunted or maligned for their quest. This is an extraordinarily dangerous job, as the Inconnu comprise Kindred who hide in many Sects, and a Steward might be asked for safe haven for an Inconnu who is a member of the Camarilla, or of the Sabbat; an Anarch or an Autarkis. Such political complications mean nothing, so long as the individual is dedicated to the quest. Stewards tend to live in unpopulated areas, as they need to hide their visitors from prying eyes.

Stewards manage smaller libraries that contain a portion of thaumaturgic lore. On occasion, a Steward will be given sealed documents containing fragments of thaumaturgic lore and ritual; fragments which are useless without the rest of the information. The Stewards are expected to keep these fragments safe. In the event of the Council's Final Death, or the destruction of the main library of the Inconnu, the Stewards are to gather and sort through the information, putting the lore back together again. The Council of Twelve hopes that by keeping their knowledge preserved in portions, they keep it safe — both from their enemies and their lessers in the society.

Equite

Other Inconnu travel widely, searching the world for unusual artifacts, researching particular events (modern and historical), and questing after even the smallest scraps of knowledge that may lead toward Golconda. Referring to themselves as Equites, these Inconnu tend to speak more about their beliefs as they travel, often attempting to convert young or disillusioned vampires to Inconnu philosophy. If they are discovered or put in danger, Equites can simply abandon an area and never return. Many younger members of the Inconnu are Equites.

Equites are scouts in the area of thaumaturgy, bringing to the Inconnu information on unusual uses or applications from around the globe. On occasion, an Equite will be taught a particularly interesting, but experimental, piece of thaumaturgy. If she learns to master her new power (and survives), she may even advance through the ranks to a Stewardship or Monitor post.

New Mechanics

Kashaph (1 pt. Merit)

The term *kashaph* is of ambiguous meaning, based on a Hebrew root word for "mutter," and implying spoken sorcery and incantations. The term is used in the Old Testament to condemn the practitioners of witchcraft. True kashaph has long been extinct — save among the Inconnu. Kashaph is an enchanted language, and cannot be "decoded" by modern linguistics or cryptography. The Inconnu use kashaph to communicate secretly, and also as a method of identifying one another.

New members of the Inconnu are not taught kashaph by normal means. It cannot be studied, nor learned like a conventional language. Instead, members are indoctrinated into the society through an elaborate ritual during which the language of kashaph is inscribed upon their soul. Once "learned" in this way, the language may be spoken, not written (there is no written form, and the sounds cannot be accurately captured by phonetic scribblings), and only another individual with this merit has the capacity to understand the words said in the language of kashaph.

Eradication of Secrets

Prerequisites: Thaumaturgy (any path) • and Dominate • • •

With only a touch, the user of this power erases knowledge from a target's mind. Unlike Forgetful Mind, these memories are not simply written over; they are fully excised and can never be restored. The Inconnu use this power as a failsafe against those who have learned too much about Golconda, Kindred lore, or their society.

This power is not subtle, and does not pacify its target in any way. The target realizes that information has been taken from him, and if he has the Awareness skill, will know the topic.

System: The user of this power must physically touch the target in order to activate Eradication of Secrets. Successful use of this power deals one point of lethal damage to its target as memories are literally burned from the cells of that individual's brain.

The user states one narrow topic that her target knows (typically something like "all recent discussions regarding my childe" or "everything learned from last night's experiment"). Then, she must roll Intelligence +

Intimidation, with a difficulty equal to the target's current Willpower points. If the successes rolled don't allow the extent of modification required, the Storyteller reduces the resulting impact on the victim's mind.

Successes	Result
1 success	May remove a single memory of no more than one hour in length.
2 successes	May remove all instances of a single topic of memory, of something learned within the last month.
3 successes	May remove all instances of a single topic of memory, of something learned within the last year.
4 successes	May alter or remove all instances and references to a single topic of memory throughout the last hundred years.
5 successes	May alter or remove all instances and references to a single topic of memory throughout the subject's entire life.

This combination power costs 18 experience points to learn.

Inconnu Thaumaturgy

The magic of the Inconnu tends to be a slower, more subtle style of casting, closer to meditation than to the Hermetic stylings of the Tremere Clan. The Inconnu use physical focuses, from religious iconography and artifacts, to crystals and perpetual motion trinkets, all designed to liberate and elevate the mind into a higher state of consciousness. Although many members of the Inconnu are practiced in other styles of magic, they prefer to utilize subtle sorceries, contemplative methods, and expansion of the mind and soul in the practice of their thaumaturgy.

The Inconnu believe that all magic is no more than an exercise of the will, fueled supernaturally by vampiric vitae. This belief lends itself to their practice of paths, rituals, and other magic. An Inconnu's casting style is unique; quiet and meditative, they focus their inner consciousness (some might call it their "third eye") and push their spirit to the task. Rather than manipulating the world around them through ritual implements, complex arcane tools, verbal cues, or physical gestures, they center themselves in a moment of absolute silence and complete focus, and then unleash their magical power through a single primary focus — and into the world.

Hidden Haven (Level Two Thaumaturgy Ritual)

This ritual is said to have been developed by the Council of Twelve to hide their massive library within the Carpathian Mountains. The ritual is difficult to cast, and must target a building no bigger than a large house. Once enacted, the building becomes generally unnoticeable; even individuals who know it exists do not notice it, nor do they remember it when asked. During the ritual, the caster must specify a physical "key" (such as spinning twice in a circle, tapping one heel on the ground three times, and then saying "Vitae Incorpora"). Any individual within 100 yards/meters of the building who performs this physical key correctly will penetrate the ritual and be able to see and locate the building without difficulty.

System: The caster must surround the building, and mark all corners, doorways, and windowsills with chalk made of owl-feather ash. The ritual takes a full night to cast, and requires the caster to sacrifice a permanent point of Willpower. Those who wish to find the building without knowing the proper physical key must approach within 100 yards/meters of the structure's location and make a successful Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 9) each time they wish to see through this ritual's protection. Hidden Haven's effects last for one year.

Father's Freedom (Level Three Thaumaturgy Ritual)

This ritual takes an hour to cast, and must be cast upon a target who has diablerized at any point in her existence. If the ritual is successful, one diablerized soul (chosen by the caster, if there are multiples) is released from its captivity, pouring out of the target's mouth in a wash of brilliant light. The spirit remembers everything that has happened both before and after its death. By maintaining the ritual, the caster may keep the diablerized soul intangibly materialized, so that she can question it. The soul has no compulsion to be honest or reveal anything, but is likely to be well-intentioned toward the individual who set it free. Once the ritual circle is broken, the spirit is released and moves on from the physical world.

Most of the Inconnu who are privileged enough to learn this ritual utilize it to free (and question) Salubri who were long ago diablerized by the Tremere. However, a few cunning — and less moral — members of the society have been known to deliberately diablerize their enemies in order to escape with their souls, and then later cast this ritual on themselves.

System: This ritual takes an hour to enact, and requires 10 points of blood be spent by the caster during the course of the casting. The target of the ritual must remain within the ritual circle (a maximum 100 square foot/10 square meter area) throughout the casting, although she may be restrained by physical force or supernatural means. If

the ritual is successful, it immediately removes all effects of this diablerie (both good and bad) from the target, except that the ritual does not restore any morality loss incurred by diablerizing.

Warding Circle versus Technology (Level Five Thaumaturgy Ritual)

Although they have a great mastery of lore and Kindred physiology, most Inconnu are not modernists. This ritual was designed by William Howard Lexington III to protect himself and his fellow Inconnu from recently-Embraced neonates and hunters using technological weapons. This ritual creates a circle of magic centered on the caster, into which technology (i.e. any machine more complex or advanced than a crossbow) cannot pass without shattering or becoming defunct. This circle can be made as large and as permanent as the caster desires, as long as she is willing to pay the necessary price.

System: The ritual requires three points of mortal blood from individuals with at least an intelligence of 3. The caster determines the size of the warding circle when it is cast; the default radius is 10 feet/3 meters, and every 10-foot/3-meter increase raises the difficulty by one (one additional success is required for every increase past the number necessary to raise the difficulty to 9). The player spends one blood point for every 10 feet/3 meters of radius, and rolls. The ritual takes the normal casting time if it is to be short-term (lasting for the rest of the night) or one night if it is to be long-term (lasting a year and a day).

Once the warding circle is established, it glows a faint coppery-orange, too faint to be seen in normal light, but notable in dim lighting conditions or natural darkness. A successful Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty 8) identifies this as a warding circle. If technology crosses into the circle, the possessor of that technology must roll more successes on a Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the caster's Thaumaturgy rating + 3) than the caster rolled when establishing the ward. Failure indicates that the ward causes all such technology on the individual to be irrevocably destroyed; data cannot be retrieved at a later date, and all parts of the item shatter. If the technology leaves the circle and later enters it again, the possessor must repeat this roll.

The Tal'Mahe'Ra

The mysterious Tal'Mahe'Ra, or "True Black Hand," are something of an anomaly in the vampiric world. Formed long ago by a cabal of supernatural creatures, the society is part death cult, part chronicler of supernatural history, and part Illuminati. They are a dangerous and unstable admixture of monstrosities, hoarding the secrets of the past while they design a future that suits their dark goals.

The Tal'Mahe'Ra pursue a position of vampiric supremacy. They protect and shepherd mortals by promoting worldwide ignorance of the supernatural. From their stronghold of Enoch in the Shadowlands, the Tal'Mahe'Ra gather secrets too dangerous to be left in the physical plane and hide them in the deep vaults of a city lost outside of time.

Members of this cult see the curse of Caine as an exalted, almost reverent state. They fight a war against an undefinable, ethereal consciousness which manipulates the mind and chains the soul, potentially rendering anyone into a slave. To combat this unknowable enemy, the Tal'Mahe'Ra have been forced to perform dangerous experiments, creating aberrant and often unstable results.

Some thaumaturges mix magic carefully, using a piece of this tradition and a sliver of that to form a patchwork whole. The practitioners of the Tal'Mahe'Ra, on the other hand, have access not only to the various forms of vampiric blood sorcery, but also to more unusual sources of magic, such as those utilized by mortal mages. Their experiments are far more complex and intricate. They break down sorcerous theory, working with multiple disparate particles on a level that is almost impossible to conceive. Instead of adding salt to water, they break apart the hydrogen, oxygen, and sodium chloride and put those elements back together to create something unnatural and grotesque.

The sorcerous liches of the Tal'Mahe'Ra take incredible risks in their research. Being exposed to intense mutations of reality has altered them, changing their senses, physical composition, and even spiritual connections. If vampires have souls, the liches of the Tal'Mahe'Ra have surely perverted theirs into something aberrant. They have made eldritch pacts with other supernatural creatures, explored the dimensional boundaries of the Shadowlands, the Astral, and the Umbra, and used vampiric blood in experiments both physical and spiritual. The study has cost thousands of lives (mortal, vampiric, and otherwise), but has also provided unique and valuable information.

In the Shadow of the Aralu

The existence of the mysterious Aralu comprises the darkest and most hidden secret of the Tal'Mahe'Ra. Sleeping eternally beneath the shadow city, these creatures are known only by the words carved into their tombs: *Nergal, Ninmug, Loz,* and *Al-Marhi*. Even the Rawi of the Tal'Mahe'Ra, their historians, do not know who truly

sleeps within those tombs. Perhaps these creatures are mummies; they may be Antediluvians, or even the sires of Antediluvians; or they may be ancient mages who have unlocked the secrets of immortality. Whatever they are, their presence radiates power.

The power of the Aralu permeates Enoch, affecting every creature that resides there. This is a source of vast and unexplained energy, resisting all attempts to quantify or control it. A small faction of liches have spent countless centuries attempting to understand this aura and utilize it for the Tal'Mahe'Ra, with little success. The auras of the Aralu twist magic unpredictably, empowering it with strange side-effects and exaggerated results. However, ritual magic is not as unstable, and both ritual casting and alchemical concoctions have their potency significantly increased when created within the aura of the Aralu.

Still, vampires who haunt the tombs for too long find themselves hungry, their blood sapped from them without their knowledge. Magic, too, is drained, even when not being used, and more than one vampire studying the tombs became afflicted with a permanently unhinged mind. To keep vampires from being affected, the Rafastio revenant family was long ago given the task of tending to the cleanliness and protection of those areas beneath the city. The tombs have not proven dangerous to them, and the Rafastio's traditional knowledge of magic makes them effective caretakers.

New Necromancy Rituals

Long ago, a group of death mages experimented with mixing and administering vampiric blood within the aura of the Aralu in an attempt to make themselves truly immortal. Although the experiment worked — in a way — the result was a horrific abomination: the Nagaraja. Nagaraja vampires consume human flesh as well as blood in order to sustain themselves. Inured to the suffering of others, these vile creatures engage in necromantic research and depraved experiments. The Nagaraja are blessedly few, as it is extraordinarily difficult to avoid *wassail* when one must engage in acts of cannibalism simply to survive.

Members of the Nagaraja Clan are the primary necromancers of the Tal'Mahe'Ra. Most of these rituals are bloody, vicious things which protect the city of Enoch, but some few are useful even away from their stronghold in the Shadowlands. Their necromantic rituals are a hodgepodge lot, created by this eccentric and devious bloodline. Some are researched and carefully engineered with centuries of dedicated practice and cautious detail, while others are off-the-cuff interpretations of ghostly Arcanoi, filtered through a vampiric understanding of magic. All require particularly depraved sacrifice and gristly components in order to succeed.

Preserve Corpse (Level One Necromancy Ritual)

This ritual enables the user to create an elixir that keeps dead flesh from rotting. The ritual requires the caster to physically coat the dead flesh with a liquid composed of grave dirt, defiled holy water, and rare herbs. Once the liquid dries, the flesh is indefinitely preserved — some have been known to last for hundreds of years. The ritual produces enough elixir to coat one adult human corpse.

Haunting Breeze (Level Two Necromancy Ritual)

The vampire can summon a light supernatural wind which serves to frighten and confuse all those within a small area or single building no larger than 100 feet/30 meters in diameter. Until the next sunrise (or until willfully dispelled by the caster), the wind in this location is filled with the soft echoes of whispers, warnings, curses, and the laughter of the dead. These terrifying sounds distract and disquiet, increasing the difficulty of Perception rolls by 2 and all other rolls by 1 for all those who remain within the area. In addition, all mortals must make a Courage roll (difficulty 4) or be spooked badly, leaving the area. Such individuals are unwilling to return under any circumstances for at least one hour.

Death's Head (Level Three Necromancy Ritual)

Some necromancers of the Tal'Mahe'Ra collect fragments of hair, bone, ash, or flesh from their enemies as a reminder of a victory. Using Necromancy, they use these remains to create a paint-like residue with which they decorate porcelain masks known as Death's Heads. Once activated, such a mask causes its wearer (who may be someone other than the Necromancer who made the mask) to appear as a wraith so long as she wears the mask. In the physical world, the wearer looks translucent and ghostlike (but is granted no special ability to pass through physical items or cross into the Shadowlands). In the Shadowlands, the wearer can pass as a wraith even among true wraiths. Note that the user's aura becomes pale, like that of a wraith (and their creature type reads as a wraith), but this does not hide or alter any other patterns or colors (such as diablerie streaks).

A Death's Head, once painted, is enchanted but inactive until used. Once activated (by putting the mask on), the mask crumbles into dust, leaving a faint pattern

of bone-white marks across the user's face. If the user wills the effect to end early; the soft patterns fade into nothingness and the user is returned to their normal physical appearance. A necromancer may create only one Death's Head at a time; any already-existing masks are destroyed (or active uses cancelled) when a second is created. It takes one full night to create a Death's Head.

Impregnable Soul (Level Four Necromancy Ritual)

Believed to be stolen from a mortal mage by the name of Eochar, this ritual shields the user against possession by ghosts, infernal entities, or other spiritual powers. Rumors are that Eochar used this magic to protect himself and his students from the machinations of the dead. While this ritual is active, the necromancer's body cannot be taken over, nor can his soul be pulled out of his flesh. Powers that command the mind (such as Dominate) are still effective. This ritual may be cast on others, but if done against their permission (such as to keep an enemy from activating Psychic Projection, Subsume the Spirit, or Possession), the ritualist must have a bit of the target's hair, spend a Willpower, and make a successful Manipulation + Occult, while the subject rolls his Willpower in a resisted action (difficulty 7 for each). Once activated, Impregnable Soul remains until cancelled by the user, or until the next sunrise.

Enochian Passage (Level Five Necromancy Ritual)

The vampire can physically pass into the Shadowlands, appearing in the fields before the mystical city of Enoch. This requires that the vampire symbolically "kill" herself by plunging a silver dagger into her heart (doing at least two lethal wound levels) and falling into a body of water deep enough to cover her body. Members of the Tal'Mahe'Ra use this ritual to go to Enoch, and thus rabidly protect it from falling into anyone else's hands.

Created and Changed Creatures

For hundreds of years, vampires have experimented with magic — twisting flesh, blood, and soul into new forms in an attempt to conquer every aspect of life. Such creatures crawl from the libraries of the Tzimisce, the rotting sepulchers of Nagaraja necromancers, and are born in the most secretive laboratories of the Tremere. While it's certainly true that most of these

The Montmartre Pact

Named for the place of its signing, the Montmartre Pact was established in 1489. The Tremere, maligned and attacked on all sides, followed the leadership of Meerlinda and Calderon and petitioned for inclusion in the nascent Camarilla Sect. Their intention caused an uproar; the Tremere were at war with the Gangrel, Nosferatu, and Tzimisce, and were known to have created slaves from the tormented bodies of Kindred of those Clans — namely, the Gargoyles, who were in open revolt across Europe.

Forced to make reparations before joining the Sect, the Tremere's pact with the Inner Circle of the Camarilla was extremely specific. Every Tremere who chose to join the Camarilla was forced to cease creation of Gargoyles (as well as a variety of other abominations), destroying all copies of rituals that manufactured such creatures and giving their oath never to revive such techniques. Further, the Tremere swore to free all captive and enslaved Gargoyles currently in their possession, and to cease hunting those in revolt. In return, the Camarilla promised to be defenders to the Tremere, ceasing all interclan rivalries and warfare with the Warlocks.

Only a few rituals escaped mention in the Montmartre Pacts; notably, Soul of the Homunculi, Blood Imp, and Rutor's Hand. While Nosferatu and Gangrel snarl and point to these rituals as clear signs of Tremere shystering, no punishment is given for their use — so long as the Tremere ensure that these creatures are no threat to the Masquerade. However, if any Tremere are found to be in violation of the specifics of the Montmartre Pact (creating Gargoyles or keeping Gargoyle slaves, in particular), those individual Warlocks are cast out of the Camarilla and quickly hunted down by Gangrel and Nosferatu. Even the Astors of their Clan must turn against them and seek to destroy such individuals in order to ensure Clan Tremere's position remains a pillar of the sect.

creatures are no more than mindless magical constructs, incapable of thinking or feeling any more than would a piece of furniture, others have sentience and even seem to manifest something akin to a soul.

Each time a monstrosity of this sort has been made public to vampiric society, it has caused outrage and bitter argument. The Gargoyle revolt around the time of the Montmartre Pact is only one notable instance; there have been other, smaller mutinies and countless breaches of the Masquerade caused by the use (or escape) of such fleshly servants. Thaumaturges that make such monstrosities are generally mad, toying with God's domain, and threatening the security of all. They must work in secrecy, hiding their labors from the world.

Gargoyles

Long ago, during the Dark Ages, Gargoyles were created by the Tremere. They were designed as shock troops: blood bound and enslaved warriors blindly willing to die at their masters' command. As slaves, a Gargoyle's unlife was a bitter torment. Their minds were erased each evening to prevent them from having any free will or independent thought; their memories were shattered; their bodies were hideous, monstrous things. Barely more sentient than dogs or horses, Gargoyles were cruelly treated, then destroyed when no longer of use or interest.

It is unknown how the first free Gargoyles escaped. Leashed by the blood bond, minds numb and uncomprehending, it seems impossible that such manikins could rise up and fight for individuality. Tales say it was because one member of the Clan learned to Embrace, creating the first Gargoyle free of Tremere influence. Others tell of a Gargoyle with the gift of True Faith who led its fellows from the chantries *en masse*. Whatever the case, Gargoyles today can Embrace, though it eradicates the memories of the person turned. Still,

they watch the Tremere with hatred and trepidation, wondering if any of their brethren are still captive in some deep chamber or hidden chantry house.

During the Dark Ages, the Tremere cast rituals on these slaves to harden their skin, give them flight, and provide them combat advantage. Somehow these rituals became automatic, activated by the Gargoyle as if they were a vampiric Discipline. It seems that repeated use of these magics altered the nature of Gargoyle blood. This is an experiment the Tremere — and others — would dearly like to understand. Several chantries have secretly taken to the practice of repeatedly enchanting homunculi, even going so far as to capture free Gargoyles for experimentation in the hopes of discovering what occurred.

At Our Command It Breathes (Level Five Thaumaturgy Ritual)

The Tremere ceased making Gargoyles after the Slaves revolt, and, as part of the Camarilla negotiations, promise never to revive the technique. This horrific ritual creates a Gargoyle from the dismembered parts of slain Cainites, and is the process through which the first of that line came into being.

To enact this ritual, the caster must prepare at least two other vampires (of the Nosferatu, Tzimisce, or Gangrel Clans) for at least a full turn of the moon, feeding them a very small amount of cursed and defiled blood, and starving them to within an inch of wassail. These individuals are tortured nightly, and various humiliations and physical horrors inflicted upon them, to break their sanity and weaken their bodies.

After the subjects are prepared, they are staked, and brought into a prepared room where this ritual is begun. Over the next few nights, the victims' limbs are cut from their bodies (the ritual prevents the parts from falling to dust). The ritualist sews the two (or more) vampiric corpses together into a single vaguely-humanoid shape, and then wraps the resultant form (and all extra parts) within the stretched womb of a deer or horse. The bodies must remain undisturbed in this sac for a period of three months, while the thaumaturge periodically visits and performs various incantations. If the thaumaturge misses even a night of these incantations, the ritual is increasingly likely to fail — if it does, the fetal Gargoyle dies, and the creature cannot be revived. If the thaumaturge is successful, at the end of the three months a newborn Gargoyle will force its way out of the thick sac of flesh.

System: The blood cost of this ritual is 5 points for each Cainite used in the Gargoyle's manufacture. After three months of casting, on the final night of the ritual, the thaumaturge must make a roll as the fetal sac is cut open. The roll is Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9, but the roll requires three successes). Subtract one die for every night the thaumaturge did not perform her incantations. A single success allows the creation of a Gargoyle (if this is a player character, it must be built according to the standard character creation rules). Attempted use of this ritual, whether successful or not, removes a single point of morality from the user's morality total. No matter what path a character espouses, this ritual (and the activities required to perform it) is deeply and utterly abhorrent. Gargoyles created with this ritual are infertile, and cannot Embrace.

Blood Brothers

In an unprecedented collaboration, the Tzimisce and Tremere *antitribu* of the Sabbat created a new type of creature, a brutal foot soldier to serve the sect. Many of the individuals responsible for the first Gargoyles were also involved in the creation of the Frankensteins, and those sorcerers learned from their mistakes and used those lessons to perfect these secondary attempts to fabricate vampiric life. The flaw that allowed an exemplary Gargoyle to create childer has been completely eradicated; Blood Brothers are absolutely infertile in all ways.

Since the early days of this ritual's invention, it — and the monstrosities it creates — have caused upheavals and fierce argument about their place within of the Sabbat. What are these creatures? Are they children of Caine? Do they deserve the freedom of a vampire, or are they more like revenants, formed only to be enslaved? Most Blood Brothers are intelligent and free-willed, but they were not Embraced. Should they be treated as full members of the Sabbat? Are they created creatures, or simply modified vampires? The Sabbat aren't sure either, and their status varies from diocese to diocese. Sometimes they are initiated as True Sabbat. In other areas, they are treated much like szlachta or vozhd: monstrous creatures to be kept in chains and unleashed for battle.

The magic used to make Blood Brothers is much more stable than the ritual which created Gargoyles. This may be due to the blending of magic, or to the fact that these creatures are created in batches, forming three to ten individuals with deeply connected psychologies. Further, a Blood Brother's fleshcrafted physiology is more able to withstand the rigors of his creation; each began as one creature, and came out connected to many, whereas a Gargoyle began as many creatures which were distilled into one. The creation of a Gargoyle is more traumatic,

mentally and physically. It's likely that the Blood Brother mentality, being somewhat dim and unimaginative, further sheltered them from psychological harm.

Mirror of Blood (Level Five Thaumaturgy or Koldunic Ritual)

This legendary ritual is used to create entire packs of Blood Brothers, forging them from mortal flesh and Cainite vitae completely outside of the Embrace. Some Cainites consider Mirror of Blood to be a heresy against the vampiric condition. Others refer to it as the pinnacle of unified magical research and experimentation. Nevertheless, all agree: it is dangerous, in the extreme.

The Tzimisce and the Tremere *antitribu* of the Sabbat created this ritual together, after centuries of trial and error. It is incredibly difficult to master and extremely delicate to carry out. To enact this ritual, the caster must capture ten children less than seven years old. These children may be of any race or sex, but they must all be of the same blood type and have no diseases or genetic imperfections of any sort.

All of the children are ghouled to the same vampire. This vampire is generally a patsy of some sort; either a newly created and disposable childe, or a captive from some other sect. For the next three months, the children are alternately pampered by their domitor and tortured by the ritualist, shaped night by night into perfect replicas of one another. The torments, as well as the delights, escalate rapidly, until by the end of the three months, the children have broken minds and equally deteriorated bodies. In this state, they psychologically transfer their self-will to their domitor, offering an implicit, soul-deep trust. It is at that point that they are made to watch that domitor die at the hands of their tormentors — and then allowed to slaughter their domitor during the final night of the ritual. With a final, twisted application of spells both Hermetic and elemental, the children are murdered, their minds are merged and their memories shared, and then they are brought back from the dead by the power of the ritual. The bond they share — their domitor's original blood-bond, now amplified and twisted into something far greater — establishes the permanent and unalterable unity of a new pack of perfectly identical Blood Brothers.

System: The blood cost of this ritual is 3 points for each child to be transformed into a Blood Brother. After three months of casting, on the final night of the ritual, the thaumaturge must make ten rolls — one for each child involved in the ritual. These rolls are made with Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9). If the thaumaturge achieves at least one success on a roll, that child survives. If two or fewer children survive the process, the entire ritual is a failure, and all of the children die. If three or more of the original ten children survive, the ritual is a success. The number of children who survive are the numbers of Blood Brothers in the new, unified pack.

Attempted use of this ritual, whether successful or not, removes a single point of morality from the user's morality total if they are on Humanity. Other paths (particularly those which eschew killing) may require a similar (or greater) morality loss. Blood Brothers created with this ritual are infertile, and cannot Embrace.

Savage Creations

Although their past experiments have not always been profitable, the Tremere have not abandoned all experiments with constructed creatures — and they are not the only sorcerers devising methods of magical and spiritual shaping. The Tzimisce have their war ghouls, the Giovanni make zombies, and the Setites create *shabti*. Technomancers have invested a phenomenal amount of effort into creating mystical automatons that are virtually indistinguishable from mortal life.

Tremere Constructs

The Tremere continue their experiments, using homunculi, imps, and Rutor's Hands as willing minions despite the Montmartre Pacts. Because these three rituals were not specifically forbidden, they have fallen through the cracks of Kindred society — they are reviled, certainly, but not technically illegal. The following constructs are deemed "officially" acceptable by the Pyramid.

Homunculi

A homunculus is a tiny creature crafted out of the caster's blood and tissue, shaped to perform menial tasks or to be a spy. Homunculi can have many different capacities, including limited flight, burrowing, or grunting speech. Establishing a psychic connection to a homunculus causes a link instead to the consciousness of its creator. These creatures tend to be loyal, if prone to pranks and cruel amusements.

A homunculus has two health levels and two dots in each Physical Attribute. When it is destroyed, its creator takes one unsoakable point of aggravated damage. A homunculus must be fed one blood point each week, or it will wither and die. (For more information, see p. 151.)

Rutor's Hands

Earl Jeremiah Rutor was Embraced by the Tremere for his advancements in medicine. As an apprentice, he performed numerous experiments on Kindred, learning how and when a severed part of the body would ash. As Lord of the chantry at York, he invented the horrible (eponymous) ritual of Rutor's Hand. To create this little aberration, the thaumaturge must pluck out his eye and sever one hand, joining the two together into a scuttling, desiccated spy. The caster can see through the eye, even at a distance, and can direct the hand's movements through concentration.

