ANCIENT



They say we have no past. It is gone, drowned in the murk of time, buried in the Sleep of ages. They say those of us who have passed our human lifetimes so many times over, they say that we are without history, adrift in a sea of nightmares, sleep and blood.

They may well be right. But I remember the night Bokor Apollinaire hurned, as former slaves dragged their masters from their homes and put them to the torch.

I remember the night the first Rinchred came to Haiti, fleeing the fires of the Inquisition and the Anarchs Revolution. And I remember when Afanso of Lishon sent his wide-eyed brood out to die on ships.

This book includes:

- The flashpoints in history that have shaped Kindred society

 for better or for worse.
 Discover the mysteries of elder Kindred and how they navigate the Fog of Ages and their own thickening Blood.
- A selection of rules for playing characters from non-modern times as well as truly hoary ancients among the undead, with powers and Merits to match.
- Advice for how elders navigate the Fog of Ages, and how to use elder characters, historical periods and the lassitude of age among the undead.



I remember Kinched set adrift on the sea... nightmares and blood.

Q... You would do well, neonate, not to ask what I remember.

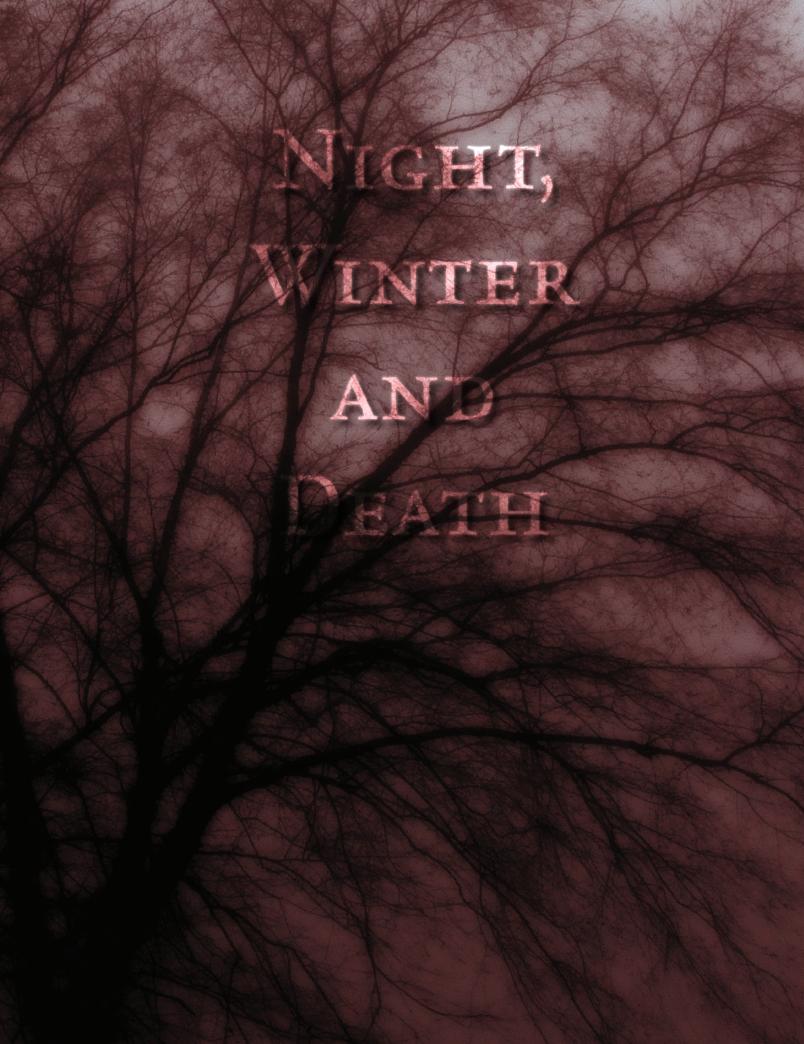
- John Stevenson, recently awakened Ventrue





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he last time I saw the mountains of Padurea Craiului, I was not yet dead. It was late autumn, and the last of the leaves had long since fallen. In another half-month, perhaps less, it would truly be winter. Each morning, J rose early from my bed, such as it was, a bedroll too thin to ward off the cold and damp that seeped up through the freezing ground every night, even with a mound of dried pine leaves beneath it and the body of another huddled next to mine. Each morning, I crawled out of my pitiful shelter, such as it was, a lean-to of pine boughs lashed together over a sapling center pole, a tarpaulin that we pretended was waterproof for the sake of our own morale spread over that. Each morning, I watched the sun rise bright silver over the snow-covered mountains and then went to check on the men on morning watch, and then the men in the "infirmary," which was our only actual tent left, though no warmer than any of the other shelters for that. We were freezing to death slowly, clinging to the side of the mountain, hiding from the Russians and the Austrians and any who might betray our location to them. We were starving to death slowly as well, because we hardly dared venture out of our mountain fastness to hunt or scavenge for food, or even use what little money we had to purchase supplies, for the risk of being caught. The wounded were dying slowly for want of real medical attention, and we had almost all been sick with some horrid illness that turned our bowels to water and made us burn with fever and left us weak as children when it passed. I had been cured of the romance of war by my first battle, and this slow death by degrees was rapidly curing me of the desire to martyr myself for the liberty of my homeland. In that, I knew I was not alone.

That morning, there was no sunrise. The sky overhead was low and leaden with snow and the wind was rising, rushing down the valley like a torrent of cold water, tasting of ice and smoke from the cook-fires. Someone's snares had caught a few hares in the night, J remember, and the morning watch was gutting and skinning them, slicing away the meat to put in our battered pots - the things were bitter and tough but if you boiled them long enough they became edible. There was just enough tea left for everyone to have a thin half-cup, but no breakfast to speak of as we'd eaten the last of the bread the week before and we were holding the cheese in reserve. J walked about the perimeter of the camp, taking reports, and then J went to shake my shelter-mate awake and give him the gist; he was the captain, after all, and J the lieutenant, but J took first watch and he the midnight hours, so J rose first.

His name was Sandor Kajetan and J had the worst, most girlish sort of infatuation with him, practically from the moment we first met. It wasn't so much that he was handsome. His nose was a bit crooked from being broken in a fight with his elder brother when he was a young boy and his chin was far too stubborn by half. It was that he possessed a fine nature that made others turn toward him like flowers following the sun, a smile for everyone, a disposition that no hardship could long depress, and sense besides. We would have all of us killed or died for him, or followed him into Hell. To this night J regret that J was never in a position to tell him how J felt, as Tzigane, the woman J truly was, and not Zoltan, the man J pretended to be in those days. A foolish regret, but one J treasure.

Che staff meeting that morning was tense. In truth, there was not much in the way of staff to meet with. Our little band of rebels had been bleeding men for weeks. Less than half of the group that had sworn to resist the despoilers of our homeland to our dying breath remained to fulfill that vow. Now, with winter coming on in earnest, the rate of desertion had increased, particularly in the night watches when it was easier to slip away unnoticed. We were, in fact, talking seriously among ourselves of laying down our arms and going back home, travelling in twos and threes to make certain the more severely wounded members of our little company made it back home alive, if not entirely whole. Then the morning foragers came back with an unexpected report: they had found the opening to a cave, further along the heights of the valley than any of them had gone before, while they searched for a wild goat or a stray sheep to drag back to camp. Sandor and J went back up with them to see what use it might be, kicking ourselves all the while for not searching for such a place before this - all of us who grew up in the mountains had a story about the local caves and the luckless boy or girl who had gotten lost in one and was never found and the like. In truth, J could see how it might have been missed before this, as the entrance was less than a man's height and half-hidden by a drift of scree and scrub brush, roughly triangular in shape. We lit a lantern and squeezed inside, for the entrance passage was narrow, but beyond the initial tunnel the cavern opened into a single large chamber and branched into smaller rooms as far back as we could find which, admittedly, was not very far. We were principally concerned that no large animal, like a bear, used it to lair in, which did not seem to be the case. In fact, there weren't even bats.

In retrospect, that should have told the mountain-reared among us that something wasn't right about that place. Every cave has some sort of creatures dwelling in it, if not bats, then insects, rodents something. This place had nothing in it, nothing living but us. Had J thought about it, J would have been troubled. At the moment, J was only thinking that it would be warmer by far than sleeping out beneath the winter weather and the relentless wind, and more secure, as well. It took us the best part of two days, our progress slowed by the snow-squalls that swept back and forth across the valley, but in the end we had everyone inside. It was snug, but warmer for it, and to celebrate some of the men went out and poached a pair of unwary sheep from some local's pasture and a few loaves of bread from his shelf. That night, snug in our new hideaway, sleeping warmer than we had in weeks, albeit on ground not quite as soft, we felt safer than we had in a very long time.

More fools were we.

The apartment building was a tiny thing, a few blocks off the campus of Eötvös Loránd University, tucked at the end of a side street cul-de-sac with a good view of the river and a little patioed garden in the back where the residents, most of them graduate students and adjunct faculty, would sit and talk into the small hours of the night. Klara liked the place because she was firmly of the opinion that one of the things her sire needed more of was basic human contact unrelated to lecturing on 19th century Hungarian literature or picking up easy underclassmen for dining purposes, and the nightgarden definitely served that purpose. Occasionally, she would come by and find Tzigane sitting at one of the patio tables in the light of a citronella lamp, actually smiling as she mostly listened to the conversation, a sweet and slightly sad expression.

No one had seen her there recently, however, and neither was she answering her phone. No one had seen her at the university, either, since spring term had ended.

"You're a loon, you know that, right? She probably just forgot to turn her cell phone on again." Joszef was, to Klara's everlasting annoyance, utterly incapable of taking anything seriously when it came to worrying about their mutual mentor. "She's not a spring chicken, you know, it's not like tech comes naturally to her."

"I am not a loon." It took all of her strength and patience not to bounce his head off the iron patio railing. "She's not answering the landline, either, and yes the bill's been paid, I made the arrangements for that *myself*. No one's seen her for *nights*, Joszef, and I have a bad feeling about it she wasn't herself all winter."

"Yeah, yeah." Brotherly condescension dripped from every syllable. "You and your special bond. Look, I'll allow that she might have gone to sleep — but if we open up the door and find her sitting in the study reading some phonebook treatise on some author no one's ever heard of, you're going to owe me an American exchange student. Two if her cell phone's off." "You're making it really very difficult not to hurt you." Klara replied, between clenched fangs, and opened the apartment door.

This was a somewhat difficult operation, because of the small mountain of mail behind it on the entryway floor, and Klara shot her companion a venomous look and made a pointed gesture downward to draw his attention to the mess. That seemed to adjust his attitude. Even when the lady was brooding, she opened her mail.

"Wait here." He caught her by the shoulder and stepped past, calling, "Lady Tzigane!"

No answer. Klara waited as her companion went room to room, turning on lights, and ventured inside once he finished his circuit and came back into the entrance hall. "She's not here."

"You're sure? Not even in the sleeping room?" Klara hurried into the smallest of the apartment's spaces, the windows bricked over from the inside. It contained nothing but a closet for storing clothing and the old-fashioned iron bedstead, unused for who knew how long.

"I was just in there, Klara," he said, drumming his fingers on the wall. "Come here. There's something in the study."

"What?"

"A letter. For you." There was a stack of them, actually — one for her, and for Joszef, as well, and a dozen others addressed but not sent to assorted individuals in Hungary and further abroad.

Klara tore hers open. Inside was a single sheet of her sire's stationary, her favorite cream-colored paper with the painted tea roses in each corner, a few lines in her own elegant hand. "It's... instructions. We're to mail the letters. If she does not return in two months, we're to contact Master Lakatos to continue our tuition, as he's agreed to take us as students on her recommendation. She's been gone almost *three weeks* if she left just after these were written, Joszef!"

She looked up to find him staring at the floor. The expression on his face wasn't guilt, not exactly. "She told me to keep you from doing anything stupid, Klara. I had no idea she possessed such faith in my abilities. I'm touched."

This time she did hit him. She felt his jaw crack under her fist, and she bared her fangs, the Beast demanding retribution. "You." Joszef opened his mouth and flexed his jaw. It made a wet crackling sound as the bones knitted again. "Has it occurred to you that you should just let her go? She doesn't want you to follow her, she's made that clear. Why can't you

She pulled back to hit him again, but he dropped his gaze and Klara reined in her anger. "I don't expect you to understand, Joszef. You don't need to help me, just don't get in my way." Klara dropped down into a chair. Why was she doing this? Out of love? Blood-born loyalty? Real loyalty? "If she dies, it's a loss. It's a loss to the world, it's a loss to knowledge and history." She swallowed. Her throat was dry, and the action made a scraping sound. "It's a loss to us, Joszef."

He crouched down next to her. "I didn't say I was going to prevent you from doing anything stupid." He put his hand on her chin, and lifted it so they were facing. "Now, use your head. Where do you think she might have gone? You know her better than anyone."

It was on the tip of her tongue to say, "I'm not sure" but that would have been a lie. "She was born in this little town in the mountains — I'm not even sure it's in Hungary anymore. She talked about going back there sometimes."

"Good. Let's see what we can find out about the place and start from there."

We didn't realize something was wrong straight away. In fact, we didn't realize something was wrong for several weeks after we moved from the bowl of the valley into the cave, until winter was well and truly underway and the snow was piling to a tall man's height outside and we had almost no chance of escape.

It was patient that way.

The first things we noticed were tiny, easily dismissible as tricks of the mind, of the isolation and the boredom that assailed us. The darkness outside the circles of light cast by our lamps and the tiny fires that we built seemed, from time to time, to be just a touch too dark. The shadows that lay on the far sides of certain of the cave formations seemed a trifle too long. The sounds we made seemed to echo a bit too far or else not quite far enough. A cold breeze that seemed to come from nowhere, a sound where no sound should be, like the scraping of stone on stone.

Fear grew slowly in us. We had all lived in fear for a very long time before this - fear of our lives on the battlefield, fear of being caught by our enemies and suffering ignoble execution for our refusal to surrender our arms - and so we were a little inured to fears that seemed, at first blush, to be childish things left over from a parochial up-bringing, a belief in foolish legends. We had forgotten that some legends have at least a grain of truth in them, and some even more than that. Some legends have fangs and claws.

It took one of the wounded first, of course. We had carried our injured with us, unwilling to leave them to be butchered by the Russians, and some had been direly wounded, indeed. Adolar's shin had been struck by a ball, the bone shattered, and the wound had festered. Before he left, our medic had amputated the leg below the knee, and the stump was healing slowly and not at all prettily. He could not walk, of course, nor move without aid. One morning he was simply gone. There was no sign of a struggle. No sign of footprints. We never did find any trace of him, search though we might.

He was only the first.

Zavod, as it turned out, was still in Hungary, a sleepy little town surrounded by orchards and fields in the southern mountains with a picturesque old church and streets named after the heroes of the Revolution of 1848. Some of the gravestones in the churchyard were more than a century old, worn almost illegible by the passage of the seasons and the hard mountain winters, but Klara felt the need to look among them, anyway.

"Here, this is one of them — Zoltan Dvorzsak, Tzigane's elder brother. She told me all about him. And here are her parents, Devald and Milush." Klara frowned. "I didn't know that. They all died in December 1849."

"Probably some kind of epidemic." Joszef played his flashlight beam down the row of headstones. "She doesn't have a grave."

"I didn't know that, either," Klara admitted, the frown deepening. "I would have thought — "

"What's that?" Joszef's flashlight beam came to rest on Zoltan Dvorzsak's headstone; something caught the light and glittered, looped over the cruciform ornament on top.

"It's a chain." Klara hooked her finger through it and tugged gently. It came free with only minimal effort, with a soft scrape of metal against stone. An old iron key on a new block-link chain. "This can't be to their house... that

would have been torn down ages ago." "No. It looks like the sort of key that

would've gone to an old steamer trunk. Where did they live?"

"A farm just outside of town." She gestured over her shoulder toward the village.

"Let's go exploring, then," he said.

It never did let us see it. It was, in fact, extremely adept at keeping just out of the range of our lamps, just out of reach of our hands unless it wished to touch us, a vague suggestion of a shape in the darkness, glittering eyes or teeth catching a stray lamp-beam, a swift skittering motion that set off echoes in the wrong direction. It was fast, and it was strong, and once it was finished picking off our weakest, it blocked the entrance so we couldn't escape it easily, and set to work on the rest of us.

We tried to get away, of course. There was more than one way in and out of those caverns - we could tell that much from the air currents we could feel and endeavored to follow. We attempted to stay together, but it wasn't possible. There was too much fear, and too much ground to cover, and too little fuel for the lamps, too few candles. By day - and we could tell it was day, because in those hours none of us could hear it or catch glimpses of it or feel its presence hanging over us - we tried to find our way out. We sent out two man search parties that often didn't return at all. By night, we found a place to huddle together in our dwindling numbers, fighting terror and exhaustion, staring blindly into the darkness beyond our sad little circles of light.

It hunted us like rabbits, and like rabbits we fled from it.

By the end, there were only four of us left, four out of almost two dozen, who found the second exit, too small for a grown man to make it through. So we set about trying to widen it with crude tools of stone and the butts of the weapons we had left and the blades of our hunting knives. It made a horrible racket, and J'm certain the thing heard us in whatever hole it slept during the day. We knew, in our hearts, that it would come for the rest of us that night and that knowledge lent us desperate strength as we worked furiously, the shaft of light passing through the aperture we had found dwindling as the day died.