Unlike other constructs, a Rutor's Hand has no intelligence or self-awareness, and acts only when directed by its creator. It is less a "creature" and more a tool. A Rutor's Hand cannot engage in combat, has one health level, and can easily be destroyed. (For more information, see pp.150-151.)

Blood Imp

One of the lesser-known constructs fabricated by the Tremere is a creature known as the blood imp. Similar to the homunculi, a blood imp is a small construct formed of the creator's blood and flesh. It is somewhat more intelligent than a homunculus, and capable of speech and simple reasoning. A blood imp is also far more loyal, and less likely to cause trouble at its master's expense. It is a humanoid creature, covered in reddish, armadillo-like plates. The experiments which led to the blood imp's creation were based around the properties in Tzimisce blood which allow for physical metamorphosis and liquefaction; the blood imp manifests this propensity through its ability to gelatinously shape its form into a perfect copy of any animal or small creature it has studied.

A blood imp has three health levels and two dots in each Physical Attribute. It is intelligent, self-willed, and (as it is fashioned of its creator's blood) wholly blood bound to the one who created it. A blood imp has three points of Willpower; by spending a point of Willpower, it may gelatinously alter its shape to match that of any other creature in its size-range. A blood imp must be fed two blood points each week, lest it wither and die. (For more information, see p. 29.)

Clones

Created by the Tremere alchemist David Witz, clones were an attempt to grasp the secret of eternal life without the burden of vampirism. Using computers to map key points of individual personalities and combining this research with biothamaturgy, Witz has created "clones," alchemical homunculi programmed with simulations of individuality. By using the discipline of Dominate, he can even give these clones limited memory of the individual

they are to replace. The argument exists that these clones are too close to a violation of the Montmartre Pact, and thus the ritual to create them has been taught to only a few.

Asymmetrical Reproduction (Level Five Thaumaturgy Ritual)

Each clone is the precise replication of a mortal, ghoul, or vampiric individual. The clone is created on a template of DNA and psychic impressions taken from that individual through study and the use of stolen genetic material. This clone is perfect, and emotionally pliable for a time — but over the course of a few days to weeks, subtle imperfections begin to creep into the programming, eventually driving the clone insane. If the clone is not destroyed by this time, it will go murderously rogue, attempting to eradicate its original (the individual whom it is a copy of) and destroy its creator.

System: This ritual takes three nights to complete, and the caster must possess some amount of the target's genetic material (such as skin cells or a hair), which is destroyed in the casting. The clone created by this ritual is a perfect, but living, duplicate of its target in every way, including all appropriate Merits, Disciplines, and personality traits, but only possesses the most rudimentary memories of the individual it is replicating. Over the course of the next seven days, the clone's psychology becomes more and more psychotic, and its Disciplines or other powers (as appropriate) become wildly unstable, until it becomes almost entirely unrecognizable from their original state. If allowed to survive, at some point after the seventh night, the clone will go on a violent murder spree — ending only in its death, preferably after the death of the individual it was created to replicate.

Although the clone is a living creature (and must eat, sleep, and breathe), if it is a replication of a vampire, it appears to be a vampire to all ordinary and supernatural means of detection.

Setite Shabti

In ancient Egypt, pharohs and priests were laid to rest surrounded by worshippers, servants, and protective guardians. Sometimes these poor individuals were humans, slaughtered for the purpose. Other times, the servants and protectors are *shabti*. Shabti (taken from the Egyptian word meaning "answerer") are ornate funerary statues, enchanted to come to life and serve their creator.

Creation of the Shabti (Level Five Setite Sorcery Ritual)

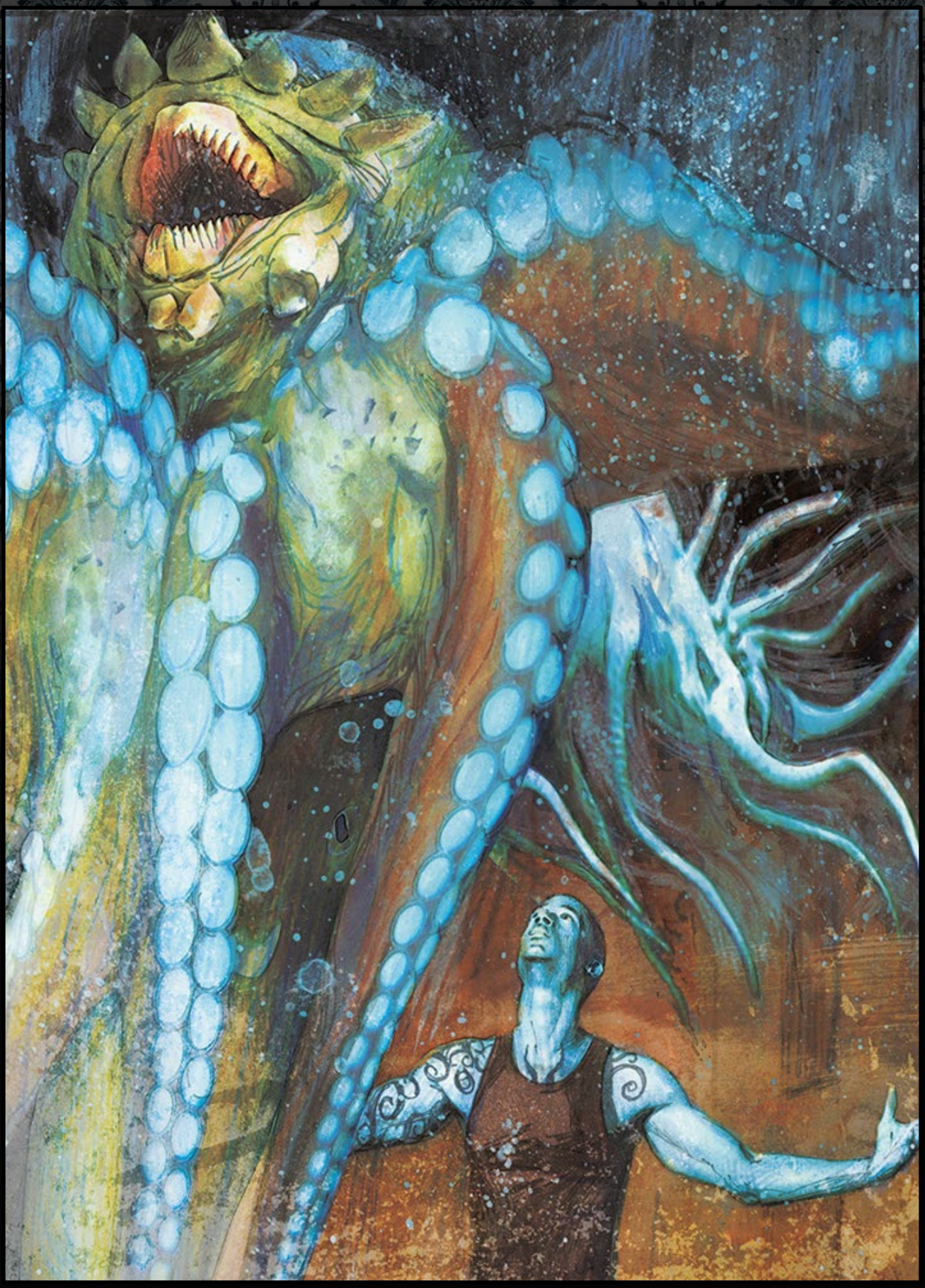
The practitioner of *Ahku* casts this ritual upon a perfectly carved statue made of gold, lacquered or petrified wood, marble, or some other expensive material. The thaumaturge recites in ancient Egyptian, "Oh, shabti, if I be called by Set to sleep, or if the sun shine upon my labors, I ask you to bring the sands of the east to the west, and judge me with His eye."

The shabti then awakens, responding, "I will do it, verily, I am here when thou callest."

From there forward, the statue is inhabited by a sentient funerary spirit. It can fight (but cannot fly, even if the statue is carved with wings), but is not capable of further speech or creative behavior. Effectively, the shabti is a golem. A shabti moves extremely slowly, and is not fit for offensive battles, but makes an exceptional defender. This creature is unfailingly loyal to its creator, and will stand guard over the vampire's sleeping form during the day (or through periods of long torpor).

System: The statue must be of at least human size (though it may be up to three times as large, and it may be shaped like a biped or like an Egyptian animal), and must be made with at least Crafts 4 (and be commensurably expensive). The thaumaturge's player rolls Charisma + Occult (difficulty 8). Once a shabti is created, the spirit remains until the next time its caster wakes up (whether that is the next sunset, or after a hundred years of torpor). At that time, the statue crumbles to dust and the funerary spirit is freed.

Regardless of its size or shape, a shabti has four health levels, four Willpower, six dots in each Physical Attribute, and two dots in all other attributes. These constructs may spend a point of Willpower to move at a walking pace for one turn; otherwise, they are stationary. They cannot be targeted by mental and social powers, with the exception of powers that remove the spirit (such as soul stealing), which immediately destroy a shabti.



Chapter Six: The Damned

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

— *Hamlet*, **I.5, 166-167.**

Of all the foul things in the world, all the evil and reprehensible denizens and terrible deeds, the worst are those monstrosities that date back to the beginning of time. These creatures were the fomenters of original evil: they dared to make war on God.

Some theologians assert that demons are mere spirits, some sort of ephemeral entity, or perhaps powerful specters of the Shadowlands. Supernatural societies have their own explanations, based on a host of legends and superstition. Sometimes, they discover an entity is nothing more than that: a story. But other times, they deal with a creature that is exactly what it purports to be: a fallen creation of the divine.

True demons are treasonous, treacherous, ravaging monstrosities with no empathy or humane understanding. These arrogant spirits were condemned and locked away at the beginning of time. The mere existence of a demon is an abomination, and Hell's inhalation tugs constantly at its foul spirits, trying to pull them away from the mortal world.

Demons need worship in order to survive. To gain it, these creatures will corrupt and destroy anything in their path — even one another. They seek power, and a demon will ravage the souls of mortals and supernatural beings alike to get it.

The Fallen?

Past fans may be wondering if this material ties into previous games, such as **Demon: The Fallen**. The answer is... *maybe*. Very few (if any) Kindred understand the nuances of the War of Heaven, and it would be difficult for them to tell apart one of the Fallen from a twisted nature spirit or even a particularly powerful Spectre. Instead, we decided to present demons as infernalist Kindred understand them to be, not as demons truly are. It's very likely that the creatures they understand to be demons are lying to them. Some, all, or none of it may be true for your chronicle.

The Host of Hell

Infernalism is thriving in the twenty-first century. Evil is spreading, and acts of violence and terrorism empower these dark entities and feed their hunger. The mortal populace no longer believes as it once did, weakening all creatures of faith and allowing demonic entities to more easily make bargains with the blithely unaware. Modern infernalists no longer wear black cloaks or scream about Lucifer as they murder babies in a Thulsa Doom-style temple. They look, act, and blend in seamlessly with the crowd.

"Infernalist" is a generic term, applied on a broad scale by those with limited understanding. Technically, an infernalist is anyone who studies, worships, or willingly interacts with demons. In the Dark Ages, true scholars and enemies of the infernal classified these mortal demonists so that they could better understand (and destroy) each type.

A *demonologist* studies demons and demonic powers. Typically, such an individual is interested in the theoretical, spiritual or intellectual science involved. A demonologist does not necessarily practice magic, has no demonic Investments or bargains, and may not have any intention to summon or interact with a demon. However, it takes only a slight change of perspective for a researcher to become an active practitioner. The temptation of such abilities can be overwhelming. No matter what rationale a demonologist uses to justify her study, collecting information and tracking down information is an easy jumping-off point for active diabolism. Many of those who first learn demonology in order to "identify and fight the infernal" eventually fall to its lures.

A second type of infernalist is known as a *thrall*. A thrall is anyone who makes a pact with a demon, whether as a single exchange of power or as part of becoming a long-term servitor. A thrall does not necessarily have any great knowledge of demonology. She might have learned a demon's true name by chance, or received the aid of a true diabolist without understanding how the practice functions. Such an individual might relish the bargain she's made, or she might fear the demon with whom she has had congress. Either way, she is trapped; all demonic bargains are permanent and cannot be undone. Because she is already damned, a thrall often slides further into the infernal as time goes by. Drawn again and again by the lure of greater power, the thrall simply decides she has nothing left to lose.

Diabolists are the third, and most dangerous type of infernal practitioner. Knowledgeable, cunning, and ruthless, a diabolist actively chooses to summon demons in an attempt to control (or worship) them. Most diabolists have a wide breadth of information about demonology, but some are specialists, trained and dedicated in the worship and summoning of one specific demonic entity. A practicing diabolist is powerful, with great knowledge of Dark Thaumaturgy and usually some Investments on the side. These individuals are also connected to the system. They can feed the demon souls other than their own to maintain power, and by converting others to the demon's cause, they gain favor—and even greater reward.

Dark Thaumaturgy

Dark Thaumaturgy is expressly defined as "sorcery taught by demons." As such, Dark Thaumaturgy is absolutely, unashamedly, viciously evil. Other items also fall into this realm. The Baali Discipline of Daimoinon, which requires the user to call out demonic names and speak infernal blessings, is infernal and corrupts the user's soul with each use. All of these powers require a point of morality loss when they are first used, and continuing tests against a character's Conscience each time they are used after the first — unless the user of such powers has traded their morality for the Path of Evil Revelations. Some examples start on p. 167.

Temptation

What tempts a vampire, who has the blood of Caine flowing in her veins, to join the ranks of the infernal? Vampires are already immortal, they have the ability to make others so, and they possess phenomenal supernatural powers. Still, the more powerful a person becomes, the more she desires to have power. There are always others who have more: better Generation, higher influence, more useful Disciplines, or greater skill. Jealousy and envy are powerful motivators, especially in such a stagnant and oppressive society.

Infernal creatures are clever. They know that even a bad choice, if it is the only option, can be a temptation. Demons are absolutely willing to manipulate a vampire's

Blasphemous Volumes

Tomes of true blasphemy and diabolism are extremely rare. Snippets of such information might appear here and there in other codices, and someone seeking to call up a demon will almost certainly find a way, but real information is costly and jealously guarded. Storytellers should be careful to keep access to (or even knowledge of) these books extraordinarily limited, in order to add mystery and reinforce the high cost for such information.

The most infamous demonology text is the *Gospel of the Consoler,* also called the *Gospel of Menahem*. This document casts Lucifer and the demons of Hell as enlightened angels who have sacrificed themselves to educate and uplift humanity. It contains several of the most ancient and powerful demonic names, as well as general rituals of summoning.

Another famous diabolic codex is the *Book of Thoth*. Ancient Egyptian myth describes its spells as offering ultimate control over life and death. Some believe this book describes cycles of existence, a litany of aeons that rose and fell before recorded history. Setites add that these dead worlds still exist, as do their rulers, but only a fool or a madman would call on such malign and primordial powers.

Dreams of Angra Mainyu is the journal of the first High Priest of Ba'al, and as such, is highly revered by the Baali. This codex details their most savage rituals and ends with a dark and revelatory prophecy of the infernal rising to devour the world.

Lastly, some demonologists study a heretical version of the deuterocanonical *Book of Tobit* which dates back to ancient Carthage. The version treasured by diabolists was a copy of the original biblical text, heavily commented upon in writing by both Troile and her lover, Moloch. This version contains ancient infernal lore about Clans, and many closely-guarded secrets about life in their ancient city. Brujah scholars loudly claim that the book is an elaborate fake, but it continues to surface through the centuries.

unlife, throwing her further and further into loss and desperation in order to get them into an indefensible position. Once her unlife (or the thing she loves most) hangs by a thread, even a humanist or honorable vampire can be turned to infernal service on the coin of self-sacrifice. In fact, those are the ones who most often fall.

It's been said that Investments and Dark Thaumaturgy are for the slothful. Certainly, such powers are gained without the expense of time and study, and usually at little cost to their wielders. However, the true advantage to an infernalist is that such abilities are usually unexpected, and that her patron can break the rules of physics, culture, and even the laws of God. The key to understanding demons is to remember that they are not creatures of the mortal world. Demons are beings of pure spirit. Withered, foul, and corrupt spirit, perhaps, but pure spirit nonetheless. Demons are not bound by physical laws like gravity, nor are they injured by mundane weapons. The only mandate that governs these spirits is the binding of their shell — whether it's the flesh of a mortal, the material of a talisman, or the earth and stone of a permanent locale.

When properly motivated, a demon can do astounding things. It can permanently increase a vampire's Generation without the streaks of diablerie. It can bring someone back from the dead (or so it claims). It can pervert and twist another person's will, or alter the fabric of time and space. Such things may be beyond the reach of a vampire, but these are the Archdukes of Hell. There are few things a supernatural creature in the World of Darkness can do that an Archduke could not mimic. A

thrall or a diabolist might get a taste of power through her Investments, or by learning Dark Thaumaturgy, but a demon can subvert the very fabric of the world. And will gladly do so.

For a price.

The Archdukes of Hell

Once an infernalist has decided to make a *foedus* (an ancient word that coincidentally means both "binding contract" and "obscenely loathsome") with a demonic entity, who or what is she summoning up? If her desire is small, any minor demon could grant the wish. But if the infernalist seeks true power, she will almost certainly have to offer herself to one of the Archdukes of Hell.

Belial the Warlord prospers among terrorist cells and suicide bombers. His abject hatred of all things drives him to horrific acts of revenge. He is a demon of pride, and tends to act through small cults, appreciating mortals with a capacity for destruction.

The second among the archdukes is Abbadon the Diseased, or Abbadon the Devourer. He is the lord of fleshly pleasures. Many of his followers trade their souls for noble purposes—often sacrificing themselves for another. There are no words for the torments the Devourer has created, and he alone among the Archdukes of Hell has devised a means to utterly annihilate an immortal soul. This is a power he guards jealously.

The beast known as Dagon goes by many other names, among them Vassago, Leviathan, and Behemoth. His reliquary rests in India, protected by generation after generation of fanatics. He is a demon of envy, a master of organization and hierarchy, who takes particular joy in seeing dreams and hopes turn to ash. Dagon is a subtle monster, specializing in offers of political and financial power.

Asmodai (or Asmodeus) has often dealt with vampires, and is spoken of at length in the heretical version of the *Book of Tobit*. His followers call him the wisest of the demonic dukes, and tell legends of his insight during the Angels' War. He is commonly called "the Throned" or "the Beautiful." He offers beauty, success, fame, and all the gifts of pride.

Azrael the Slayer is a cunning entity, and the most secretive of the Archdukes. He uses chicanery and lies to gain followers, tricking them into his service or convincing them to bet their souls on the outcome of a game of chance. Preferring a feminine form (though demons have no real gender), she has reportedly been destroyed on several occasions, only to rise again decades or centuries

Known Demonic Entities

The Archdukes of Hell are the most powerful and well-known demonic forces plaguing the earth, but they are by no means the only entities making infernal pacts for immortal souls. The following names have been linked to demonic worship. Some may be vampires masquerading as demons while others are purely mythical, but all have been associated with the worship of the infernal. These are not the "true names" of the demons, but merely the names by which these creatures are most commonly referred. *Caveat emptor.*

Namtaru, Spreader of Plagues

Neberu the Prophet

Rabisu the Vagabond

Halaku the Anguished

Nikanuuranu of Neberu

Azaneal the Priest

Annunaki, She of Many Faces

Lammasu the Betrayer

Orobas the Glutton

Apep the Serpent

Ba'al the Destroyer

Ba'alat the Nymph

Nergal the Diseased

Moloch of the Iron Fist

Beelzebub, Lord of Flies

Shaitan, the Deceiver

The Thousand Names, the Celestial

Umvak the Swarm

Shahlieh, Mother of Enigma

later. Azrael was the first to walk the continents of the West, encouraging the native cultures to games of sacrifice and bloody tribute.

Calling the Infernal

Summoning a demon is a delicate process. Performing such an invocation incorrectly can destroy the caster — or cause him to end up as a demon's newest toy. However, not all infernalists are demonologists. Some are just desperate individuals with nowhere else to turn. How, then, does an unschooled individual call forth a creature of infernal powers?

It is difficult to find a teacher of demonology. Those who study demon lore for dark purposes do not wish to be found, and those who use it to root out and combat demons are too cautious to teach such knowledge. It's easier to find a teacher for non-infernal Paths of Thaumaturgy, and far less dangerous — but a thaumaturge cannot achieve the things a demon can offer. A vampire seeking to make a literal "deal with the devil" must discover the true name of a demon, and then perform a summoning (and binding) ritual.

A demon's true name is far more than the appellation which mortals use to refer to the creature. It is a long, complex series of syllables best compared to a verbal DNA strand rather than an intelligible language. If a diabolist has only a portion of a demon's true name (or if any of their verbalization is incorrect), the summoning spell will end disastrously.

Names such as "Belial" and "Abbadon" are the Celestial names, not the True names of these creatures. Celestial names hold enough significance to attract a demon's attention, or to pressure that entity into responding. True names can compel a demon to act, even against its will.

When a demon is summoned, it appears as a spiritual being within the binding circle. The creature may take on a the form of a pillar of fire, an ethereal monstrosity, a cold reflection of the caster's own face, foul curl of sulfurous smoke, a transparent image of someone from the summoner's past, or some other disturbing non-physical manifestation. In this form, it tests the edges of the circle and struggles against the caster's will.

Once the entity is satisfied that it cannot escape, the demon will take physical form in order to more easily communicate with its supplicant. This form may be of any appearance, from a horrific monster to the visage of

the summoner's true love. It often shifts and changes as the demon speaks, testing the summoner's concentration and learning his psychology while the two barter.

A demon can stay in the physical world for only a short while. If not bound to a host, it must return to Hell. A human body will do for a while, but demons are a staggering concentration of blasphemous energy, and a fleshly host burns quickly under such trauma. After two or three days, such a host is destroyed and the demon returns to Hell. This does allow a demon time to tutor a supplicant in Dark Thaumaturgy, though, or to perform a physical service required by a foedus. While it might seem that a vampiric body would be a more suitable residence (as they are sturdier than a mere human), demons don't like to possess vampires. The blood of Caine seethes with holy poison, carrying the lingering effects of a curse imposed by God. Inhabiting a vampire is like being surrounded by active vestiges of faith. Such inhabitation is extremely awkward and uncomfortable for the demon.

A demonic spirit can remain in the physical realm for a longer period of time if housed within a physical talisman. The item must be specifically made of rare materials which are precious and significant to the demon, and engraved with portions of the demon's true name as well as magical inscriptions of binding and strengthening. In such an object, a demon can remain almost permanently — at least, until the talisman is destroyed.

The last means of binding a demon is to tie it to a location. By desecrating a lake, a building, a copse of trees, or some other area through bloody and blasphemous ritual, an infernalist can curse the location and affix a demon's spirit into the fabric of the world. This is hugely difficult, but also tremendously powerful. A single hunter with True Faith could destroy a mortal possessed by a demon, and a band of dedicated inquisitors might pose a threat to a talisman, but it would take an army of sanctified combatants to force a location-bound demon back to Hell.

Bargains, Deals, and Pacts

Once a petitioner and a demon are face to face, the individual wishing to make a bargain must begin the negotiation. Demons prefer to deal in mortal souls: the currency of Hell and the source of a demon's eternal power. They will accept offerings of blood, suffering, wealth, or forbidden knowledge, but there is a point in any negotiation where a demon demands ultimate satisfaction.

Most arrangements between demons and their thralls are just that: arrangements. The demon promises one thing, the thrall promises another, and between them they strike a deal. Not everything has to be signed in blood or involve the direct exchange of a soul. So long as the demon is gaining some amount of power in the arrangement, it is extraordinarily willing to help — especially if such "help" will eventually encourage the petitioner toward a more permanent deal.

An arrangement can take one of three basic forms: bartered services, empowerment, or true foedus. Bargains are simple verbal deals; either side may wriggle out of them if willing to suffer the wrath of the other. Empowerments typically involve a single exchange from both sides; usually a portion of the petitioner's soul in exchange for one manifested alteration of reality, or a single permanent demonic Investment. The demon does as requested, takes its payment, and the deal is over. Neither side can break such a deal. The demon cannot take back what has been given, nor restore the world to its original state — unless both sides engage in a second deal to that effect. This usually requires a contract signed in blood, an oath, or some other supernaturally enforced arrangement. Even if the individual never again practices diabolism, she has given a portion of her soul to the demon, and it may contact her, visit her, or utilize her senses at any time, even if it cannot exercise control.

A foedus, also known as a True Pact, requires the dedication of an individual's entire soul. Typically this also involves the worship of an Archduke (or enough power to command and control a lesser demon). These pacts are an ongoing partnership between the petitioner and the demonic entity, or a permanent transfer of power. The petitioner must continue to fulfill a role for the demon's benefit. This may include forbiddance (such as an inability to step onto holy ground, or speak Christ's name) or active service (sacrifice, conversion of others, or some other repeated offering). For its part, the demon must continue to empower the petitioner. This is the secret of Dark Thaumaturgy: rather than the vampire utilizing magic inherent in her blood, she calls out to the demon and it allows her to utilize its infernal energy. If the petitioner breaks the foedus, or does not fulfill every detail of the ongoing bans or services, her infernal master will rise up and devour her with rabid glee. If that occurs, no powers, spells, or weapons wielded by the petitioner will harm the demon; the breach of the oath has rendered the entity invulnerable to the struggles of its thrall.

The moment an individual agrees to a bargain, he is marked as that demon's thrall. His spirit invisibly holds the sigil of his demonic master — a sigil that becomes visible on his aura only when he utilizes the powers of

Vampiric Souls

In order to forge a *foedus* with a demon, an individual must possess a soul, sentience, and free will. This leads to another issue: do vampires have souls? Although no one knows the true disposition of a vampiric soul, it has been proven that vampires can perform summoning rituals, they can bargain with demons, and they can make pacts involving the sale of their soul. Demons, it seems, are willing to take the risk.

If a vampire is already damned by her nature as a member of the undead, how can she bargain with something she doesn't control? In reality, there's a difference between a soul being damned, and a soul being claimed by a demon. A demon is interested in harvesting as many souls as possible in order to empower itself, even — perhaps especially — if those souls were headed to Hell anyway.

The way a demon sees it, the only thing better than a cookie is a cookie you steal from someone else.

the infernal. At any time other than when he is actively using his demonic gifts, the mark is unnoticeable, even to aura-perceiving powers, though it may be detected by certain extraordinary levels of Auspex such as Karmic Sight (**V20**, p. 140).

The Costs and Benefits of Infernalism

As creatures of hate and torment, demons twist, defile, and damage life itself. A demon can cause an earthquake, but sculpting stone into something beautiful is difficult. A demon can heal a mortal's injuries, but such healing requires something like the sacrifice of an innocent child.

Once an individual makes any kind of bargain with a demon, she has become a thrall. Her demonic master can contact her, sense her location, or perceive the world through her senses at any time, without even asking. Such an individual's soul is marked by the demon, even if the sigil is invisible (unless the thrall uses her infernal powers). Typically, thralldom is followed by corruption, and every vice possessed by the thrall begins to overflow. These drives become more and more difficult to resist, manifesting as constant urges that will eventually overcome the thrall and drive her into full diabolism. Each time she succumbs to her vices, the thrall's soul becomes slightly more corrupted (and if a vampire, her Beast grows stronger as her humanity fails). No matter what a demon says, or how small the deal an individual makes, piece by piece, the demon gains power. The only way to maintain control of one's soul is to feed the demon someone else, instead.

An infernalist's aura usually looks no different than that of any other vampire (or mortal, as the case may be). However, when a thrall uses an infernal power of any kind, her aura palpably changes; anyone with mystic senses (Disciplines and demonic gifts, as well as Awareness) can tell that dark forces are at work. Even normally non-sensitive mortals feel deep chills.

Ritual of Summoning

This ritual is not thaumaturgical, and can be performed by anyone, mortal or Kindred. Creating a summoning or

New Expert Knowledge: Demonology

Although the Occult and Theology Abilities can reflect esoteric or theoretical knowledge about demons, knowing demonic secrets or how to summon the infernal requires a character to possess Demonology. Institutions such as the Catholic Church or the Sabbat Inquisition restrict circulation of this knowledge, but demons and their thralls actively encourage it, doing everything they can to make sure that censored versions of these secrets can be found on the Internet, in college libraries, and scrawled on the walls of nightclub bathrooms.

binding ritual requires the Celestial Name or True Name of the demon. Further, the diabolist must succeed in lengthy calculations and mystical rites that can take months to perform. While a demon is bound in a summoning ritual, the diabolist may make further bargains, invest the demon into a talisman, or otherwise perform infernal acts.