In the end, we failed. The exit was still too narrow when sunset turned the sky bloody - too narrow for all but one. J was slender enough to get out and Sandor, damn him, forced me through as J stood arguing with him in front of it, shoved me into the opening and out the other side with kicks and blows and shouts. J heard him screaming behind me as J fled down the hill, half-running, half-falling, more than half-blind with tears.

If I see a thousand years pass, I will never forget those screams.

Breaking into the local historical society building was not a particularly taxing exercise in burglary. In fact, it took more effort to keep their flashlight beams from being seen than jimmying the simple locks. Occasionally Klara could find it in her heart to be grateful of Joszef's misspent mortal life.

"Here... property records from the 19th century." A cloud of dust went up. "It's a good thing we don't need to breathe."

"Read fast. Sunrise is in two hours and we'll need to -"

"Here's a thought: why don't we just take the damned ledgers, since I doubt there's going to be a run on primary resources relating to obscure midcentury properties, and read them at our leisure?"

Klara was forced to admit there was a certain amount of sense to that viewpoint, which was how they spent a day sleeping, uncomfortably, in the trunk of her car with two enormous and horribly dusty antique property ledgers for pillows. The next night found them

creeping about an orchard that occupied the ground that had once been the Dvorak family farm and, upon which, the foundation of the old farmhouse could still be found by the appropriately motivated.

"Damn it."

"What's the matter?"

"I think I found what we're looking for — the ground's all rucked up over here. Someone's been digging." Klara found Joszef with her flashlight beam, sunk knee-deep into the freshly turned earth. "Help me up?"

A few hard tugs later, and he was back on solid ground and they were both on their knees, digging as swiftly and silently as they were able, with their hands, lacking any other tools. Klara reached what they were looking for first, starting in surprise as her fingernails struck leathercovered wood, and then metal. A quick few minutes' work found them pulling a small trunk, little more than a large letter casket, out of the old foundation-hole. The key fit perfectly, as Klara knew it would, in the built-in lock. "What...?"

"It's... her journals. I've seen her writing in them." Klara gently eased one out; they were packed tightly together, more than a dozen tiny leather-bound books in almost as many styles, filled with her sire's neat, elegant handwriting. "Why would she come all the way out here to bury her journals?"

It pursued me, of course. I was the last morsel of the banquet it had prepared for itself, after all, and I doubt it ever had any intention of letting me go. And, of course, it caught me, for I was only a griefstricken, terrified girl who had just left her only friends to be slaughtered while she made her escape. By some miracle, J even managed to strike it. J can still remember the sensation of its blood on my hands, burning cold, colder even than the air and the snow bank into which it threw me as it took me, tearing away my life and my humanity in great hungry gulps. J remember the pain as it speared out my eye with one long talon and the horrible taste of the blood it spat into my mouth and the agony as I twisted and writhed in the grip of the change.

But J do not remember it. J cannot recall its face, or the form of its body, or anything about it. J cannot remember these things, and I cannot step beyond them. They tether me to a point where I do not wish to remain. I must, in some way, make my peace with the agonies and fears of my past, or I will never progress beyond them, never transcend the anguish of that night in any meaningful way.

Klara, I am sure that it will be you who reads these words, and I beg you to listen. The past has weight. History has mass and density, and sometimes hands to hold us down, to tear us apart. If you have come this far, you have saved my journals, and therefore much of my memory, from those grasping, tearing hands. You cannot save me. I must do that on my own.

I must do this thing for myself: I must find it. I must face it. And I must leave its ashes in the wind of the mountains.

I must be more than what it made me.

ANCIENT

By Bethany Culp, Sebastian Freeman, Howard Qngham, Myranda Kalis, -foe Rinman, P. Alexander Scokel, Chuck Wendig and Filamena Young

Credits

Written by: Bethany Culp, Sebastian Freeman, Howard Ingham, Myranda Kalis, Joe Rixman, P. Alexander Scokel, Chuck Wendig, Filamena Young

Creative Director: Rich Thomas

Production Manager: matt milberger

Developer: Matthew McFarland

Line Developer: Joseph D. Carriker, Jr.

Editor: Anita Hager

Art Direction and Layout: Craig S Grant

Interior Art: Juan Cale, John Christopher, Trevor Claxton, Bethany Culp, Erica Danell, Tariq Hassan, Jeff Holt, Mathias Kollros, David Krentz, Marco Mazzoni

Cover Art: Dan Dos Santos

Special Thanks: Joe Wallace and Andrew Pavlides for Greek assistance.

Coming Vext



ANCIENT BLOODLINES



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INTRODUCTION

Change is afoot, you say. Change is always afoot. It is our role to remain constant, for we are not prey to time; we are its predators.

> — Francis Rose, Shadow Archbishop of Canterbury, 1649

INTRODUCTION

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"I shall not die! I shall not die!" she cried, half mad with joy, and hanging on my neck; "I shall be able to love you for a long time still. My life is in yours and all that is me comes from you. A few drops of your rich and noble blood, more precious and more potent than all the elixirs in the world, have given me back my life."

—Théophile Gautier, "The Beautiful Vampire"

The vampire is, in his own way, immortal. He strides through the back-alleys and dark gatherings of the past, and walks into the present with a wealth of terrible stories to tell. He was doing terrible things in the time of Elizabeth and Victoria, and he does terrible things now. Jaded by the ages, he sinks to deeper horrors, stranger tastes. His power grows with time. His influence spreads further than any living man can imagine.

Or, at least, that's what the vampires would *like* to think. In fact, as time goes on, the vampire becomes disconnected from the world, unable to deal with the pace of change, and with human emotions and behaviors that once were part of her own nature. She is limited in her horizons by fear of the world outside the boundaries of her territory, the fear that should she leave the confines of her world, she might meet the sun. And one night, she knows that she will fall asleep and dream for a long, long time, and wake up with only the faintest memory of who she was in a world she no longer recognizes. Her fate is madness and confusion as much as it is power and eternity.

Even so, fragments of the past come to light. Some of the undead learn how to separate true experiences from dreams. Some of them never really sleep.

Some vampires remember.

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This book examines the secrets of eternity: how vampires see the past, and how they survive it, what they do to avoid forgetting all that they are, and the awesome powers available to the ancients. Finally we reveal some of the flash points of Kindred history, those epochal moments when everything changed.

Historical Settings in Storytelling Games A big chunk of this book dedicates itself to ten epochal pe-

A big chunk of this book dedicates itself to ten epochal periods in Kindred history, and presents material to facilitate Storytellers and players in creating stories set in the past. Of course, in a book like this, space is at a premium, and historical detail must give way to game material. This isn't



ANCIENT MYSTERIES AND ANCIENT BLOODLINES

This book's sister title, **Ancient Bloodlines**, picks up on many of the threads in these flash points. In particular, the bloodlines that are mentioned only in passing in these sections are given full treatments in that book.

In addition, **Ancient Bloodlines** details the legacies of these historical periods in a modern context. The Babylonian Edimmu, the Indian Kindred's caste system, the Narodnaia Volia shadow cult — these are just a few of the tidbits found in that book.

The two books are meant to be enjoyed together, but they're both useful on their own, too. You're not going to be at a complete loss if you only read one, and we've tried to keep from referencing one book in the other as much as possible.



a textbook of history; it's a game supplement. The book is here to help you and your fellow players derive enjoyment and entertainment through creating compelling and interesting stories. And they're *your* stories, not ours.

Making stories set in the past can be tricky. Details are treacherous, and it only takes one slip to break suspension of disbelief. Having said that, suspension of disbelief is a funny old thing. You can utterly destroy it by fluffing the most trivial of details and yet get away with ignoring history completely in other respects.

In fact, the very existence of a whole underground society of vampires (and post-Hollywood-meets-Anne-Rice vampires at that) breaks history, and if taken to its logical conclusion, does so irrevocably – dragging us into the realms of alternatereality science fiction (but more on that later).

And this is precisely where suspension of disbelief comes in: we *want* to play a story based on the premise that "vampires in the catacombs under Ancient Rome" is a brilliant idea. So we ignore the fact that it flies in the face of real-world folklore and myth, let alone history, and have fun with it.

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Research

Storytelling games are one of only a very few categories of games that require really extensive preparation on the part of at least one player. And a storytelling game set in the past needs more preparation still. Any historical setting really needs at least some research. But how much research do you really need?

To be honest, most people can probably get by with reading a couple of novels or watching a few films set in the appropriate time period. Maybe the films take history for granted, but if you're not bothered by that, you could do a lot worse than sitting down with your friends and catching a flick to get you into the mood. For example, if you want to run an Elizabethan game, you might want to check out Shekhar Kapur's Elizabeth films. They don't so much take liberties with Lady History as kidnap and viciously beat her, but they have the look, the atmosphere and, more importantly, a feel to them that reflects what modern-day people want to see from a film about that era (and remember, it's what your group wants to see that's really important). Likewise, HBO's TV series Rome might have characters who age at drastically different rates and a six-year pregnancy, but no other filmed source so accurately reflects the savagery and decadence of Late Republican Rome.

If you want to be a bit more serious in your research, reading a book on the period you're looking at will probably supply you with all you need. Accessible, fascinating history books exist for every period of human history. The insertion of just a couple of facts gleaned from a resource on history can make the difference between an OK game and a really interesting one. Resources like Wikipedia are frequently the subject of academic scorn, but let's face it, they are really good for picking up useful facts for games at short notice. You want to know who were the Consuls in Rome in CE 313? You're actually much better served going to Wikipedia for the answer than wading through the university library (it was Constantine, Licinius and Maximin Daia, by the way, with only Constantine and Licinius still standing at the end of the year).

Accuracy versus Perceptual Authenticity The past is important to us, but not as important as our

The past is important to us, but not as important as our idea of it. We have this concept that the past is set in stone, that it can't be changed, but our perception of it alters all the time. Events we take for granted as having happened have been changed in a million tiny ways. Things happen. The facts are there. But something in human nature makes us endlessly interpret and re-interpret the past.

This all sounds very theoretical. But the point is that when we tell stories about times in history, no matter how hard we try to be accurate and true to that history, we always end up setting our stories in an *idea* of the past. We create the past we want to see.

Which is to say, if you're playing a Storyteller game set in a historical era, it's not about getting all the details right; it's about getting the *right* details right, and not sweating the others. Or to put it another way, being accurate is second to being *authentic*, and what "authentic" means here depends entirely on the perceptions of the people involved in making up and enjoying the story.

For example, going back to our Ancient Rome game set in the time of Constantine, you probably know that Romans used denarii and sesterces as coins. But unless you did a university degree in Ancient History and you took the Late Roman course modules, you probably don't know that the monetary system was victim to hyper-inflation at about the time we're talking about, or that Constantine's predecessor (sort of - it's complicated) Diocletian issued a document setting maximum prices on things which actually made the situation worse, and that Constantine overhauled the coinage and instituted new coins... But honestly, does knowing that really help? If you didn't know any of this, and neither did your players, you probably don't need to give them a five-minute lecture on Late Roman economics, because it's not like you're going to dwell much on that stuff anyway. Sticking with the denarii and the sesterces may annov the few purists who know, but in the end, most people don't care about that level of detail. Of course, this sort of thinking won't help you pass any history exams, but then, storytelling games are not history exams. They're entertainment.

If part of your story is set in the gladiatorial arena, it adds just the right amount of flavor to know the names of the gladiators and what weapons and armor they use, and how they yell "We who are about to die salute you!" but if you don't know the rules about what gladiators are supposed to be pitted against which others, or the way in which different gladiatorial types fell in and out of fashion as time went on - well, who's really going to notice? Some details probably don't need going into at all, and might even kill drama. For example, knowing that, according to a growing number of historians, the vast number of gladiatorial matches stopped before anyone got killed because gladiators were far too expensive to waste may well get you marks in an essay, but having your characters get into a gladiatorial bout knowing they're probably going to walk away with some scratches is not nearly as nerve-shredding as a climactic bout where their final destruction is a very real possibility.

In the end, you only need to include those details that preserve suspension of disbelief. This is not a term-paper, or a historical novel, or even the script of a historical movie. It's an evening's entertainment, in the company of friends, all of whom are complicit in the creation of the world. (and Firing It Again) Any sane person knows that in the real world, vampires do not exist. We establish as one of the foundational truths of the World of Darkness that, in the fictional setting we play our games in, they do. And we expend a certain amount of effort in suspending disbelief, to come up with – let's face it – only partially believable reasons as to why they are not running the world, and people do not know about them.

Breaking History

In a story set in a historical setting, the issue is multiplied, since the temptation with any historical setting is to chuck in a couple of real historical figures for the sake of flavor... and then the temptation is to kill or Embrace them. Here we have a coterie of Roman vampires. They meet the Emperor Constantine at the head of his army on his way to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. The night before the battle, they get him alone in his camp and suck him dry - or maybe even give him the Embrace. What then? The Roman Empire doesn't come under the control of Constantine. He doesn't – crucially for European history – convert to Christianity just before the battle. The Roman Catholic Church isn't founded and institutionalized. Medieval history doesn't happen. Without medieval history, the Renaissance doesn't happen (or at least, in neither the same way nor in the same place – maybe it happens in India or China first). And so on. The entire course of world history is transformed.

Is this necessarily a bad thing? If the game you're playing isn't connected to a present-day game, does it really matter if the world you have created around your table diverges from our own? Really ambitious and enterprising Storytellers might even think of extending that across the ages: the characters kill Constantine; the Empire remains pagan; a few hundred years later, the characters wake from torpor to find themselves in a world rendered unrecognizable by their own actions. Running with it is a perfectly valid way to go about handling such history bending events (for an example of this sort of thing, check out Kim Newman's novel *Anno Dracula* and its sequels, which extrapolate what happens after Queen Victoria becomes a vampire and the undead take over Britain). It's not something to be done lightly, though, and is well outside of the scope of this book.

On the other hand, your game might be a flashback, or you might intend the game to move forward through history until the present day. Or you simply might not relish the idea of creating a new world history from scratch. If this is the case, there are a number of ways to get around the problem.

One method is to simply find ways not to alter history. The characters meet Constantine, but he never seems to be away from his army. Or he somehow escapes. Or someone else appears at the very worst possible moment and the vampires' scheme is thwarted. On the one hand, it keeps the story running. On the other hand, it's a somewhat dictatorial way of Storytelling, creating a sort of "me versus them" dynamic.

Another technique is to make history set, and then find reasons as to why the characters' actions, whatever they do, create the same result. The vampires kill Constantine, only to discover that the following day the army is led by Constantine to victory. Maybe a member of Constantine's staff, already a Christian, takes the place of the real, pagan Constantine whom he vaguely resembles, and shapes the Empire — and history — to his own agenda. Maybe the man the characters killed was the impostor, and the real Constantine is ten miles down the road. This works, of course, but used too often, players can feel powerless, and unable to alter anything.

Another way to fix history is to exploit the Fog of Eternity. The characters kill Constantine and wreak havoc with Roman history. Eventually they all fall into torpor. One wakes up a few hundred years later (and then wakes his friends) to find Rome full of statues of Constantine and the Roman Catholic Church alive and well. They look at the records. They didn't break history at all. What happened? Was the clear memory of what occurred before no more than a torpor-dream? If it was, how come they all share it? Or are there other forces at work? Suddenly, the characters' attempted smashing of history has become the basis of several more story hooks, without having to change any historical events at all.

And yet another approach is simply for everyone to lay their expectations for the game on the table. It doesn't hurt to establish before you play just how much history you want to set, and how much you're happy to change, particularly if the historical game you're playing is a prequel to your modern game.

In the end, we say what we always say — make the events of your stories and chronicles fit your own desires. If you want your version of Qing Dynasty China, Tsarist Russia or Mughal India to be meticulously detailed, more power to you. If you just want it to be like your favorite film, well, that works too. The only thing that is non-negotiable is your enjoyment.

What's in This Book

Chapter One: Piercing the Fog of Eternity delves into the intricacies of the Fog of Eternity, and examines how the Fog can be useful in a chronicle. Learn the secrets of the coveted Requiem Diaries of the Kindred, and discover how to create and run stories set within a vampire's torpid dreams.

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Chapter Two: Unstuck From Time looks at the old vampires themselves: what is it like to wake up from centuries of torpor and find that everything has changed? How do newly-awakened elders cope with the march of progress? Systems for creating elder vampires and vampires from the old nights, along with Merits, Flaws and Devotions all find a place here.

Chapter Three: Relics of the Past presents a number of historical vampires ready for use in your chronicle, or ripe for adaptation.

And in Chapter Four: Flash Points in History, we take a tour at breathtaking speed through ten periods of world history that changed the condition of the Kindred forever, and drops hints as to how vampires from the past respond to the modern world. The flash points are presented in reverse chronological order, beginning with the comparatively recent Great War, and ending in Ancient Egypt. Each of the flash points is briefly summarized below:

a fourney Back in Time Goodbye to All That: The Great War (CE 1914-1918): A look at the First World War through the eyes of the Kindred, and how the rules of war - and how vampires reacted to it - changed forever.

Blood Flows West: The Montrose Party (CE 1839-1869): The American Gold Rush and what it meant for the vampires of the age, focusing on the ill-fated Montrose Party and their undead guardians.

Age and Treachery: The Great Rebellion (CE 1857): The introduction of Western Kindred to the vampires of India, and the treachery and bloodshed that destroyed so many of both.

Feeding the Fire: The Haitian Revolution (CE 1791): The vampires of Europe arrive in Haiti and slake their thirsts on the blood of slaves. The factions here are defined not by beliefs, but by how the Kindred destroyed their rivals.

The Lost Generation: The Thirty Years' War (CE 1618-1648): The Kindred of Europe use mortal conflict as a mask for their own battles. The result would be the destruction of nearly a third of the continent's vampires.