System: The player makes an extended Intelligence + Demonology roll for every week of research, and must accumulate a number of successes equal to the demon's Willpower. A bound demon must obey the diabolist's requests to the letter for one day, but may deliberately twist the wording of such requests to its own ends. If the summoner botches this roll, the results are catastrophic. This can result in the caster's instant death, or worse — the spell could summon the demon but fail to bind it. Historical plagues, infernal curses, and the release of powerful, evil souls are but a few of the possibilities.

Investments and Gifts

Investments and gifts are singular bargains made with a demon. They do not require long-term service or interaction, but they do require an overtly evil act in order to seal the bargain. This act is usually specified by the demon during its negotiation. Once it has been performed by the petitioner, the bargain is complete. This act will always require a Humanity roll.

Demons do not have to bargain for Investments. They can also perform actions that rend the very fabric of reality and even rewrite history, though such things are more costly. Particularly powerful demons can change a past event, rewriting time. They can grant a one-time benefit, such as the ability to be mortal for a day, or walk in the sun for a week. They can search the pits of Hell for the spirit of a loved one, and resurrect that individual into the body of another being (usually a sacrificial mortal vessel). They can even offer true knowledge that is outside the reach of the mortal world, such as the location of a sleeping Methuselah or a vision of ancient Enoch. Whatever you wish for, they can provide... or make you think they can.

Each of the following Investments costs 3 experience points, and requires a separate compact with a demon. These represent the oaths that the character has made to his demonic master, turning him into the demon's thrall. Storytellers should feel free to invent their own demonic Investments, as appropriate to their chronicle. Characters may not have more Investments than their Willpower.

Arsenal of the Beast: With each purchase of this Investment the character grows a bestial weapon. Possibilities include claws, fangs, a gaping maw, horns, a lashing tail, poison, venom spit, spines, and tentacles. Use of this weapon inflicts Strength +2 lethal damage, but by spending a point of Willpower, the user can cause the weapon to do aggravated damage for a scene.

Contagion: By touching a living being and spending a Willpower, the character may give him a subtle, infectious disease (or cure a disease she has inflicted in this manner). This disease inflicts 3-5 dice of bashing damage per day until the recipient perishes (or in the case of a vampire, falls into torpor from his wounds).

Degraded Restraint: By touching his intended victim and spending one point of Willpower, the character causes the victim to temporarily lose a point of Self-Control or Instinct for the rest of the scene.

Enmity Purge: With a touch and an expenditure of one point of blood, the infernalist dredges up every evil, vile impulse within her target, subtly encouraging bigotries, racism, elitism, and primitive sadistic instincts. Individuals who fail a Self-Control or Instinct roll (difficulty 6) will fall to the mercy of their baser impulses for the rest of the night. They will act on their most fascist and tyrannical drives, condemning those who are "different" and uncompromisingly promoting their agendas to the detriment of anyone who does not fit within their social structure — regardless of friendships, boons, alliances, or any other reason for empathy.

Essence to Ash: The character may cannibalize her own soul for power in emergencies. The player may spend a point of permanent Willpower to heal two levels of aggravated damage. Because such sacrifices are permanent, this is an Investment of last resort.

Insidious Whispers: With a touch and an expenditure of two blood points (or two levels of lethal damage for mortal diabolists), the infernalist infects his target's subconscious. She will begin to see her deepest fears in everything: a preoccupied friend is planning to betray her; a mild rebuff becomes an intolerable embarrassment; a childe's affection for a companion becomes inalienable truth of a forced blood bond. The target must succeed on a Conscience roll (difficulty 6) to resist this power. If she fails, the effects last for a number of days equal to the infernalist's Willpower.

Penance of the Damned: By locking eyes with another individual and spending a blood point, the infernalist forces his target to make a Conviction roll (difficulty 6) or relive her worst memory. If the target fails, all of her Virtues fall to 1 for the next hour.

Telepathic Worm: With an expenditure of a point of Willpower, the character causes a tentacle of mental

energy to slither into his target's subconscious, lying dormant in her thoughts until triggered. Every time the target sees a specific individual, speaks their name, or attempts to contact that person, a telepathic lash of pain and despair slashes through her mind. This attack uses the infernalist's Wits + Intimidation, and bypasses resistance powers such as Fortitude, as damage for this attack is suffered in Willpower rather than health levels. The worm remains in the victim's mind for one cycle of the moon.

The Baali

Of all the vampiric bloodlines, one name echoes with centuries of atrocity and blasphemy. From ancient Carthage, where they worshipped their demonic masters in open rituals, to the quiet spread of diabolism in modern nights, there have always been Baali. The cult is secretive, clinging to atrocity and sacrifice and mastering foul sorceries that others can barely imagine.

In the beginning, there was a mystery cult that began the city of Ashur, in the lands now called Iraq. Somewhere in that part of the Middle East, perhaps closer to Jerusalem, a coven of this cult cast bloody human sacrifices into a deep well. One night, a powerful vampire discovered these sacrificial rituals. He hurled the priests into the well with their tormented victims, and drained his blood over them, driving everything within to vicious, maddened acts of rage and depravity. Three emerged from the well after the vampire had gone. These were the first Baali.

In time, the most powerful of the three Baali Methuselahs built a great fortress within the deep crater that surrounded the ancient well. Shaitan, as he was called, drew his tribe together and swore them to the service of the infernal. The bloodline exists to this day, hidden in the defiled city of Chorazin.

Chorazin, the Damned City, lurks in a hidden valley somewhere in the Middle East. Some legends say that its black basalt ruins overlook the Sea of Galilee. Other ancient texts imply it is closer to Damascus, or even further south, near Mecca's sacred stone. Certainly, the site is hidden by vast and powerful infernal magic that predates even the writing of the Torah. Thousands of captive souls are bound to these spells, their tortured spirits as well as their bodies woven into the stone walls of the fortress. Few know of its existence, and it can only be found by the most powerful sorcerers—and those who have sold their soul for such knowledge.

It is said that two demons actually reside within the city, accepting prayers and adoration and turning the

sun black so that their vampiric subjects may continue to worship during the day. The visages of these two entities, Azaneal and Namtaru, were carved as the pillars of the city's massive black gate, to welcome Baali who have roamed — and destroy the unfaithful that would dare attempt to enter Chorazin. Azaneal, himself, is an inspiration to the bloodline, as he was once a Baali. Within the last few centuries, he has seized the powers of a demon, forcibly elevating himself into the infernal host.

As faith has begun to fail in modern society, the Baali (like their infernal masters) have grown ever stronger. They have made war on other infernal groups, enslaving lesser demons to Baali masters and absorbing their thralls.

The Veneficti

A powerful group of infernalist mages known as the Circle of Red warred with, and were nearly eradicated by, the Baali. The last and most powerful of this once-dominant coven of wizards were forced to swear eternal loyalty to the Baali, swearing their knowledge and their souls into slavery in exchange for continued existence. Over the centuries the mages have been used as servants — and experiments. Now, they have become something else.

Physically twisted and laden with permanent investments, the Veneficti now endure as something close to revenants. They are semi-immortal, lich-like, feeding on will much as ghouls feed on blood. Hunched, leathery, and wrapped in tattered black rags, the Circle of Red practice the darkest rites of magic and protect the libraries within the fortress of Chorazin.

Among the most prized texts of the Veneficti are five of the six infernal volumes of the Voleurs d'Enfer, a rival group of demonologists from the Dark Ages. They still seek the final, and most powerful codex, which disappeared shortly after the death of a famous infernal thief named Artaud de Pontmolain.

Secrets of the Eldest

The Baali have been diabolists longer than any other creature on the planet, and were gathering infernal lore even before their progenitor cast them down into the ancient well. Some of these earliest diabolists still exist, residing in torpor within the basalt city of Chorazin. Their bodies rest in iron casks on earth that has been so defiled it steams with the heat of Hell itself. These vastly old elders of the Clan hoard secrets that many would trade their souls to know: True Names that have never been spoken; truths about the epoch before the Flood, and the secrets of ancient Carthage. It is even said that one ancient Baali sold her soul to Lucifer himself; she is the only diabolist known to serve the Morningstar rather than a mere member of his army. She may even be able to commune with Lucifer, sharing his wisdom, and perhaps even the knowledge of the face of God.

Profits of Hell

While the creatures granting these powers are unabashedly evil, infernalists don't necessarily need to be. There are many arguments a vampire can make about exceptions, or how his actions served a greater good. Still, when it comes down to it, excuses don't matter. You made the deal. You pay the price.

Once a bargain's been struck, there's no going back. Nothing can purge the stain of infernalism from a creature's soul. Working against the constraints of a bargain is a ticket to a very, very short existence, and won't redeem your soul. As an infernalist, you do have a choice; it's just a choice between "serve your evil master" or "die in tremendous pain."

Therefore, Storytellers should use these contracts sparingly in their chronicles. Characters in league with the infernal have signed up for the short road to PC retirement or death, and it's almost impossible to find a way out — other than to kill the demon that holds your contract. Characters with infernal powers can occasionally make for interesting Faustian dilemmas, but more often, they're better suited as antagonists.

The Sabbat Inquisition

The Sabbat Inquisition was founded to stamp out infernalism and the Path of Evil Revelations within the Sword of Caine. Over the years, its authority was further expanded into the murky realm of religious purity, determining what is and is not heresy in the Sword of Caine. Inquisitors also oversee and sanction practitioners of Thaumaturgy within the Sabbat.

The Inquisition's power originates from two articles of the Code of Milan, namely the fourteenth and the sixteenth (**V20**, p. 41). As the permanent "accepted means" for dealing with such matters, the Inquisition is granted the right to take action against infernalists and heretics. Inquisition personnel may detain or destroy at will, so long as they can prove the subject's guilt.

Some Sabbat merely offer lip service to Caine and the Sect's religious tendencies, but members of the Inquisition are fanatical in their duties and their belief that their fight is just, although that does not always mean the individual Inquisitor is deeply religious. They have simply seen enough of the infernal to be absolute and incontrovertible in their cause.

Overall, the religious focus of the Inquisition is far more intense than any other group within the Church of the Dark Father. The Inquisition obeys the Regent, who has direct, personal oversight over every trial. The Consistory has the right to summon Inquisitors and request their attention to a particular individual, but cannot give the Inquisition commands. Most members of the Sect fear and despise them for the power they wield. The order also has a vicious rivalry with the Black Hand that dates back a hundred years. Inquisitors make no mystery of their suspicions regarding the Black Hand's secretive ways, and most members suspect that the Hand is guilty of harboring heretics within their ranks.

The Inquisition is torn between acquiring political power and performing their duties apolitically. The order operates under an explicit command by the Regent to remain neutral in all political dealings of the Sect. Yet if they disavow politics entirely, they will be driven into obscurity by the Black Hand, who seizes every opportunity to degrade Inquisition authority and reputation. As part of their response, Inquisitors delight in outing hidden Hand operatives within the Sabbat, deliberately causing such agents to reveal themselves to their brothers and sisters in the Sect.

Compromises

Infernalists must be very cautious among the Sabbat. Unlike other Sects, the Sabbat has a fairly long history of discovering and destroying them; the Sword of Caine is well-guarded against such corruption. Yet diabolists do manage to infiltrate, and even convert others to their demons' service.

The natural proliferation of evil within the Sect hampers Inquisition duties. Members of the Sword of Caine relish atrocity, and an infernalist's black deeds rarely seem out of the ordinary. Sabbat are free to speak their minds, so how then can a Judge determine the difference between a mouthy Loyalist and a true heretic? Tzimisce create ritae from the leavings of a creature known as Kupala, who shows every sign of being a demon — but the Inquisition cannot afford to make that accusation, lest the Auctoritas Ritae become compromised and the entire Sect fall. Lasombra mystics speak of the Abyss as though it were a God to rival the one that cursed Caine, and they hold their knowledge close. Even a few high-ranking members of the Black Hand practice quiet, personal heresies. Members of the Inquisition must tread cautiously.

On the other hand, Thaumaturgy is valuable, even if most magical practitioners are sinning in some way against core tenets of the Sabbat. If the Inquisition formally declares Kupala a demon, then the ritae are infernal by default, and every member of the Sabbat must be destroyed for practicing infernalism. The Abyss Mystics fight a battle of influence to remain unaccused, lending the Inquisition unquestioning aid and describing their studies in the most benign manner possible. The hypocrisy of such sanctions gives rise to even more mistrust.

Beyond the desperation, lust, envy, and greed that often tempt vampires toward the infernal, members of the Sabbat face another compelling argument from infernalists. The fallen host, like Caine himself, refused to be made slave to any power. They claim to understand the nature of sacrifice for freedom, and they preach that demons hate the Antediluvians with a burning passion; therefore, they claim, the enemy of my enemy should be my ally — if not my friend.

Heretics

The Sabbat is rife with heretical doctrines. In a nutshell, any beliefs which revere the Antediluvians, enslave others, interact with the infernal, encourage blood bonding (outside of the Vaulderie), forsake the ritae, or preach against Caine are heretical. Any who deal with the Setites (who worship their Antediluvian as a god) are heretical. Thralls are also technically unacceptable, along with the Antediluvians (which by extension means all vampires of the Camarilla). Over the last century and more, the Inquisition has declared certain Paths to be heretical: Path of Evil Revelations, Path of Typhon, Path of Sutekh, Path of Lilith, and Path of Blood. Even the Lasombra Clan's Path of Night balances on the edge of being declared heresy.

Occasionally, adherents to these heretical Paths are given the opportunity to convert to a more acceptable morality, and perform contrition for their sins against the faith. Typically, practitioners are simply destroyed.

Certain rarely-seen, aberrant texts and beliefs from the Dark Ages or ancient times are also considered heretical. The gnostic writings of the Cainite Heresy, in particular their *Book of Shining Blood* (also known as the *Euagetaematikon*) are such works. These books espouse the ideal that vampires are godlike, and infused with religious divinity. They promote the belief that the vampiric vitae is cursed by God, and therefore sacred and holy, and that God marked Caine with the curse in order to show that Caine was the successor to the Throne of Heaven.

Another text, the *Gospel of Laodice*, is also considered a heretical work. This book details the origins of a Path of Morality known as the Road of Heaven, and state that it is the only Path to which vampires should adhere. The book claims that this system of morality stems from Caine's sacrificing his brother, Abel, and some versions postulate that those who follow the Road of Heaven will be forgiven by God after their Final Death.

Lastly, anyone found to possess knowledge or information regarding Golconda (a state which is a blasphemous treason to the vampiric condition) are burned as heretics. Condemned heretics are always destroyed, usually by fire.

The Inquisition further opposes the practice of unrestrained or constant diablerie within the Sect, arguing that repeated observance of the Amaranth creates an uncontrollable addiction. A single act of diablerie is tolerable. Even the occasional victorious consumption of an enemy's soul to benefit the Sect is acceptable, but individuals who are willing to gain power by feasting undiscerningly on souls are too easily led to buy and sell them in demonic pacts. Diablerie erodes a Cainite's ethics.

The Inquisition watches those who actively diablerize. They investigate individuals who diablerize more than once a year, suspecting that such an individual's scruples may be too easily compromised after such blows to their morality. Some Inquisitors put forth the circumstantial proof that all established infernalists are also habitual diablerists, thus insisting that the reverse is usually true. This position is considered somewhat extreme by the rest of the Sect, and has led to many disputes — particularly between the Inquisition and the Black Hand.

Structure

The Inquisition maintains a straightforward hierarchy. At the apex is a singular Grand Inquisitor, and beneath

her authority are Judge Inquisitors, Watchers, and Knight Inquisitors. The Regent appoints the Grand Inquisitor, and may dismiss a vampire from that post at any time. Further, the Regent appoints a non-Inquisition envoy to monitor the order on his behalf.

Judge and Knight Inquisitors are always members of nomadic, Inquisition-only packs, although this is beginning to change. Recently, some dioceses beleaguered by infernal agents have requested that Inquisitors be embedded in founded packs. The Inquisition has begun to grant these petitions grudgingly.

A typical Inquisition pack consists of five members: three Judge Inquisitors, and two Knight Inquisitors. The team is typically led by the most senior Judge, who holds the position of Ductus for the pack. Watchers, usually retired Judges themselves, oversee these field agents from a stronghold known as Santo Oficio, or "The Holy Office," a hidden location which is the core of the Sect. Within the Santo Oficio, the Grand Inquisitor performs her duties, and the Inquisition maintains libraries of all recovered knowledge. Further, all accusations, investigations, trials, and executions are meticulously logged. Every pack of Inquisitors has a codex dedicated to their activities over the centuries, and no detail is too small to be recorded.

Many Clans are represented within the Inquisition, though some are more prevalent than others. Crusaders of the Ventrue *antitribu* are the most common, and tend to gravitate toward positions of power. The rest of the order is overwhelmingly comprised of Lasombra, Tzimisce, and Toreador *antitribu*.

It is difficult to manipulate members of the Inquisition, due to the membership's fanatical adherence to the faith of the Dark Father, Caine. They demand high principles regarding sin, redemption, damnation, and loyalty to the principles of Caine. The order's membership tends to follow the Path of Honorable Accord, with a smattering of members on the Paths of Caine or Cathari (and a few strange variations on Path of Night). Inquisitors must be able to carry out righteous judgment, maintain a strict religious focus, and take orders from those who acknowledge their divine evil. It should be further noted that all of these Paths lend themselves toward fanaticism and take a dim view of politics.

Unusually, there are also Harbingers of Skulls within the Inquisition. These recruits are particularly fanatic, utilizing ancient methods of torment to discover infernal corruption within the ranks. They even dub themselves "Lazarene Inquisitors" to distinguish these methods from those of their less discerning fellows. It is suspected that some of these vampires are seeking a particular demonic entity — but it is not known why, or what interest or revenge drives such intense fervor.

Authority

Inquisitors routinely travel through Sabbat-held territories, often presiding over rites or assisting with Sect punishments. They have the leeway to look at any Cainite's dealings for proof of ideological deviance that may be a threat to the Sect, and they wield that authority with a heavy hand.

The Inquisition has acquired a reputation for cruelty — no mean feat among those who willingly label themselves monsters. In the past, members of the Inquisition could be identified by their red robes and iron reliquaries of office. In modern nights, Inquisitors still bear reliquaries, but robes have often been replaced with modern clothing (still universally containing strong notes of scarlet).

Typically, a pack's Knights enter an Archbishopric unannounced, ahead of the other Inquisitors. After the Knights have performed preliminary investigations, the Judges follow, arriving in full and terrifying grandeur. Inquisitors spend their time investigating local Sabbat, looking into the history and background of individuals and packs for one to three weeks before (nearly always) ending their efforts with a formal accusation and a trial. It is generally suspected that Inquisitors occasionally stage deliberate trials with "not guilty" verdicts to give the Sabbat at large some measure of hope and confidence in their supposed impartiality.

Inquisitors often use ceremony as a weapon, occasionally making accusations immediately after the climax of a completed ritus. If any member of the territory flees upon the Inquisition's arrival or during their investigative period, the Knights have full authority to render immediate judgment and destroy that vampire.

Trials

The Inquisition has unprecedented power to accuse, interrogate, and judge cases of heresy and infernalism. An Inquisitor may accuse any member of the Sabbat save the Regent, and may take anyone thus accused into custody. The individual's priest must be present to witness interrogation, trial, and destruction, and may advocate on his packmate's behalf. Typically, the Inquisition prefers to perform trials in public, and they are conducted with all the pomp and circumstance the Sabbat can muster.

The Inquisition listens to any accusations brought forth by a member of the Sect, but are known for putting both accused and accuser through similar degrees of torturous interrogation. While Judges perform questioning,

Knights scrutinize the rest of the Sect. The accused can request an ordeal as proof of innocence, or some form of contrition if the charges are purely heretical and do not include infernalism. However, an Inquisitor has no duty to grant such a request.

The illusion of impartial justice is important, but it is rare that an Inquisitor brings a Sect member to trial unless she is certain something will be found. Typically, the highest-ranked Judge Inquisitor judges the trial, while another Inquisitor (Judge or Knight) serves as prosecution against the accused. On particularly prominent or high-profile cases, a panel of three Inquisitors (who are never from the same pack) will jointly hear the case and render unified judgment.

An individual who has been investigated and determined to be free of infernal taint (or heresy) is given a writ of innocence called the *ad cautelum*. A writ of ad cautelum is an ornate document on flesh-parchment, its words written in blood and ash, which details the specific crimes and the individual's innocence of them at the time of the writ's creation. It is sealed with the Inquisitor's mark and the stamp of her reliquary on blood-red wax. The security of the writ lasts for three months, during which time the individual is expected to be particularly penitent and atone for any other sins he has committed against the faith. Once the ad cautelum has expired, this individual is no longer protected by the Inquisition. He is to be watched, like any other member of the Sect, and may be investigated again if new evidence surfaces.

If found guilty, the accused is tortured and executed. Heretics are killed by gruesome means, while the sentence for infernalism is always death by fire. These punishments are made public, to revitalize the Sect's fear and encourage other members to avoid similar fates.

Every trial is reviewed by the Regent, regardless of the trial's outcome. If the conclusions of heresy or infernalism are found to have killed a member of the Sabbat who is innocent of either, the Judge Inquisitor who administered that punishment is destroyed for incompetence.

Mechanics

Iron Reliquaries

An Inquisitor's Iron Reliquary is their badge of office, and each one is bestowed directly by the Regent. Reliquaries also serve as a holy symbol on which Inquisitors (and subjects) must swear to the truth (though it has no capacity to enforce that oath). Physically, a reliquary is a stylized version of the Sabbat symbol, forged of iron. It can be held and wielded like a dagger, and often incorporates sharp spikes or cutting surfaces.

Infernal Inquisitors

There's an old urban legend among the Sabbat that an Inquisitor was discovered to be secretly an infernalist. Shocking! ...but, while possible, unlikely.

Inquisitors are constantly monitored by Watchers, and the Inquisition is overseen by the agents of the Regent. It would be nearly impossible for one to become infernal, or maintain a relationship with a demonic creature, without being discovered and destroyed by their fellows or the Regent's agents. The Inquisition also maintains records, blood, and logs of every active Inquisitor at the Santo Oficio to ensure this does not happen. The Sect is well aware that Inquisitors have the most knowledge of such things, and keep a constant eye that such knowledge does not become practical application.

In some chronicles, or for some Inquisitors, the Iron Reliquary may further grant its owner some of the powers given by True Faith. Each reliquary is unique, and reliquaries of slain Inquisitors are destroyed. The Regent handles each reliquary before conferring it upon an Inquisitor, so the connection to the Regent can be sensed by Auspex in order to prove the Iron Reliquary isn't a fake.

Animus Ligature

Prerequisites: Auspex • • and Thaumaturgy •

This power allows an Inquisitor to detect signs of deep attachments upon an individual's aura. Vinculi, blood bonds, codes of honor, soul bargains, and sworn oaths are reflected as scarlet flares, burning brighter or dimmer to reflect the intensity of the bond. If these flares reflect ties of blood, the Inquisitor will receive a visual impression of the other individual in the link (though, obviously, no perception of how that second individual feels or if the bond is returned). If the flare reflects an oath or a code of honor, the Inquisitor will only have a sense that the target takes a promise, oath, or debt very seriously — not whether that attachment is infernal or to whom such a promise was made.

System: After the character stares at the subject for at least a few seconds, the player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 8). Failure indicates that the flares are too indistinct to be made out individually from the rest of the subject's aura. This power does show infernal compacts, but in no way distinguishes them from any other oath or code of honor. The flares of blood bonds or Vinculum are clear, but it is entirely up to the Inquisitor to determine why any other flares exist in her subject's aura.

This combination power costs 12 experience points.

The Josians

"And He said to Josiah, 'Tear their kingdom down. For they have forsaken me, and worshipped demons. They have not walked in my ways, nor done what is right in my eyes.'"

Although the infernal has existed since before recorded history, the Sabbat did not establish an Inquisition until the nineteenth century. It took the Camarilla nearly as long to accept the genuine danger posed by diabolists. Named for the biblical king Josiah, who put an end to the sacrificial worship of the god Moloch in the Vale of Gehenna, the Josians are an order of archons that focus on rooting out the various Gehenna cults and infernalists within the Camarilla. Their purpose is to excise heresy, defend the Camarilla against demonic corruption, and to seize (and study) the texts and practices of Gehenna lore in the slim circumstance that those cults are right.

In Ancient Days

The history of the Josian archons begins in a strange place, during the rise of the city of Carthage. The Brujah speak of Carthage as glorious empire where mortals and vampires lived in peace, and that is true, though they omit the darker sides of that tale. In fact, Carthage was also home to a degenerate blood cult. Assamites resided there as well, serving as judges and keeping the peace. Baal and other infernal entities were worshipped in temples sculpted of obsidian and bathed in blood.

After the Second Punic War, the Malkavian seer, Tryphosa, had visions of infernalism and rot in Carthage. She went to the Ventrue of Rome and demanded that the city be struck down before the Baali evil spread further. The Ventrue, fierce rivals of the Brujah, rose to the challenge. In alliance with the Malkavians and the Toreador, the Ventrue forces assaulted the city, fighting against united forces of the Brujah, Assamites, and Baali.

Since that day, a small coterie of elders of the three Clans — Ventrue, Malkavian, and Toreador — have made it their business to seek out, track down, and destroy infernalism and demon-worship wherever it is found. These groups were first organized by the Ventrue Lysander, a Toreador Methusulah from Africa named Adanaya, and the Malkavian Tryphosa (until her supposed destruction), along with support from many others who were involved in the fall of Carthage. They chose this course not out of a duty to holy faith, but out of their own motivations — personal vengeance, fear of infernalists, and hatred of the Baali. Like all Elders of the time, they did not fight personally, but worked secretly through their lineages and through other vampires bound to them by blood.

Since then, those who serve these powerful Elders have continued the eradication of diabolism wherever it was discovered. As Princes rose and fell, through the Anarch Revolt and the formation of the Camarilla, and into the Victorian and then the modern age, these lineages have continued their efforts in secret. They have maintained contact with one another through the centuries, working covertly to eradicate the corruption of the infernal.

Misfit Archons

In 1764, the Inner Circle of the Camarilla met for its twenty-second official gathering. The Hellfire Clubs of London were extremely popular in mortal society, and decadent occult fascination was influencing Kindred culture as well. The church's control over Europe was lapsing, and mysticism and superstition warred with faith. The Camarilla was plagued by heretical doctrines, decadent coteries, and pseudo-religious cults. To counter this, the Inner Circle founded a group of archons entrusted with the duty of rooting out cults and heresy. It is whispered that it was the Tremere Meerlinda who coined the name "Josians" as a reference to biblical myth, and tasked them with this secret purpose.

The ancient anti-Carthage coterie discovered the Josians and their covert mission and took an interest, placing their servants and successors within this branch of archons so as to effectively utilize the Camarilla's resources toward their own goals. They sired childer or moved pawns into service, quietly providing them with the education and abilities they would need to hunt the infernal as well as reveal Gehenna cults within the Sect.

The Industrial Revolution marked several upheavals within the Camarilla. The world was changing rapidly, and the stagnation of Elder vampires was becoming more and more apparent. Although the Josians performed admirably, support from the Inner Circle wavered, and soon the Justicariate's attention (and resources) moved to support other issues. As servants of the infernal proved

more and more difficult to find, the Josians lost focus and their numbers dwindled. Their effectiveness was often hampered by politics and internal Camarilla strife.

For more than a century, the Josians worked on their own, following the leadership of an Elder Ventrue, Archon Margause Devereaux, and her servire, Henri d'Acquitaine of Clan Malkavian. Devereaux was appointed Provost of the Josian Order, and formally took charge of the division. However, to keep the order's task secret, their efforts were never lauded, and their successes are kept hidden from the majority of the Sect.

By the year 1999, the Josians and their secretive mission within the Sect had been all but forgotten, pushed aside by more pressing concerns. Those who were part of the order continued to perform their duties, though they were largely unsupervised and unsupported. Those Princes who even knew the term "Josians" considered them little more than misfit archons; crackpots and eccentrics, given no real regard by prominent members of society. If it hadn't been for Archon Devereaux's personal labors to keep the Josian Archons functional, the order might have fallen apart and been utterly forgotten.