Iberian Nights: Gremio de Corajoso (CE 1415-1580): Portugal explores the world, establishing colonies across the globe. The Kindred follow, under the leadership of Afanso, Prince of Lisbon.

Father Governs Child: The First Kingdom of Thailand (CE 1238-1368): The Naga King's adoption of Buddhism, and the beginnings of the battles between Bird and Snake that continue to this night.

Clash of Empires: The Crusades (CE 1095-1300): The Camarilla fell, and the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum were the powers in Europe's nights. But there were other covenants then, as well, and in this flash point we see their rise and fall.

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Black Streets of Babylon: The Seven Spirits (625-539 BCE): The story of En-Isiratuu, the prince who ruled Babylon's Kindred for millennia, and the horrible curse he unleashed upon the world.

Rise of the Covenants: Ancient Egypt (circa 1279 BCE): The reign of Ramses the Great, and how the cults of the various Egyptian gods established the system of covenants that Kindred still observe tonight.



ANCIENT MYSTERIES AND REQUIEM FOR ROME

Readers of Requiem for Rome and Fall of the Camarilla who peruse this book hoping that it reveals all of the secrets of that setting, and thus fuses the world of Vampire: The Requiem into a neat little package, might be a bit disappointed. We don't refer to Rome much in this book, and in fact about the only direct references we're going to make to it are here and in a brief discussion of Skills in Chapter Two.

The Julii were a Roman clan, known as the Founders. The Camarilla was largely their doing, but they were wiped out as that organization fell. In terms of game mechanics, they are identical to Ventrue. This raises the questions: Were the Julii a separate clan, or a Ventrue bloodline? Or, conversely, are the Ventrue just the modern expression of the Julii? If nothing changed but the name, what does it matter?

Two of the flash points in this book take place before or roughly contiguous with the time periods presented in Rome, and they, like all of the flash points, make reference to Ventrue rather than Julii. That shouldn't be construed as an attempt to ignore other books in the Vampire line. Rather, it's in deference to the fact that each of these flash points takes place in only a handful of pages, and making up and establishing new names and identities for the clans isn't feasible (not if we want to give you any other information).

The bottom line is this: All of the books in the Vampire line are meant to be used with only the World of Darkness Rulebook and Vampire: The Requiem. Ancient Mysteries breaks this rule a little, what with its "sister title," Ancient Bloodlines, but even that isn't necessary to use and appreciate this book. Trying to keep all of the details consistent between an ever-growing list of books would be a challenge, but more importantly, doing so flies in the face of the *point* of this book.

Namely, history isn't smooth. It's broken, and the edges are sharp. Read on, and be careful.



CHAPTER ONE: Piercing the Fog of Eternity

I HAVE HEARD MANY OF MY CONTEMPORARIES SAY THAT THE FOG OF ETERNITY IS THE TRUE CURSE OF OUR KIND. THAT IT DOOMS US TO REPEAT THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST TIME AND TIME AGAIN. YET sometimes I wonder: Is it not a boon that our ELDERS LOSE SOME OF THEIR ACUITY OVER LONG CENTURIES OF TORPOR? IS IT NOT PLEASING TO KNOW THAT A TRUTH OF THE PAST CAN BE UNEARTHED ONCE AN AGED MONSTER HAS FINALLY FORGOTTEN TO CONTINUE OBSCURING ITS HONESTLY, FOR ALL THAT IS LOST THROUGH THE Fog, I prefer this world of forgotten evils to A TYRANNY OF PERFECT, ANCIENT MONSTERS.

In the former, I see hope.

— Bianca Tilley, Master Archivist of the Agonistes

I have come to believe that the whole world is an enigma, a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth. Umberto Eco

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Cicero said of history that it is "the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life and brings us tiding of antiquity." For the Kindred, nothing could be further from the truth. The Danse Macabre conspires with the Fog of Eternity to bury history, making of her a harlot who speaks well of one interest or another, yet skews the truth and leads Kindred towards the same mistakes time and time again. What isn't forgotten through the dreams of elders is consciously obscured, often to protect or support a Kindred politically. The Damned bury the diseased truths that make up their own blighted history as deeply as they inter the drained corpses of their victims. Yet like the undead themselves, the past has a tendency to rise from the loam of misdirection and falsehood.

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Kindred society has a strange, conflicted view of digging into its own past. On one hand, an attitude that dismisses history as irrelevant (especially given the somewhat dubious nature of documents of Kindred history and the even more suspect first-hand accounts) prevails among the elders and other leaders within Kindred circles, who place intense pressure on those who begin to research the past to halt their investigations. Suspicious elders rarely even have their own supporters research city, clan or covenant history, reasoning that any investigation that might expose the indiscretions of a rival's past may backfire and present the elders' own secrets. Given that many elders don't remember precisely what they did to survive in their early nights or how they scrabbled up the ladder of power to the rung they hold now, much of that paranoia is well founded.

Yet, it does happen. Neonates seeking an advantage over a rival or simply attempting to get to the bottom of a mystery tend to be the Kindred most likely to dig into the past. Similarly, those most likely to become lost in the maze of lies, secrets and hidden agendas that makes up Kindred history are the young and ambitious (such as the players' characters), most of whom have not even experienced the mad nightmares of torpor themselves. Exceptions exist, of course, such as bloodlines devoted to unearthing the past or elders who have awoken to find their own histories blurred and unrecognizable within their minds. Additionally, some elders encourage their supporters to seek out their rivals' secrets. They simply watch those researchers closely lest they start unearthing the elder's own sordid past. A favorite tactic is to keep the researchers physically isolated from lines of communication, so that if they unearth anything damaging, they never get the chance to tell anyone (at least not before the elder employing them has the opportunity for damage control).

Whether rank neonate or experienced elder, Kindred excavating the Ancient Mysteries of the past must contend with numerous obstacles, not least of which is the Fog of Eternity. The results of those investigations, whether a juicy bit of blackmail to hold over an elder's head or the true origins of one of the great covenants, sometimes even justify the risk.

The Fog of Cternity The precise nature of the Fog of Eternity remains a matter

of some debate among Kindred. Discourses and Requiem diaries (see p. 25), dating as far back as the Camarilla, display a peculiar focus on that aspect of Kindred existence, and at least two bloodlines devoted to understanding it have risen over the millennia since. Some Kindred claim that the Fog of Eternity developed as part of the larger curse of undeath, while those who reject the idea of the Kindred condition as a supernatural curse accept the Fog of Eternity as a natural imposition of the Kindred form on the mortal mind. A few Kindred psychologists have claimed, in the last two centuries, that the Fog of Eternity is a necessary process within the vampiric mind that helps buttress the psyche against the madness that would surely come of centuries of unfulfilled hopes and dreams.

Some neonates point out that they have trouble remembering the specifics of an event that occurred a decade ago and that they doubt they'll be any more capable of doing so after a century. These pragmatic Kindred often dismiss the Fog as a myth, yet another urban legend about vampires, like the dangers of crosses and running water. Memory is notoriously unreliable, and piling centuries of it in a brain meant only to process a few decades can't help. Mortals, they point out, tend to develop major memory problems in old age, and they live a handful of vears compared to the Damned. Some Kindred dismiss this argument; the dangers of senility and Alzheimer's are physiological, not psychological. Others aren't so sure.

Why Qt's There The question of whether or not the Fog of Eternity is some curse that can be overcome or is simply the result of the length of time that Kindred exist ultimately only matters if the characters are Kindred with a vested interest in overcoming it (such as members of the Ordo Dracul or Agonistes bloodline), in which case the Storyteller is encouraged to decide the precise nature of the phenomenon for her own game. Below, we discuss why the Fog of Eternity exists in the game, both from a mechanics standpoint and why and how it functions in the setting. Understanding these aspects of the game design allows Storytellers to make the right decision for how to handle the Fog of Eternity in their chronicles and allow players to unearth the Ancient Mysteries it obscures.

In the Game

The Fog of Eternity exists primarily to maintain a sense of mystery within the game world, while preventing player characters from being completely outclassed by millenniaold vampires with perfect recall and understanding of the thousands of years of human history they have witnessed. Just as rising Blood Potency has the negative effect of requiring blood of ever-increasing power to sustain the Kindred, increased age has the negative effect of requiring ever-greater storage space in the mind to contain everything that elder has experienced.

Indeed, in a way the two game mechanics go hand-inhand. As an elder sleeps and allows her blood to thin out to a sustainable level, any Skills or Attributes she possessed at superhuman levels consequently decrease. These dots lost represent a decreased acuity that had been based in part on years of information and experience; years that vanish into the haze of torpid nightmares.

To clarify, however, the Fog of Eternity does not simply refer to the tendency of Kindred to lose memories in torpor. While the average Kindred mind tends toward a strength that mortals simply do not possess, especially as the blood thickens, that strength does not necessarily equate to a greater capacity for memory. Even a mortal can be hard-pressed to remember the details of events that happened a few years before, and after a decade or so they tend to fade into broad strokes punctuated by a few hazy but specific memories.

For example, a woman in her early 30s might look back a decade and remember that she was "in college back then." She likely recalls several specific events that took place in college, especially the ones that she has related to others time and time again in the intervening years. However, to confuse things further, stories often take on a life of their own. Chances are she remembers the stories better than she does the actual events, and in telling each story she might be surprised to find that she uses the same phrases, whole sentences and even vocal cadences with each telling. Yet when she closes her eyes and tries to summon forth the images of what she describes, she likely pulls forth a memory colored more thoroughly with the telling of the story than the actual happenings.

When a person returns to a place he has not been to in a long time, it may feel simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. While one might be inclined to immediately chalk up the sensation to changes in the environment over time, in truth, the feeling stems equally from the locale as it exists in memory. This blurring of the lines of truth combined with the largely oral historical tradition of the Kindred results more in a mythology than a history, an account in which even the relatively recent past recedes into a fog of analogy (see "In the Setting" below).

The Fog of Eternity serves two closely related purposes in the setting. On one hand, it deepens the mystery of the Kindred by declining to openly reveal a definitive vampire history. In doing so it follows the general "toolkit" approach of the World of Darkness games, allowing Storytellers to carve the past from the present in whatever manner best represents the stories they want to tell. It allows for customizability, and a single Storyteller may find that a history in which the Invictus has remained unchanged more-or-less since the rise of Rome fits one chronicle, while a backstory in which the Invictus didn't come into existence until the 15th century (but claims to be far older) better suits another. This freedom is intentional. The Fog of Eternity does not exist to argue that the Kindred have no past, but rather emphasizes that they have a past that shapes the course of their unlives, yet they don't have a clear understanding of it.

The Fog of Eternity underscores the importance of the local in the setting. Most Kindred remain fairly well aware of the history of the domain they call home (though in some situations, that slate may have been wiped clean through revolution, attacks by hunters, or any of the other dangers of the Requiem). Many Kindred possess a vague understanding of the history of their covenant in an international sense, even if that history flows as half-formed myths and allegories, but they would be remiss if they didn't know the major points of history in their local covenant. Few of the Sanctified in Montreal, for example, realize that their covenant brought low the Camarilla in the fourth and fifth centuries, but they certainly are familiar with the story of their first local archbishop, a Kindred Embraced by native pagans who received a divine vision of the Spear and held the city against outsiders for several decades, causing a rift between the isolationist Sanctified and the rest of the Kindred of Montreal that remains to this night.

The Prince of New Orleans, as another example, arrived in the Americas as little more than a neonate, undertaking a dangerous journey from Spain with his closest confidant on the behest of his elders. His influence has intertwined with the history of the city ever since, wrapping itself into the themes that the setting sets forward for the city, that of the eternal war between faith and the vices that undermine it. In many ways, the history of Augusto Vidal is the history of New Orleans. However, it is not the history of a secret conspiracy of Kindred in Europe or even the history of his covenant, the Lancea Sanctum. Vidal may have been born in Spain, but his history takes place almost solely in New Orleans.

Even if the chronicle takes place in an ancient city such as London or Rome, the reliable history (that witnessed by the major players involved) likely only stretches back a few centuries (due to torpor and attrition). While the deeper past may be known to a select few Kindred of the area (likely in the form of folktales and myths, no matter how academically their proponents disguise them), the *important* history is the one whose results and effects are playing out across the chessboard of the city tonight.

As a result, the history of the World of Darkness outside of the local setting of the Storyteller's chronicle, including the history of the Kindred, *simply doesn't matter until the story demands that it does*. The Kindred of New Orleans might be interested to hear that, two and a half centuries ago, the Kindred of London experienced what they call the Cull; an event that destroyed almost every Kindred in the city. But that frightening prospect wouldn't matter to them a fraction as much as the revelation of the true hand behind the Storyville murders (the latter simply matters in a real, political way while the former remains mere *trivia*). Unless, of course, Kindred in New Orleans began to disappear following a recent arrival from London....

In the Setting

Having established why the Fog of Eternity exists from a system standpoint, one might wonder why it exists in the setting. Surely academically minded Kindred could come together to overcome the physical and psychological underpinnings of the Fog of Eternity. What is it about Kindred society that deepens the darkness into which the efforts of all Kindred seem destined to descend?

Kindred society displays remarkable paranoiac tendencies. Any weapon or advantage they provide another Kindred, they reason, becomes an advantage that can one night turn against the provider. Kindred history is rife with parables of the proverbial dog that bites the hand that feeds it (the entire Carthian Movement in the average Invictus Kindred's estimation, for example), and elders are generally disinclined to teach skills or Disciplines to those Kindred who they don't have thoroughly under their moldering thumbs. Information, as the adage goes, bears a power all its own, and most Kindred are unwilling to provide that power to others. The small, obvious secrets include the location of a Kindred's haven or the make-up of her herd. The deeper secrets include her co-conspirators in her rise to Hierophant or what she sacrificed to master blood sorcery.

Information is power, and power is something Kindred don't wish to provide other Kindred. While this applies most strongly among rivals in city and covenant politics, vampires generally don't even share information to one another across city lines. The rare letter may be passed between princes of nearby cities (or conspirators hoping to claim a city's throne for themselves), but rarely are detailed books of Kindred history passed back and forth across city, county or state lines, especially given that Kindred don't generally hold a strong interest in what's going on in a city two or more hours away.

This results in a society in which most information exists on a local level due to the self-involvement of the individuals therein. The Masquerade, which demands that Kindred don't put to paper (or electronic communication, given the dubious privacy afforded by email and text messaging) information about their kind, society and ultimately their situation furthers this inward focus. What does pass between sire and childe, mentor and protégé or patron and client usually is shared verbally, establishing a robust tapestry of oral history in which each strain remains so alienated from the others that the overall result seems thin and confused (until the characters work to put together what they've learned from their various patrons to see the larger picture — if they ever do).

Any information leaked to the mortal populace cannot contain enough accurate and detailed information to lead the masses to the Kindred. Also, most elders staunchly refuse to provide detailed information of their own past activities, for reasons already discussed. Finally, intelligent Kindred make many of their moves in secret. Given these three points, it is only natural that the Kindred would develop an aesthetic for their own history that appreciates the "truth" of a lesson over its historical accuracy. In other words, the value of a lesson lays in the greater mastery of the Danse Macabre gleaned from its hearing, rather than any ability to rattle off dates and names with authority. Analogy and allegory become the primary languages of such lessons, and over the centuries, analogy begins to look a lot like truth.

The oral history of the Kindred presents a unique challenge and opportunity to a Storyteller willing to make the most of it. On one hand, the Storyteller gets to weave an elaborate mythology, even for events that occurred in the past century or two, while on the other he can pepper it with misconceptions and outright falsehoods.

When first working to design a setting, understanding the way the major players interact with one another

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and how they have done so in the past is obviously key. Abstracting them into a more robust mythology can be difficult, however. One method of doing so is by looking at the history of the region from the point of view of each covenant and writing a few lines about the major public events from their perspectives. Then filter those perspectives through whatever lenses the characters learn their history from, whether a sire or covenant leader, flavoring it with their personal goals and opinions while excising whatever unpleasant truths or disturbing secrets that the teachers might have found less than appealing. It may take a bit of work, but the results can be astonishing.

Obviously not every Kindred favors an oral mythology of "greater truths" to a concrete body of factual and verifiable information. The Agonistes, a bloodline of Mekhet scholars and philosophers, for example, devote their Requiems to ferreting out aging texts that hint at Kindred involvement in the affairs of mortals and other supernatural entities alike. These researchers interview venerable Kindred on the verge of the sleep of ages, hoping to protect their valuable experiences from the ravages of torpid nightmares.

The lack of verifiable written accounts and the personalities and personal preferences of the Kindred are not the only obstacles to piercing the Fog of Ages. As mentioned above, the very physical aspects of the Kindred condition smother the Ancient Mysteries sheltered within.

These demands of the Kindred form place strains on an elder's mind beyond those represented merely by Humanity loss and derangements. Elders cling to the philosophies of their covenants and the rote actions that they have performed for centuries to maintain a sensate grip on the Requiem they've come to inhabit. Furthermore, most elders have multiple plots unfolding at any given time, their attention torn between the movements happening on dozens of chessboards. In short, elders tend to be distracted. As a result, neonates often come away with the impression that elders are largely anachronisms, creatures that rely equally on the rigid ritualism of Kindred society and the most ingrained assumptions brought with them from the time period in which they breathed and walked beneath the sun to weather the passing of decades. To an extent, they are right. Elders prop their minds up with their own assumptions and the controlled behaviors of the Requiem. To do otherwise tempts chaos, and chaos is the larder of the Beast.