Structure

Josian Archons work quietly and maintain their effectiveness as undercover operatives by altering their identities from time to time. They always work in pairs; one Archon, and one servire. Typically, both are trained in many different skills and work as jacks-of-all-trades. Each Josian must be prepared to infiltrate, investigate, and defend himself with minimal backup from his superiors or other archons. This may cause him to appear weaker than other Archons, but his knowledge of lore is far superior to his fellows'.

Recruitment as a Josian demands no prerequisite set of skills, though most new members are already familiar with a fair amount of Noddist and infernal lore. An individual discovered with a great deal of information on demonology has two options: serve as a Josian, or die as a heretic. Unfortunately, that decision is made by the Josian in charge of the investigation, and not by the individual being scrutinized. They are united by purpose, rather than by ability. The leaders of the Josians use the opportunity afforded by these operations to study the lore and the practices of these cults, making Archon Devereaux one of the Camarilla's foremost scholars on the myths of Caine, Kindred lore, and occult theology.

Josians are allowed to collect and maintain personal knowledge of these heresies, though they are not to keep written records of their activities nor personal libraries of such material. They are quietly authorized to work with "agents of despicable quality" in their investigations (including non-vampires, as well as Sabbat members and heretical Independents). During one such hunt for a Ventrue infernalist, the Josians are even known to have coordinated with a Sabbat war pack who recognized the magnitude of the creature's threat.

Authority

Although the Camarilla Traditions do not explicitly forbid infernalism, the Inner Circle's record is clear. Humanist vampires detest these practices, and all acts related to demonology. Such activities and investments are considered a breach of the Masquerade, and a threat to the security of the Sect. Practitioners of infernalism, like cults dedicated to the lore and knowledge of Gehenna, are to be eradicated with extreme prejudice. Princes found to have been harboring either are usually destroyed.

In a standard investigation, the Josian and her Servire work as a team, usually with one infiltrating and one maintaining a safehouse and support. When a cult is discovered or an infernalist located, the Josian has the authority to destroy that individual — although the politics of the Camarilla can make utilizing this authority somewhat complicated.

A Josian may, in these circumstances, request the local Prince's assistance. If local forces are inadequate or compromised, the Josian may call in more Archons (usually other Josians, but not always). Technically, the tradition of Domain implies that a Prince is under no burden to assist the Josian. However, most Princes are savvy enough to realize that if they are anything less than immediately and enthusiastically compliant, they could be charged with sheltering heretics — or with being heretics themselves.

A Josian nominally has the authority to put an entire domain in lockdown, though to do so would certainly be pressing her luck. It is also within her authority to decree that all Kindred within that domain are now Profane. Profane vampires may not hold status or position, are stripped of all boons owed to them, and may be destroyed outside of the Traditions as though a Blood Hunt had been called upon them. If any vampire with the Profane status immediately presents himself to the Justicars (or any Archon), he can be proven innocent, shrived, and their status restored. However, no one knows of an instance when this authority was enacted, and some Kindred even doubt the validity of such a heavy-handed policy. And yet, the Inner Circle has never refuted the Josians' claim to this level of authority.

The Inner Circle knows full well that the Camarilla could collapse from the bottom up if word spread that the "myths" of Gehenna are discovered to be true. Although they must allow a certain amount of agreement that the Third Generation existed (some of those Ancients are their sires, after all), they maintain a tight control on the idea that the Antediluvians will awaken and slaughter all vampires, or that there is any apocalyptic "End Time" approaching. They support the Josians when these archons discover such information, and in their attempts to destroy Gehenna cults. They also support eradication of infernalists, and knowledge on that topic. However, if a Josian misuses her authority — or calls too much attention to her work — the Inner Circle may decide that archon is, in the end, expendable.

Infernalists and Heretics

The Camarilla disdains Paths of Enlightenment as a threat to the Masquerade, though most are implicitly tolerated. However, there are some ethical beliefs which are abhorrent enough to have been declared heresy by the Inner Circle. These include the Path of Night, the Path of Evil Revelations, the Path of Caine, and the Path of Lilith. Those who deal with demons or other infernal entities, or those who willingly allow themselves to be hosts for a spirit could also be deemed heretical (a ruling that chafes the Giovanni).

Those who participate in Gehenna cults are clearly heretical. This absolutely includes the Sabbat, as well as groups who seek to recreate Carthage, discover Enoch, or who believe in the End Times (whether they are trying to stop Gehenna or to bring it about). Individuals who seek Golconda, a state associated with the infamous infernalist Saulot, are also heretical, as is anyone plotting to find or awaken a progenitor of one of the Clans (which often includes Setites).

Recently, the Josians have heard rumor of a strange text circulating through the hands of mortal hunter groups. It's called *The Apostate Auguries*, and there are claims it was written by a powerful Malkavian Seer who fell victim to such hunters. Ambrus Kelemen, one such Archon, is doing all he can to track this volume down and determine what risk it represents to the Masquerade.

Mechanics

False Death

Prerequisites: Auspex • • • and Obfuscate • • • • •

This power may be used on the wielder, or on any other willing individual within five feet/one and a half meters. The target of this power appears to die. The death appears genuine in all ways, including leaving behind remains. However, the target instead slides sideways into a pocket realm without the passage of time and is displaced from the physical world. A lifeless but identical construct of the victim's own physical matter has been swapped into its place just before death occurs.

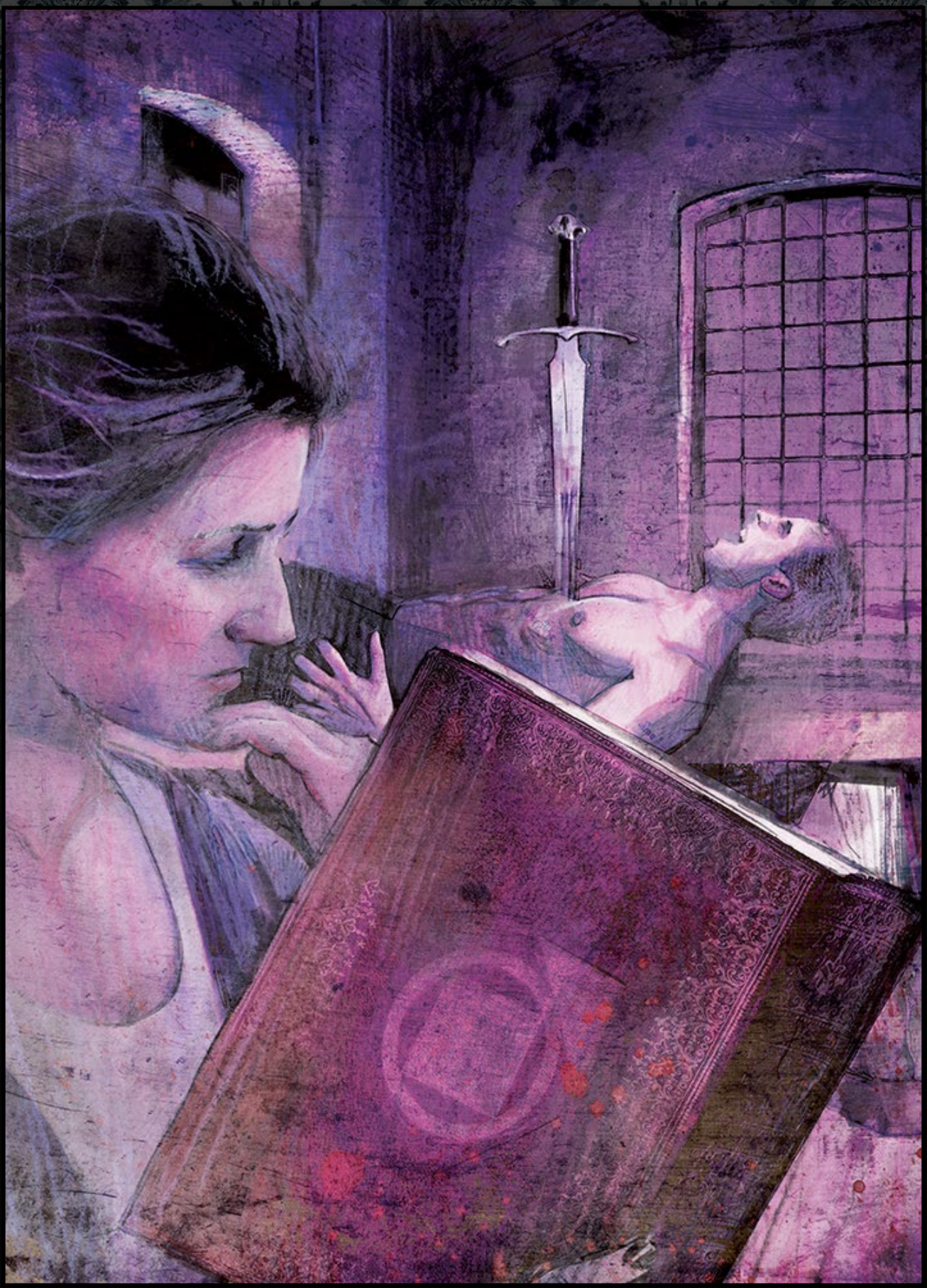
The target remains displaced until a predetermined set of circumstances occur at the location where she "died." These circumstances are chosen by the user at the moment the power is activated, and may not be altered thereafter. Once those circumstances are fulfilled, the individual reappears in the precise location from which she vanished. There are known cases of Josians vanishing into the grip of this power, never to reappear. Either the circumstances were poorly defined, it is presumed, or they somehow became impossible to fulfill.

False Death is useful for faking a Josian's Final Death when he is compromised, or to allow an infiltrating Josian to pretend to take part in sacrificial rituals. The Josian appears to slaughter his target, proving his dedication to the cult, and then returns hours (or weeks, or years) later to rescue the innocent from displacement.

The use of this power wipes any knowledge-locks on the target individual. Thereafter, powers such as Summon, Scry, or Clairvoyance can no longer target her (and register as though the individual were dead). The ability to use such powers on this person may be reestablished as per a first use of those powers. Josians are known to use False Death on themselves and their Servires routinely, to invoke this erasure against those who might be spying on them or tracking their movements.

System: After the character stares at the subject for at least a few seconds, the player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 8). The target must be generally willing to escape her circumstance, even if she does not know a power is being used on her.

This combination power costs 20 points to learn.



Chapter Seven: Secrets of the Blood

If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself.

– George Orwell, 1984

An exhaustive dissertation on a topic as broad as blood magic would be impossible. Too much esoteric lore has been lost through the ages as reclusive blood magicians met Final Death without ever passing on their hoarded lore to anyone else. But more than that, too many modern blood magicians cannot even agree on what blood magic *is* sufficiently to allow for a universal understanding of the art's principles. Historically, Kindred occultists used words like "Thaumaturgy," "Necromancy," and "Sorcery" to differentiate their own magic from that of rivals and to occlude their practices from those who might steal their precious lore. In modern nights, the once sharp divisions between the various manifestations of blood magic blur.

A pedant might argue that nearly everything a Kindred does might be considered blood magic. After all, how does a vampire even rise every night, save through the power of her supernaturally enhanced vitae? Even those Disciplines which do not directly require blood to use are still passed from sire to childe, and generally a Kindred cannot begin to learn Disciplines not associated with his bloodline until he has tasted the blood of another vampire whose Clan is known for that Discipline.

While most Kindred occultists would never consider Disciplines to be "blood magic" in the conventional sense, understanding the distinctions between Disciplines and blood magic is necessary to understanding exactly what blood magic is and what it is not. Disciplines are inherited supernatural powers passed down through Clan lineage. For Kindred of the Eighth Generation or higher, each Discipline consists of specific powers which must be learned in sequence. Only elders of the Seventh Generation or lower can expand upon that platform by learning powers which can be customized to each elder's own personality and understanding of the Discipline's nature. According to Noddist dogma, all Disciplines flow from each Clan's Antediluvian founder (or from the line's progenitor, in the case of bloodlines) and reflect the interests of the founder and how he evolved to respond to the curse placed upon him by Caine. In short, the creation of expanded Discipline powers is the province of elders, and the creation of entirely new Disciplines is the province of Antediluvians or, at the very least, bloodline progenitors who are typically of very low Generation.

Weaker Kindred chafed against these innate restrictions. While the power of the blood did not permit less powerful Kindred to create true Disciplines of their own, a few scholars discovered, after centuries of effort, the next best thing. By channeling both blood and will in the course of

performing ritual activities associated with mortal religious or occult practices, these Kindred learned how to create what can best be described as pseudo-Disciplines: blood-based powers which mimicked the structure of Disciplines, but which are neither inheritable for one's childer nor amenable to elder-level manifestations. Over time, these pseudo-Disciplines came to be known as blood magic. Inferior to true Disciplines in many ways, the various blood magic paths were never as easy for Kindred to learn as the Disciplines inherent to their Clans. Further, they invariably required blood from the user (often in prodigious quantities), and, worst of all, errors by the user in activating these strange powers often caused serious side effects quite unlike the misuse of conventional Disciplines.

However, these limitations were outweighed by powerful benefits. Aside from the obvious advantage of being able to create what is effectively a customized Discipline, the early blood magicians learned that they could also create special rituals thematically connected to any blood magic paths they studied, and unlike the five-tiered Disciplines, there was apparently no limit to the number of rituals a blood magician could learn. To a vampire of high Generation who was typically at the mercy of elder Cainites armed with potent customized Discipline effects, this was an amazing opportunity to even the scales.

The Blood and the Will

The dice mechanics of Necromancy as depicted in **V20** work somewhat differently than what is described here, but for the purposes of this book, Necromancy is just another form of blood magic and works mechanically just the same as all of the other paths, i.e. with Willpower rolls instead of Attribute + Ability rolls for path powers and Intelligence + Occult rolls for all Necromancy rituals. Similarly, Sorcery paths such as Akhu and Koldunic Sorcery which previously used different dice pools will now also use Willpower rolls for all paths. However, if the Storyteller wishes, characters using Necromancy or any of those previously covered schools may instead use the dice pools listed in **V20** or in prior **Vampire: The Masquerade** supplements as an optional rule.

Foundational Principles

All forms of blood magic share certain commonalities: basic principles of construction that provide a framework for all would-be blood magicians to shape the art. There are four major principles and several minor principles. The major principles are the principles of blood, will, knowledge, and identity.

The Principle of Blood

The Principle of Blood is the easiest for neophytes to comprehend. Simply put, blood magic is completely dependent on the application of Kindred vitae. No non-vampire can ever work blood magic as it is performed by Kindred. Ghouls who receive appropriate training from blood magician regnants may learn the simplest paths and rituals (though only after years of study), but a mortal not blessed with Kindred vitae can never duplicate the effects of any Sorcery path, even when the path is expressly based on a magical style in which that mortal is an expert. Without exception, every power associated with every blood magic path requires the expenditure of at least one point of vitae, and a few powers (and many rituals) require even more.

The Principle of Will

The Principle of Will is equally straightforward. Every manifestation of blood sorcery is the result of the vampire focusing and exerting his will to bring the effect into existence. It is significant that this principle refers to *will* rather than *belief*. While many blood magic paths and sorcery schools are implicitly or even explicitly based on archaic religious practices, there is no requirement at all that the blood magician be a believer in the underlying religion. Some practitioners are, such as those Old Skool Anarchs who were adherents of Voudoun or Santeria in life and who adapted those practices to fit the needs of Voudoun Necromancy. But Punk Sorcerers who practice Voudoun Necromancy because its violent and disturbing aesthetics appeal to their personal sensibilities can be just as proficient as those Old Skoolers who are devoted to the loa. Indeed, there is some anecdotal evidence that it is *better* to be a non-believer than one of the faithful. Some tales suggest that actual religious devotion to otherworldly powers invoked through blood magic opens the magician up to a heightened risk of possession or some other malefic effect.

Mechanically, the Principle of Will simply means *that all activation rolls for blood magic path powers are Willpower rolls*. It is impossible for any blood magician to accidentally unleash a blood magic effect (while in frenzy, for example). Likewise, the effect, if successfully produced, will almost never deviate from its creator's wishes. The vampire might fail to produce any effect at all, and that failure may yield catastrophic side effects — but side effects generally do not cause wild spells or rogue magical manifestations (although some paths which require the blood magician to traffic with spirits or demons can produce almost any phenomena).

Rather, such disasters target the vampire herself, specifically through some fracturing of the will that was not strong enough to control the powers it sought to channel. Whereas botched rolls involving Disciplines usually mean that the vampire will be unable to effectively use that Discipline against the same target again for a brief period, botched rolls for blood magic are far more serious and result in catastrophic consequences, even potentially resulting in heavy damage to the Kindred's psyche (reflected by the loss of temporary Willpower points, or even the loss of a permanent Willpower dot).

For practitioners of Thaumaturgy and Necromancy, that's bad enough. For occultists who plumb the depths of the more obscure paths of blood magic, a mistake can be even worse. If a blood magician botches on a roll to activate a Sorcery path, she suffers some form of short term psychological or physiological defect related to the misapplied path. Each school of sorcery curses its practitioners for their incompetence differently. This backlash usually lasts for the rest of the night, although members of Clans intimately associated with a school are free of this particular penalty. The Storyteller is free to impose some other comparable deficiency in place of those described in the sidebar.

The Principle of Knowledge

The Principle of Knowledge holds that a vampire cannot learn any form of blood magic either intuitively or through observation of another practitioner. Each aspiring magician must actively study the occult lore associated with her school and develop a deep empirical knowledge of the arcane practices that go into each path and each ritual. The Principle of Knowledge has its greatest relevance in the area of rituals, as all rolls to enact rituals are Intelligence + Occult. As such, to be a successful ritualist, the vampire must be neither stupid nor unlettered. This principle is also the

Sorcery Botches

Dur-An-Ki botches cause the ashipu to briefly become lost to the spirits from which her powers flow. The ashipu temporarily (and immediately) gains the Fugue Derangement (see **V20**, p. 291). Assamite Sorcerers do not suffer from this effect, but all other Assamite ashipu do, as do all ashipu outside that Clan.

New Age Sorcery botches cause the sorcerer to become overcome with anger toward those who would denigrate his beliefs and reject the truths he possesses. Mechanically, treat this as a form of the Paranoia Derangement (see **V20**, p. 292), except that the source of the vampire's paranoia is an ill-defined conspiracy of entities who wish to suppress all knowledge of his "enlightenment." This conspiracy can consist of anything from the Camarilla Inner Circle to the Trilateral Commission to the Grey Aliens of Area 51, depending on the beliefs espoused by the New Ager as a basis for his theory of magic.

Koldunic and Old Skool Sorcery botches cause the sorcerer to acquire a psychosomatic aversion to the holy symbols in a manner similar to the Flaw Repelled by Crosses (V20, p. 495). The difficulty to resist Rötschreck is equal to (4 + the user's sorcery rating).

Punk Sorcery botches generally cause the vampire to suffer from the effects of the Hysteria Derangement (see **V20**, p. 291). The Punker is even quicker to anger than normal, and delights in anarchic destruction of all symbols of authority.

Setite Sorcery botches, regardless of school, cause the sorcerer to acquire an intense photophobia. When exposed to extremely bright lights, the sorcerer must roll for Rötschreck against a difficulty of (4 + the sorcerer's Path rating). Setite lector-priests do not suffer this effect.

Finally, Spirit Thaumaturgy botches (regardless of which form of Sorcery allows access to this path) open the vampire up to possession by a spirit or simply cause him to *believe* that he has been possessed. Regardless, treat this like a manifestation of the Multiple Personality Derangement, with the currently dominant personality based on a relevant spirit (see **V20**, p. 292).

source of the magician's need to pick a primary path. Whichever path the sorcerer studies first informs his understanding of all other paths, and no secondary path rating can ever exceed his primary path rating until he has mastered the primary path completely.

The Principle of Identity

Finally, the Principle of Identity defines the level of connection that allows the blood magician to properly target his magic. When invoking the powers associated with most paths, the magician must direct his attention to himself or to some personage or thing within his field of view. For example, it is generally impossible to target someone the magician sees on a live television broadcast with a Path effect, though some Anarchs are able to push against the edges of this limitation by focusing their magic through ritually-prepared CCTV cameras. Indeed, for some Path effects, even line-of-sight is insufficient and the magician must come near the target or even physically touch her.

Rituals allow for greater range, but even they are limited in that the blood magician must supernaturally

On the Other Hand...

While the default assumption is that all ritual rolls are based on Intelligence + Occult, the Storyteller may, as an optional rule, replace Occult with some other Ability more appropriate to the ritualist in question or to the themes of the chronicle, as appropriate. For example, a Punk Sorcerer might replace Occult with Streetwise to represent the fact that his magic is based more on urban legends and contemporary folklore than on esoteric knowledge. A Hacktivist might replace Occult with Computer for rituals incorporated into computer programs or activated through the Internet. A Setite lector-priest or a Dur-An-Ki ashipu might eschew Occult in favor of a customized Expert Knowledge in Comparative Theology or Religious History. Absent Storyteller approval, however, all ritual rolls should use the Occult Ability.

identify a distant target. In ancient times, this could be achieved by invoking True Names, but the power of such naming has diminished over the centuries, and tonight, only spirits and similar creatures can be bound in such a manner. Many schools of blood magic traffic in ancient lists detailing the True Names of angels, demons, totems, and other spirits, especially the Tremere who have managed to eke the most power out of True Names in the modern nights. For beings of the material world, blood may serve instead. This is especially true for vampires, and a single point of vitae properly incorporated into a ritual can allow the ritualist to strike her target across any distance. For other rituals, affecting a target at a distance can be achieved through sympathetic magic.

Principles of Sympathetic Magic

The following lesser principles — Contagion and Sympathy are subsidiary to the Principle of Identity. Collectively, they describe what is known as sympathetic magic: the process by which a blood magician may target someone or something beyond his immediate presence.

The Principle of Contagion states that things that were once connected or once part of a single whole retain a link even after they are separated. The stronger the physical or emotional connection was during its existence, the stronger the link after the separation. Thus, when using a ritual against a distant target, it is helpful to incorporate something that was once a part of the target or, failing that, something that was once in the possession of the target. Ideally, the element incorporated takes the form of a point of the target's blood. Less intimate connections impose a progressively steeper dice penalty on the ritual roll.

Some rituals require a specific level of connection, usually a point of vitae. For rituals which do not specify the level of connection, apply the difficulty modifiers in the chart below. No combination of difficulty modifiers can raise the difficulty above 9 nor lower it below 4. If the difficulty modifier would normally raise the target number above 9, the ritual cannot be completed with such a limited degree of connection. The difficulty modifier imposed by the Principle of Contagion may be modified by application of the Principle of Sympathy.

Difficulty Modifier	Sample Connections
-1	A point of the target's blood or a severed body part at least as large as a finger.
No modifier	A lock of hair, a fingernail, or any bodily fluid other than blood. A magical item created by the target (such as through a Thaumaturgy ritual) also satisfies this degree of connection.
+1	A physical object which the target considers a prized possession.
+2	A physical object which was owned and regularly handled by the target within a week of casting. An item containing a recent fingerprint from the target. A point of vitae or a severed body part from a blood relative of the target.
+3	A physical object which was handled by the target at least once within the last week.
+4	A recent picture of the target.
+5	The target's name written on a piece of paper.

The Principle of Sympathy (also known as the Principle of Similarity) is often summarized by the aphorism that "like produces like." In other words, two things which are similar in some ways can, through magic, be made

Auspicious Elements

Below are some of the more common auspicious elements associated with the various blood magic schools.

Akhu: Early Egyptian iconography, altars and temples sanctified by prayers to Set or other Egyptian gods allied with Set, activities designed to show contempt for Egyptian gods opposed to Set, and, naturally, snakes of any kind.

Dark Thaumaturgy: "Satanic" imagery such as inverted pentagrams or depictions of the Horned Devil, bloody and defiled altars, activities designed to invoke revulsion in others, human sacrifices.

Dur-An-Ki: Babylonian astrology, ritual invocations of ancient Near Eastern deities, ecstatic activities, amulets and other talismans, temple settings ritually sanctified for the performance of Mesopotamian holy rites.

Hacktivist Thaumaturgy: Computers and other high-tech equipment, Hermetic symbols incorporated somehow into technological devices, any other auspicious elements of Tremere Thaumaturgy (so long as technology is incorporated into the element used).

Koldunic Sorcery: Elements drawn from Eastern European paganism, ritual animal sacrifices, sanctified "green spaces" that allow a direct connection to the earth, physical locations in Eastern Europe (or that are physically suggestive of the geography and cultures of Eastern Europe).

Nahuallotl: Mesoamerican imagery and iconography. Human sacrifices. Among Setite practitioners, Quetzalcoatl is elevated in importance over all other gods.

New Age Sorcery: Meditation, drugs, crystals, new age or trance music, elements associated with any specific New Age practices followed by the individual sorcerer, cultists (mortal or otherwise) devoted to the sorcerer's belief system.

Old Skool Sorcery: Ritual animal sacrifices, invocation of pagan deities, ceremonial daggers, self-inflicted wounds, outdoor environments that invoke Neolithic settings (caves, stone circles, groves, etc.).

Punk Sorcery: Deliberately staged violence, public acts intended to undermine authority figures, acts which defy conventional morality or aesthetics, sigils unique to the sorcerer (often inscribed in her own vitae), magical symbols and trappings randomly assembled from conflicting styles.

Sadhana: Hindu imagery and iconography, especially that pertaining to Shiva. Ceremonial fires. Ritual cleansing and meditation. Mortification of the flesh.

Tremere Thaumaturgy: Pentagrams or Seals of Solomon, alchemical formulas and alchemically significant elements (mainly mercury, silver, gold), candles, ritual use of blood, incantations or writings designed to invoke the symbology of the intended effect.

Wanga: Imagery associated with Voudoun, Santeria, Candomble, or Palo Mayombe. Morbid trappings and paraphernalia (bones, skulls, grave dirt, etc.). Wangateurs among the Punk Sorcerers deliberately play up the "Hollywood Voodoo" aspects of their rituals, while those of the Old Skool movement treat their religion with cold seriousness (as do, generally, Setites and Serpents of the Light who study this school).

to be similar in other ways. The "voodoo doll" fetishes associated with some Necromancy schools are a prime example of this principle—a doll is made to resemble the target of the vampire's ire, and accordingly, whatever is done to the doll also is done to the person it represents wherever she may be.

Generally, sympathy and contagion are used in tandem. The vampire must craft the effigy to be used in the ritual with an Intelligence + Craft roll (difficulty 8). At a bare minimum, the vampire must at least incorporate the target's name into the doll's creation, if only by carving or writing it somewhere on the doll's body, although clothing or bodily materials taken from the target and incorporated into the doll's construction are better. Each success on the Craft roll reduces the difficulty modifier on the subsequent Intelligence + Occult roll caused by a weak connection (as described under The Principle of Contagion) by 1. However, the successes on this roll cannot modify the difficulty by more than the vampire's rating in his highest blood magic path, nor can it reduce the penalty imposed by a weak connection below zero.

Principles of Ritual Construction

The following minor principles apply to the construction of rituals. While all of them inform the design of rituals in general, some will play a more important role in the development of a particular ritual than others. Likewise, individual Sorcery schools may find some principles to be more generally applicable than others. For the most part, these principles affect the aesthetics associated with the ritual, i.e. what a Tremere ritual looks like as opposed to what a Punk Sorcery ritual looks like. However, some of them do present optional mechanical rules which can affect ritual casting.

The Principle of Auspicion states that a ritual may be more successful when performed at an auspicious location or time or under otherwise auspicious circumstances. The more complicated these elements make the ritual to enact, the more powerful the ritual itself can be. Thus, a simple ritual might need to be performed at the stroke of midnight. A complicated ritual might need to be performed nude under a full moon at the stroke of midnight on the Winter Solstice. Each school of sorcery has certain elements or tropes considered to be supernaturally favorable for it. Any rituals adapted from other schools should be modified to include the appropriate auspicious elements.

The Principle of Complexity is related to the Principle of Auspicion and holds that the more powerful a ritual is intended to be, the more complex the activities used to invoke the ritual must be. Alternatively, the element of complexity might require the vampire to extend the ritual's casting over multiple nights or even weeks, or it might require him to do something objectively simple but which might be situationally difficult (such as "place a lit candle on your bare chest until it has melted completely"). In terms of ritual complexity, a simple ritual might require something as simple as spitting on the floor, while a complicated ritual might require the ritualist to keep a live spider under his tongue for the ritual's duration or to perform an incantation over bowl of vitae every night for seven nights.