This affects the way elder Kindred interact with other vampires, especially neonates. Elders often seem distracted, sometimes confused and without a doubt aloof. Everything they come into contact with stirs some subconscious association (often many), but their memory, overburdened by centuries as it is, struggles to make sense of the dead echoes of emotions inspired by the color of a vase or the scent of a fine cigar. Many elders, creatures of nigh-infinite patience, allow themselves the time to ponder these associations, leaving younger Kindred to wait in uncomfortable silence. These ancient worthies tend to treat one another similarly, the difference being that in such situations each elder expects such behavior from the others. Many meetings of the Primogen, especially in older cities where such positions might be held by Kindred with at least two centuries of experience, tend to lapse into silence as each august member contemplates the underlying meaning of a given action or phrase.

Most elders can and do act with startling alacrity and focus when necessary, but prefer to let events unfold slowly, mentally examining them from every angle and postulating each likely outcome while gazing back over their Requiems for familiar strands or repeating themes. Keeping in mind the vast amount of time most elders have witnessed pass before them, and the desire of such elder personages to control all within their dominion (especially their own minds), can help both players and Storytellers effectively portray elders.

Allowing an elder character a few moments to stare silently ahead allows Storytellers the time to think of an appropriate response to a query (plus it can give a Storyteller in a tight spot a moment to breathe and get her bearings) and deliver it in a way that is believably in character without ruining tension or mood. Such a tactic can help control the pacing of the scene and build apprehension among the players. For players of elder characters, the same tactic allows them to think through each sentence (or decision) while maintaining the detached aloofness that so defines elders.

Kindred and the Fog of Cternity Newly Embraced Kindred often assume that a race of

Newly Embraced Kindred often assume that a race of ancient creatures will provide eyewitness reports on the history of their country or the world. They question their elders, seeking information on personages whose historicity borders on myth, such as Christ, Shakespeare or King Arthur. When they realize that their elders know no more about such individuals than their mortal counterparts, neonates often shift their line of questioning to famous people of the more recent past: What was Abe Lincoln like? Franz Ferdinand? Queen Elizabeth I? Rarely do the neonates garner more information about such famous and important people than they do the more mythological. Such makes sense of course, given the Kindred predilection towards avoiding the spotlight that such personages often occupy.

But then the Kindred begin asking about their sires' pasts, only to be utterly shocked by how little these immortal beings know even about their own histories.

November 18, 1998

My nights grow longer, but my weeks shorter.

Each night seems to stretch for an eternity between twilight and dawn, yet each time I chance a look at the calendar, two or three weeks have passed. It is all I can do to keep myself occupied. To keep my mind active. I hunt more than I used to. Interaction with the kine keeps me sharp. Keeps me distracted. Or it did in the past. Now I fill my nights with a hundred small distractions. Not so easy in this sleepy city, where bars close at two, three at the latest. If you had asked me a decade ago if I would ever set foot in an all-night diner, I would have called you a madman. Now they are my only comfort. Smoke and the rancid stink of grease hides in the weave of my clothes, blanketing my skin, seeping into my pores, filling me and clinging to my flesh. But it is not so great a cost to ask, for what I take in return: sanity. Like a European noble playing at the pastoral, I take comfort in the bleating of sheep.

Sometimes I read, but the written word is a temporary distraction at best. I used to finish a book in a night. Roderick, rest his soul, knew every library in the city as well as he knew the taste of my blood, so often did I send him with a new list of books to obtain. Now I find myself staring at the page, my eyes wandering over the words in the most rote of actions, my mind elsewhere. Not thinking of anything, exactly, but falling into that numb thoughtlessness, as if slipping into the daysleep. If falling asleep while reading is not a sign that the end is near, I know not what is.

I've made a mistake, I'm afraid, assuming that freeing myself of the shackles of the hunger faced by so many elders would stave off torpor. Foolish in retrospect. As the Dark Prince wrote, it is the Stagnation that suborns the Hunger. My unchanging nature allows me to subsist on the water-thin vitae of dogs and pigs to this night. Yet torpor... torpor is the very essence of stagnation, is it not? How could I be so fool as to believe that stagnation would stagnation end?

I ramble, and in doing so I complain uselessly. I can do only this, a note to myself: Elliot, when you awaken from your sleep, you must seek out a new Coil, a Coil that breaks Stagnation's back on the sharp edge of hunger. Have studies been done in torpor prevention? They must have. You must find out.

I've gone off purpose - tonight Prince Charles held court at Elysium. Lady Eloise glanced at me askance several times. I suspect she recognizes the signs. Insightful, that one. Soon though, soon the exhaustion on my features will be writ so deeply as to be read by any Kindred who takes the time to look my way. That's when I'll begin worrying. Perhaps I should be worried now. Perhaps Eloise had me followed. Perhaps her people drove the car that passed by earlier, headlights prowling across the room like foul predators, throwing shadows against the maps that hang on the far wall.

Perhaps I am worried. Perhaps this journal is less a precautionary device and more a testament to my fear. Perhaps my time has already come. Kindred who existed less than a hundred years ago take on the mythological status reserved among mortals for people whose reputations were blown entirely out of proportion when alive (such as Jesse James) or about whom what relatively little is known might be conflicting (such as Shakespeare). Sometimes even Kindred still active take on aspects that combine the historically verifiable with the patently fictitious (not unlike President George Washington). In Chicago, an unbound pimp called Old John serves the Kindred as a terrifying and mysterious boogeyman, despite his widely accepted destruction in the early eighties. Next to nothing is known about the origins, history or motives of the most terrifying American Kindred, the diablerist called Unholy. Even a Kindred whose mortal life was a matter of a great deal of historical study and whose unlife is widely available for reading in Ordo Dracul chapter houses around the world remains a figure of mystery, a being who inspires even the immortal undead to leave a light on when falling into the daysleep. Vlad Dracula would likely have it no other way.

Excavating Nights Passed

While the vast majority of Kindred prefer to eke out each night focused on the present and the future, giving little if any attention to the past (yet another underlying cause for the Fog of Eternity), many Kindred take history to task,

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I have a bit of official business. I keep hearing stories from the Lords that a few amateur historians among their number have begun putting together some form of treatise on their family's history and origins. While their efforts are laudable, I can't help but believe that the results will be laughable. These projects invariably serve to aggrandize some Lord or another at the expense of the truth. The Lord I spoke to, an American, mentioned that the Lords had drawn from a number of sources, including something he called "the Byzantium Letters."

Apparently this is their phrase to describe any historical text that can be traced back to Constantinople. That the Lords possess some of these texts doesn't bother me terribly; the fact that as far as I know we haven't read them, does. An entire collection of Byzantine writing we've never seen, probably looted from out own archives during the war, likely by the crusading ancestors of the very Lords who tonight are using them to justify their rule. Sometimes I suspect that the true source of the Fog is selfishness. An overwhelming desire to see the past as one wants it to have been rather than as it was.

Obviously something needs to be done about the Letters. We need to obtain copies if nothing else. I suggest contracting the Earl's Court group again; they displayed both competence and discretion in the Hartfield business. As for the Lords' treatise, I can only suggest a counter-treatise, something that calls into question their assumptions and evidence. To do that, we'll have to find a copy of whatever they come up with. Perhaps another job for Earl's Court? Or do you know someone better?

As always, your friend and compatriot,

digging into the depths of deceptions and misconceptions for the true Ancient Mysteries. Kindred scholars exist in every covenant. Sanctified archivists toil over thick tomes, excising heresies (and perhaps hiding them in secret collections). Acolyte priests journey through the wilderness seeking ancient Hierophants who sing of the first nights of man. Ordo Dracul historians debate the finer points of academic history with keepers of the First Estate's complex system of heraldry, while Carthian revisionists decry any truth as fundamentally tainted by the authority.

Many of these Kindred accept the version of the past that best supports their personal agenda, whether that involves justifying their sire's brutal reign or shoring up a clumsy theory about the genesis of a bloodline. The Beast within almost demands such sloth, rejoicing in each minor victory just as it exults in the flow of blood from a victim's throat. Only the most dedicated Kindred cut through the layers of falsehood and unearth shards of the true past.

Multiple avenues to unearthing the past exist. Sifting through the topsoil to the glimmering gems of truth buried therein can be as easy as arranging a meeting with the prince and cajoling a truthful answer to one's questions (ease, of course, is defined relatively). Many young Kindred seek the secrets of the history by bringing the lens of knowledge granted by the Kindred condition to bear against the confused occurrences of the past. Unusual events and

strange happenings pepper the history of every city, and the discerning vampire may be able to spot those that bear the taint of Kindred involvement from those that do not.

At first glance, members of Clan Mekhet seem uniquely situated to this manner of work. Many Shadows tend toward an academic bent, and the Mekhet Embrace strengthens and quickens their minds. The clan even boasts a bloodline, the aforementioned Agonistes, devoted primarily to uncovering the truths of the past and spreading it to as many Kindred as possible, so that the secrets they unearth don't vanish into ignorance yet again. Though an established bloodline for almost two millennia, the Agonistes have long been abused for their interest in the past (especially by the Lancea Sanctum, though the Agonistes) penchant for dabbling in any occult sorcery they come across has a hand in the church's animosity). They maintain their influence and ability to work largely by making themselves invaluable to Kindred society as a whole. They have developed the most successful processes for avoiding loss of knowledge through torpor, abilities that remain in high demand among influential elders (and serve to make the Agonistes' own work that much easier).

However, this type of investigation is hardly limited to Mekhet characters. A Ventrue may be more capable of spotting the invisible hand between unusual activities at city hall, while a coterie's Daeva might read a society page in



ancient mysteries

an old newspaper and be able to guess why the city's rising star suddenly stopped being invited to debutante balls. The Storyteller can involve members of any clan by tailoring the challenges before them to the characters' skills. Investigation serves as the most universally useful Skill towards this end, but Politics and Socialize would grant information in the examples given above; Animal Ken might help a Gangrel make sense of unusual migration patterns, while Stealth or Larceny could reveal to a Nosferatu just how the assassin described in an old police report entered and exited the hotel room of her victim unseen.

Not all strange events can be attributed to vampire involvement, however. Some unusual occurrences in the history of your players' city may serve as red herrings or could even lead to tense scenes of horror involving entities from the other **World of Darkness** games. Many newspapers run columns about uncanny events around the world, while books about the apparently unnatural and the boldly unusual grace the shelves of most large bookstores. These can provide inspiration for players and Storytellers alike, while opening the reader's awareness to just how odd the real world around us can be.

Kindred sources also provide information about the past, albeit information complicated by all of the obstacles noted above. Kindred sources include Requiem diaries (see below), covenant archives and elder mentors. Even if the characters find that their sources are largely honest, each source should only grant a clue towards the greater truth of the puzzle, forcing the characters to work together to piece together the facts. Not only does this involve all off the players, it also explains why the characters are the first (or perhaps one of the few) who have uncovered the truth in question. On the other hand, a suitable anticlimax underscoring the stratification of Kindred society might find the neonate characters uncovering a dark secret that's openly known to every ancilla and elder in the domain.

Requiem Diaries

The Kindred exist in an unusual dichotomy. The First Estate and Sanctified stress the importance of the First Tradition, yet both covenants maintain extensive libraries of records regarding inhuman theological debate and lineages of blood that span decades or centuries between generations. The Ordo Dracul, a politically conservative body that more often than not supports Invictus efforts to enforce the Masquerade, stuffs its numerous chapter houses with every manner of occult item and tome (along with the occasional cassette tape describing the vivisection of a decidedly inhuman entity), while the Circle of the Crone claims to closely follow the Masquerade through a complex oral tradition even as they perform bloody rites to bless their tales of heroism and villainy. The ostensibly benevolent Agonistes line remains one of the greatest offenders, keeping vast ciphered libraries of Kindred lore hidden in the very heart of academic communities throughout the western world.

Despite the Masquerade, numerous elders and ancillae maintain Requiem diaries. Such may be stacks of literal tomes detailing their nightly struggles, while others may hide their secrets behind hundreds of carefully crafted paintings... the truth of which is only revealed to those in possession of the correct cipher.

Ironically, those Kindred most prone to developing extensive collections of notes in case of unplanned torpor tend to be the same hypocrites most likely to attack their rivals in Elysium over small-scale breaches of the Masquerade. The fact that they are overcompensating can be easily disguised behind other motivations, hiding the fact that their personal library could blow the Masquerade wide open if it fell into the wrong hands. The enduring fear of torpor, the nightmares caused thereby and the inevitable slippage of memory over the course of centuries ensure that Kindred continue to risk their existence with personal accounts of their nightly doings.

Requiem diaries are considered an art form in some circles. It is understood that they are the most private, revealing thoughts of an elder vampire, and yet, the writers also understand that at some point, someone other than the author is going to read them. The creator therefore strives to make the reading as interesting as possible. Elders learn to conceal truly damning facts beneath seemingly embarrassing tales. A vampire might wax poetic for pages and pages about his lost love, the woman he left behind when his mortal life ended, and every word of it is true. And yet, as juicy as it might seem, it doesn't necessarily grant a rival or enemy who reads it any special knowledge, other than a way to get under the elder's skin. The author retains the advantage he has a way to remind himself who he is, should he have a bad bout with torpor. He shows his childer or allies that he is a feeling, caring being (or was, once), and that might induce them to treat him well. And his enemies, if they find the diary, learn personal details about him, but nothing of his schemes or what plans he has in the works.

This doesn't take into account, too, that the whole thing could be written in code, or could be an outright fabrication. Writing a fictional Requiem diary is a tactic for confusing one's enemies that might well work, but it can backfire. A vampire who wakes up from torpor might have no reason to disbelieve what he wrote about himself, and so if an elder chooses to fabricate a past, he'd better make sure it's one he likes.

Of course, some elders do this on purpose in order to cleanse their souls of past crimes. If they don't remember that they did it, they reason, that's as good as not having done it in the first place.

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Storytelling the Fog of Eternity Throughout this book we present artifacts of the past, whether they be literal items unearthed by Kindred scholars or treasure hunters, the stories of important time periods in Kindred history or even actual Kindred divorced from the time in which they were ushered into the night. Feel free to use these examples in any way that serves your chronicle. Perhaps the version of the High Middle Ages presented in these pages, a time of great tumult in which two mighty empires of the night clashed for the right to claim Europe as their own, is only how an ancient prince of Prussia remembers it, divorced from the center of the action both by geography, time and the confusing nightmares of torpor. Perhaps an angry Ventrue forged the tomb etching below, hoping to frame the Mekhet of Constantinople for a crime that never occurred (or that he himself committed).

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Act of Sugar

Vampire: The Requiem presents a setting in which history can and should be incredibly important. The Kindred of the past built the present in which the players stand. The Storyteller should make history her playground, bending, twisting and warping it (before slapping on a thick veneer of lies) in whatever way crafts the most compelling chronicle. The truth is out there; what lies herein is only a guide.

Uncovering Ancient Mysteries

The most important consideration a Storyteller can give to the manner in which she plans on handling the history of the Kindred is precisely what that history represents, both to the characters delving into it and to the world at large.

What do the characters stand to gain from excavating the past? Does this aspect of history illuminate the problems of the present, providing the solution to some short-term concern that the characters face? Will, for example, what they uncover condemn the Sheriff for the very crime that he currently works to pin on them? Does some conflict the characters' sires faced hold the solution to their current situation? Or do the secrets of the past present a greater truth that can change the entire world in which the chronicle takes place? Are unearthed prophecies of the end times coming to fruition? Do the clans all stem from a single founder or are they, ultimately, completely different species of monster? Can the methods used to maintain the ancient Camarilla be updated for use in the modern nights, ushering in a golden age of Kindred power?

What do they have to overcome in order to discover those truths? Is the past a quagmire of lies and deceit that the characters are doomed to become lost in, led to false conclusions by ancient deceptions? Is history a labyrinth of lies through which one can carefully navigate to uncover the truth? The answers to these questions, of course, are not something you should hammer the players with (any more than you would if



Translation from the Greek: Know you, who read these words, that you are Kale of Byzantium, called Mystikoi, childe of Andronikos, childe of Basileios. Know that you have been placed in this tomb to await the sleep of ages, imprisoned without sustenance, and already your skin shrinks against your bones. Know that you were once second to the Priscus, and were a noteworthy in the court of Stephanos. Know that you have been betrayed by the authors of false scripture, who take blood consecrated to the demons of Rome in vile mockery of the Eucharist. Know that those called the Breath-Eaters betrayed you. Know that they struggle to bring hell to this world. Do not trust the Shadows, for they make false promises, practice necromancies and cavort with demons. Do not trust the Agonistes.

you decided that in your game, the Lancea Sanctum are right, God is real and the Kindred were cursed by His hand), but having a strong grasp on these truths will help you develop and underscore the themes of your chronicle.

The other important decision the Storyteller must make is the scale of the secrets that matter in her chronicle. A Storyteller can craft an incredibly rewarding chronicle about digging into the past that never leaves the environs of the characters' city. Kindred history, like its society, is carefully stratified, and each stratum provides darker secrets than the one above. In New Orleans, for example, a group of Kindred working under Primogen Hurst to delve into the secrets of Donovan could very well discover revelations not only about the Sheriff, but also Prince Vidal; such information might drive them into the camp of Lord Savoy, only to uncover in the final act a secret equally dark in the French Quarter Lord's past. Any sufficiently well crafted setting should be able to support such locally based hunts for the treasures of the past.

On the other hand, the players and Storyteller may be more interested in globe-spanning enigmas, perhaps seeking the founders of the clans or covenants, the reasons for the fall of the Camarilla, the true source of Theban Sorcery or even rumors of an extinct clan. While local secrets may shatter a city's political structure, Ancient Mysteries unearthed on a global scale can change the *world*.

Intrigue Among the Damned

Aside from obscuring the past and providing numerous story hooks for players interested in delving into the bloody history of the Kindred, the Fog of Eternity opens entire vistas of storytelling intrigue. Beyond the possibilities mentioned above, such as seeking solutions for the present in the stories of the past, the Fog of Eternity presents opportunities to set confused elders against one another. A grudge can outlast a Kindred's memory of why it came to be. Elders may set the player characters on a quest to uncover information about their rivals in the hope of uncovering some truth about themselves (or similarly, may be unaware of a dark secret of their own that the characters are likely to unearth due to such an investigation). How does the elder react when faced with a deed of inconceivable horror that he perpetrated in the past? Does he deny the evidence, decrying the characters as liars and character assassins, withdrawing his support of them? Does he launch into a mindless frenzy, destroying anything he can sink his fangs into?

If the characters are elders or have been in torpor, other avenues of intrigue arise. A character may recognize a new acquaintance from sometime in the past, but be unable to understand the uneasy feeling she causes in him. Rivals may call on the character to fulfill a favor owed, but the character has no memory of such an obligation. Characters might not even recognize the very Kindred who attacked them and left them for dead until it is too late. (Describing and roleplaying the character slightly differently, and presenting her with a different name, can do the trick in this latter example. The "remembered" assailant might merely be the confused results of the nightmares of torpor, or the attacker may have changed her identity. Either way, the twist should scare the hell out of the players.) Torpor can also act as a convenient way to smooth out tensions that have arisen between players over the course of the game, polishing away the petty insults and small betrayals. Conversely, a Storyteller can use torpor to plant false seeds of tension in a group that gets along *too* well for a pack of bloodthirsty fiends. An ambitious Storyteller might combine both, making one character friendlier towards the other while building the paranoia of the other character towards the first. The Storyteller should be careful with these tools, however, using them only to the extent that the players will appreciate. Some players don't care to have their feelings or emotions dictated to them and will bristle at any attempt to do so.

An avenue of torpor-based intrigue that combines the confusion caused by the Fog of Eternity with the exploration of Ancient Mysteries, while making everything intensely personal, involves characters uncovering the truth of their own forgotten or confused past. Numerous examples of written fiction, cinema and television about the quest of the amnesiac exist, so we won't belabor it here. Most importantly, the payoff of this kind of story needs to support its use. Whatever the characters uncover needs to undermine or twist their own assumptions about themselves, Kindred society or reality itself in a significant manner, or the entire effort may turn out anticlimactic.

Consider using the rules provided in Chapter Two for creating Kindred Embraced in earlier times to build a set of characters that have awakened in the modern nights without a clear understanding of their Embrace, mortal lives or how they ended up in torpor. Similarly, such a character might be integrated into a group of more conventional modern characters, granting a level of intrigue that reaches into the past without feeling irrelevant tonight. Again, examples abound in fiction, especially science fiction and horror, of characters with pasts mysterious even to themselves.

Advanced Storytelling Techniques

Everything mentioned above can be extrapolated into new and exciting ways of experiencing **Vampire: The Requiem**. Stories can be told over decades or centuries without being communicated in a linear manner; events may jump back and forth as the characters uncover more about themselves, their mentors or sires. A single game may see players taking on multiple characters from across history, playing out stories that, while not necessarily visible to the individual shortsighted Kindred involved, weave a rich tapestry across the ages for the players to appreciate.

A simple version of this might involve the players designing two characters each, one Embraced in the modern nights and a second Embraced at the height of the Invictus Empire (see p. 151). The Storyteller sets the game simul-

taneously in medieval Estonia and modern New Orleans, switching back and forth whenever the mood seems right. If the Storyteller wants to emphasize the inevitability of any Kindred institution's destruction, she may require the medieval characters to be Acolyte Estonians resisting the encroachment of Christianity and the modern characters to be Sanctified, Invictus or Carthian supporters of Prince Vidal as his reign falters in the modern nights. If she wishes to tell the story of the Lancea Sanctum, she may require the characters on both ends of history be members of the covenant, the medieval characters witness to its subjugation of pagan Kindred as the modern characters watch it tear itself apart. Finally, the Storyteller may wish to borrow a theme from the World of Darkness Rulebook: What rises must fall. What has fallen may rise again. In this case she asks her players to portray pagans both in Estonia and in New Orleans. She moves between the two settings, and the characters play witness to the fall of pagan society while actively working to undermine Prince Vidal's theocracy.

Another advanced technique allows Storytellers the freedom both to mine the characters' pasts and begin a chronicle in medias res: flashbacks. Flashbacks serve as an excellent method to underscore the themes of the present action while delving into the characters' pasts for motivations or simply to further flesh them out. Given the various options presented here, flashbacks can take numerous forms. One option is that they are a narrative conceit, with no effect on the characters (other than fleshing out the stories for the players). The flashbacks may be memories surfacing in the characters' minds, usually inspired by whatever threat the characters are facing in the real time of the story. Perhaps flashbacks only occur when characters unearth some piece of history, and the flashback allows the characters to experience the history rather than simply read about it. Finally, characters who have undergone torpor may be granted flashbacks that undermine scenes that they already experienced over the course of the game. These are most effective when the Storyteller leaves the veracity of these flashbacks unconfirmed both in and out of character, resulting in tense confusion on the part of the characters. Allowing what occurs in flashbacks to affect the present of the chronicle and involving other players in the flashbacks are both ways of increasing the importance of this method of Storytelling while making it more enjoyable for the players.

Torpor Stories

Despite its inevitability and the Kindred factions devoted to its study, torpor remains one of the Kindred condition's most hotly debated mysteries. What esoteric truths damn the Kindred to decades of sleep to overcome the drawbacks of potent Vitae? At what point must a Kindred sleep for weeks or longer to heal horrible wounds, when a brief expenditure of the blood mended all previous injury? What relationship does the Kindred's connection to the Beast have with the amount of time spent in the sleep of ages? From what source do the terrible nightmares that plague the sleeping stem?

Any Kindred who survives the other slings and arrows of the Requiem eventually experiences torpor. While torpor typically results from massive injury to the vampire's body (especially in the young), the eldest of the Kindred feel the pull of torpor nightly drawing them towards the centurial sleep. While some Storytellers may simply gloss over periods a player's character spends in torpor, others might wish to instead explore the torpid experience, either to keep the player involved in an ongoing game or simply out of the opportunities the state presents.

The Brother of Death

The first thing any serious scholar of torpor recognizes is that context largely determines content. The state of a Kindred's mind when she slips into the long sleep has a pervasive effect on the matter of the vampire's dreams. A Kindred beaten into torpor finds herself locked in months or years of terror, reliving the assault that brought her low, perhaps replacing her assailant with any number of other anxieties. A Kindred who slips into the long sleep voluntarily or due to age, on the other hand, may have pleasant (or, at least, uneventful) dreams as he retreats from the violence and fear engendered by the Requiem.

A Storyteller interested in including a torpor story in her chronicle should begin by establishing the character's length of torpor based on her Blood Potency and Humanity as described on pp. 175-177 in **Vampire: The Requiem**. Remember that a character who enters torpor due to damage must have enough blood to heal three points of damage or she counts her Blood Potency as one higher for the purposes of determining length of time in torpor.

A character who enters torpor due to age, starvation, or as a voluntary act has relatively innocuous dreams for a number of weeks equal to her Resolve + Composure. These dreams resemble, but lack the vibrancy of, the dreams of the living. In short, little differentiates these early torpor dreams from the daysleep, and a Kindred awoken during this time suffers no ill effects from torpor dreams. Kindred who take special care to establish an environment of peace and tranquility before entering torpor convert this period of time to years rather than weeks, while Kindred prepared through the use of mystical means of staving off torpor (such as those possessed by the Agonistes) may never experience confusing or negative dreams. A vampire regains one point of temporary Willpower for every week spent in this

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state, up to her usual maximum. This is relevant because the battles to come can strip her Willpower away, which, in turn, can lead to loss of memory.

Conversely, characters with high Blood Potency (6+) or a tendency to experience nightmares anyway (due to a Flaw or derangement) halve their Resolve + Composure ratings for the purpose of determining how long they last before succumbing to the more terrifying dreams of torpor. Even if a character of advanced age, or one who is predisposed to nightmares, takes the effort to establish a comfortable resting place, thus converting the time before nightmares set in to years rather than nights, she still halves the value of her Resolve + Composure. A character who experiences torpor due to violence (such as having a stake shoved through her heart) immediately experiences vivid nightmares upon entering torpor, regaining no temporary Willpower before being locked into a struggle with her subconscious.

Facets of Torpor

Kindred essentially experience two types of dreams: nightmares and everything else. The latter tend to be vague, formless and placid, yet they can bring comfort to a Kindred seeking respite from the horror of the Danse Macabre. Kindred nightmares, on the other hand, seem bolstered by both the blood and the Beast, taking on a surreal and vivid immediacy that can be difficult to differentiate from reality.

Some Kindred, especially those who took care to enter torpor peacefully, experience the dreams of torpor as an endlessly cycling series of realistic encounters. They feed, they attend Elysium, and they politick. Kindred who starve into torpor often focus on dreams of hunting, forever hungry and forever seeking the solace of Vitae in an endless night. Elders who enter torpor due to advanced age dream of preparations unfulfilled and the realization of plots they never managed to complete. Due to the endless repetitions of these dreams, some elders come to believe in their reality. Stories set in these dreams allow Storytellers to take advantage of the repetitious nature of Kindred existence, heightening it into a bizarre cyclic performance in which the character constantly strives for some fulfillment forever just out of reach.

Kindred who enter torpor through violence, however, experience a horrible dreamscape. These dreams tend to be surreal explorations of the subconscious in which the character's fears are personified. These dreams allow Storytellers to play with horror tropes that would otherwise be thematically inappropriate for her game. The prince of the character's city may not normally be the type to stalk a character through the twisting abandoned hallways of an eerie museum, but in the nightmare logic of torpor, he can, eyes wild and fangs dripping with gore.



the fog of eternity - torpor stories 1 2

The following characteristics define the experience of torpor dreams:

Adversary

Torpor dreams, whether nightmarish or stoically banal, almost universally feature an Adversary, an entity that acts as a personification of the dreaming character's Beast. The imagery of the Adversary typically stems from a combination of the character's clan and Vice. A Mekhet with the Vice of Pride may experience her Beast as a regal and terrible monster of shadows, while one with the Vice of Gluttony may suffer the abuses of a bloated pool of darkness that consumes all it comes into contact with.

In non-nightmares, the Adversary may take the form of a new Kindred in the character's Requiem, but is equally likely to adopt the features of a familiar vampire the character fears. In the latter case, the Adversary's influence results in subtle changes to the feared Kindred's appearance, based on what in particular makes the torpid character afraid. A dreaming vampire's Adversary might be a Kindred who she fears for political reasons. That vampire might therefore always be surrounded by supporters (he might even control them with puppet strings attached to their bones and lips). A character who she fears might be after her blood and soul, though, is likely to be a monster, all fangs and claws... even if he's a weakling in real life.

The Adversary's strength is directly proportional to the strength of the character's Beast. If the Storyteller finds the necessity of a dicepool for the Adversary, it is always the torpid character's (Blood Potency + 10) – the character's Humanity. The Adversary possesses an amount of Willpower equal to the character's Resolve + Composure.

Anxieties

Kindred who extol torpor as a cathartic experience universally claim that overcoming or accepting one's Anxieties is key to this catharsis. Anxieties typically take inspiration from the character's primary motivations, Virtue and covenant, though Vice and clan play a minor role as well. Kindred in torpor experience Anxieties as overlarge versions of the fears they deal with every night. Storytellers are encouraged to keep in mind the character's recent struggles and accomplishments, as well as any goals she has professed to be working towards, when developing her Anxieties.

Anxieties serve an active role in the torpid dreams. In nightmares, they may take on overt and horrific characteristics (usually with features inspired by the character's Vice and clan), while in more rational dreams the anxieties remain mundane but take on a greater significance (or stand in the character's way more often). The character's Adversary works to further the Anxieties or to keep the character from overcoming them. In any scene in which the character makes significant strides towards overcoming her Anxieties, the Adversary loses a point of temporary Willpower. In any scene in which the character's Anxieties overwhelm her, she loses a point of temporary Willpower.

Aspects

The simple building blocks of the character's torpid dreamscape are called Aspects. Aspects flavor the entire dream world with imagery taken primarily from the character's covenant and clan. An elder Gangrel of the Invictus, experiencing a non-nightmare torpor dream, may inhabit a dream version of her own city, but her clan affiliation lends everything that occurs a certain feral immediacy while her covenant membership extends to the city's architecture, making it significantly more gothic or baroque than it would be otherwise. A young Carthian Daeva, on the other hand, might experience a nightmare of wildly erratic excess, a forever-shifting fetish club in which the chairs are upholstered with human skin. Covenant-inspired Aspects occur especially often among faithful Acolytes and Sanctified.

Avatar

The Avatar is the representation of the character's self within her own consciousness. In other words, the player controls the Avatar just as she would her character. The character's Virtue, Vice, covenant and clan all play a part in the Avatar's appearance, as does the character's idealized sense of self. A character who believes himself ugly will have an Avatar even more hideous than the character, for example, while a Ventrue with the Justice Virtue may seem particularly upright but judgmental. Occasionally these aspects take on a more literal appearance (the aforementioned Ventrue might be adorned in judge's robes).

Torpor stories are largely exercises in narrative and storytelling, and, as a result, traits aren't usually necessary. If the Storyteller needs traits for the Avatar (usually to contest rolls by the Adversary), he may use the highest of the character's Power, Finesse and Resistance Traits. Most rolls utilize one or a combination of two of the above traits, similar to the rules for ghosts (p. 208 of **The World of Darkness Rulebook**).

To Sleep, Perchance to Dream

Torpor stories play out as a highly metaphorical struggle between the Avatar and the Adversary. During each scene the Adversary uses the character's Anxieties (in a backdrop of the dream's Aspects) to challenge the Avatar. With each scene, both the Adversary and the Avatar risk a Willpower point. Whichever aspect of the Kindred's mind overcomes the other retains its Willpower point, while the other loses a point.

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This struggle determines the extent to which the experience of torpor negatively affects the sleeper. A character who faces and overcomes his fears, soundly defeating his Adversary (by retaining half or more of his Willpower while reducing the Adversary to 0), not only retains his memories and sanity, but may come out of the experience bolstered in mind or spirit, gaining one or more experience points or being granted leave by the Storyteller to purchase a lost dot of Humanity. A character who only barely defeats his Adversary is left somewhat shaken and may have some false memories, but comes out of torpor largely unchanged.

A character whose Adversary defeats him (that is, the character has no Willpower when the torpor ends), however, faces harsh repercussions. If the Adversary barely scrapes by a victory, the character's memories become muddled and confused, replacing some scenes (at Storyteller discretion) that occurred prior to the torpor with scenes that occurred only in the character's dreams. A character soundly defeated by his Adversary not only loses more memories, but also gains a derangement appropriate to the content of the torpor story.

Storytellers might use a freeform narrative-based style of roleplay to determine the outcome of the scenes of conflict between Avatar and Adversary, boil it down to a roll between the opponent's traits, or use any combination thereof. Storytellers who decline to use dice at all should keep in mind the strength of the Adversary relative to that of the character (determined by the dice pool mechanics given above) when creating challenges or puzzles for the player to overcome. In short, much of the onus to ensuring a fair session falls to the Storyteller, and she must be careful not to abuse her authority.

The Waking Dream

Storytellers interested in pushing the envelope of what is and isn't real for the characters may continue the chronicle, coming up with a plausible reason to keep a starving or deeply wounded character from torpor. The Storyteller should take the players of the other characters aside and explain to them that they are portraying the torpid character's perception of their characters rather than playing their actual characters (which gives them room to explore the behavior of their character as they emphasize certain aspects over others). The Storyteller then leads the characters through a nightmare session of harrowing, Requiem-altering events or frustrating, repetitive and confusing tasks, often pulling the rug out from under the players, changing important personages in the story or the locale the story takes place in with the same ease that dreams shift. Asking the players of the nontorpid characters to roll with these punches as if nothing is wrong can heighten the confusion for the torpid player. When the Storyteller feels she has thoroughly explored what she wants from the torpid character's dreamscape, she wakes the targeted character up, informing him that everything he experienced seemed utterly real.

Some players might find this approach frustrating (much like movies or television shows in which the entire tension about which the plot revolves turns out to be a dream), so the Storyteller should be careful before embarking on this kind of story. Since it puts other players on the sidelines (rather, it means they aren't actually playing their characters, but are simply acting out the torpid character's perception of them), it is perhaps best limited to a single chapter.

Similar to the above approach, characters in torpor at the same time who share a close connection (such as the bonds of coterie, Vinculum or blood ties) may experience eerily similar torpor dreams, allowing a Storyteller to involve several torpid characters in the same torpor story.



NUMBERS

If you'd rather have a more concrete system for what memories a vampires loses, consider this one. For every point of Willpower by which the Adversary's total exceeds the vampire's when the torpor ends, the vampire loses one dot of a Skill. If the vampire has no Willpower when the torpor ends, the vampire loses Skill dots equal to *double* the Adversary's total.