The Principle of Inherency holds that, for purposes of ritual magic, an item known for a specific trait (whether it actually has that trait or not) can bestow that trait on another if the item is incorporated into the ritual. The more difficult it is to find an item with the appropriate trait and to incorporate it into the ritual, the more effective the ritual becomes. A simple ritual might require easily obtainable materials, such

Ritual Principle Bonus

While the Principles of Ritual Design do not offer direct mechanical benefits to the player, the following optional rule is available. If the player can demonstrate through evocative description how the character has used the Principles of Ritual Design to maximize the ritual's effectiveness, the Storyteller may grant bonus dice to the Intelligence + Occult roll. The player may describe in particularly vivid detail how she is incorporating the auspicious elements of her school into her work, how she has applied greater levels of complexity to the ritual, how she has incorporated elements with particularly important inherent properties and, if applicable, how any sacrifices made in the ritual have affected the character. No more than a +1 bonus per principle invoked should be available for such narration, with an additional +1 bonus available to players who perform truly memorable descriptions of the ritual's preparation and enactment.

as a live spider for Clinging of the Insect (see **V20**, p. 235) or a quantity of nightshade for the Touch of Nightshade ritual (p. 149). A complicated ritual might require more problematic materials like the ear of a still-living creature (in order to allow others to hear the vampire's astral speech) for Whispers of the Ghost (p. 149).

The Principle of Sacrifice states that the most powerful rituals are those which are fueled by the vampire's self-sacrifice. While most rituals do not require the expenditure of blood as Path powers do, some simple rituals do require blood, often in considerable quantities. More complicated rituals require more drastic sacrifices, such as the deliberate self-infliction of aggravated damage. Other extreme sacrifices do not harm the ritualist at all, at least directly. Instead, they risk some degree of moral or psychological damage to the vampire, whether it's the deliberate infliction of cruelty on an animal for Whispers of the Ghost or the brutal sacrifice of a child necessary for the Innocence of the Child's Heart ceremony (see p. 152). Generally, an action only counts as an extreme sacrifice if it is the sort of act that would result in a Degradation roll for vampires of Humanity 4 or higher.

Learning (and Subverting) Rituals

For loyal Tremere, rituals are fairly easy to learn... if one's superiors approve. Under the default rules for Thaumaturgy, a Tremere can essentially learn new rituals for free, but the player must role-play the experience of learning of the ritual's existence, requesting and gaining permission to learn the ritual, and actually spending time in-game mastering the procedures associated with the ritual. (The same rules apply for Giovanni and other bloodlines as indelibly associated with Necromancy.) Obviously, simply asking for a ritual is not a viable option for rogue Tremere among the Anarchs and the Sabbat, let alone thaumaturgists outside Clan Tremere. For such characters (and, with Storyteller approval, for Tremere loyalists who, for whatever reason, have elected to take the extraordinary risk of learning an unsanctioned ritual), the following alternative rules for learning rituals are available.

Optional Rule: Purchasing Rituals through Experience

The default assumption is that all rituals are free for the player but must be obtained through in-game activities, whether through research or horse-trading. However, individual Storytellers may not wish to devote a significant portion of game time to one character's efforts to learn a new ritual (particularly if the character is the only blood magician in the coterie and his efforts to learn a new ritual monopolize the group's time). Accordingly, the following optional rules allow for the player (with Storyteller approval) to simply purchase rituals with experience to represent knowledge obtained during down-time.

For loyalist Tremere, learning a new Thaumaturgy ritual costs ritual level x 2. The same rules apply for any character who has Necromancy as an in-Clan discipline and who wishes to learn a new Necromancy ritual. For all characters for whom Thaumaturgy and/or Necromancy are not Clan-favored, the cost is ritual level x 3. If the ritual is completely foreign to the vampire's blood magic school, the experience cost increases to ritual level x 3 for characters for whom Thaumaturgy and/or Necromancy are Clan-favored and to ritual level x 4 for all other characters, to represent the complications inherent in adapting foreign rituals.

The Storyteller may require the player to make some additional rolls before allowing the purchase. For example, she may require him to roll Charisma + Politics to represent his character sucking up to the Regent of the chantry or Intelligence + Investigation to represent research performed during downtime. Alternatively, she may require the player to roll his unmodified Mentor or Contacts rating as an in-character explanation for how the character obtained the ritual. Assuming these rolls are successful (and remember, these are matters for Storyteller discretion), the player then need only pay the experience cost to gain the ritual's benefits.

Acquiring a new preexisting ritual is a two-step process: First, the blood magician must learn that the ritual exists. This requires an extended Intelligence + Investigation roll with a difficulty of the ritual's level + 3. The total number of successes needed is equal to the ritual level x 5, with each roll representing one week of game time spent consulting with occult sources, poring over musty tomes, and all the other things required in the pursuit of "forbidden lore." If the character possesses appropriate Backgrounds (such as the Mentor Background — providing the mentor in question is a fellow blood magician), the player can add the Background rating to the dice pool for each roll.

If the ritual is associated with the blood magician's school, the next step is to master the ritual. While many rituals seem to be simple affairs to the uninitiated, every single aspect of a ritual must be exactingly reproduced for the magic to function properly. Even Anarch rituals which appear effortless and improvised to onlookers can incorporate dozens of gestures and movements; just because the observer cannot hear any incantations by the sorcerer doesn't mean he isn't *thinking* a lengthy phrase in Latin, Sumerian, or COBOL as a focus for his magic. Mastering a ritual requires an extended Intelligence + Occult roll with a difficulty equal to the ritual level + 3. The total number of successes needed is equal to the ritual level x 5. Each roll represents a week spent analyzing, memorizing, and experimenting with the ritual, although the character is free to do other things during the same period if he can devote at least a few hours every night to study. If the player dedicates his character's full attention to learning the ritual and doing nothing else except feeding, each roll may represent a single night.

Of course, the preceding rules presume that the vampire wishes to learn and master a ritual associated with his

own blood magic school. Acquiring and mastering a ritual associated with another school requires an additional step, as the vampire must adapt that ritual to fit the practices and themes of her own school. Or, as the younger vampires would put it, she must "hack" the ritual. This process makes mastery considerably more challenging. The total number of successes needed to adapt and master a foreign ritual increases to ritual level x 10. However, the player may subtract the character's total number of dots assigned to all of her blood magic paths from the number of required successes, to a minimum of half the normal number of successes. This reduction represents the extent to which greater fluency with one's own school makes it easier to adapt foreign rituals to it.

Thaumaturgy Paths

Mastery of the Mortal Shell

Folklore warns of the dangers of the witches' curse and the ability of warlocks to possess the weak and force them to do their bidding. During the early nights of Clan Tremere, Mastery of the Mortal Shell was developed to battle the Tzimisce and Gangrel marauders that attacked their chantries. The use of this Path was later expanded to enforce subservience among Gargoyles after their first revolt. A thaumaturge practicing Mastery of the Mortal Shell explores the fundamental workings of the body, granting control over the physical workings over her victim. Targets may include humans or any supernatural creatures with flesh such as vampires, werewolves, or mages, but not ghosts or demons, who are made primarily of spirit.

Lesser powers of this Path are clumsy in their control of the body, but become increasingly precise and complete.

A number of the powers in this Path are activated by touch. Depending upon the circumstances, the Storyteller may require a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll for the thaumaturge to make contact with the intended victim. Targeting rules (see **V20**, p. 274) apply for attacking a specific extremity if contact is not guaranteed.

Unless otherwise stated, the powers of Mastery of the Mortal Shell last a number of turns equal to the number of successes the thaumaturge scores on her activation roll. A victim may only suffer the effects of one power from this Path at a time. Thus, a thaumaturge may not enact Vertigo and Contortion at the same time upon the same victim. The most recent power activated replaces the effects of previous powers used upon the victim.

• Vertigo

The thaumaturge induces minor disorientation and dizziness through subtle manipulations in the subject's body. The physical discomfort is temporary and minor, but a clever thaumaturge can use it on rivals at the most inopportune times, causing them to lose their aplomb.

System: A touch from the thaumaturge invokes disorientation in her victim. If successful, all of the victim's physical actions are at +1 difficulty for the duration of the power. Subsequent uses of this Path may extend the duration, though the difficulty will not increase further.

•• Contortion

With a touch, the thaumaturge causes a group of her opponent's muscles to contract involuntarily, reducing it to twitching fits. This effect is extremely disconcerting to the subject, rendering the limb or muscle group unusable.

System: By making physical contact with one of the limbs of the target, the thaumaturge renders it useless for the duration of Contortion. A leg rendered useless makes standing difficult, and the victim suffers from increased difficulty (+1 to +3, depending on circumstances) to appropriate Dexterity challenges related to her leg, such as dancing or balancing on ledges. A contorted arm hangs lifeless at the subject's side. A useless head causes loss of speech and increases the difficulty of all Social rolls are at +2 as the facial muscles spasm out of control.

••• Seizure

Seizure causes the body to erupt into a fit of convulsions. All the muscles throughout the body tighten uncontrollably, while the victim foams at the mouth and spasms rack him with agony. A mortal may even choke to death as her tongue cuts off her air supply.

System: A light touch from the thaumaturge forces the very unpleasant effects of this power upon the target. For the duration of the seizure, a target's body writhes, tormenting her to the point of incapacitation. Victims suffer a +2 difficulty penalty to all physical actions. The victim also suffers one level of bashing damage every turn, as her body helplessly twists itself. At Storyteller discretion, the effects of this power may even cause death in extremely ill or wounded mortals.

Damage may be reduced as normal (although levels from armor do not apply).

•••• Body Failure

Thaumaturges wielding this frightful power gain devastating insights into the workings of the body, allowing a complete shutdown of its systems. This sudden

biological overload often proves fatal to mortals and damaging to other supernatural beings. Body Failure has been used throughout the ages to afflict horrific ailments in inconspicuous ways that suggest a stroke or heart attack.

System: The thaumaturge no longer needs to touch her victim to strike out with this level of mastery of the Path. She may affect any target within her line of sight, but she must keep visual contact with the victim at all times to maintain this effect. A successful activation of this power grants effects similar to Seizure, except that damage is lethal (and thus not soakable by mortals) due to complete mass tissue and organ failure. Additionally, the victim suffers a + 2 difficulty penalty to all actions.

The subject may resist the effects of Body Failure via a Stamina + Fortitude roll when the thaumaturge attempts to strike the target (difficulty equals the thaumaturge's current Willpower). Each success the victim gains on this roll reduces the duration of Body Failure by one turn.

••••• Marionette

The thaumaturge invoking Marionette gains such mastery over the body of others that she can magically seize control of another being and force her victim to act according to her own whims. This control is not as fine as the direct and personal command of the Dominate power of Possession, but the thaumaturge's true body is not as vulnerable during the manipulation. Once established, the Marionette victim is under the complete sway of the thaumaturge, forced to perform as the thaumaturge's macabre pawn.

System: The thaumaturge may affect any target within her line of sight, but she must keep visual contact with the victim at all times to maintain this effect. A subject may resist the effects of Marionette on a Stamina + Fortitude roll (difficulty equal to the thaumaturge's current Willpower) when the thaumaturge attempts to take control. Each success the victim gains on this roll reduces the duration of Marionette by one turn. Victims lacking Fortitude do not have the physical resistance to defy this effect.

For the duration of this power, the thaumaturge can cause the victim to perform any physical action, using the target's pools with a penalty of +2 difficulty to all rolls. The concentration this power requires also increases the thaumaturge's own difficulties by two for all other personal actions undertaken while manipulating the victim. To extend the duration of this control, the thaumaturge must make a second activation roll. Marionette does not rob the victim of her cognizance, only physical control over her body. During this time of thaumaturge's mastery, the target remains aware that some outside force is manipulating her physical actions, conscious that they are not her own. The victim may spend a point of Willpower to attempt to take a mental or social action, such as activating a Discipline or speaking.

Path of the Focused Mind

A would-be thaumaturge must possess a strong will and well-developed intellect to master the subtle art of Thaumaturgy. Practitioners of the Focused Mind greatly enhance their mental alacrity and readiness, allowing better comprehension of problems and situations. Thaumaturges, already mentally disciplined, become frightfully powerful in the realm of the cerebral when mastering this Path.

Developed by Melvin Liebknecht, a Tremere Kabbalah scholar, this Path of Thaumaturgy languished in obscurity until discovered in a lost chantry in Berlin after the end of the WWII. Interest in this Path quickly spread through the Pyramid as the adaptable Tremere realized its great potential and benefits. Unlike most Thaumaturgy, the powers of this Path do not require an action to invoke, although they still require the normal blood expenditure and Willpower activation roll. Thaumaturges with this Path may use any single power from this Path during a single turn.

• Readiness

Using Readiness makes the caster able to gain a quicker understanding of a predicament. Enhanced lucidity enlightens the caster, allowing increased cleverness and better reactions to changing situations.

System: This power is only usable on the thaumaturge herself. Every success on the activation roll adds one die to a special dice pool for the remainder of the turn. These dice may be used on any Wits-related rolls or actions that the thaumaturge performs during this turn. Alternatively, each die removed from the dice pool adds one to the caster's initiative rating.

•• Centering

By invoking this power, the thaumaturge causes a sudden, intense calmness in the subject by whispering soothing words to her. While under this serenity, the target is better able to focus on tasks at hand, ignoring distractions and annoyances, including grave bodily harm. Thaumaturges in fear of frenzy often use this power on themselves to stifle their own emotions and achieve a state of tranquility.

System: This power is usable on any one subject within earshot of the thaumaturge and lasts for one turn per success on the activation roll. During this period, the target is unaffected by any power or effect (with the notable exception of Elder disciplines) that reduces her dice pools. This includes wound penalties, situational modifiers, and Disciplines. Modifications to difficulty numbers still apply during this time, however. In addition, due to the unnatural serenity that this power bestows, the target receives two additional dice in all attempts to avoid or break frenzy.

••• One-Tracked Mind

By extending her powers to other individuals, the thaumaturge is able to fixate the subject on one action.

This single-mindedness of the target is so complete that they ignore everything else that occurs around them. Guards are easily distracted with this power, as their attention becomes fixated elsewhere, and research becomes a dedicated, focused task. Use of this power is sometimes colloquially referred to as "railroading someone."

System: This power may affect anyone who can hear the thaumaturge. Successful invocation makes the target unable to split any dice pools for multiple actions and unable to change tactics after actions have been declared. As a side benefit, the target reduces the difficulty of the declared action by one. Additional actions that the victim takes (from Celerity, for example) during the duration of this power must follow up upon their initial action, as they concentrate wholly upon this one idea. If the target wishes to attempt a different course of action, she must spend a point of Willpower per scene (or per turn in combat). The duration of One-Tracked Mind is one scene, or one turn per success on the activation roll.

•••• Dual Thought

The rigors of learning Thaumaturgy strengthen the mind and the will of a thaumaturge. As a result, those skilled with Thaumaturgy often have the ability to quickly assess a situation and calculate the options available to them. At this level of mastery of the Focused Mind, the thaumaturge is able to divide her attention to two completely separate tasks without penalty or distraction. As One-Tracked Mind forces the subject's attention into a single objective, Dual Thought expands the thaumaturge's concentration to the point that focus upon two goals is possible.

System: Successful use of Dual Thought allows the caster to take two actions without penalty during her turn. (Note that this power specifically lifts the restrictions of multiple actions detailed in **V20**, p. 248.) The extra action granted by this power must be a mental action, whether it's the use of Disciplines such as the use of Auspex or Thaumaturgy, or the contemplation of some problem. If the character is using both actions to solve a problem, she has two separate dice pools to draw from. These two actions happen at the same time, as determined by the initiative rating of the character. You may not use the extra action to re-cast Dual Thought.

••••• Perfect Clarity

Perfect Clarity brings about a Zen-like moment of focused insight for the thaumaturge as she gains a brief, perfect understanding of herself, the universe, and her place within it. This lucidity protects the thaumaturge from influences both internal and external; even the Beast within is unable to rage forth. Thought and action become one as a complete serenity of the mind descends upon the thaumaturge.

System: Perfect Clarity lasts for the duration of one scene, (or one turn plus an additional turn for every success on the activation roll if used while in combat). For this period, the thaumaturge has the difficulties of all actions reduced by two. The Kindred is immune to frenzy and Rötschreck from all sources, even supernatural triggers. Finally, any means to control or influence the thaumaturge suffer a +2 difficulty, including powers such as Presence, Dominate, and Dementation.

Path of the Levinbolt

Lightning has long been considered the dominion of the gods, but has traditionally been out of reach of thaumaturges due to a lack of understanding of the principles of electricity. As a result, this Path remained relatively obscure until the birth of modern science and the efforts of John Blackwood. The ample supply of electricity in the late 19th century meant that thaumaturges no longer had to wait until a convenient storm to charge their powers, but could gather the required electricity in mere seconds to direct as they chose.

Practitioners of the Path of the Levinbolt tend to cause a good deal of static electricity around them, even when not engaging their powers. Sometimes this plays havoc with cellular service, causes lights to flicker without reason, and computers to experience power surges in their presence.

A number of the powers in this Path are activated by touch. Depending upon the circumstances, the Storyteller may require a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll for the thaumaturge to make contact with the intended victim.

Targeting rules (see **V20**, p. 274) apply for attacking a specific extremity if contact is guaranteed.

• Flicker

Novice thaumaturges learn to freely absorb power around them through electrical outlets, circuits, or batteries. A user of this power can sense the current feeding into a specific electrical system and then draw it to her, effectively turning it off.

System: The thaumaturge simply glances at a target powered by electricity. Upon a successful activation roll, she can shut down an electrical device for ten minutes per success on the activation roll. The spark of electricity arcs from the device directly into the thaumaturge in a frightening display of mystical power. The source of this power is immediately known.

•• Spark

Novice thaumaturges can build up a tiny static charge, enough to make a noticeable snap with a touch. Such a discharge poses little threat to healthy targets, though the energy can ruin delicate electronics or stun an unlucky victim.

System: The thaumaturge simply touches a target (after the requisite blood expenditure and activation roll by the player) and releases the spark. The electricity can snap from any part of the caster's body, so a thaumaturge might give an unpleasant surprise to someone touching her. The resulting electrical discharge inflicts four dice of lethal damage to targets (difficulty 7 to soak), and short-circuits electronic equipment and devices not specifically grounded against lightning strikes.

••• Illuminate

Neonates sometimes derogatively refer to this effect as the "40-watt Tremere," right up until they've felt its sting. The thaumaturge summons enough electricity to cover her hand or arm in arcing bolts. This power can charge a battery, briefly run a small device, or even leave a nasty burn on a touched subject.

System: Each success scored on the player's activation roll translates to approximately one turn of power sufficient to run a handful of lights or a small electrical device. Alternately, the thaumaturge can shock someone by touch, as with the Spark power, but for eight dice of lethal electrical damage (difficulty 8 to soak).

The current created with this power is not strong enough to force its way through less-than-ideal

conductors, and thus simply inflicts electrical damage on raw metals, woods, or other matter in the form of a burn and discoloration. The thaumaturge can alternately allow the electricity to spark around her hand, eyes, or head; this creates illumination about equal to a dim light bulb, and lowers the difficulty of any Intimidation rolls by 2.

•••• Thor's Fury

The thaumaturge may strike her enemies from afar as though she were a god. She may direct an arc of lightning from her body to nearby targets.

System: The thaumaturge focuses her concentration upon her target and then directs hurled bolts via a Perception + Science roll (difficulty of 6 plus the range in yards/meters, maximum 4 yards/meters). Each success inflicts a level of lethal damage (difficulty 8 to soak). The source of this power is immediately known.

••••• Eye of the Storm

The thaumaturge becomes a shifting, sparking pillar of electrical power. The energy channeled in the Eye of the Storm shields her body from virtually any direct harm.

System: When a thaumaturge spends a Willpower point to invoke this power, she solidifies the stored electricity inside of her into a mystical barrier that completely surrounds her. The caster becomes immune to any ranged attacks. Metal weapons such as swords inflict injury as normal for the first strike, but are then melted from contact with the barrier, and the wielder takes a level of lethal damage. Enemies that dare to touch the caster suffer two points of aggravated damage (difficulty 8 to soak). Non-metal weapons, such as wooden stakes, are not affected by Eye of the Storm. This power lasts for a single turn, with each additional success on the activation roll extending this duration by one turn. Mental and social attacks may pass through this barrier.

Path of Spirit Manipulation

Created to replace the rituals practiced by Clan Tremere in the days when it was a band of mortal wizards, Spirit Manipulation is the art of forcing spirits into actions and situations that would normally be contrary to their nature. These spirits are not the wraiths controlled by Necromancy, but a manifestation of the great powers of the universe that the limited humanoid brain perceives as spirits. Some believe that spirits are tulpas—constructs of human will created by faith to explain how the universe manages to function. Spirit Manipulation forces these spirits into a grotesque mockery of their normal behaviors to achieve magical results in the material world.

Creating Spirits

Spirits are constructs born from the spirit realms and are known to those with Hermetic training as the Umbrood. These spiritual constructs are not sentient as traditionally understood by those that live in the physical world, but are reflections of the spirit world and perceived aspects of the universe interpreted in a way that limited mortal perception can understand it. As such, spirits come in a wide berth of different types and potencies. The following rules are a limited guide for creating spirits for **V20**.

First, define the concept of the spirit. Traditionally it is limited by a single category that you can describe with a phrase. Some examples might include: nature spirit (land, sea, wood, or desert), conceptual spirit (mathematics, war, or mechanics), or an inanimate object (a computer, a knife, or a piece of jewelry).

Next, determine the potency of the spirit by defining its rank (from 1 to 5). The rank of the spirit determines its Willpower score. If the spirit must engage in any test, her dice pool is twice its rank.

For each level of rank of the spirit, assign one Discipline power based on the concept. For example, a rank 3 Fire Spirit might possess three dots of Thaumaturgy: The Lure of Flames (**V20**, p. 218). Willpower fuels any special ability that a spirit might possess, and Willpower points are regained every 24 hours.

Finally, assign one Ability per rank of the spirit. A spirit of war might have Brawl, Melee, Firearms, Survival, or any number of abilities related to war or fighting. Each Ability adds two dice to its base dice pool of Willpower x 2.

• Hermetic Sight

The vampire can perceive the spirit world, either by gazing deeply into it or by seeing the presence of nearby spirits as a hazy overlay on the material world.

System: Hermetic Sight allows the thaumaturge to perceive the spirit realm interlaid over the material world for one hour. Each additional level of success on the activation roll increases the duration of this power by an additional thirty minutes.

•• Astral Cant

The languages of the spirit world are infinitely varied and mainly incomprehensible to mortal (and immortal) minds. Astral Cant does not teach the thaumaturge the tongues of the spirits, but it does allow him to understand them as they speak to him and to reply in their own languages. The use of this power is not always necessary; many spirits speak human tongues, but choose to feign ignorance when dealing with vampires. Spirits are not affected by Dominate, but may be manipulated by Presence. Some thaumaturges theorize that this is because spirits are not actually sentient as a vampire would understand the concept, but are manifestations based on the perception of those that are self-aware.

System: Astral Cant allows the thaumaturge to speak to any spirit visible via Hermetic Sight for fifteen minutes. Each additional level of success on the activation roll increases the duration of this power by an additional fifteen minutes to the duration.

••• Voice of Command

This is perhaps the most dangerous power in the Spirit Manipulation arsenal, for the consequences of failure can be particularly unpleasant. Voice of Command allows the thaumaturge to issue orders to a spirit, compelling it to heed her bidding whether or not it desires to do so.

Spirits compelled by this power are fully aware that they are being forced into these actions, and may well seek revenge on their erstwhile masters at a later time. Thaumaturges who issue commands above and beyond what their spirit servants are compelled to perform may find themselves ignored or mocked. A trickster spirit may agree to a situation to follow orders only to betray its master, leaving the thaumaturge in a situation of potentially fatal embarrassment.

System: The thaumaturge makes the normal opposed Willpower roll against the spirit. The target spirit resists with Willpower (difficulty of the thaumaturge's Manipulation + Occult). The degree of success the thaumaturge attains determines the complexity and severity of the command that she can issue.

Number of Successes	Effect
Botch	The spirit is immune to the character's commands for the rest of the night. It reacts however the Storyteller deems appropriate. Typically, the spirit is angry enough to seek revenge at the first opportunity. It may ignore, taunt or even attack the character, at the Storyteller's discretion.
Failure	The spirit is unaffected, and further attempts to command it are made at +1 difficulty (cumulative).
1 success	The spirit obeys a very simple command that is of no great inconvenience to it.
2 successes	The spirit heeds a relatively straightforward command that it is not innately opposed to performing.
3 successes	The spirit agrees to perform a moderately complex task that does not violate its ethics.
4 successes	The spirit consents to an extended or intricate task that does not place it in immediate danger.
5 successes	The spirit accepts a lengthy or nigh-impossible task, or one that means its destruction.

•••• Entrap Ephemera

This power allows a thaumaturge to bind a spirit into a physical object. This can be done to imprison the target, but is more often performed to create a fetish—an artifact that grants mystical benefits powered by the spirit. Fetishes created by this power are often unreliable and fail at inopportune moments, as the spirits within are understandably displeased with their situation and will take any opportunity to escape or thwart their captors. Lupines find it offensive for vampires to possess a fetish, and often they will frenzy simply at the sight of a vampire wielding one.

System: The thaumaturge must first locate a vessel symbolically aligned with the targeted spirit that will eventually become the fetish. Then she must command the targeted spirit to enter the vessel via an opposed Willpower roll. The target spirit resists with Willpower (difficulty equals the thaumaturge's Manipulation + Occult).

Should the thaumaturge succeed, she can create a fetish of a power level based on the number of successes achieved over the spirit, up to a level five fetish. For example, if the thaumaturge wins the opposed Willpower roll against the spirit by three successes, she creates a level three fetish.

Interactions between the Spirit Realm and the Physical World

The traditional laws of physics and reality are often bent to reflect the spiritual understanding of those that travel through the spirit realm. It might be a winter night in the physical world, but noon on a summer day in a specific section of the spirit realm. Typically, the usual banes of vampires, such as fire or sunlight, do not affect them in the exact same manner as in the material world. Visits to the spirit realms should be inherently challenging, but not instant death traps.

Storytellers are encouraged to subtly create spirit realms that are a metaphor for the real world. For example, a thaumaturge attempting to deal with a computer spirit might find herself in a spirit realm that mirrors a nightmare version of an office cube farm.

The environments in the spirit realms can directly affect those that are walking both worlds. If there is a wall in the spirit realm, a thaumaturge cannot simply walk through it unless she completely returns to the physical world. Conversely, she can venture into the spirit world, walk through the physical wall that isn't in the spirit realm, and then return to the physical world. Objects on both planes of existences are real to the thaumaturge. Spirit walls may impede her progress in the physical world, and spirits may strike her at will.

A thaumaturge must be careful to remember that inhabitants of the physical world and the spirit world can't see through to the other side and thus some conversations and actions will seem ludicrous. Storytellers are encouraged to remember to firewall the reactions of the NPCs and apply the proper consequences to the thaumaturge's actions. If she wanders out into the middle of a park babbling to the Spirit of the Oak Tree, other vampires and mortals would think she's crazy or dangerous.

Creating and maintaining a fetish is difficult; because of this, the number of fetishes a thaumaturge may create is limited by her Willpower. If the thaumaturge gives away said fetish, it still counts against her total available slots. She may only create an additional fetish when one of her previous fetishes has been destroyed.

A fetish grants a number of bonus dice to a specific skill comparable to the level of the fetish. For example, a healing spirit trapped inside a scalpel would grant extra dice (the level of the fetish) for any Medicine roll. The Storyteller always has final authority on what sort of fetish can be made.

A fetish is activated by rolling the user's Willpower (difficulty equals the fetish's power level + 3). A botch on this roll destroys the physical component of the fetish and frees the spirit that was trapped within.

••••• Duality

The thaumaturge can now fully interact with the spirit world — a strange place that only sometimes resembles the real world. While using this power, she exists on both planes of existence at once. She is able to pick up objects in the physical world and place them in the spirit world and vice versa. Beings and landscape features in both realms are solid to her, and she can engage in any manner of interaction. She can even use Thaumaturgy and other Disciplines in either world. This is not without its dangers. With a single misstep, the vampire can find himself trapped in the spirit realm with no way to return home. Several incautious thaumaturges have starved into torpor while trapped on the other side of the barrier that separates the physical and spirit realms.

System: The thaumaturge may interact with the spirit world for fifteen minutes. Each additional level of

success on the activation roll increases the duration of this power by an additional fifteen minutes. Duality can only be enacted while the character begins the process in the physical world. While in this state, the thaumaturge becomes susceptible to attacks from both realms and suffers from a +1 difficulty to all Perception rolls. The character is still considered to be in the physical world for purposes of basic physics (and common sense).