Note that this is a harsh method of simulating the effects of torpor. The best way to do it is for the Storyteller and player to work together and figure out what the character remembers, what has been lost, and what she now believes is real due to torpor dreams. The next chapter includes systems for reclaiming memories lost to torpor, and it's perfectly acceptable to have those methods apply to regaining Skill dots. That just means that an elder fresh out of a bad torpor is vulnerable until she can figure out what's going on.

While any Skill might be lost to torpor, it makes more sense for Mental and Social Skills to be affected first. The vampire loses factual knowledge, but is still just as skilled with a blade as she ever was. This plays to the notion of the confused, angry and still very dangerous elder vampire, recently out of torpor and ravenously hungry.

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CHAPTER TWO: Unstuck From Time

Yes, it's true, it can be lonely, walking among these poor, silly people for all this time. But you mustn't complain. After all, there will at least always be something to eat.

> — George Salem Douglas, Gangrel of Philadelphia

"Nonsense," I exclaimed, laughing. "How can any man, be he count or peasant, live for three hundred years? I suppose you mean that his family has held the castle for that length of time?"

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— Frederick Cowles, The Vampire of Kaldenstein

The immortality of the vampire is an oddly conditional sort of thing. The undead convince others to join them – when they don't just give the Embrace regardless of consent – with the promise of immortality. The sire often omits the unpleasant truth of that immortality; yes, you're going to exist forever, but you may spend centuries sleeping, and then you'll have to deal with the way the world has changed when you wake up.

This chapter deals with precisely that issue — how do vampires deal with a world unknown to them when they come to themselves after decades or centuries of torpor? How do they hold on to their memories and their sense of self? And how can you play the part of a monster trapped in the future, a relic eternally separated from the only existence he truly knows?

Waking Up to the Future Imagine a monster. Once human, she slips through the

Imagine a monster. Once human, she slips through the cracks and exploits the gaps of human society, both high and low. She has human agents who will kill and die for a taste of her precious blood. She knows her world back-to-front, and if she does not have the same freedom of movement she did when she was alive, if she does not have the variable interests she once had, what of it? The power she now commands more than makes up for what she sees as only the slightest narrowing of her horizons.

And then disaster: she falls foul of a monster more dangerous and ruthless than herself, and he beats her into torpor. Or, by some freak accident, she becomes trapped somewhere confined and dark, where she can only starve, and, having gone mad with hunger, having fed upon herself all she can, loses consciousness. Or maybe one night she simply feels terribly, terribly weary, and falls asleep.

She sleeps for decades or centuries. She dreams. And one night she wakes up. Everything is different. Carts are made of shiny painted metal, and roar, and move at a terrible speed without any animal to pull them. People watch moving pictures on glowing glass boxes, and talk into or intently manipulate tiny devices, staring into small windows which display all manner of pictures and symbols.

The city is so loud now. The buildings loom down from above and go up forever. The night sky is a different color. The air smells acrid, foul. The perfume worn by women has an artificial flavor to it. Dogs and cats look somehow different, bred into distinctive and strange shapes (but they still bark, and hiss and run away – that part doesn't change). Women dress like the men, and the men wear odd materials and colors, with little concession to our vampire's sense of decency. A metal carriage roars past, and strange music blares from nowhere; it offends her every aesthetic sensibility. All of her human slaves are dead. She finds the local of the Elysium she remembers, but it is gone. In its place is a vast, hideous building, and behind its glass doors are dozens of gaudy boutiques – she recognizes a shop when she sees one, at least – and flocks of slack-jawed, hostile children in immodest clothes, who stare in open contempt at this woman in her archaic, dusty outfit.

She commands some luckless passer-by to stop. She takes him to one side, and bids him tell her the location of a half-dozen landmarks she knows. He has never heard of most of them. One that he recognizes was knocked down when he was a small child. She leaves his exsanguinated corpse behind and seeks out the Kindred of the region. In the end, they find her. This has not been her territory for a very long time, and when the current owners of this hunting ground find her she does not understand why she is not welcome here.

She thinks she is going mad. She cannot recognize this world — but worst of all, she has a vague, terrible feeling that she is not sure about the world she came from, either. She remembers faces and names, but she recalls the same individuals being both friends and enemies. She remembers watching someone be destroyed in three different ways. She dreamed for so long, longer than she was alive, longer than she was awake and walking; and now she does not know what was real and what was a dream.

It doesn't end well.

But this is what a vampire has to face when she wakes up from torpor. She is alienated from the familiar trappings of her existence; someone moved the furniture in her world when she wasn't looking, and nothing seems recognizable anymore. If she hasn't lost every relationship she had when she was last up and walking, she likely has no more than one or two, and those relationships have changed. They were awake, and their games moved on as alliances developed, came into being, and shattered, new

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ancient mysteries

players were dealt into the game, and old players fell out of play forever. The rules are defined and interpreted by different judges now. And more than losing her world, her slaves, her old ties with her allies, she has lost herself. She cannot understand this new time, and she barely remembers her old one.

How can she adjust?

Some time ago, a vampire of the Ordo Dracul put forward the theory that Kindred are not the people they were when they were alive. He said that the human soul had departed, and that what remained in the vampire's body with the Beast, animated and imbued with that endless hunger, was only an echo of the human soul. The mind, with only an echo to power it, calcifies, he said. It can no longer innovate emotionally. Its ideas are never more than well within the limits of what was intellectually possible before the Embrace. Because the mind has no vital spark apart from the Beast, it has no reason to retain its memories, and little ability to distinguish the strange, recursive, chillingly credible dreams of torpor from its actual experiences. All experience was illusion, without the spark of a soul to imbue the real world with its solidity and form. His conclusion was that the Ordo Dracul's obsessive researches into bettering the vampiric condition were pointless: the mind would atrophy, and one night, all that would be left would be a Beast and a body.

He ended up getting kicked out of the Ordo Dracul. He had espoused a heresy that a covenant full of selfinvented heretics couldn't tolerate. The last anyone saw of him, he was impaled on a long stake and left to meet the sunrise.

But the fact is, he may have had a point. A centuries-old undead monster who wakes from torpor find herself intellectually decayed. She flails around, looking for ways to stop losing her mind, to be able to distinguish experience from dream. Static, she finds herself unable to adapt. The future confuses and disorients her.

She lashes out.

Future Imperfect

Living humans sometime suffer from what Alvin Toffler called *futureshock*, a state of stress and disorientation brought about by the rapid transformation of society caused by the relentless pace of technological advancement.

It's difficult for a human being to really imagine what this phenomenon is like for a vampire. Consider kidnapping a member of one of those tiny tribes who still live in the Amazon rainforest, flying him to New York in a 747, dressing him up in a suit and making him do an office job, without giving him any explanation of how to cope apart from a basic course in English. It's like that. Here's an English vampire from the Jacobean era, buried under a stone cairn on a little island on the Roanoke. A coterie of vampires from Philadelphia finds him and wakes him up. When he fell into torpor, the British, Spanish and French were jockeying for the right to plant colonies, the British had just lost their first one, and the Indians were of an unknown quantity. The coterie takes him to Philly and help him to fit in. How does he manage?

One thing the vampire *doesn't* do is curl up into a ball and start whimpering. Vampires are predators and parasites; they have the urge to control, to master the living. And when put to flight, the undead become vicious and mad. An old and powerful vampire on a confused rampage is a terrible thing to get in the way of. Even when he calms down a bit, it takes a lot for an old vampire to adjust, since vampires simply aren't cut out for adapting — a vampire does not adapt to the world, he adapts the world to *himself*. Small wonder that so many of them find other ways to deal with their disorientation.

Withdrawal

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Old vampires with atrophied Humanity find it hard enough to interact with humans in any respect other than eating them. A vampire who has just awoken from a long torpor may find that her best bet is to endure society long enough to set up some sort of network, and then to withdraw somewhat. The vampire puts his head in the coffin-dirt and normally tries not to think about the world more than he absolutely has to.

It doesn't take much. First, the old vampire needs somewhere to stay. That isn't so hard, as it's perfectly reasonable that with the right use of powers he can easily find a suitable place. An old Mekhet walks into someone's house and simply exists around the inhabitants, without ever letting them see her. She sneaks drops of her blood into their coffee and food, until they're all hopelessly bound to her (this works for younger Mekhet as well, of course... only with less consistent success). If she's proficient enough with Auspex, she can communicate with her new willing slaves through telepathy and ask them to run errands. If the vampire is very frugal, she can feed from the inhabitants of the house while they sleep. A group of adults sharing a house is best for this sort of thing, if only because such individuals are usually youthful adults who see lots of people, giving more chances for feeding.

This living situation gives the vampire the added bonus of observing the interactions and relationships of living humans in the present. Getting in is not a problem (unless the vampire has a hang up about entering without being in-

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vited). The difficulty here is making this arrangement work for any length of time. It's far too easy to kill someone.

A Gangrel, on the other hand, might spend most of his time in the form of a wolf or a bat, and hidden under the earth. Maybe he takes control of the rats that infest the sewers and uses them to clear and guard an underground area. A Nosferatu might do either of these as well, but is more likely to use his powers to scare people and younger vampires away from his haunt. Ventrue and Daeva are the least likely vampires to withdraw, but even so, it is a simple matter for one of these clans to find a place to hide and simply *tell* the humans who live there to help.

Whatever happens, if the vampire wants to stay secluded, he needs agents of some kind. If the local prince knows about him, he can send a ghoul or neonate agent as a proxy to the court. On the other hand, he might never want to leave his haunt and thus uses the agents to bring him prey — for example, the Gangrel utilizes a sewer-dwelling tramp he has made into a ghoul and bound under a Vinculum, ordering his slave to bring him hapless people from the alleyways and shop doorways above the sewerside haunt they now both inhabit.

Getting an agent is the difficult part. The most obvious thing to do is drag some hapless victim off the street, kidnap her, give her the Embrace and tie her to a Vinculum, or make her into a ghoul. But the vampire has to find someone of the appropriate social status to effect the vampire's wishes. The problem with this is that the vampire in question may not have a hugely accurate idea of his new slave's influence and station. People in the present day recognize social cues which are fully as complex, subtle and unique as any of the mores of Louis XIV's court.

Take the Ventrue who stalks the group of young executives on the streets in the middle of an epic bar-crawl. Which one is the dominant force, the one who's going to be executive VP in three years? Which one is the bottom feeder? Which one is seriously disturbed and potentially a violent liability? It's difficult enough for living people to figure such things out, but for a vampire who has spent more time either as a predator or unconscious and dreaming than he ever spent being a living person among other living people, it can be all but impossible. In the end, it's the luck of the draw which one he gets.

Dealing with the new leaders of the undead may be a picnic after trying to deal with modern-day humans, but it's still tricky. Different princes hold to different rules, different styles of leadership.

The current prince *might* be fine with a reclusive elder popping up in his domain, who never leaves her lair and who communicates through ghouls and neonates who are almost as clueless as she is... but he probably won't be. Even taking into account the fact that torpor weakens and thins the blood, an old vampire is still a threat. Vampire elders are at best a little paranoid: is the prince going to believe that the ancient monster who has just popped up in his domain is doing nothing and not coming out because she can't cope with the modern world?

For one thing, no elder, even one suffering from a bad case of future-shock, is going to admit that she can't cope. The prince demands that the elder come out and show fealty. The elder sends her proxy and says, fine, I'm in line. The prince sends back and says, no, you have to come yourself. The closeted elder politely invites the prince to visit. If either side backs down, it's a sign of weakness. At best, the individuals in question thrash out a somewhat icy deal, particularly if the recently woken vampire is unusually powerful or has a fearsome reputation. It's more likely that the prince takes steps to marginalize the already-alienated vampire, or, if he's either particularly tyrannical or particularly weak, sends vampires to assassinate her. The elder may be housebound, but nonetheless retaliates. Chances are, though, that it won't end well for anyone, least of all an elder who just wanted to be left alone.

• Hermits in the Game

In the context of most games, an ancient vampire who stays at home and exercises his influence through proxies is really not a tremendously interesting choice for a character. It's not impossible, though, especially if your chronicle is based heavily on politics and discussion.

On the other hand, such vampires make superb sires and mentors for characters, and great antagonists. A reclusive vampire elder doesn't need to be a shadowy mastermind. He might project the image that he is, and rumors of his web of influence (so subtle that no one knows about it!) spread throughout the Kindred community, but in truth, the hermit is isolated. He is dangerous because of his age and power, but only face to face.

• Case Study: Elisabeta, the Plague Nun Elisabeta claims to be the childe of the Plague Angel, progenitor of the Morbus bloodline, although no one believes her. She also professes to have an origin dating back to the time of the Camarilla's fall. No one believes that, either. Both of those facts are true, but you would have to visit her to find out, and seeking out Elisabeta is difficult; she inhabits a deserted London Underground station which visitors can only reach through service tunnels... service tunnels which are currently claimed as the territory of a pack of werewolves. The werewolves leave her alone, for the most part, although they often resent and threaten any visitors she does have. Vampires without considerable skills in stealth may never reach the

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vast candle-filled chamber in which the Plague Nun keeps prayerful vigil. Her childe is Lucrezia, a recently created Morbus who hates the fact that she has to lead the Plague Nun's diseased ghouls in finding blood for her mistress. Lucrezia is not under a Vinculum – the Plague Nun is in her own way too naïve not to trust her – and is trying to think of a way to destroy Elisabeta once and for all. London's most influential vampires share her desires.

Self-Delusion

Some ancient vampires, so addled by the Fog of Eternity and the effects of future-shock, go a bit wrong. The psychic trauma of adjusting to the modern world and the loss of their identity makes them adopt new personas. A vampire who loses a solid sense of who he is (which often coincides with him having lost his precious Requiem diary) often finds that he learns modern skills and languages remarkably quickly, at least for a short time. Within a few nights, he has pieced together a new persona from bits of information, mementos and whatever he can glean from his dreams. One elder imagines himself as having been in the court of Louis XIV, and although his history of the period is not remotely perfect, and his dusty, bloodspattered affectation of the dress of a French aristocrat slightly surreal to look at, no one is going to tell him otherwise, because notwithstanding the delusions, he is extremely dangerous.

True, his blood is no longer as potent as it once was, but even so, the elder may still have the broad arsenal of powers he had before he fell into his coma, even if he can't use them quite as effectively. On the other hand, he might not have that many powers at all, and may be extremely vulnerable. But is any wise neonate prepared to take the risk that this is the case? The elder gathers objects that remind him of his fictional past, most of which don't even come from France, let alone France in the 18th century, and tells himself that they are from his living days. He claims to have been present at historical events. He announces he is the long-disappeared prince of the city (and maybe even takes the old prince's name).

Do not laugh at him; do not point out the flaws in his history. His only way of coping is to believe his own persona, but whoever he believes himself to be, he is old and powerful, and in his madness he will not hesitate to destroy a neonate who doubts the truth of his "memories," because they are all he has.

He's dangerous in another way, too: he might be believed. He imparts what he really thinks is vitally important information — and it's all complete rubbish, dangerous nonsense that puts the new vampires that use it in terrible risk. He is no idiot. He secretly knows he is deluding himself even while he is trying to find out who he truly was... before his enemies do.

• Deluded Elders in the Game

A character who is so badly affected by the Fog of Eternity that he forgets who he is and has to invent a new persona creates several interesting opportunities for storytelling. An entire chronicle could be based on a coterie made of awakened elders who have created new identities, but who secretly wonder who they really are. As they learn the secrets of their own pasts (perhaps even presented through one-off stories set in past eras) they learn more about themselves than they perhaps wanted to, or find out things about their coterie-mates which, if they shared them, could damage every relationship they hold true. And all the while, they struggle with delusions, with the memories of dreams, and the doubts as to whether their current allies are friends or enemies.

These deluded elders have near-infinite use as Storyteller characters. A coterie of vampires might find that the elder who advises and protects them is always ready with insider information, based on long-held memories. But his insights aren't accurate. Is he betraying them or is he simply misled, and if he is misguided, can they disabuse him of his dangerous notions before he gets himself destroyed – without turning him against them? Do they even want to?

Case Study: Nitokris

Nitokris woke up from a sleep of centuries in 2005. She says she was Embraced in the time of the Heretic Pharaoh Akhenaten (which would date her back to the 14th century BCE). She was one of the original Followers of Seth who manipulated the king's downfall, she says. And when she was Embraced, she was mummified first and was conscious when they removed her lungs, intestine, liver, stomach, heart and brain and packed her head and chest with natron and spices. She claims that the god Typhon Seth speaks through her, and she has gathered a sizable group of vampires, ghouls and brainwashed living humans who treat her as a prophet of Typhon Seth, Cradle of Chaos. And she claims that the reason she has no reflection or shadow is because her reflection walked away, long ago, and hounds her like a spirit of wrath.

In a vast townhouse she holds court, and human fanatics volunteer themselves for sacrifice, knowing that to be ritually disemboweled on the Altar of Typhon Seth will condemn them to eternal oblivion as Amemet devours their souls, but that their sacrifice furthers the cause of the Cradle of Chaos in the world. She sits on her throne, stroking black polished statuettes of Typhon

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Seth she claims she brought with her from Egypt three millennia ago.

In fact, Nitokris is less than half as old as she thinks she is (which still makes her terribly ancient) and although she does project a strange, sweet fragrance, she was certainly never mummified. When the wild-eyed Sethites who devote themselves to her volunteer themselves for eternal oblivion, they're just disemboweled for the hell of it. The statuettes came from a flea market. They're about ten years old and made of plaster of Paris. The part about the reflection is true, though.