Spirits who have been previously angered will seek physical revenge on unwary thaumaturges using this power.

A botch on the roll to activate this power tears the vampire out of the physical world and traps him in the spirit realm. The way back the physical realm, if there is one, is left to the Storyteller's discretion, and may spark an entirely new story.

Thaumaturgy Rituals

Level One Rituals

Blood into Water

Mortals have discovered clever ways to use science and technology to discover hidden traces of blood in crime scenes. Kathryn Malcolm, a neonate Tremere in New York, realized that the police department was tracking a series of murders linked to vampires via blood evidence, and crafted this ritual to remove tainted evidence from a crime scene. Once the caster has completed this ritual, all spilled blood within the ritual's reach transmutes to water. This ritual is most frequently used to remove bloodstains, whether as a result of foul play or rites that involve blood.

System: The thaumaturge pours a cup of purified water through the fingers of her outstretched hand while chanting. The ritual transmutes all spilled blood within a radius of five feet/two meters per success on the activation roll. Blood in containers and in living things will not be affected — only spilled blood.

This power has no effect on blood used to create active or passive Discipline effects. Blood into Water could not be used to remove a ritual such as Ward Versus Ghouls (**V20**, p. 234) due to the magic properties of the ritual having transformed the blood, though it could be used to clean up a drawn blood circle used to bind a demon, so long as that binding is done and over with.

Blood Mastery

Kindred scholars urgently warn against allowing any blood magician to have access to your blood unless you have complete trust in her. A thaumaturge with a small quantity of vitae can focus its power into sympathetic forms. By destroying a point of blood from an enemy, the thaumaturge gains symbolic power over the target, which in turn allows her to manifest her supremacy over the victim in the next challenge.

System: The thaumaturge must mix a tiny quantity of her own vitae (a negligible amount, less than a point) with that of her victim, and then slowly burn it in a fire or boil the blood slowly over an open flame. The caster speaks the phrases of symmetry as she finishes. Once complete, the thaumaturge gains a limited magical mastery over the victim until dawn. In the next test that the caster initiatives against the victim, the caster automatically succeeds in the attempt.

If the task would require a roll, the caster garners one success automatically, but no more (and cannot roll or spend Willpower to improve the roll). This means that the caster is guaranteed a marginal success against his opponent, though it may not be in a fashion that the thaumaturge desires. For example, one success alone is not enough to completely mesmerize an enemy, but it might influence him briefly with Dominate. Similarly, if the victim takes some action first, Blood Mastery is of no help if the caster could not normally make a countering roll. For example, the caster would still be subject to an opponent's use of Presence, because he may not normally make a roll to resist. If the victim uses some Discipline that would require the caster to resist, though, then the thaumaturge automatically counters it and thus ends the power of the ritual.

Blood Mastery can only guarantee success in one limited endeavor—a thaumaturge cannot burn multiple points of blood to gain additional successes or success on multiple consecutive actions. Once the ritual is in place, it must be discharged before it can be invoked again against the same subject. Blood Mastery expires if its effects remain unused by sunrise.

Encrypt Missive

Letters were once the dominant form of communication and information collection. Cautious Kindred learned to either be discreet in their dealings on paper or to send blood-bound or Dominated personal messengers. Neither option was ideal when you needed to be explicit and ensure that *only* your intended recipient received the message. To insure that important messages remain secure against prying eyes, the Tremere utilized this ritual to encode documents magically. This ritual is not used as often in the age of instant electronic communications, but is occasionally used to communicate between chantries or to issue important edicts.

System: The thaumaturge writes the message in blood over the course of a night and speaks the name of the person or group that she wishes to read it. Only the writer and the target to which the letter is addressed can read the document. To any others who observe the letter, the writing appears to be gibberish. Obviously, this ritual may only be used for written communication. Encrypt Missive only works with the original document. If someone else tries to scan or copy the document, the magic holds and the message remains scrambled.

Impressive Visage

Beauty and sexual magnetism have always opened doors. Influence in the Ivory Tower is won via elegant social battles of wit, elegance, and charm. Apex predators navigate these choppy waters with sly smiles to obfuscate their intentions. Rumor has it that this particular ritual was developed by Aiden Balfour, a bitter, plain-looking Tremere tired of the local Toreador Harpy unduly influencing the Prince's favor with his pretty smile. When this ritual is cast, the thaumaturge gains a heightened degree of sexual attractiveness; she is much more desirable and commands attention as if she were a top model. For this ritual to take effect, the caster must wash her face with a point of virgin blood and place a sprig of dried mint in her shoe.

System: The caster gains two dice on all Appearance-related rolls for the duration of this ritual. This ritual lasts for a number of hours equal to the successes scored on the activation roll.

Learning the Mind Enslumbered

This ritual is used to determine the cause of torpor in a vampiric body or the cause of destruction in a Kindred's ashen remains. To conduct this ritual, the thaumaturge places a penny or other small coin over the eye of the torpid Kindred. He can then hear — in the vampire's voice — the cause of her cold rest. If all that remains of the body is ashes, the thaumaturge need only lay the penny in the remains to complete the ritual.

System: This ritual requires a half hour to cast, at the end of which the thaumaturge hears a ghostly message from the victim naming who she believes torpored or killed her. This is not a divination ritual, and therefore the information may not be accurate. If the culprit was disguised or hidden, the spirit of the victim will do her best to answer the question. This power has no effect on creatures other than Kindred.

Purify Blood

The Black Death killed more than seventy-five million people across Europe during the Dark Ages. Early experimentation showed that most diseases, even blood-borne ones, rarely have any effect upon Kindred, yet vampires *can* carry such diseases and pass them to their victims. This devastated private herds and caused a severe blood shortage that strained the Masquerade to its breaking point. There had previously been mystical methods of cleansing blood, but they were time consuming and complicated processes.

A solution came from the Tremere — then a struggling Clan seeking to buy their way into polite society — in the form of this simple ritual. The tainted blood must be decanted into a suitable container and then stirred with a special mixture of ash and crushed ginger as the thaumaturge chants the ritual incantation. The blood lightens slightly in color if the ritual succeeds, and the rite cleanses all poison or disease from the sample.

Purify Blood does not function on blood that's still in a creature's system. The ritual therefore cannot cleanse a human of disease or make drinking from such a vessel safe; it will only purify blood that is removed from the human first. Some vampires shun this ritual because of the extra work involved in securing blood without the Kiss, and the less-than-satisfactory taste (not to mention the lack of a warm, beating pulse) definitely puts off Kindred connoisseurs. For these reasons, Purify Blood remains a ritual of last resort during desperate epidemics and not a nightly staple.

System: Purify Blood functions on up to one point of blood. Because of the volume limitations, Purify Blood can cleanse only one blood point at a time. Poisons, diseases, and other mixtures disappear, while foreign substances bubble to the top and can be skimmed off. However, the ritual does not in any way change the potency of the blood; vitae can still cause a blood bond, and blood rendered acidic or caustic by a Discipline (like Quietus or Vicissitude) cannot be cleansed. This ritual cannot counter the Vaulderie (nor is it stealthy enough to perform unnoticed in the midst of such a rite). Rotten, solidified, or excessively befouled blood also vanishes if subjected to the ritual (at Storyteller discretion), so a vampire needn't fear gagging on old, dead blood.

Sanguineous Phial

The Followers of Set have long practiced an archaic version of this ritual during their religious rites and devotions to their dark god. The Tremere streamlined the ritual to allow them to quickly hold large quantities of blood for an indefinite amount of time without it spoiling. In modern nights, it is useful for Kindred who do not have the medical knowledge or technology required to preserve blood in a more mundane fashion. A side benefit to this ritual is that it works on Kindred vitae without severing the Principle of Identity (pp. 132-133). This allows a cagey thaumaturge to store the blood of her enemies and use it at just the right moment.

System: To prepare for this ritual, the thaumaturge buries a covered earthenware container for two nights and then unearths it. The following evening, she crumbles dried ash leaf into the empty canister and then whispers the proper incantation. Afterwards, she may pour blood into the vessel and then seal it closed with tallow melted from a candle. The blood will remain fresh until the seal is broken. After the container is opened, the blood begins to spoil at a normal rate. If the vessel is broken, the blood immediately deteriorates to the state it would have attained had it not been preserved at all. The vessel may be used more than once, but the ritual must be recast or the blood will go bad.

Sense the Mystical

Blood magic creates a resonance in the space in which is it cast. This mystical energy can be detected and measured. A thaumaturge can use this ritual to sense this resonance left by magical objects and effects. This ritual was originally developed to seek out non-Tremere thaumaturges and magical artifacts, and is commonly used among the younger Tremere seeking to make a name for themselves. The thaumaturge chants over a mystically prepared candle and then lights it. All sources of blood magic within the radius of the candle light glitters visibly to all present.

System: The effect of this ritual lasts for a number of hours equal to the successes scored on the activation roll. Sense the Mystical can detect Thaumaturgy, Necromancy, and similar blood magic if used within the radius of the candle light. This power does not distinguish between the different types of blood magic, nor does it pick up normal Disciplines. This ability lasts for one hour.

Level Two Rituals

Craft Bloodstone

A Bloodstone is a small pebble that has a sympathetic link with the thaumaturge that created it, allowing her to always know the direction and general distance of the object. This ritual was widely used by the Tremere during the many wars of the Dark Ages, when knowing the position of troops, messengers, and property could give

your side an incredible tactical advantage. As technology advanced with the invention of satellite communication and GPS systems, Bloodstones fell out of favor. However, more conservative thaumaturges have returned to this older method for tracking their allies, mumbling fears about "hackers" and "technomancers."

To create a Bloodstone, the thaumaturge must place a small pebble into a vial filled with three points of blood from any source. (This blood does not need to be human.) Once a night, over the course of three nights, she must recite an invocation over the vial. The bloodstone slowly absorbs a single point of blood each night, and the liquid becomes slightly clearer, until on the third night it becomes as transparent as water. The thaumaturge then has a mystical connection to the stone, and knows its relative position at all times.

System: A thaumaturge may create a number of Bloodstones up to her permanent Willpower rating. She instinctively knows the precise direction and general distance from the caster. If a Bloodstone is obfuscated or mystically hidden, the caster may follow the trail until she reaches the general location. Once there, the connection becomes blurred and she can no longer quite feel the Bloodstone. A Bloodstone that is destroyed severs its connection to the thaumaturge immediately, often with some form of painful backlash (which is distracting, but not damaging).

Extinguish

Fire is a primal fear for Kindred. It triggers the Beast and expels reason. Some elders still shiver when they recall the dark nights of the torch-wielding Inquisition. This ritual eliminates some of the threat fire poses. The caster is able to douse dangerous flames, leaving vampire hunters quite surprised when their torches and brands are no longer effective tools.

System: Casting the ritual requires that the thaumaturge recite an incantation and then pinch out a candle's flame while spitting on the floor. Once completed, for the rest of the night, the thaumaturge may speak a single magical syllable to automatically extinguish a single fire up to the size of a bonfire. This power may be used a number of times equal to the number of successes on the activation roll for the ritual. The casting of this ritual may trigger a Rötschreck check (see **V20**, p. 299).

Illusion of Peaceful Death

The Masquerade can be difficult to maintain with factions of warring vampire coteries fighting for dominance and resources. A bloody murder at the wrong time can draw undue attention from the police to an already complex situation. A Tremere from Chicago created this ritual to distract local police from looking too closely at the victims of vampire attacks. This ritual heals obvious wounds on a corpse, causing a body to appear as though it died a natural death.

System: The caster must have a pristine feather soaked in the blood of a good man that died peacefully. She must carefully dust the corpse with it while chanting the phrase "It must have been Frank's time to go. At least he went out in his sleep." This ritual does not add blood to a corpse, but it does reduce the chance that anyone will notice how much is gone. The body must still have at least half its original blood for this ritual to succeed. This increases the difficulty of any investigation powers or abilities used on the corpse by one per success on the ritual.

The Jinx

Some historical records suggest that the Jinx could be one of the oldest rituals of blood magic in existence. This ritual is used to punish the enemies of the thaumaturge without directly attacking them or leaving behind evidence. The Jinx requires a point of blood, and either a part of the victim such as a lock of hair or an item of significance to her in order to properly connect the victim with the power behind the ritual.

The thaumaturge must meditate for ten minutes upon her hatred and anger toward the victim and then burn the spell's components. Once completed, the victim is vexed with bad luck, causing her to fail in a mundane task. This can cause anything from minor typographical errors to automobile accidents, depending upon how the thaumaturge jinxes his mark.

System: The thaumaturge must concentrate his anger toward the victim while burning an object that has a psychic resonance with the intended target as per the Principle of Identity (pp. 132-133). Each success gained on the activation roll for the casting of this ritual causes an automatic failure for the next roll the jinxed character makes, regardless of the outcome. If the caster achieves four successes on the activation roll, then the next four rolls for the jinxed character fail regardless of the outcome. The Jinx does not cause a botch, just a simple failure. If the Jinx is applied to a contested or extended action, the roll simply yields no successes for the current turn until the number of pending failures is expended.

Oinos of Dionysus

This ritual allows the thaumaturge to ritually brew a special cask of spiced *oinos*, an ancient Greek wine believed to have been created by the god Dionysus. Mortals that

consume this wine feel a pleasant drowsiness, vague ethereal happiness, and arousal, until they eventually lose consciousness and sleep for the remainder of the evening. They awake to vague pleasant memories, completely forgetting the details of everything that happened the night before.

A draught of the Oinos of Dionysus serves to protect the Masquerade at special parties where vampire guests wish to feed in the open. Vampires that drink from mortals tainted with the mystical *oinos* feel a slight buzz — not strong enough to be considered intoxicated, but just enough to get a taste of nights when they still breathed and hungered for appetites other than blood.

System: The caster must mix at least one point of his blood with the wine and spices. Once completed, the *oinos* must be ingested to take effect. After imbibing the *oinos*, a mortal must make a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to take any action, as she is overcome by an artificially induced lethargy. This effect lasts a number of hours equal to the number of successes achieved on the activation roll. Subjects may resist this effect by scoring at least three successes on a Stamina roll (difficulty 8). Vampires and other supernatural creatures are unaffected by the Oinos of Dionysus, as their blood is too potent to be overpowered by this concoction.

Vampires that feed from a mortal under the effects of the Oinos of Dionysus feel a similar effect, but not one that overpowers them or impairs them. They feel an artificially inflated sense of happiness and remember nights when they were a mortal. In an emergency, the vampire under these effects can expend a blood point to flush the toxin from her system.

Whispers of the Ghost

Communication with the physical world is difficult while astrally projecting. Astral travelers typically must spend a point of Willpower to manifest visually as a ghostlike shape in order to communicate, and this can strain the strength of even the hardiest of Kindred. The Tremere spent decades attempting to overcome this taxing cost of one of their primary Disciplines, and eventually created Whispers of the Ghost as a way to sidestep the costly requirements of astral communication. Upon completing this ritual, the thaumaturge may communicate from her Psychic Projection form into the material world. The caster can speak with anyone she encounters, but her words come as faint whisperings. People who hear these susurrations often mistake them for the words of ghosts or spirits. While astrally traveling, the thaumaturge must grip the ear of a still-living creature in the left hand of her physical body.

System: The caster must meditate for fifteen minutes in complete silence. Then she must sever the ear of a still-living creature and hold said ear in her left hand before using Astral Projection (**V20**, pp. 138-139 — the thaumaturge must possess Astral Projection in order to use this ritual). The thaumaturge may speak to the physical world in a ghostly whisper. If she wishes to be seen, she must spend a point of Willpower to manifest as normal, but that cancels the ritual. Should the "donor" of the ear die, the ritual immediately ends. Loss of morality may apply if the donation was not voluntary.

Level Three Rituals

A Touch of Nightshade

Legends of the deadly poison nightshade stretch back to antiquity when it was used to weaken the legions of Marcus Antonius during the Parthian Wars. This ritual builds on these stories to create a poison that can punish a single victim, Kindred or kine, with only a touch.

The caster must anoint her hands with the bitter extract of nightshade before conducting this ritual, and then engage in skin to skin contact with her intended victim. Within half an hour, the victim begins to suffer effects that mirror that of actual nightshade poisoning. Some of the symptoms include dilated pupils, sensitivity to light, blurred vision, headaches, confusion, and convulsions.

System: This ritual creates a skin-contact poison that may only be used once before it turns inert. If the poison is not used by the end of the evening, the power fizzles and the poison is rendered useless.

The thaumaturge must apply the mystical poison to her own skin (which is immune to the poison) and then touch her intended target. The Storyteller may require a Dexterity roll or a Manipulation roll to touch the victim, depending upon the circumstances. Once per night, until the potency of the poison fades, the victim must make a Stamina + Fortitude (difficulty 8) check to resist the effects of the poison. With three or more successes, the target resists the toxic effects of the poison, but still suffers from minor headaches and feels that something is wrong. Otherwise, the victim suffers an extreme reaction to the poison, causing sweating, blurred vision, and convulsions. The difficulty for all rolls for the remainder of the evening is increased by one. (Remember that Kindred sweat blood! This can be a real problem for Kindred trying to preserve the Masquerade.)

The numbers of successes on the activation roll for the ritual determines the potency of the poison. Each success adds an additional night of effectiveness for the poison.

The effects of this mystical poison may be countered by the ritual Purity of the Flesh (**V20**, p. 232).

The Bottled Voice

To rob an enemy of her voice strikes into the heart of her identity. This ritual is often used as a public punishment for those rebel souls that refuse to moderate their behavior in court or Elysium. The victim must be immobilized as a crystal bottle is placed over her heart while the caster chants the incantation that draws out the target's voice. Next, the thaumaturge must seal the crystal bottle with wax to trap the voice and complete the ritual. Afterwards, the victim is no longer able to speak or make any sort of verbal sound. This curse can seriously limit a Kindred's powers. Without the ability to speak, disciplines such as Dominate or Presence may be useless to the target, as are blood magic rituals with a verbal component.

System: To cast the ritual, the thaumaturge must immobilize the victim. This can be done via staking or binding the target. The caster must have unfettered access to the victim while he attempts to draw forth the voice. Each point of Willpower the victim currently possesses extends the required casting time by fifteen minutes. Once the ritual is complete, the crystal bottle contains the essence of the victim's voice, and she may not speak nor make any verbal sound until the seal or the crystal bottle has been broken. The death of the thaumaturge does not break this curse.

Inscription

Blood magic is the ultimate advantage in the Jyhad, but not everyone can (or is allowed to) learn Thaumaturgy. The thaumaturge can craft an annotated version of a ritual, fueled with her blood, to make the formula accessible to someone else.

Clan Tremere created this ritual as an aid to teach their Apprentices the basics of blood magic by practicing a specific ritual. They later used Inscription to provide a one-time ritual advantage to their allies, allowing the Tremere to force a dependence upon them for magic.

The Inscription ritual allows the thaumaturge to cast any first or second level ritual onto a page or other flat surface (something portable and easy to fold is preferred). A reader can then unlock the power of that ritual by reading the inscription and following its instructions. The scribe uses her blood as a base for the ink, and her vitae's power remains in the mixture to help fuel the ritual. An inscribed ritual is in imperfect form and cannot be used to learn Thaumaturgy. It's a simplified set of instructions, with the scribe's vitae overcoming any omissions or sloppiness on the part of the practitioner.

System: A thaumaturge who knows the techniques of Inscription can write an abbreviated form of any first or second level ritual that she knows, at a cost of two blood points. Anyone who can read the language used may then recast the ritual later. Casting the ritual from the notes requires the use of the usual components and time, as well as an Intelligence + Occult roll, but the caster need not have any knowledge of Thaumaturgy. Once an inscription is complete, the power of the writer's vitae is trapped in the object; her maximum blood pool is effectively reduced by one until the inscription is used. After use, the inscription dries into a fine, illegible ash, with all the power expelled from the ink. The scribe can use the inscription himself (which is rather pointless) or give it to someone else.

It is well known in magical circles that the blood powering Inscription can be used for links of Sympathy and Identity, and an incautious thaumaturge could find her blood in the hands of an enemy who can use it against him. To prevent an inscription from reaching the wrong subject, many scribes also use the Encrypt Missive on their enchanted notes to ensure that only the intended recipient may use this ritual.

Rutor's Hands

The creation of life, twisted and obscene as it might be, has long been a goal of some thaumaturges. While Gargoyles and homunculi are among the more well-known creatures created by Thaumaturgy, the Rutor's Hands are a more obscure and horrifying creation. A thaumaturge of sufficient will can pluck out her own eye and set it atop one of her own severed hands and animate this thing as a scurrying, malevolent spy. The eye rests on the back of the hand and swivels about to watch its surroundings, while the hand scuttles about like a desiccated spider. The construct obeys the will of its owner and can relay what it sees and hears (even though it has no ears) back to its master, as the thaumaturge desires.

System: The casting of this ritual requires that the thaumaturge cut off her hand and pluck out her eye at the conclusion of this ritual; this causes five-levels of unsoakable aggravated damage. Once this damage is healed, the Tremere regenerates her hand and eye, though the ghastly homunculus may still prowl. Completing this ritual may also require a Willpower roll at the Storyteller's discretion, simply to carry out the painful finale. The animate hand has one health level of its own and moves about with the equivalent of two dots in each Physical Attribute and in Perception (see p. 108). The caster mentally directs the thing's movement at will (so long as the thaumaturge remains conscious, of course). The Hand must have one point of blood each week, or else it crumbles to dust.

Likewise, if the hand is exposed to sunlight or fire, it vanishes with a squeal, leaving behind a putrid stench.

Soul of the Homunculus

A thaumaturge in need of assistants for research work cannot always rely upon the loyalty of apprentices, but who doubts the loyalty of one's own flesh? A homunculus is a tiny creature crafted out of the caster's blood and tissue and invested with life via Thaumaturgy. Crafting a homunculus takes several hours of uninterrupted work, and a thaumaturge can have only one homunculus at a time.

The horrid little entity takes shape in a bubbling morass of oil, blood, denuded bone, and chunks of the caster's body. At the conclusion of the ritual, the homunculus crawls from its fatty birthing caul to serve its master. It can move about under its own power, and may be used as a spy or a means to fetch materials. The homunculus acts according to its master's orders, which may be issued by thought as long as the beast is in its creator's presence. Over time, some homunculi may develop their own personalities and goals.

System: A homunculus (see p. 107) has two health levels and two dots in each Physical Attribute. It works much like a limb of the creator, as the homunculus only moves or acts if the caster so wills it. Homunculi are damaged by sunlight and fire like Kindred. A homunculus, though created from the caster's flesh, is a separate physical entity, and thus does not count as an arcane connection, nor do its bodily fluids count as its creator's blood.

Transubstantiation of Seven

The Tremere hold a special loyalty to House and Clan, but the extent of this loyalty and the means by which it is garnered remain a secret to the Kindred at large. In reality, every Tremere Apprentice holds a partial bond to the Council of Seven through their mixed blood.

After the Embrace, a Tremere neonate undergoes a formal oath-swearing of the Code of Tremere. No magic compels that oath, but the presiding regent (or higher ranking Tremere) ends the formality with the Transubstantiation. The caster fills a large chalice with his own blood and intones the syllables of the ritual. The neonate, still grappling with the new phenomenon of blood-thirst, drinks the entire contents of the chalice. As the blood enters and spreads through her system, the rite mystically transforms it into the blood of the Council of Seven.

By this means, the Tremere place each neonate one step toward a full bond with the council, without the risk of having enemies steal the council's blood. Partaking of the Transubstantiation is considered a requirement for a fledgling to be recognized socially as a true member of the Tremere Clan.

Those who undergo the ritual, and indeed, many who have the ability to perform it, know little of its mystical design or purpose. Obviously, the transmuted blood is that of the Council of Seven — but how vast are their stores that they can transfuse neonates at the whims of those conducting the ritual? Where does the neonate's blood go? Whispers of a hidden vault beneath Vienna with labeled, preserved vials of vitae from every Kindred who has ever undergone this ritual can't possibly be true... can they?

System: The caster of the Transubstantiation must sacrifice a point of her own blood. The blood placed in the chalice remains unchanged until after it's imbibed and then spread throughout the subject's system, at which point it takes on the properties of the Council of Seven.

This causes one step toward a blood bond to the whole council, but guarantees that the councilors' vitae cannot be stolen. Because the blood is already in the subject's system, it counts as his own vitae if it is later drained out.

In truth, there is no physical requirement that this rite be used on a new neonate. A rare few Tremere neonates escape the process. Theoretically, the rite could also be used to generate a stronger bond in older Tremere or even in ghouls or Kindred of other Clans. Kindred of the 14th or 15th generations, ghouls, and revenants cannot use this rite — their blood is not sufficiently strong enough to channel the councilors' power.

Level Four Rituals

The Curse Belated

The training of a ghoul to serve the needs of a thaumaturge can take years. Some use this process to weed out undesirables and test potential Embrace candidates. The amount of effort involved inspired the creation of the ritual known as the Curse Belated. By performing this ritual on a ghoul, the caster invests a portion of her power so that, should the unthinkable happen, her thrall shall be resurrected as a vampire.

This ritual was originally used by the sorcerers of the Assamites and the Followers of Set. Clan Tremere has an organized system of schooling their apprentices, and while most are forever regulated to the position of research assistant, some were important enough that elders sought out and converted this ritual to preserve those that they put so much time into.

System: The thaumaturge must first prepare a brand with her sigil. She must feed her ghoul a point of blood while chanting the incantation, and then seal the covenant by branding her sigil onto the body of her thrall. The thaumaturge loses access to one permanent point from her blood pool until this ritual is triggered. The moment that the ghoul's heart stops beating, the stored vitae inside her body activates and resurrects her as a full-fledged vampire. Once "Embraced," the sigil disappears and the empty spot in the caster's blood pool unlocks, allowing her to once again spend that blood point. The caster is immediately aware that the ritual has been triggered and that her former ghoul is now dead and might be her new childer. (Though she can sense the ritual's activation, the thaumaturge may have no way to know whether the former ghoul managed to survive the process.)

Track Transgressor

Transgressor is the term for outsider thaumaturges or rogue Tremere that use blood magic to attack the Ivory Tower. Track Transgressor was designed to track these enemies of the Camarilla. Clan Tremere vigilantly hunts these enemies to protect the Camarilla from mystical assaults (or so it claims). Skeptics whisper that the Warlocks simply don't like the competition.

System: To cast the ritual, the thaumaturge must locate a site where Thaumaturgy has been cast within the past twenty-four hours. She must then spill her blood (spending a blood point) upon the ground while reciting the proper incantation. Bloody footprints that are only visible to the caster appear on the ground and lead away to the transgressor. After casting this ritual, the Tremere is able to flawlessly track down the transgressor until dawn. This tracking follows the exact path that the magus took after leaving the area where the magic was used. This ritual may track down only Thaumaturgy and related rituals, not Necromancy or other types of magic.

Infirm Inert

Amongst the vast arsenal of mystical powers of Kindred, perhaps the most important is the ability to leverage blood to heal wounds that would stagger or kill mortals. Kindred can quickly knit and heal their injuries from abrasions, lacerations, and even the loss of appendages. This ritual allows a thaumaturge to transmute a drop of her blood into a mystical poison that temporarily blocks her victim's ability to use her vitae for healing. Before casting Infirm Inert, the thaumaturge must imbibe a small quantity of blood laced with laudanum and then meditate for twenty minutes. Finally, she must expel a drop of blood into the palm of her hand. The next Kindred the caster touches before dawn suffers the effects of the ritual.

System: Infirm Inert creates a skin-contact poison that may only be used once before it turns inert. If the poison is not used by the end of the evening, the power of the ritual fizzles and the poison is rendered useless. The thaumaturge must apply the mystical poison to her own skin (she is immune) and then touch her intended target. The Storyteller may require a roll to touch the victim, depending upon the circumstances.

Upon skin contact, Infirm Inert temporarily cancels the victim's ability to heal, though she may not be aware of this until she actively attempts to use her blood to do so. Victims may spend a point of Willpower to ignore this effect for one turn. When this ritual expires, all wounds may be healed according to the type of damage suffered, as normal. Each success on the activation roll for the ritual adds an additional night of effectiveness for the poison. The effects of this mystical poison may be countered by the ritual Purity of the Flesh (**V20**, p. 232).

Innocence of the Child's Heart

It is difficult to be subtle when your fellow predators can sense your motivations. Innocence of the Child's Heart masks the aura of the caster from the Auspex power of Aura Perception. Any who use that power on the caster will perceive a white aura, untainted by any signs of vampirism. This ritual requires a high price: the sacrifice of a mortal child.

System: Innocence of the Child's Heart requires the ritualistic sacrifice of a mortal child and the harvesting of her heart. The thaumaturge must dip a beloved toy that once belonged to the child in the heart's blood. The toy will quickly absorb all of the blood until it appears to be clean again. As long as the caster carries the toy, her aura will be pure white untainted by any signs of vampirism. The duration of the effect is one week, plus an additional week per success on the activation roll. This horrific ritual imposes an extreme cost on the caster's Humanity.

Mirror Walk

Practitioners of Astral Projection understand that there are multiple layers to the universe. A Malkavian thaumaturge obsessed with mirrors is rumored to have created this ritual, allowing her to travel from place to place in the material world. Mirror Walk creates a sympathetic link between two mirrors, allowing the caster to travel between them as long as they are within a mile of each other.

System: The thaumaturge must create two identical mirrors of the appropriate size made with silver. She

must soak both mirrors in two points of her own blood and chant over her creation for three nights to create a special resonance link between the two objects. Once completed, the thaumaturge may stand before either mirror and recite the mystical password to open a magical gate between the two mirrors. Such powerful magic cannot be done swiftly, as it requires three turns for the portal to open. The glass ripples and shimmers when ready, and then the caster may step through. She may take one passenger with her on this trip, but she must act swiftly, as the gateway closes after 2 turns. If the thaumaturge or her passenger is delayed, they may become trapped between locations and lost in another realm.

Scry

Scrying is the practice of remote viewing via a reflective, translucent substance such as water. The thaumaturge must craft a wide silver bowl and then fill it with purified spring water mixed with a drop of owl's blood. Next, she must concentrate upon her intended target and gaze into the bowl. If successful, the caster can see and hear what is happening around the target as though she were personally there.

System: Once the bowl and water is prepared according to the specifications, the thaumaturge must concentrate for a minute before attempting to scry her target. This ritual lasts for a number of hours equal to the successes for the activation roll. The thaumaturge only has to concentrate during this duration to view scenes through the water. If a location is the center of the Scry, this location cannot be changed throughout the duration of the ritual. The caster cannot use Auspex powers, Thaumaturgy, or similar mental Disciplines through the Scry.

If the caster is attempting to scry an item or place, she must be familiar enough with it to have formed a psychic attachment with it. If the caster intends to scry upon a person, she might have in her possession an object with a psychic resonance with the target (p. 133).

Stolen Kisses

Thaumaturges cast this ritual when they do not wish to feed by mouth. Instead, Stolen Kisses allows them to drain small portions of vitae through other parts of a vessel's body. Some vampires prefer the strong handshake in a crowded room. Sadists enjoy choking vessels, providing a double pleasure of asphyxiation and the flush of new vitae coursing through cold veins. Others seek to relive mortal experiences by draining

blood from a vessel during sex. Victims from this ritual are not immediately aware that blood is drained from their bodies, but will experience a slight sensation of dizziness and light-headedness. This ritual requires the caster to carry a "witch's kiss" — a thistle steeped in the blood of a vampire — somewhere on his person

System: The thaumaturge must first make a small incision on his body where she intends to make physical contact with a vessel. Once the ritual is cast, the wound knits itself closed and then opens to create a lip-and-mouth mystical orifice that when pressed against a vessel's flesh will drink one blood point every other turn from the victim as long as contact persists. After the second point of vitae is consumed, a vessel is likely to feel woozy, while taking five blood points can cause the victim to black out from the substantial lack of blood in her body. Stolen Kisses remains active for one night. Note that the thaumaturge does not cause ecstasy or rapture when taking blood in this manner, as he would if he fed on a vessel normally.

Unweave Ritual

Thaumaturges have long used their powers to inflict harm upon those that have offended them or compete against their interests. Often, it is a rival thaumaturge that is the most dangerous and willing to strike out against a blood magician. Unweave Ritual allows a thaumaturge to identify the enemy ritual under which she labors and then create a countering blood magic ritual to unweave it. Thaumaturges skilled in this magic learn general principles to confound other rituals, shrug off their effects, or collapse them prematurely.

System: First, the caster must figure out what ritual currently afflicts her. If she possesses the ritual, this is automatic. Otherwise, this may require some research via an Intelligence + Occult roll with a difficulty base of 4, plus 1 for every level rating of the ritual. Next, the caster must secure a component that would be used in the casting of the offending ritual, then destroy it in some fashion. Her successes subtract from the successes scored by the original caster; if she manages to wipe away all of the successes, the offending ritual immediately ends, with all concomitant effects. Thus, a quick end to Bind the Accusing Tongue (**V20**, p. 230) would allow the victim to speak ill of her enemies again, but a premature end to a Blood Contract (**V20**, p. 239) would painfully shove her into torpor.

Only rituals that have a duration can be unwoven. For instance, a thaumaturge who has thrown off a blood bond through Abandon the Fetters (below) is not constantly under the effects of that ritual. Once the ritual is complete, the bond is gone and the ritual is done. However, a thaumaturge suffering from The Bottled Voice (p. 150) would be considered to be under the duration of the ritual as long as the crystal bottle remained sealed, so it could be unwoven. Note that a thaumaturge can only unweave a ritual on herself, not one on someone else. A thaumaturge suffering from multiple rituals must unweave each one separately. Multiple unweavings can be accumulated against a ritual so long as the appropriate time and components can be acquired.

Level Five Rituals

Abandon the Fetters

Created by Clan Tremere during the Anarch Revolt, Abandon the Fetters shatters the blood bond between master and thrall through a grueling, excruciating process that lasts an entire night. The thaumaturge forms a bond to the thrall and master by mixing a concoction made from blood from all three of them and placing it in a glass container. Next, the caster must exsanguinate and excoriate the thrall. The exact method is determined by the ritualist's individual style: some prefer mortification with a whip, while others might apply brands. Once the subject is almost dead, the caster shatters the glass container, spilling the blood to the ground and snapping the thread of the bond. The mixture of blood evaporates in a hissing, scalding steam, and the subject is freed.

Some princes forbid the practice of this ritual in their domains, believing that it could be a threat to the Second Tradition for a thaumaturge to undo one of their punishments.

System: The thaumaturge must have one point of blood each from himself, the thrall, and the subject's master. (If the caster happens to be the subject or regnant, no additional blood is needed.) The excoriation causes three levels of unsoakable aggravated damage to the subject as flesh is flayed or burned away. The final venomous steam inflicts an additional level of unsoakable aggravated damage on both the caster and the subject. The subject loses a permanent point of Willpower, but if the ritual succeeds, the blood bond dissipates immediately. However, this offers no protection against the formation of another, later bond. Abandon the Fetters may not be used to break the vinculum of a Vaulderie or the effects of the Transubstantiation of Seven ritual (p. 151).

Cobra's Favor

During the war between the fledgling Camarilla and Clan Assamite, there were a vast number of casualties. The Tremere created this ritual as a precaution against being diablerized by their many enemies, especially

the Assamites, who seemed to delight in targeting the Warlocks. Some historians have speculated that Cobra's Favor was the first of many thaumaturgical experiments that eventually lead to the ritual that cursed the Assamites at the signing of the Treaty of Tyre.

Cobra's Favor manipulates the vitae of the caster, causing it to burn with a toxin that causes horrific damage to anything that consumes it. The ritual requires an herbal poultice and the venom of a snake to be mixed with some of the thaumaturge's blood.

System: By spilling one point of blood into a prepared container and combining it with the necessary herbs and poison, the thaumaturge recites an incantation, willing her magic into the concoction until it turns jet black. The caster must ingest the elixir for the ritual to take effect, suffering one level of unsoakable aggravated damage in the process. Afterwards, for the next week, anything that consumes the blood of the caster suffers a level of aggravated damage per point ingested. Each additional success on the activation roll extends the duration of the ritual by an additional week.

Court of Hallowed Truth

House and Clan Tremere have long utilized this ritual for tribunals and internal matters. Recent nights have seen a number of Princes call upon Tremere to use the ritual within their political halls in exchange for favors. Casting this ritual is an expensive and lengthy process, but there are always those willing to pay the price for the added assurance. Unbiased testimony and blatant truth become standard within the court, and many connivers and liars have betrayed their own plans under the effects of this power.

To cast this ritual, the thaumaturge must place a skull and a pair of crossed bones upon every entry to the room, including windows. Once the court is assembled, the caster must then spend a point of blood at each of the entries into the room to symbolically seal the room from falsehoods. This ritual can be quite costly if the ritual is cast in a large room with multiple entrances and windows.

Several Princes have come to rely too much on this ritual, much to their undoing, as either the Prince becomes preposterously indebted to the Tremere or other Kindred resent her heavy-handed tactics and refuse to attend meetings. This power invariably erodes the power of Princes who rely on it, though some are too short-sighted to understand this.

System: Once the ritual is complete, all who enter the room are bound to abide by the truth-telling edict it enforces. No falsehood may be spoken, and direct questions from the presiding judge or power are answered candidly with no omissions or deceit. The magic persists within the room for the length of one week. Each additional success on the activation roll extends the duration of the ritual by an additional week.

Nectar of the Bitter Rose

A secret known only to the elder Tremere and vile diablerists, Nectar of the Bitter Rose breaks the usual constraints of diablerie, allowing multiple vampires to share in the fruits of a victim's power. This ritual is considered a dark stain from the Tremere's past, and evidence of any knowledge of this ritual would be cause for scandal in the Camarilla.

System: The thaumaturge must restrain the victim in some fashion while casting this hour-long ritual over him. She must chant the proper incantations while her coterie of would-be diablerists taunt the victim over his impending doom. While distracted, the caster mystically identifies different aspects of the soul and symbolically separates them from the whole by draining the target of vitae in small batches.

At the ritual's completion, the caster and up to five vampires may attempt to gain the benefits of diablerizing the subject. Each would-be diablerist must make a separate challenge to claim the dark prize. Nectar of the Bitter Rose does not allow a vampire to gain benefits from diablerizing a victim of weaker or lesser generation — it simply lets multiple people share in a diablerie.

Severed Hand

The Amr of Clan Assamite created this ritual as a means of showing mercy to criminals that deserved punishment, but not the Final Death. Severed Hand allows the thaumaturge to permanently sever a part of a restrained Kindred's body in such a fashion as to prevent the vampire from ever regenerating the lost body part. Although the hand is typically the most common appendage removed, this ritual can affect eyes, fingers, tongues, and other body parts.

The most important component is the severed anatomy of the subject, which is why this ritual is almost always performed at the maiming. The Tremere stole the secrets of this ritual and then removed references to the veneration of Haqim. Clan Assamite was quite surprised to learn that Camarilla had adopted the same practices in their courts.

System: This ritual takes an entire night to perform, during which time the wound is treated with different alchemical compounds to prevent the regeneration

process. Although the health levels can heal in the normal way, the severed body part is unable to be restored to its former condition without magical healing (such as Obeah, **V20**, p. 457).

Stone of the True Form

Stone of the True Form requires a small stone that is perfectly spherical. The caster must carefully coat it with a mixture made from a point of her blood and other eldritch compounds. Once the ritual is completed, the stone serves as an anchor to metaphorically connect the material world with Plato's world of idealized forms. If the thaumaturge has the will, she can force others to assume their natural shape.

With a single touch of the stone, the caster may engage the target into a contest of will to force them to assume their natural form. A thaumaturge might use a Stone of the True Form on an Obfuscated Nosferatu, force a grotesque Tzimisce into a humanoid form, or even trap an enraged werewolf in its mortal form.

System: Over the course of one night, the thaumaturge must cast this ritual on a small round stone such as a marble. Afterwards, the cast may use this stone as a trigger to engage her target in a contested Willpower roll (difficulty of each other's Stamina). If the caster wins by even one success, the subject will immediately shift to her natural form for a single turn. Every success above and beyond the first success extends the number of turns a target is unable to assume a shape other than her original form. If the stone is shattered, the victim is now free to change shape no matter how many turns left remain on her term in her original form.

Koldunic Sorcery Dice Mechanics

As noted previously, **Rites of the Blood** represents an effort to simply and unify various schools and Paths of blood magic. For Storytellers that prefer this method, the roll to activate a Koldunic Sorcery Path is now a Willpower roll with a difficulty equal to (3 + Path rating), and each such roll also requires the expenditure of one blood point. The roll to activate a Koldunic Sorcery ritual is Intelligence + Occult with a difficulty equal to 3 + the ritual rating. These rules supersede those in **V20**, but if you prefer the original rules, feel free to use whichever you like.

In addition, the default assumption is that Koldunic Sorcery is almost universal among Old Clan Tzimisce, fairly common among Sabbat Tzimisce, and nearly unheard of among all other Clans. The school's metaphysical connections to Kupala and to the lands permeated by that spirit increase the difficulty by +1 on all Koldunic Sorcery rolls made on behalf of kolduns who work their magic outside the territories of Eastern Europe.

Koldunic Sorcery

The Way of the Spirit

This Path is rarely found outside of Old Clan Tzimisce, whose members still stalk the same ancestral lands as their sires and their sires' sires. But it has utility even for Sabbat Tzimisce, and so its knowledge spreads even to more cosmopolitan Clan-mates. The path allows the koldun to diffuse his perceptions across an increasingly large area. If the magic is performed correctly, the koldun will be able to perceive potentially everything that takes place in the affected area (which might be many square miles), though opening one's self up fully to such awareness is dangerous for all but the most strong-willed kolduns. Instead, most reflexively limit their perceptions to "all intruders" or "all potential feeding vessels" as they desire, and even the most perceptive koldun might miss something important if she has inadvertently excluded it from her gaze. While the power is active, the koldun may also target any location or person he can perceive with any other Koldunic Path power or ritual, provided that the rating of the Path power or ritual does not exceed that of the koldun's rating in The Way of the Spirit. This power also defeats the use of Obfuscate by any Kindred within the area of effect.

•	The koldun can perceive everything within a 50-foot/20-meter radius.
• •	... within a 100-yard/meter radius.
• • •	... within a quarter-mile/half-kilometer radius.
• • • •	... within a mile/1.5 kilometer radius.
• • • • •	... within a five mile/eight kilometer radius.

The number of successes on the activation roll determines how many successive scenes the effect lasts. If activated before the sun rises, the koldun's awareness can extend into the daylight hours, and the koldun suffers no negative effects from monitoring his lands during the day. He does still suffer the usual dice penalties for taking any other actions during the day.

The Way of Sorrows

While a part of the broader Koldunic school, this Path does not overtly rely upon a direct connection to Kupala. Rather, it invokes a number of curses in the name of various pre-Christian Slavic deities. Then again, some Tzimisce scholars speculate that at least some of those deities are themselves merely aspects of the being which calls itself Kupala. All of these effects require the koldun to be able to directly perceive the target. They cannot generally be used at range through sympathetic magic, but they can be used against a distant target whom the koldun can perceive through powers such as The Way of the Spirit or Scry (p. 153).

• The Frustrations of Nestrecha

The koldun may destroy her enemy's resolve, instilling feelings of pessimism and hopelessness.

System: For one turn per success, the target may not spend Willpower for any purpose.

•• The Insults of Krivda

The koldun unleashes a hateful insult toward his foe, thereby provoking her to mindless anger.

System: In response to the insult, the target must immediately roll Self-Control to resist frenzy against a difficulty of 5 + the number of successes on the activation roll, maximum difficulty 9.

••• The Weeping of Kruchina

The koldun may instill a crushing despair or nigh-suicidal depression in her enemy.

System: For one turn per success, the target is overwhelmed by intense misery and weeps uncontrollably. She cannot engage in any action that requires concentration, and a Kindred loses one blood point each turn as vitae streams from her eyes.

•••• The Misfortune of Chernogolov

The koldun taunts his enemy with a prediction of certain doom, which then comes to pass.

System: The target automatically loses two successes on every roll she attempts. The effect lasts for a number of consecutive rolls equal to the successes rolled.

••••• The Starvation of Marena

The koldun may now inflict direct damage on her enemy in the form of bitter cold and starving hunger.

System: For each success, the target suffers two levels of bashing damage that can be soaked normally. In addition, a vampire targeted with this power loses one blood point per success.

Koldunic Sorcery Rituals

Reawakening the Dead Water (Level One)

The koldun must drop one point of blood into pool of water and then drink the equivalent of one blood point from that source. The koldun will be able to ingest this water without difficulty.

System: If the ritual is successfully performed (with at least one success), the koldun regains a point of spent Willpower. This cannot raise his Willpower above its normal maximum. This ritual can only be performed once per night.

Invoke the Lesser Sign of Power (Level Two)

The koldun may invoke the authority of the spirits which are the source of her magical birthright. She must concentrate for a single turn and then make the Lesser Sign of Power with her hands. If the ritual succeeds, her eyes glow with power.

System: For one hour per success, the koldun gains a -2 difficulty reduction on all Intimidation or Leadership rolls made against mortals, provided that she can make eye contact with them.

Cowing the Servant (Level Three)

The Tzimisce enjoy the feeling of control over their servants, even more so when those servants quake with fear. This ritual heightens the normal devotion of a ghoul, revenant, or other blood bound servant. The koldun mixes a sheep's brain with soil from his domain and a point of his own blood, while chanting an ancient Slavic incantation. Then, he forces the servant to eat the foul mixture.

System: For one week per success, the difficulty of any roll made for the koldun to manipulate the servant is reduced by -1.

Ties That Bind (Level Four)

The koldun must spill four points of her own blood onto a patch of earth that she has claimed. Then, she must ritually devour a handful of the blood-soaked soil. Doing so reconnects her with the spirit of the land and facilitates the workings of koldunism. This is often used by kolduns outside of Eastern Europe to offset the distant connections to their homeland.

System: For one night per success, the koldun reduces the difficulty for all rolls pertaining to Koldunic Sorcery by -1. This ritual cannot be performed more than once per week.

The Inmost Tug (Level Five)

The koldun may alter the emotional characteristics of any blood bond he holds over a thrall. In place of the normal feelings of love and devotion, he can cause the thrall to feel a debased lust, a terrified obedience, a fraternal devotion, or any other emotional context he chooses. The koldun need only speak a word in the presence of the thrall to invoke the ritual's power.

System: Each success represents one scene in which the thrall is compelled to feel an emotion of the koldun's choice toward him.

Anarch Rituals

Flatline (Level One Ritual)

This ritual targets a mortal and causes her to appear to be dead in every way except for the fact that she still walks and talks. She has no pulse and her breath will not fog a mirror. If she is unconscious, she is indistinguishable from a corpse. Not even the most sensitive medical instruments will indicate that she is alive, even as she desperately tells the paramedic that she is. The sorcerer must place a small, dead animal somewhere in the target's home.

System: The effect lasts until the next morning and can only be used on one target per month. The dead animal must be placed in the target's real home. The ritual won't work if it is left in a hotel room or somewhere she is house-sitting or squatting. The power will not affect any supernatural being. This ritual is most often used by Punk Sorcerers who either want to terrorize a mortal or embarrass some Camarilla Lick by causing one of his blood dolls to think she's become a vampire and cause a scene.

Iron Body (Level Two Ritual)

This common ritual augments the resilience of the subject (which can be the sorcerer or anyone he chooses). The ritual requires a spent shell casing which has been soaked in a point of blood from the person who will benefit. While that person carries the shell casing on his person, he may soak damage from fire and sunlight with his normal Stamina. The effects of this do not stack with Fortitude; only the higher of the two apply.

System: The ritual lasts for one hour per success and does not allow the recipient any additional soak. It just extends his normal soak to include fire and sunlight.

Hell's Calling (Level Three Ritual)

This ritual requires a sympathetic link to the target at least equal to a personal possession (p. 133). The object must be set inside a rusty hubcap and doused in gasoline. Then, the sorcerer must spend thirty minutes meditating on the item while whispering "Burn, baby, burn," before finally setting the item on fire. The target, wherever she is, suffers the effects of Rötschreck.

System: Upon this ritual's completion, the target must immediately roll for fear frenzy. The effect may be overcome by spending a Willpower point, but otherwise, a failed roll causes the target to enter frenzy and flee the area in terror. The character will also have no idea why she is suddenly overcome with terror, and once she thinks to ask herself what she is afraid of, the effect will end.

Ward versus Vitae (Level Four Ritual)

This peculiar ward is inferior to most wards used by the Tremere, but it is often sufficient for the needs of Anarchs. The sorcerer must make a sigil out of her own vitae on some object or surface. If a vampire of lower Generation touches the object or surface, he is affected. Kindred of equal or higher Generation are not affected.

System: Kindred below the caster's Generation who touch the ward suffer two dice of lethal damage each time they do so. After the first touch, however, a Kindred who wishes to proceed again must roll Willpower (difficulty 7) or spend a Willpower point. Each use of this ritual costs

one point of blood and can only ward one discrete object: a single window, a door, a book, or one door of an automobile. Larger objects can be warded but only if the ritual is cast multiple times.

Dur-An-Ki

The Hunter's Winds

This path was originally developed by Assamite sorcerers and is rarely encountered outside of that Clan, but knowledge of it has passed into the larger pool of Dur-An-Ki lore. The Path is designed to augment a vampire's natural stealth and skill with Obfuscate. While many aspects of this Path seem redundant given the existence of Obfuscate, the Path offers a powerful advantage over that Discipline — for example, Auspex does not automatically pierce the veil provided by The Hunter's Winds. While Auspex may add to the observer's Perception-based rolls as the Storyteller sees fit, the observer does not automatically see through deceptions just because his Auspex exceeds the ashipu's Path rating, as is the case with Obfuscate or Chimerstry.

• Scent of Deception

The target of this power gains the ability to alter her scent or eliminate it completely.

System: A successful roll means that the target either leaves no scent that can be detected or tracked, or she leaves the scent of someone else known to her. A failure means nothing happens. A botch means that her scent is more easily identifiable to others (in addition to the other penalties for botching a blood magic roll).

•• Chameleon's Skin

The target's skin and clothing automatically assume the coloring and texture of whatever he stands near.

System: For the duration of the scene following the activation scene, the difficulty of all Perception rolls to detect the target increase by +4 so long as he remains stationary. While he is in motion, the effect is negated, but once he comes to rest again against a different surface, he can reassert the camouflage with a successful Perception + Stealth roll (difficulty 6, or 9 if someone is actively searching for him at the time). Any texture changes are illusory; the target does not gain the durability of a brick wall just by standing near it.

Other Paths of Dur-An-Ki

Many of the paths associated with Dur-An-Ki are functionally identical to various Thaumaturgy paths. In many cases, the Dur-An-Ki version came first and was adapted to Thaumaturgy by Tremere. Those paths are as follows:

- The Path of Life's Waters (Path of Blood, **V20**, pp. 213-214)
- The Path of Jinn's Gift (Path of Conjuring, **V20**, pp. 220-221)
- The Path of the Ailing Jackal (Path of the Father's Vengeance, **V20**, pp. 226-228)
- The Hand of the Magi (Lure of Flames, **V20**, p. 218)
- The Covenant of Enki (Neptune's Might, **V20**, pp. 218-220)
- The Laws of Suleiman (Spirit Manipulation, p. 142-145)

In addition to these familiar paths, there are several paths unique to practitioners of Dur-An-Ki, two of which are described below.

••• Unassuming Pose

The target effortlessly blends into any crowd of people. Everyone present will assume the target belongs there, including any pursuers.

System: If the roll succeeds, any observer will automatically assume that the target belongs in whatever location he is found. Those searching for him are incapable of perceiving that he is an intruder. However, this effect cannot fool technology, and anyone observing through CCTV, for example, can spot him as an interloper.

•••• Whiff of Kalif

The target of this effect generates an aura which is physically intoxicating to anyone who directly observes her. Those affected may experience a pleasant daydream, or may just be left standing slack-jawed as the target goes on his way.

System: If the effect is successfully activated, anyone who observes the target during the rest of the scene must reflexively roll Wits + Alertness (difficulty 7) or become intoxicated for a number of hours equal to the ashipu's successes in triggering the effect. Affected individuals are incapable of taking any action beyond staring vacantly at visions only they can see or perhaps giggling from time to time. However, any direct threat to an affected individual immediately causes the intoxication to fade.

••••• Ghost Body

As a particularly powerful effect, Ghost Body requires the ashipu to expend three points of blood instead of the normal one. When the effect is activated, the target becomes completely invisible, inaudible, and intangible, and she can move freely through any barriers other than wards against vampires.

System: If activated successfully, the target becomes immaterial in nearly every sense. The effect does not make her into a true ghost, and she is incapable of interacting with wraiths or spirits while in this form. She is also incapable of using any Disciplines while in this form. The effect ends as soon as the target makes the conscious decision to affect the physical world in any way.

The Path of the Evil Eye

Throughout history, the ignorant and superstitious have feared the Evil Eye—a belief that some people have the power to curse their enemies, whether through the invocation of dark powers or simply through malicious will. In some places, such beliefs persist, perhaps in part because of the existence of this Path, which allows an ashipu to invoke wrathful djinn to embarrass, injure, or even kill his enemies. But this Path is not the exclusive province of Dur-An-Ki. Its ancient pedigree means that it is known to many Old Skool Anarchs who have preserved the power to curse over the ages, while its sheer vindictiveness has ensured that modern Punk Sorcerers have learned to duplicate its effects.

To use the Evil Eye against a target, the sorcerer must either be able to make eye contact with her and say something to indicate his disdain, whether a traditional Arabic curse or simply a shouted "Fuck You!" Alternatively, the sorcerer can make use of an effigy to cast the curse over a longer distance (as described under the Principles of Contagion and Sympathy on pp. 133-135). The target will not necessarily realize that she has been cursed. An Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 6) roll is required of the target if the sorcerer casts the curse in her face, while a roll at difficulty 9 is required to realize that recent bad luck is the result of a curse cast from afar. A character with Aura Perception or who has at least one dot in this

Path may notice tell-tale signs of a curse lingering in the target's aura and may recognize this as the residue of a curse with a Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7). A character who successfully identifies a curse this way may treat the curse itself as a mystical connection equivalent to a prized possession while in the presence of the cursed individual.

The sorcerer who laid the curse can negate it at will. Any other character capable of recognizing the curse (including the target herself, if she has the appropriate knowledge of blood magic) may attempt to negate it with Thaumaturgical Countermagic (V20 p. 228) or any comparable blood magic effect. The one who lays the curse never knows exactly how the curse will manifest itself. Each level of this Path sets the parameters for what type of harm may occur, but the Storyteller determines the precise nature of the manifestation.

• Humiliation

The simplest application of the Evil Eye causes the target to embarrass himself in some public way. Possible results include saying something embarrassing in front of one's peers, failing disastrously at a feeding attempt, or simply ripping the seat out of one's pants while in a crowded bar.

System: Each success represents one night during which the target is affected by the curse. The curse triggers once per night at a time of the Storyteller's choosing, usually the scene during which the character is in front of the largest number of individuals or in which he is in front of the largest number of socially important people. That is, it may trigger while the character is in a crowded restaurant or when he is alone with the Prince, whichever has the greatest potential for personal embarrassment. The Storyteller determines when the curse triggers, but it should do so at least once per night.

During the trigger scene, on every Social roll made for the character, the player must add a number of automatic 1s equal to the sorcerer's rating in the Path of the Evil Eye, thereby increasing the likelihood of a botch on a Social roll. In addition, during the trigger scene, the Storyteller should roll a number of dice equal to the sorcerer's rating in this path (difficulty 5). Successes mean that some external event happens that causes embarrassment to the character, such as a waiter spilling drinks on him or a car splashing him with mud.

•• Loss

This curse affects the target's material worth. It most commonly causes the target to be stripped of money, but it may also cause her Herd to diminish, or destroy a Haven. The curse can target any tangible asset represented as a Background. If the character has no suitable Backgrounds, it targets personal items of emotional significance.

System: Within one week, the target loses one dot from an appropriate Background. Generally, the curse preferentially attacks Resources over other Backgrounds, but theoretically any form of tangible Background representing a personal asset can be a valid target. The sorcerer has no control over how the Background point is lost or even which Background point is lost. The Storyteller may even choose to decide randomly.

••• Peril

At this level of mastery, the ashipu may finally endanger her enemy rather than merely inconvenience her. The curse cannot directly harm the target, but it can create a situation in which it is possible for her to be harmed, whether at the hands of a drunken lout who takes offense to the target's manner at a bar or a pack of werewolves who, by happenstance, choose to board the same lonely subway car as the victim.