And here's the thing – Nitokris *appears* to be immensely powerful and wise and strange, a savant whose words seem to carry with them the dust of the Red and Black Lands. She cheerfully imparts information to seekers, for a price. And a lot of what she says is true. But an awful lot of what she shares is just so much mystical nonsense, albeit nonsense that a frightening number of people, ghouls and vampires believe and act upon.

Given the secretive nature of her followers, too, who's to know who converted to her worship? Nitokris *is* powerful, and with that she's overpoweringly smug and supremely irrational. She doesn't even know herself what the final point of her schemes is, and that just makes her plans so much worse, because she's able to perpetrate the most terrible crimes at a moment's notice with absolute conviction.

Refusal

Some vampires, who wake from torpor and realize that their world has gone, can only embrace their anachronism. The vampire behaves as he remembers being (which, given the uncertain nature of the Fog of Eternity, is not necessarily the same as who he was). Some refuse to accept the present day, or simply can't manage to dress and talk like someone from modern times. Most old vampires have this problem to some extent, but the vampires who really exemplify this phenomenon cross over from being simply a bit out of place to become blood-stained freaks of time.

A vampire who last felt comfortable in the time of Victoria simply can't bring herself to dress in something that she considers indecent, even while bathing in the blood of an innocent she dragged off the street, tortured and killed. A monster who once stalked the streets of Providence in the days of the Puritans finds he cannot abide the immorality he sees about him on the streets of his modern city; he murders and feeds with abandon, but still preaches the same grim creed that sustained him while he lived. The medieval knight can just about get his head around wearing jeans and a T-shirt (although that's all he wears, even when it's

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10 degrees Fahrenheit outside), and has no qualms about the most terrible atrocities, but he still invokes the Evil Eye when the telephone rings, and still, despite himself, suspects that the TV has demons inside it.

Princes try their best to hunt down creatures like this whenever they cross that final line between being just strange and becoming full-blown threats to the Masquerade. Different princes draw this line in different places, but most of them have a line. The line also changes its position depending on how powerful and dangerous the old vampire might be, of course, and on how strong or weak the prince is.

• Walking Anachronisms in the Game

Far from being objects of ridicule, these creatures are true horrors. They ape another age, and perhaps even do it imperfectly, but their attempts at a humanity long past only draws into sharp relief the way that all the Kindred ape the living. Characters who deal with such an elder or have him as a sire or patron may find him to be infuriating; it's not that he doesn't understand the march of progress — it's that he *doesn't want to*.

He refuses to countenance the fact that he might have to accept these things to survive. And if, as is sometimes the case in Kindred politics, other vampires' survival depends on his (they signed up with his faction before knowing really what he was, or they're his childer and are liable to be dragged down with him), he can become in his unwillingness to catch up a harbinger of terrible disaster for them all.

Playing the part of such a character can be challenging. In game system terms, you could express this kind of disadvantage as a Flaw or a derangement. But a lot of roleplaying comes into it as well.

It's important to remember that such a character is not by any means a figure of pity — you don't waste pity on a creature who can tear your throat out with a flick of his wrist. He's not a comic figure, either. The way his stubbornness ensures his regular sidelining at Elysium and the resentment this engenders is not by any means funny. They patronize him; they treat him as one would treat a neonate. He begins to conceive a toxic hate for the established order. And when a creature like that becomes hateful, only tragedy can result. And all because he is incapable of developing the self-knowledge to see that his inability to adapt has brought him to this pass.

On the other hand, he might actually *want* to be able to understand the present, but like a man suffering from the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease, who knows that there are things he is missing in his mind, the vampire, try as he might, cannot operate in the world. The vampire sees that he needs to adopt new ways of thinking, but somehow fails to really get his head around the subtleties. He wants to dress for the Prince's formal reception, but can only turn up wearing the same filthy, bloodstained breeches he has worn for centuries. Because they are the only clothes he really knows. Can he escape from this? The chronicle might well be set up to see if he can... before destruction takes him and everything he still has.

• Case Study: Andrew the Tanner

Andrew the Tanner fell into torpor some 200 years ago, and only recently awoke. He is a huge, bald-headed man. Even though, as a dead man, he doesn't sweat, he reeks of it. He has a face like some kind of deformed bull, no neck to speak of, and forearms like the haunches of shire horses. The Tanner looks like a nightmare come to life, made all the worse by the leather apron he wears, befouled with grime from countless murders and countless skinnings. He talks in the urban low-life vernacular of two centuries ago. He introduces himself as "a gentleman of taste and discretion, a master craftsman and a student of the arts,' and swears profusely and imaginatively, as only a man of his era can. But a huge, greasy, blood-stained figure in an antique leatherworker's apron, who has breath apparently worse than any other individual on Earth, cannot be hidden for long. Andrew concentrates on the alleys and sewers, but already urban myths about knife-wielding maniacs haunting dark, foul-smelling corners of the city have begun to circulate.

This old villain refuses to have anything to do with the current leadership of the Kindred, partly because he knew the Prince his first time around and partly because some part of him knows that with his archaic clothes and vile smell, he could never make anything other than the most negative impression. He's quite correct, and now that the Prince knows that the Tanner has awoken, she has issued a request that he be brought to her, without the Masquerade being breached further. Which is, of course, harder to do than she admits.

For every vampire elder who comes out of torpor unable to deal with the world as it is in the modern day, another manages to adapt just fine. But how does one vampire get out of torpor with his memory intact and his identity robust when another who is exactly the same age is wandering the streets wearing a Victorian top-hat and behaving like a rake from the last century?

The whole thing doesn't seem to obey any rhyme or reason. It seems to vary not just from vampire to vampire, but from torpor to torpor. Here's a vampire who slept from 1563 through to 1701. That first time, she lost her

New Tricks

identity practically whole cloth, and it took her nearly five decades to become as comfortable in her surroundings as her counterparts. She slept again from 1890 to 2005; this time she hasn't just picked up exactly where she left off, but she already has the hang of e-mail and text messaging. She barely remembers the dreams this time around.

Maybe it's because, this last time, she conquered the dreams that plagued her while she slept (see p. 30 for more on how to do this). Or perhaps she learned something, or paid attention to some supernatural prohibition that she ignored before. Did a fellow vampire give her help before she lay down her head? Or were there allied Kindred ready for her, ready to impart information on how to rebuild herself in the present? How does she do it?

The Ctiquette of Awakening

Many princes have instituted strict rules about what to do when Kindred in their domains find a torpid elder vampire. Some of these rules are political. Princes who have been around a long time inevitably make a lot of enemies. What are the chances that one of those old enemies is lying in one of those coffins? Or if not an enemy, an erstwhile friend? Or a vampire of repute and respect from times past? Or just someone no one has ever heard of?

One prince dictates that she must personally see a torpid vampire before anything else is done, and that the decision as to whether the elder should be awoken is hers alone. Another only requires knowing that a torpid vampire has been found, and makes it clear that the consequences of awakening a vampire in torpor are on the head of the one doing the waking. A weak and paranoid prince demands that any torpid vampires get destroyed immediately out of hand (but then, everyone ignores him anyway).

Along with the rules about how one decides whether or not a torpid vampire *should* be woken up come the rules about *how* the Kindred should go about awakening her. Does it need to happen somewhere silent and solitary or in the presence of the prince, the Seneschal and the Primogen? Do the devoted of the Lancea Sanctum need to be present in force, singing hymns, or must the Acolytes make some sort of sacrifice before the drops of blood are allowed to fall on to the sleeping vampire's lips?

Some of these things are matters of clan or covenant tradition. Some of them have a kind of sense to them. The Kindred dimly recognized long ago that how a vampire remembers the experience of torpor has in part something to do with the way she wakes up. A human who has a nightmare is more likely to remember it if he awakens suddenly. It's like that, only multiplied thousands of times.

And the effects of the waking process really depend on the elder. For example, if the Acolytes perform an arcane rite involving knives, self-mutilation, naked dancing and rhythmic shrieking to ease the elder's return into the world, he might, if he's one of the Crone's devotees himself, find it stirring and comforting. On the other hand, he might be just as likely to find it nightmarish, redolent of the werewolves who beat him into torpor in the first place. He may have preferred Sanctified hymns — but on the other hand, those same hymns might bring reminiscences of fire and "purification." A vampire awakens in a silent, darkened room — but he was driven into torpor after having experienced the dungeon of a Lancea Sanctum Inquisitor, and spends his first few minutes back in the world shrieking and thrashing around.

Members of the Ordo Dracul have found from recording as many accounts of torpor as they can that the effects of the Fog of Eternity may be alleviated or worsened by the manner of one's waking, but that it depends on the vampire, and cannot be conclusively proven.

Case Study: Francis Rose

Francis Rose was, in life, a choirboy, and the beautiful favorite catamite of a supposedly celibate bishop. A Daeva of the Lancea Sanctum bestowed the Embrace on the sixteen-year-old, and more than five centuries later, Rose appears to be in the full bloom of his youth, a fanatical and charismatic Archbishop of the Sanctified. He is a disturbing monster, his androgynous beauty and angelic smile masking a cold intellect and a desire to manage his servants that a modern viewer would describe as arrant control-freakishness. Rose has fallen voluntarily into torpor three times now, and each instance has taken steps to guard his body with Kindred bound to him by Vinculi and ghouls entrusted to them in turn. Each time, on a date set in advance by Rose, the Sanctified have taken his body to the precise place he has stipulated – the crypt of the local cathedral – and there have sung through a short but precisely-written liturgy by the Archbishop himself, as one trusted servant slits his wrist and feeds his master.

Each time, Rose has awoken, smiling and ready once more to bestow love upon the worthy, test the likely and smite the unclean, without apparently experiencing any of the ill-effects of torpor.

Do the liturgies work? Or is it the fact that they pander so completely to Rose's minute pedantry? Or is it no more than a coincidence that the Right Reverend Francis Rose has awoken each time as himself? Will the next time be the occasion that Francis Rose loses his mind?

• Game Systems

When the character awakens, the player and the Storyteller can discuss between themselves what happens next, and how the character responds to her awakening. This takes

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a lot of honesty and trust. The players and the Storyteller might elect to determine loss of memory by playing through the character's torpor dreams, as described in Chapter One. Optionally, players can leave the whole thing to chance, electing to make a single roll to see if the character remembers her past and can adapt to the future.

Dice Pool: Wits + Blood Potency (use the number of dots in Blood Potency the character had *before* torpor began)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character experiences the effects of future-shock. After a number of decades equal to the character's Blood Potency, the player can try again.

Failure: The character doesn't suffer from future-shock, but doesn't adapt at any great speed either. The character loses many of his certainties about his past. What was a dream? What was real? Who are his allies and who are his enemies? He depends upon mementos and diaries. He can find his feet, but it will be decades before he fits in.

Success: The character can adapt, quickly and swiftly (see "Replacement" below).

Exceptional Success: The character adapts to the modern world, as above, but can remember clearly and accurately who she is and who her friends and enemies are, or were. She does not suffer from the Fog of Eternity.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Character's body is tended and
	watched over by others over the whole
	period while he is in torpor
+2	Character has Humanity of 6 or above
+1	Character is awakened by a vampire
	known to him as an ally
-1	Character is awakened in a manner
	offensive to his sensibilities
-1	Character is awakened by strangers
-1	Character awakens in unfamiliar
	surroundings
-2	Character is awakened by a known
	enemy or open members of a sect to
	which the character is hostile
-3	Character has Humanity of 4 or
	below
-3	This is the second or subsequent time
	the character has been in torpor

Theories

The Ordo Dracul isn't alone in researching into how exactly one of the Kindred can come out of torpor with his minds and memories intact. A number of Carthians see it as a political issue; drawing on some — human — Marxist theories that health and ideological approach are inextricably linked (as in, a healthy ideological position makes for a healthy mind), they propose that perfect ideological purity brings to the vampire the moral strength to resist the erosion of memory. Does their theory work? The Carthians haven't been around long enough for the theory to really meet with its proof. Besides, finding two Carthians who wholly agree on what constitutes true purity of ideology is not easy. If no one really knows what makes for the perfect expression of revolutionary doctrine, and the doctrines themselves haven't been around long enough to be proved, who can really trust them?

The position of several sects and sub-groups among the Sanctified isn't all that different: true faith brings moral strength, and moral strength brings the power to resist the dreams and retain the memories. The advantage they have over the Carthians is, of course, that they've had the time to prove that it works — except that they *haven't* managed to prove it. Part of the reason is that, like the Carthians, even the most fanatical members of the most particular Sanctified splinter groups don't agree on the minutiae of doctrine.

The prevailing view, among those members of the Invictus who care, is that it's all in the blood. Vampires from the better, more ancient bloodlines have a better chance of coming out with their minds intact... because that's the way the blood works.

A number of views persist among the Acolytes. One theory says that it's a spiritual issue, that a vampire in torpor separates from his ghost, and that it travels through the landscape of dreams. Another theory has it that the vampires who come out of torpor with a full complement of memories are those whom the Crone has chosen to perform her will in the world. Which is all very well, but impossible to prove either way.

In fact, all of these theories have an "out." If a Carthian or member of the Sanctified goes mad after sleeping, he clearly didn't have that pure and perfect ideological position. If an Invictus vampire doesn't keep his memory, his blood wasn't pure enough. If an Acolyte falls prey to toxic future-shock, he was not favored by the Crone; his ghost lost its way and lost in its fight against the monsters of dreams.

Replacement

The Fog of Eternity isn't always necessarily a bad thing. Another vampire of the Ordo Dracul put forward the idea not long ago that for most of the undead, the Fog of Eternity was actually one of the things that ensured the vampire's immortality... that it's not a flaw or a curse, but a necessary part of the vampiric condition. The theory goes like this: a vampire has a superhuman, eternally enduring body, but only a human mind, and a human mind missing some indefinable characteristic that only the living have. With a human mind comes a human capacity for memory, and a human capacity for memory is designed for a human lifespan.

Were a vampire to remember too much, he'd go mad. So, during his inevitable bouts of torpor, his memories fade, allowing him to think and learn new ways when he revives.

This theory is all well and good, but if it's really not a curse, how come the reaction of the vampire to his state is, nine times out of ten, confusion? Why is it that torpor dreams are so weird and unpleasant?

On the other hand, our Ordo Dracul researcher does at least make one important point: many vampires awaken from torpor and immediately assimilate the trappings of their new culture, learning new languages, new skills (like how to drive, for example, or how to use a mobile phone) and the new rules of society. In a matter of a few nights, the vampire, while not quite a native, is perfectly able to hold his own in the future.

Why does it work this way for so many of the undead and yet not for others? Some vampires awaken from torpor alone; others in the presence of several other vampires. Some vampires have the benefit of rituals and defined ceremonies. Others don't. The torpid share no one factor that would help them to acclimatize themselves to the present day. But the remaking of an old monster depends very much on where that information comes from.

Indoctrination

Want to succeed among the Kindred? Get the power on your side. That's patently obvious. But how do you do that? The hard way is to suck it in and become a complete toady, working insanely hard just to find a place. You hope against hope that the elders of your faction notice and throw you those few precious scraps of social status. One night, you might be old and powerful yourself, but only when someone falls into torpor... and then only until the bastard wakes up.

Except... what happens when these powerful, evil old monsters wake up from their centuries-long sleep and they're not wholly sure who their friends are, or even who they are? An ambitious vampire might be able to make a few marks on a blank slate and create something new. All it takes is someone to get there first (or, if you got there second, to wipe out the people who got there first), make sure things like Requiem diaries and other bric-a-brac are well out of the way, and supply the recently awakened elder with a quick indoctrination into *your* take on Kindred politics. It's risky, but then, dealing with vampires is risky anyway, no matter whose side they're on. And the sheer vulnerability of a vampire in the first stages of recovering from torpor means that with the right blend of subtlety and cunning, with the right hidden-truths, half-truths and outright lies, he could be yours.

Or, from the other point of view: our vampire may not consider himself vulnerable. He has slept for two centuries. He is able to deal death without thought or twinge of conscience. And now he wakes up, and he doesn't even know who his friends are. Can he admit this? No, he'd be showing weakness. He has to pretend he knows what he's doing. He doesn't realize that they *know* he's lost his self in the Fog, and that the lies that they're feeding him aren't the truths of his past. It doesn't matter how old, powerful and vile he is. And so, he swallows whole whatever his new "friends" are feeding him, because he really doesn't know what's true or not, and he can't bear the loss of face that comes from admitting he's lost. Meanwhile, if the younger vampires manipulate him in *just the right way*, he's the greatest ally they might have.

• Case Study: George Salem Douglas George Salem Douglas fell foul of a group of Philadelphia hunters called the Chestnut Street Compact a long, long time ago. They left him for dust. About two years ago, a coterie of Carthian neonates found the old Gangrel's emaciated form and, having realized what they had on their hands, pulled out the stake. Then they set to work. The result was a supremely manipulable elder, albeit one who hears voices and believes that the owls are after him (and who has a disconcerting habit of jabbing his fingers right through the eyeballs of anyone who says otherwise, friend or foe).

Once upon a time, he was Invictus, but now he's a convinced Carthian, and while the vampires of Elysium recognize his formidable reputation of old, they find themselves surprised by his willingness to forsake his old allegiances and espouse the cause of Kindred democracy. He himself keeps wondering why he says and does the things he does, and why those who should be his friends keep him at arm's length, while the reaction of his supposed enemies is even more ambivalent, suspended between pity and betrayal. The idea that he may have been duped has come to his mind, but he also knows, having been a Primogen once, that he cannot admit it, nor can he easily change sides without alienating everyone. But Douglas is no idiot, either. Soon, he will realize that the contradictions that trouble him are the key, and he will come to the conclusion that he has been duped. The vampires who currently manipulate him will be in for a terrible surprise when he begins to maneuver them in return to their Final Deaths, one by one.