System: The number of successes determines how many nights the character is at risk. At the start of each night, the Storyteller must roll a die and, depending on the results, fashion an encounter for the targeted character.

Dice Result	Nature of Peril
1-3	None. The curse does not trigger during this night.
4-6	Minor: An encounter which is not likely to harm the character but which has a chance to do so. A mortal tries to mug the character while she is in front of mortals, or simply tries to hold up a convenience store while the character is in line paying for gas. A bar patron takes offense to something the character does or says and tries to pick a fight.
7-8	Moderate: An encounter with a significant likelihood of at least some harm to the character. The character is involved in a car wreck or struck by a hit-and-run driver. Stairs give way while the character is climbing them.
9	Severe: An encounter in which the character is almost certain to suffer some lethal damage. The character inadvertently says something offensive that provokes frenzy rolls in nearby vampires. The building collapses while the character is in it or a fire breaks out.
10	Catastrophic: An encounter that is potentially deadly. The character's is locked out of his haven during the day. The character unwittingly says something that offends a pack of nearby Lupines.

Nights on which there is no peril do not count against the ashipu's successes; the curse will continue until the target has suffered a number of dangerous encounters

equal to the successes or the curse is lifted. During any dangerous encounter, a targeted character has a chance to realize she is under a curse (if she didn't already know it). The roll is Intelligence + Occult. The default difficulty is 9, but it drops to 8 if the character has Auspex or to 6 if the character has any knowledge of this Path.

•••• Enemy

This potent curse causes the target's friends and allies to turn against him, even as it causes the numbers of his enemies to grow.

System: For each success on the Willpower roll, the target loses one dot of Allies, Contacts, Influence, or Retainers. This may reflect friends and allies who have become angry with the character and turn their back on him, it may reflect contacts and allies who are simply unavailable for a time, or it may actually result in such characters being injured or even dying due to ill fortune. Alternatively, the player may choose to spend some or all of the successes to give the target a new Enemy (as per the Enemy Flaw) who arrives to pursue a vendetta against the character. Regardless, the effects manifest within a week, and the player of the targeted character may neither regain lost Backgrounds nor remove the Enemy Flaw without learning about and neutralizing the curse.

••••• The Eye That Wounds

The ultimate expression of this malefic path, the Eye That Wounds does not require time to establish a chain of ill fortune. It strikes immediately. The ashipu must make eye contact with her target and utter some exclamation pertaining to a characteristic of his. It can be praise or insult, sarcasm or fury, but whatever form it takes, the target is immediately struck with an agonizing injury that damages that characteristic.

System: While the curse allows for flexibility, the default assumption is that for every two successes (rounded up), the target (or object, if the curse is directed toward a possession of the target) suffers one level of aggravated damage. Generally, even a single level of damage is sufficient to slay an animal or destroy most objects. If used against a mortal, this power will permanently maim him. If used against a Kindred, the curse will inflict damage shaped by the ashipu's words. If she compliments his beautiful eyes, they will be burned and he might be rendered blind until he can heal. If she mocks his honeyed words, the curse might burn out his tongue and leave him unable to speak. This curse may be transmitted through an effigy, but the normal difficulty penalty imposed for using an effigy increases by +2 (see Principles of Contagion and Sympathy on pp. 133-135).

Dur-An-Ki Rituals

Horoscope (Level One)

Using Babylonian astrology techniques, the ashipu can study the stars to gain insight into his enemies. To cast a horoscope of a mortal, the ashipu must know her birth name, as well as the location and the date of her birth. To cast a horoscope for a vampire, the ashipu must know both of those and also the date of her Embrace. Armed with such knowledge, the ashipu can both learn his enemy's innermost secrets and target her more effectively with his magic.

System: Each success allows the ashipu to discover one secret about the target of the horoscope, chosen from the following: Nature, primary aptitudes (i.e. Traits rated at 3 or higher), Flaws, or major tragedies from her life (or unlife). Alternatively, the ashipu may use the horoscope in conjunction with an effigy to improve the efficacy of sympathetic magic, with the successes on the ritual roll reducing the difficulty penalty applied to such rolls. However, the ashipu may not use a horoscope to reduce the dice penalty by more than his Dur-An-Ki rating, nor may he use it to reduce the penalty to less than zero.

Infusion of Kalif (Level Two)

This ritual is important to all ashipu who seek enlightenment, but its effects have been duplicated by a number of blood magicians from a number of schools who abuse its ancient pedigree for a baser purpose: getting high. The ritual allows the blood magician to ritually infuse vitae into hashish so that Kindred may imbibe of it through a hookah and become intoxicated.

System: The sorcerer must obtain a quantity of hashish and soak it in a quantity of his own blood. The ratio is fairly high — twenty ounces of hashish is soaked in one point of blood, and the process (which takes three full nights) yields only one ounce of kalif per success. The "quality" of the kalif is determined by the Generation of the vampire whose blood was used in the ritual (which need not be that of the sorcerer). Each dot of Generation increases the quality by +1, so kalif successfully infused with the vitae of a Ninth Generation vampire would have a quality of four.

To properly use the kalif as part of a Dur-An-Ki ritual, one ounce of it must be placed into a hookah along with specially prepared rosewater. After smoking for at least half an hour, the player of the imbibing character must roll Stamina + Fortitude (difficulty 6, with a dice penalty

equal to the quality of the kalif used in the ritual). There is something of a "sweet spot" that the sorcerer must reach. If sorcerer fails or botches, he becomes too intoxicated to do anything more than continue to enjoy the kalif (and for many Kindred, that's enough). On the other hand, if the player rolls more successes than the character's Dur-An-Ki rating, the character doesn't get high at all and must continue smoking for another half hour interval before rolling again.

Only a number of successes greater than zero but equal to or less than the character's Dur-An-Ki rating allow for him to reach the ecstatic state required to properly use kalif in further rituals. If the proper number of successes are rolled, the character enters a state of heightened awareness in which Dur-An-Ki is easier to perform. For the rest of the scene, the difficulty of any roll related to Dur-An-Ki paths or rituals is reduced by an amount equal to half the quality of the kalif.

Bull of Heaven (Level Three)

In imitation of the rituals supposedly used by the goddess Ishtar when she prepared the great Bull of Heaven to face Gilgamesh, this ritual allows the ashipu to enchant and command an animal to do its bidding. The result is similar to the Animalism power Subsume the Spirit.

System: The ashipu must drink from the animal while simultaneously feeding it blood. One point of blood is sufficient for any animal smaller than a man. Three points is required for any animal larger than man-sized, up to the size of a bull. Animals larger than cannot be used for this ritual. Upon receiving the blood, the animal immediately becomes a ghoul, gaining one dot of Potence and one dot of either Fortitude or any other Discipline possessed by the ashipu which does not require sapience (such as Dominate or Dur-An-Ki). For the remainder of the night, the ashipu can reflexively direct the animal at will and see through its senses while retaining his normal awareness of his surroundings.

Directing Ahriman's Lance (Level Four)

The ashipu must fashion a sympathetic connection to a target out of a talisman small enough to be swallowed. Then, she must swallow it, wait an hour, and then cut the talisman out of her own belly. Other sorcerers may assist in this undertaking, which inflicts a minimum of two levels of unsoakable lethal damage on the one performing the ritual. Until the next inauspicious night, any Kindred who holds the talisman will find that the spirits bless his efforts to kill the target.

System: To determine how long the ritual lasts, the ashipu must first use the Horoscope ritual against the target or, if the birth date and death date of the target is unknown, he may cast a horoscope for the assassin who will wield the talisman. In the latter case, only that assassin may benefit from the talisman's properties, but in the former case, anyone can use the talisman. When Horoscope is used in conjunction with this ritual, the talisman will function for a number of nights equal to the successes rolled for the Horoscope. During that time, any roll made by the bearer of the talisman which bring him closer to killing the target benefit from a difficulty reduction equal to the successes rolled for this ritual.

Seeing With the Sky's Eyes (Level Five)

By meditating on the universe, the sorcerer can look down on his enemy with the eyes of Heaven. The ashipu must enter an ecstatic trance. Then, he must concentrate on an individual by studying an effigy of her. The effigy must incorporate at least a recent photograph of the target, if not something with a stronger connection. This ritual cannot be achieved with just the target's name (see Principles of Sympathy and Contagion on pp 133-135).

System: Each success allows the player to ask one question about the target's current location and activities.

Setite Sorcery

Ushabti (Akhu Path)

Ushabti derives its name from the figurines crafted for the tombs of the wealthy and powerful in ancient Egypt. It was believed that such figurines would come to life in the Underworld to serve their masters as laborers or playthings. Each application of this Path creates a different ushabti, and each ushabti can only be activated once. The sorcerer must forge the figurine from wax or clay mixed with a point of blood. Then, he must carve Egyptian words of power onto the figurine before bathing it in honey and beer. Activating a figurine requires the sorcerer to spend a point of blood and speak an incantation, and the player rolls Willpower to determine whether the ushabti activates. If it does, the figurine expands into a life-sized, animate figure that obeys the sorcerer's will. In the case of a botch, in addition to the normal effects, the ushabti will activate but will be hostile to the sorcerer.

Activated ushabti have Attributes and Abilities determined by the level of the path used to create them. The sorcerer may not grant an ushabti Abilities she does not have nor Ability ratings higher than her own. The successes on the Willpower roll determine how realistic the activated ushabti is. However, the successes applied to "realism" can never exceed the path rating used. Thus, only an ushabti created with Gift of Khnum (Ushabti ••••••) can be indistinguishable from a living creature.

Successes	Results
1	A crude thing obviously made of wax.
2	As realistic as a well-made waxwork or a china doll.
3	Lifelike enough to fool a casual viewer (difficulty 6 to detect as fake)
4	Extremely lifelike (difficulty 8 to detect as unreal)
5	Indistinguishable from a living creature

Once activated, the ushabti endures for one lunar month, but this can be extended indefinitely at a cost of one point of blood per additional month. However, this assumes that the ushabti remains within its master's haven and does not interact with mortals. If those conditions are broken, the ushabti will degrade into nothingness within an hour. A sorcerer can craft an ushabti for use by another, but doing so costs him one Willpower.

Laborer (•)

The ushabti can be a human or an animal. It is mindless and obeys all orders from its master. It has two dots in each Physical Attribute, one dot in each Mental Attribute, and no dots in any Social Attribute. It has no Abilities.

Servitor (••)

To the Laborer, add three additional Attribute dots. None can be applied to any Social Attribute, and no Mental Attribute can rise above 2. Add two dots of non-combat Abilities.

Guard (•••)

To the Laborer, add six dots of Attributes and four dots of Abilities. Guards may have Social Attributes, but no Social or Mental Attribute may exceed 2, nor can any Ability.

Overseer (••••)

To the Laborer, add nine dots of Attributes and six dots of Abilities; no Social or Mental Attribute may exceed 3, nor can any Ability.

Gift of Khnum (•••••)

The ultimate expression of this art, the Gift of Khnum (the legendary creator of humanity according to Egyptian lore) allows the sorcerer to create what is effectively a living body, either as an obedient slave or as a ready-made vessel for a wraith or a spirit. The character who activates the ushabti decides which, although the latter option requires her to have a compliant wraith or spirit handy.

To the basic Laborer, add 12 dots of Attributes and eight dots of Abilities. The ushabti gains the Virtues, Humanity, and Willpower of a starting vampire. It is sentient but emotionally bound to the one who activates it as if by a blood bond. This is true even if a spirit or wraith possesses it. Each use of Gift of Khnum costs two Willpower points at the time of activation, and the player may spend additional Willpower points to gain automatic successes on the activation roll. An ushabti created with this Path does not degrade unless someone actively challenges its identity and persuades it that it is not real. Absent proof of its own unreality, the ushabti is effectively immortal.

The Path of Praapti (Sadhana Path)

Praapti is the power of instantaneous travel. The Indian Sadhana practitioners developed this Path to match their mysterious Asian rivals, who have the power to travel instantly along lines of mystical force. Later, turncoat sadhus sold the secret of this Path to the Tremere, who reverse-engineered it into what they call the Path of Mercury. A handful of New Age Anarchs have also stumbled onto the secret of this path, which they simply call Teleportation.

Individual levels of this Path do not have distinct effects. Instead, a higher mastery simply indicates a farther distance that can be traveled. Ideally, the sorcerer must be able to see the target location or know it intimately. Failure on a roll to activate this path means that nothing happens at all, but botches are more problematic. If the target location is within sight or is very near (the other side of a wall, for example), a botch causes the character the usual catastrophic problems for blood magic. If the sorcerer attempts a blind teleport, however, botches are much more dangerous. Typically, the sorcerer finds himself merged with a solid object, suffering one level of aggravated damage per "1" rolled. Three or more levels of damage also means that the sorcerer is stuck inside a large object such as a wall or the ground, and may not be able to break free. Fortitude soaks this damage as normal but will not help a character who materializes six feet underground. Familiarity with the target location of a blind teleport affects the difficulty of the roll as follows.

Familiarity	Difficulty Modifier
Intimate (one's own haven)	-1
Visited regularly	+0
Unseen but understood (such as the other side of this wall)	+0
Unfamiliar (visited a few times)	+1
Very unfamiliar (a known location)	+2

•	Teleport up to 10 yards/meters.
••	... up to 50 yards/meters.
•••	... up to 500 yards/meters.
••••	... up to 5 miles/8 kilometers.
•••••	...up to 500 miles/800 kilometers.

Teleportation is rarely exact. Every "1" rolled on a successful roll throws the sorcerer off by 10% of the total destination. The number of successes rolled determines what can be conveyed. A single success allows for the teleportation of the sorcerer's nude body. Each additional success allows for the conveyance of an additional twenty pounds. If the successes rolled are not enough to encompass what the sorcerer seeks to carry, the Storyteller decides what is left behind.

The Flow of Ashe (Wanga Path)

The Flow of Ashe is unusual even among sorcery Paths in that it does not cost blood to use. Indeed, its purpose is to prevent the wangateur from requiring the use of vitae in other contexts. Derived from Yoruban herbalism, the Flow of Ashe may more accurately be described as a series of rituals which must be learned sequentially. Each ritual produces an herbal mixture which, if used properly, can take the place of blood under different circumstances. The Willpower roll is made when the blood point would normally be spent. If it fails, the vampire loses two points of blood instead of the one he would have spent had he skipped the ritual altogether. Normally, the ingredients must be mixed and then the mixture used on the next turn, but Gift of Ashe overcomes that limitation. More importantly, if circumstances allow for it, many of these mixtures may even be used on others besides the wangateur.

• Touch of Life

The wangateur may ingest a special mixture of herbs and powders in lieu of expending blood when trying to imitate the characteristics of the living. The effect lasts for one scene. The wangateur may ingest this mixture for himself or provide it to another Kindred (but not a mortal) who must swallow the mixture during that scene. In the latter case, the wangateur decides which aspect of the living the other Kindred will imitated.

•• Strength of Root and Stone

The wangateur may inhale a mixture of herbs and powders through the nose instead of expending blood when trying to augment a Physical Attribute. The effect is the same as if the vampire had spent one point of blood to improve a Physical Attribute. The effect lasts for one scene. The wangateur may use this mixture himself or provide it for another (including a mortal). If it is to be used by another, the wangateur decides which Attribute is to be augmented when the mixture is prepared.

••• Breath of Life

The wangateur may use a mixture of herbs and powders in place of blood when trying to heal herself. The specific mixture produces a paste which the wangateur must physically smear on the area to be healed. The effect is the same as if the vampire had spent one point of blood to repair physical damage. This power cannot be used to heal aggravated damage, only bashing or lethal. The wangateur may use this mixture for himself or for another (including a mortal).

•••• Favor of the Orishas

The wangateur may use a mixture of herbs and powders in order to fuel any Discipline (including blood magic) that requires exactly one point of blood to function. This formula also requires a small quantity of blood to function, but it need not come from the wangateur and, in fact, can come from an enemy (human or Kindred) who has shed blood nearby. The wangateur may only use this mixture on herself and must make a superficial cut on her arm and then rub the mixture into the open wound.

••••• Gift of Ashe

The wangateur may now create mixtures using the first three levels of this path which will maintain their efficacy for an entire night rather than just one turn or scene. Furthermore, the wangateur can maintain a number of mixtures up to his Intelligence simultaneously. Thus, he can provide the mixtures to allies and no longer needs to be nearby in order to provide the appropriate benefits—he can simply give the mixture to an ally and send her on her way.

Setite Sorcery Rituals

Armor of Diamond Serenity (Level One Sadhana Ritual)

This ritual calls upon Shiva to purge the sorcerer's mind of mortal passions and to grant Enlightenment.

System: For the rest of the night, the sadhu is immune to frenzy of all types, reduces the difficulty of all Willpower rolls by -2, and treats his Willpower as if it were two higher against effects which use his Willpower (temporary or permanent) as the target number. However, while the effect lasts, the sadhu loses the ability to spend blood to increase Physical Attributes.

Craft Gris-Gris (Level Two Wanga Ritual)

Well-known to those familiar with Voudoun, a gris-gris bag is a cursed item which inflicts pain and misery on the target. The wangateur must fill a bag with herbs, mineral powders, the finger bone of an infant, nine pinches of grave dirt, some item taken from the target, and two points of her own blood. The bag must then be hidden (ideally buried) within a few feet of the target's home or haven.

System: While under the effects of the gris-gris curse, the target suffers a -1 penalty on all dice pools due to a constant, throbbing headache. This effect is permanent against mortals unless the bag is found and removed. Against Kindred, it lasts for one night per success but ends early if the bag is removed. In the hands of another wangateur with a higher Wanga rating, the bag has a sympathetic connection to its creator equal to a point of the creator's blood.

Scorpion Sending (Level Three Akhu Ritual)

The sorcerer crafts a scorpion out of wax, incorporating some material that came from the target's body. She writes the name of Set on the scorpion and recites the story of the poisoning of Horus, leaving out the part where he recovers. Then, she leaves the model in an area where the target will come, at which point it will come to life and attack him.

System: The scorpion has the normal traits for an animal of its size, but if it strikes the target successfully, he is poisoned. The poison inflicts one level of lethal

damage every fifteen minutes. The damage ends if the target successfully rolls Stamina (difficulty 7) with one roll every fifteen minutes. The venom attacks mortals and supernaturals alike. The scorpion is small and therefore difficult to see (Perception + Alertness, difficulty 7).

Dismemberment of Osiris (Level Four Akhu Ritual)

The sorcerer ritually dismembers the leader or spokesperson of a group or organization (who must be a male; female-led organizations cannot be affected by this power). Then, after the victim is dead, the sorcerer removes his phallus and drops it into a tank of fish who then devour it. In response, the group or organization suffers an external setback over the next six months.

System: The results are largely a matter of Storyteller discretion, influenced by the success of the ritual. As a general rule, assume that each success on the roll results in a cumulative 10% reduction in the size and resources of the targeted group.

Shackles of Blood (Level Five Wanga Ritual)

The wangateur brews a potion that can create a temporary blood bond even at a distance. She must incorporate three points of her own blood, a variety of natural ingredients, and the heart of a recently deceased mortal whose gender is opposite that of the target. She then stirs the mixture for three hours and strains it through unbleached cotton before feeding the finished mixture to the target.

System: The false bond lasts for a number of nights equal to the successes. At the end of that, the effect ceases, but if the wangateur successfully blood bonds the target for real during that time, it acts like any normal blood bond. While this ritual would seem to be needlessly overcomplicated compared to blood bonding through conventional means, it has a potent advantage — if the potion is fed to a mortal, any vampire who feeds on that mortal within the next 24 hours is affected as if he had drunk it directly. In this way, a devious wangateur can gain power over a vampire who does not even know she exists.

Dark Thaumaturgy

The Fires of the Inferno

Practitioners of the Fires of the Inferno may summon forth balefire that springs forth from her hands in jets or

globes. Many believe that this malignant green flame is conjured from the very depths of Hades. Being burned by these fires is to taste the agonies that await them in Hell. Witnessing the conjuring of the Fires of Inferno allows anyone with mystical senses to know the source is infernal. Balefire is greatly feared, as fire is one of the surest ways to bring Final Death to a vampire.

System: The number of successes determines how accurately the vampire places the flame in his desired location (declared before the roll is made). Individual descriptions are not provided for each level of this path — fire is fire, after all (and can potentially cause frenzy in other vampires witnessing it). The chart below describes the path level required to generate a specific amount of flame. To soak the damage at all, a vampire must have the Fortitude Discipline.

Fire under the caster's control does not harm the vampire or cause him to frenzy, but fires started as a result of the unnatural flame affect the thaumaturge normally.

• Lighter (difficulty 3 to soak, one health level of damage/turn)

• • Stovetop (difficulty 4 to soak, two health levels of damage/turn)

• • • Blowtorch (difficulty 5 to soak, three health levels of damage/turn)

• • • • Flame-thrower (difficulty 7 to soak, four health levels of damage/turn)

• • • • • Conflagration (difficulty 9 to soak, five health levels of damage/turn)

The Path of Phobos

Infernalists know the power of fear and the leverage of desperation. Practitioners of this path mystically tap into the depths of their victims' psyches, prying the terrors from their minds and making them appear real. Sophisticated Sabbat infernalists prefer this path, as they enjoy the sublime effects of using the subjects' own fears against them rather than vulgar, brutal displays of fire and demonic servants.

Infernalists that inflict nightmares upon others risk consuming the horrible memories that have leached from their victims, only to relive them later. Storytellers should force a Manipulation + Empathy roll (difficulty 7) on any character that utilizes the Path of Phobos more than once in a given story.

Each evening while reliving the nightmares of her victims, she will wake soaked with blood; effectively costing an extra point of blood to wake due to the lack of sound sleep. Such is the price of hellish insight. The number of successes indicates how long the character must cope with the sea of stolen terrors rampaging in her mind.

1 Success	One Week
2 Successes	Five Days
3 Successes	Four Days
4 Successes	Two Days
5 Successes	One Day

• Induce Fear

The infernalist harnesses the power of Hell to twist the mind of her victim, leaving her to feel paranoid. Subtle shapes and shadows shimmer at the edge of the victim's vision, tormenting her by lurking just beyond her range of sight.

System: The infernalist may target any subject within her line of sight. She must concentrate, gesture toward the victim, and chant the proper invocation to Hell. Should she succeed, the victim becomes noticeably upset and preoccupied, which should be role-played. To resist, the victim must make a Courage roll (difficulty 4 + the number of successes achieved on the activation roll, to a maximum of 9) to take any action other than looking for the imagined stalker.

All of the victim's dice pools for the duration of this power are automatically reduced by one. The duration of this power is limited by the number of successes achieved on the activation role:

1 Success	One Turn
2 Successes	Five Turns
3 Successes	One Hour
4 Successes	One Night
5 Successes	Two Nights

•• Spook

This power transforms suspicion to dread, as the flitting shadows become frightening threats. The victim senses something terrible is about to happen to him unless he immediately flees the area. He might imagine she sees the flash of a gun barrel or hears the clicking of hard-soled shoes on the pavement just behind her. He might even believe she smells her pursuer's sweat or feels his damp breath on the back of her neck.

System: The infernalist must see her victim and whisper a prayer to Hell for this power to work. The nagging

sense of discomfort in the back of the character's mind becomes more tangible. Mortals must make a successful Courage roll (difficulty 7) to keep from fleeing the area in terror. Vampires must make the same roll, but if they fail they enter Rötschreck.

••• Terrorize

The infernalist can draw out his victim's fear and present her with it. The victim sees that which terrifies her the most. If she fears spiders, she may imagine spider webs brushing her face and hands as thousands of illusory arachnids scuttle across her flesh. She may hear them skittering across the floor or clicking their horrid chelicerae. To the victim, the effects seem very real, though they are simply illusions and invisible to onlookers.

System: The infernalist must concentrate for a moment and then gesture toward her victim. Should she succeed, the terrorized subject must succeed in a Courage roll (difficulty 7) to shake off her fear in order to act. Otherwise she simply cowers, feebly hiding from her imagined object of terror. Botching this Courage roll results in a derangement, preferably suited to the fear visiting the victim.

The duration of this power is limited by the number of successes achieved on the activation role:

1 Success	One Turn
2 Successes	Five Turns
3 Successes	30 Minutes
4 Successes	One Hour
5 Successes	One Night

•••• Fear Plague

The infernalist can now taste her victim's most deep-rooted fear. She can force her subject to plunge deep into this phobia every waking moment. A person afraid of drowning would feel the air thicken and coagulate in his throat and lungs until he cannot take a breath, while a person afraid of vampires may see fanged nemeses in his coworkers or lurking behind every corner. Eventually, the victim becomes so exhausted that he is unable rise and face a new night of swarming horrors.

System: The infernalist must see and then loudly curse her victim for this terrible power to take effect. Once cursed, this power lasts for a week. The victim is constantly harassed by his fear every moment. For the duration of this power, all Willpower rolls are made as though the character's permanent rating is three lower than normal (to a minimum of 1).

••••• Leech of Fear

This power enables the infernalist to temporarily feed on fear as though it was blood. This experience gives a euphoric high stronger than conventional feeding, but it is a dangerous practice if used too frequently. The infernalist converts the pure emotional charge drawn from the victim's terror into a mystical substitute for vitae.

System: As long as she has her subject in sight, the infernalist may attempt to gain sustenance from any fear that the victim might be currently suffering. Naturally, the victim must have cause to be afraid of something or someone while the infernalist practices this power. These fears may not be caused by other applications of this path.

The number of successes achieved on the activation roll determines the number of points transmuted into the infernalist's "fear pool." Each point in this "fear pool" may be spent exactly like a blood point, beyond normal Generation limits. However, this extra source of power must be utilized before sunrise or it will disappear.

In addition to the lost Willpower point, a botch means that the infernalist gets no "fear pool" from the victim, and cannot use the power on that victim again for 24 hours.

The Taking of the Spirit

By calling upon the power of Hell, this path allows the infernalist to strip away the temporary Willpower of her victim, leaving an almost soulless automaton ready to serve the infernalist without question. Some fiendish vampires have built entire legions of servants for themselves with this power. This fearsome path works on vampires and kine alike.

System: The infernalist loudly calls forth the legions of Hell to steal away the spirit of her target and then touches her target. Depending upon the circumstances, the Storyteller may require a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll for the thaumaturge to make contact with the intended victim. Once contact is made, the infernalist must engage in a contested Willpower roll against the subject (difficulty 8). Success means the victim loses a number of Willpower equal to the infernalist's successes.

If the victim accumulates more successes on this contested Willpower roll before being reduced to zero Willpower, he resists the powers of Hell. In addition, the suffering he endured hardens his mind, and this infernal path may not be used against him again a full year.

If the victim is reduced to zero Willpower, he must do the vampire's bidding, not speaking, staring blankly forward, in a state much like a zombie until he has regained one dot of Willpower, as per the chart below.

If the infernalist is killed, the victim regains all of his lost Willpower immediately.

A botch on the part of the infernalist has unique results: He loses a number of temporary Willpower points that corresponds with his mastery of said path. These Willpower points return at a rate of one per night. If all points are lost, he may come under the control of otherworldly forces.

The Willpower siphoned by this power returns at a rate determined by the infernalist's rating in the path:

- • Return of 3 Willpower points per day's rest
- •• Return of 2 Willpower points per day's rest
- ••• Return of 1 Willpower point per day's rest
- •••• Return of 1 Willpower point per week's rest
- ••••• Return of 1 Willpower point per two week's rest

Rites of the Blood

In the deepest crimson depths of their being, raw power waits to be brought to the surface. Through their force of will, Kindred can drag this power kicking and screaming into the open to perform miraculous feats and twisted blasphemies. These rituals have been developed to direct and focus this new force, unconstrained by the structure of the known Disciplines. As such, only one word has been seen fit to describe this power that has echoed throughout the ages. *Magic.*

Rites of the Blood is a collection of rituals practiced among the various Kindred sects and Clans. This isn't just a collection of powers, but an examination of the sects themselves and how they use their eldritch mystical arts: the Thaumaturgy of the Camarilla Tremere, the bloody rites and patchwork sorcery of the Sabbat, the creepy and alien practices of the Tal'Mahe'Ra, "street" rituals from the Anarch contingent, the sorceries of the Assamites and Setites, the necromancy of the Giovanni, and even some of the mysterious ways of the Inconnu.

This book includes:

- A look at how the various Kindred factions view and utilize blood sorcery in the modern nights.
- A number of new rituals, Sabbat rites, and other powers for the various blood sorceries of the Kindred.
- Revising and updating more classic *Vampire: The Masquerade* blood sorcery material to **V20**.