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Game Systems: Indoctrination

Characters might want to try their hand at re-educating a confused elder for their own purposes. This is how it works in game terms. Note that if the elder is not suffering from the Fog of Eternity, there isn't any point even trying this. It just doesn't work.

Also, characters trying to indoctrinate a confused elder have to act fast: after three nights, a vampire's blood and psyche have stabilized enough that further attempts to change the old vampire's ways of thinking have the same effect as they would on any elder: dismal failure.

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion – higher of target's Intelligence or Wits

Action: Extended. Each roll represents one night of active contact with the elder. The character indoctrinating the elder needs a variable number of successes depending on how strongly conditioned the character intends his victim to be. The character has three nights to affect this, and hence may only attempt three rolls. Several characters may act as a team if they so wish (see the teamwork rules on p. 134 of the World of Darkness Rulebook).

Successes	Degree of Indoctrination
5	Level 1: Target acquires variations on previously held beliefs.
10	Level 2: Target changes some of his beliefs or allegiances, or changes to beliefs that aren't wholly incompatible with his old worldview (for example, an old-style Invictus being talked into the Lancea Sanctum).
15	Level 3: Target completely changes his behavior and allegiances, becoming an enthusiastic patron of his new "friends" and avowing that he always has been.
20	Level 4: Target becomes blindly devoted to his new allies, and may kill or die for his new ideological position. Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target is not remotely fooled. No further attempts will work on the target. The target may, if he wishes, fool the individual attempting to indoctrinate him into thinking that he's bought the lie.

Failure: The roll results in no successes being added to the total at this time. The only real effect of this is that it draws out the process.

Success: The roll adds successes to the total needed. If the total aimed for is reached, the target accepts the new beliefs and attitudes imposed upon him.

Exceptional Success: If a single roll achieves five or more successes, the target loses a point of Willpower. If the final total of successes turns out to be five or more successes higher than the total desired, the target becomes more fanatical and committed than the characters attempting the manipulation had originally hoped, adopting behavior described one level more extreme than originally desired.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+3	Subject was in torpor for more than 300 years
+2	Subject was in torpor for between one and three centuries
+1	Indoctrination performed by vampire(s) who woke up elder
+1	Subject was in torpor for more than 50 years but less than a century
-1	Elder is suffering from some form of future-shock
-1 to -3	Subject was, before torpor, actively hostile or prejudiced against the beliefs he is now expected to buy into
-4	Character has access to his own Requiem diary
	• Game Systems: Regaining the Self

The biggest danger with tricking an elder into accepting a new attitude is that he might eventually realize that the new way of looking at things that he's assimilated is somehow wrong and, more importantly, that his so-called "friends" have coerced him into believing things about himself and others that are not accurate.

Other characters might try to talk some sense into the elder, or the awakened vampire might have an opportunity to break the spell, as it were, perhaps by finding his old memorabilia or meeting someone he knew before he fell into torpor, or he could experience a situation that closely resembles the event that drove him into torpor. Or perhaps he undergoes some sort of trauma: someone he knows gets destroyed, or he gets burned by sunlight or fire, or he goes into a fear frenzy for some reason.

Dice Pool: (characters trying to talk sense into subject) Presence + Persuasion – target's Wits; (subject trying to snap out of it himself) Wits + Blood Potency

Action: (characters trying to talk to subject) Extended. Each roll represents one night or part of one night with the tar-

get. A character trying to regain a subject's old personality needs a variable number of successes depending on how strongly indoctrinated the victim has been.

(character trying to snap out of it himself) Extended. Each roll represents one event that triggers the character's fogged memories. These could be weeks, months or even years apart. The Storyteller should keep note of these, adding together any subjects gained with each roll until the character realizes the truth. Any successes the player gains can be added to the total acquired by players of characters trying to talk him out of his new beliefs.

Level of IndoctrinationSuccesses Needed to Reverse

Level 1	5	
Level 2	10	
Level 3	15	
Level 4	20	

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target's new beliefs are only strengthened. Perhaps the target sees his supposed "saviors" as a threat. He might even turn on them: make a roll for anger Frenzy. If the character is trying to snap out of it himself, a dramatic failure subtracts one success from his current total.

Failure: The roll results in no successes being added to the total at this time.

Success: The roll adds successes to the total needed. If the total aimed for is reached, the target comes to himself, but gains a mild derangement.

Exceptional Success: A single roll makes major progress. If the final total of successes turns out to be five or more successes higher than the total desired, the target regains his old self and does not acquire a derangement.

Suggested Modifiers

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Modifier	Situation
+4	Character has access to target's Requiem diary
+2	Target knew character before he fell into torpor
+1 to +3	Target has access to material proof
-1	A year has passed since indoctrination
-1 to -3	Character belongs to faction in opposition to the target's current allegiances
-2	A decade has passed since indoctrination
-3	50 years have passed since indoctrination

Seven Remedies

A number of things can, according to Kindred myth, help a recently awoken vampire to avoid the ill-effects of torpor. They're basically superstitions, but then, so are vampires in some circles. None of these remedies have been tested in any way that might be called scientific (much to the Ordo Dracul's disappointment), and so even if one works, it's hard to know if it was the remedy or some other factor.

- Mix the Vitae used to awaken the torpid elder with a homeopathic infusion of aconite and belladonna.
- Bring an innocent (defined as a human who does not know of the existence of the Kindred, and on whom no vampire has ever fed) as the first victim for the newly-awakened's thirst. Allow the awakened one to feed on the victim until death. Fresh blood cleanses the palate and the soul.
- On the contrary: feed the awakened one on the blood of animals for three nights after his awakening. This will wean him back onto the blood, for the richness of human vitae intoxicates, and in a time of weakness, intoxication can be disastrous.
- Only awaken a torpid vampire on the new moon. Too much light from the sky, too soon, and the dead lose themselves. The moon brings madness, especially to those who are vulnerable.
- Find a childe of the awakened one, and sacrifice him to his sire. Allow the old one to diablerize the younger, and thus regain the shard of his soul he placed in the childe before he slept.
- The vampire has some of the memories of the dead man, but he is not the dead man. He is simply a hollow, hungry corpse and a dead man's memories. But every vampire's ghost walks abroad, and all a vampire need do to never suffer from the Fog of Eternity again is to find his own ghost, and diablerize it.
- The vampire who awakens from torpor must never enter a home again without being invited, and must never cross running water. If she observes these prohibitions, she will not lose her mind the next time she falls into torpor.

Character Creation

An elder with skin so dry it cracks like spun sugar lurches to unlife, a single drop of blood wetting his lips and driving his body into ancient hunger.

Another stands in the bell-tower of a church, watching over his small sleeping town, and he wonders whose dreams he can toy with on this fine, clear night.

A third such creature has long since gone mad, and now stalks the abandoned subway tunnels beneath the city, hissing and spitting, a shuffling cabal of the dispossessed and destitute following close behind, their knives dragging along the old brick walls.

The ancient and/or historical vampire character is a complex creation, each different from the next. Some slumber. Some wait. Some go mad. Such characters needn't be the domain of the Storyteller, though – no longer must they be solely antagonists in your story. But playing one such elder first necessitates creating him, demanding that you take the vision of the ancient creature and translate his long Requiem to paper.



THE PROCESS

Two places you need to look: first, the character creation rules in the World of Darkness Rulebook, which can be found on pp. 34-35.

Second, find the character creation for the vampire template, found on pp. 90-99 of Vampire: The Requiem.

Ready? Set? Create.



You're going to follow the character creation steps as laid out in the World of Darkness Rulebook and Vampire: The Requiem. Initially, think of your vampire on the first nights, even the first year, of his now-lengthy Requiem. You're imagining and creating a starting character, and from there you'll figure out an appropriate amount of experience points that you'll then spend to develop the vampire's traits into the elder character he has become.

Step One: Concept It helps to think of your character in his early Requiem, to picture how he was then - what concept did he fulfill? Young anti-establishment firebrand? Social ladder-climber and greed-junkie? How far back are you looking, time-wise? You should endeavor, of course, to tailor your character to the time period – a Renaissance-era vampire might have been a learned beast, a creature of crass sexual innuendo, or one addicted to the thrill of abusing others through usury. A vampire from ancient Sumer or the Aztec Empire might have been a human sacrifice saved from the chopping block by her sire, drawn into the timeless Requiem as a misguided act of mercy and destiny. Thinking of your character's early concept and then contemplating the



concept that the vampire "grows into" as an elder can be fun to consider: does she only further embody her initial concept, never-changing, only becoming the pinnacle of what she hoped to become? Or has he long forgotten who he once was, changed dramatically by his experiences as one of the accursed Damned?

Step Two: Select attributes

Again, you're determining the Attributes for the vampire at an early point in his unlife: as per the books, determine primary, secondary and tertiary and spend the dots accordingly. Early Attribute designation should be bound up with early concept: the aforementioned Renaissance usurer and sexual dervish is sure to have high Social Attributes, while the firebrand or saved sacrifice might have high Physical or Mental Attributes. The elder may eventually break out of these primary/secondary/tertiary categories, but it's worth considering for purposes of early design.

Step Three: Select Skills

Skills. Same arrangement of categories. Same considerations of concept. The greedy Renaissance vampire probably had high Intimidation, Persuasion, Socialize and Subterfuge, but likely had secondary concerns in Skills like Academics or Politics. The Aztec sacrifice might have once been a thief or even a "wild" girl kept to the margins (Larceny, Brawl and Survival would thus be high).

This brings up a point: historically, some Skills don't necessarily apply. If the vampire's human origins are more than 100 years in the past, Computer and Drive (at least in regards to cars) aren't Skills he'd possess because, of course, they didn't exist. At a certain time in history, Firearms drops off the radar (the traditional concept of a "gun" has been around since the 15th century, though even before that you have cannons, "fire-lances," and other explosive projectiles).

So, what to do? You have a couple options available.

The first is, ignore them. Your historical character's set of abilities is likely handled by existing Skills, just as those abilities are handled for modern characters. You want to know how best to represent archery or horse-riding? The same way you do now: under Athletics. By not concerning yourself with the more anachronistic Skills at present, you still leave room for them to grow in modern nights. Remember, you're going to be playing the vampire *tonight*, not 500 years ago. She may very well want to learn how to access the Internet, or may already know how to keep track of her diverse herd on an Excel spreadsheet, which means you'll need the Computer Skill one way or another.

The second option is, allow certain Skills to do doubleduty. Firearms becomes the domain of archery (same idea, after all – point projectile, account for wind and other complications, and fire at a distance). Science handles ancient science and perhaps even alchemy (which in modern nights falls under Occult, yes, but historically has been considered a "scientific" pursuit). Drive handles riding horses, donkeys, camels, and even driving carriages and wagons. Be sure to discuss this with your Storyteller, however, because this can bring up a minor complication: if your character has three dots in "Firearms" historically due to his skill with a bow and arrow, why then does he awaken in modern nights with the same aptitude automatically in handguns, rifles and other such weaponry? The Storyteller will either want justification for that ("My Daeva's been practicing") or will instead ask you to juggle some points away from that Skill and into something more appropriate to the current era.



REQUIEM FOR ROME

If you possess Requiem for Rome, you'll note that the Skills there get actual substitutions — Archery, Ride, Religion, and so forth. You can choose to use those replacements, if the Storyteller allows, but it'll still be necessary to navigate exactly how those "new old Skills" will apply to your vampire in modern nights, especially when something like Athletics arguably covers Archery and Ride for every other character. We only recommend using those full substitutions if the Storyteller's going to run your character through some nights way-backwhen — if you're jumping headlong into modern nights and reserving historical story bits only for narrative and prelude (meaning, no dice rolls), then leave the substitutions alone. Otherwise, it can be a bit of a sticky wicket.

And, of course, if you don't have access to **Requiem for Rome**, it's a moot point anyway.



Step Four: Select Shill Specialties

For the pre-Embrace mortal, it's time to pick three Skill Specialties. *This* is a great time to highlight some of the historical abilities of your character. A modern character might have the following Specialties: Politics (Delegate Math), Athletics (Spelunking), and Streetwise (the Bloods). A historical character will have no such Specialties. A Renaissance character, however, might have Politics (Class System), Athletics (Juggling), and Streetwise (Merchant Guilds). The Aztec girl might have Medicine (Poultice), Larceny (Steal Food), and Intimidation (Gone Feral), but none of these are modern in context.

The question becomes, what happens to useless Skill Specialties in modern nights? Why take them at all — isn't it a waste? That line of thought, unfortunately, can dimin-

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ish the game. Technically, nothing's a waste. Anachronism is interesting, and Vampire is a game where modernity doesn't necessarily equal reality - that poultice we mentioned might be viewed as "superstitious nonsense" by the medical establishment, but this is the World of Darkness. Vampires are likely thought of as "superstitious nonsense," too, and yet they exist. The character might still in these modern nights try to apply a poultice to a gash that runs up a ghoul's leg, and find that it is surprisingly effective (beyond superstition, native remedies have often provided a springboard into modern medicines, so who's to say the concoction is completely invalid?). Plus, some Specialties can be easily tweaked to suit modern contexts. Merchant Guilds and Class Systems both exist in some fashion. Merchant Guilds could be construed as modern corporations or even unions, while Class Systems ... well, the system that grew out of Renaissance humanism is still present today thanks to thriving capitalism, so that Specialty still works, doesn't it?

If a Specialty really doesn't fly in modern nights (a "Siege Weapons" Specialty for Crafts, for instance), the Storyteller should allow you to simply replace it, or if it's overly concerning, don't take it to begin with. Only take Specialties, then, that would or could be used in modern nights.

IF YOU LIKE ANACHRONISMS...

Anachronism. In the context of **Requiem**, it's when a character behaves in a way that is incongruous with the current time period, meaning, modern nights.

Anachronism can be an interesting narrative technique. Certainly things have changed for the character, whether she just woke up or has been up and around for the last 10 years. If she was born when chariots were popular, automobiles are likely to stir in her discomfort, even anxiety. And that's okay. The tension born of such anachronism can be good in a game.

Of course, anachronism can also be really ridiculous if over-played. If your vampire's running around yelling "forsooth!" and throwing "thous" and "thees" in at every turn, that's not dramatic — it's just silly. If he sees a car and decrees it a demon and then tries stabbing it with his Roman Gladius, well, that's funny and everything, but we're probably not aiming for a comedy of errors. Keystone Kindred, this is not.

The point being, moderate your character's anachronistic tendencies. The process should be largely internal. Yes, your vampire in modern nights may see a rumbling belching city bus and think it's some gassy throwback to the gluttonous demon, Belphegor, but *externally* these thoughts manifest as little more than anxiety and distrust over being near such boisterous modern contrivances.

Step Five: add Vampire Template

As the sidebar in **Requiem** says, "I Wasn't Embraced Yesterday." That's especially true, here — your character will have been Embraced at some point in the distant past, whether it's 50, 500 or 5000 years prior. Your human was dragged into a dark portal near the palace at Burushanda, or was seduced by the dead brother of the last Cappodocian king, or stumbled drunk into a Nevada brothel after lashing his horse clumsily to the post outside. And as a result, the chords and notes of his Requiem stirred in his ears even as the rush of living blood died down. Remember: at this stage, you're imagining and formulating your vampire character as a relative neonate during the time period in which he was Embraced. You are not, as yet, framing him as a historical elder.

Clan

History will have little bearing on choosing your character's clan. Each of the clans has been around for most of history, with little deviation. If you aim to play a member, perhaps a singular one, of a rare or lost clan, that's fine provided you're willing to sit with the Storyteller and put in the work to come up with the clan's weakness, Discipline set, and what especially makes this family of vampires different from the others that are already on the table.

It is important to try to envision exactly what a clan might have been doing in the historical era you've chosen as your character's origins. Doing so also helps the Storyteller come up with new plot twists that might carry over from forgotten nights. In the lost Kingdom of Kush, in the Nile River Valley in what is today Sudan, the Mekhet might have served as advisors to ancient kings or as keepers of hidden shrines. The Gangrel of that era might have been plucked only from the supposedly monstrous (and headless, according to legends) Blemmyes, a tribe of vicious desert warriors.

The Daeva of 18th century New York City might've been the mysterious patrons and keepers of both the theater bosses and the prostitutes, while the Nosferatu of the French Revolution might have lurked in a skullwall Necropolis beneath where the guillotine robbed so many of their heads – and drizzled so much sweet blood downward, ever downward.

Imagining the general nature and behaviors of a given clan during a given time period helps frame what *your* character might have done when dragged headlong into such a lineage. Did she accept her clan as it was, or did she try to forge a new path and demonstrate a new way? And start thinking, too, about how such actions might have earned your vampire new friends and enemies individuals who, thanks to the animating Vitae within their should-be-dead bodies, could still be up and walking around and reserving a special nugget of hate or obsession for your vampire.

Covenant

So it is with clan, so it goes with covenant. It's important for you to conceive of what a covenant was like when and if your vampire character joined one, and also why he felt attracted to that group to begin with — unless, of course, he was forced to join a particular covenant thanks to sire or clan, which will frame his experience in modern nights.

Covenants, perhaps more so than clan, see substantial change over the centuries, and you also have the advantage that a covenant can be very different from one region to the next. A Crone cult from pagan Lithuania (13th century) might've gathered at the confluence of the Neris and Vilna Rivers, sacrificing animals and criminals to the river waters to appease them. A Crone cult from nearly any point in Japan's history might worship Izanami, the goddess of death who hides in the shadows, calling themselves the *shikome* (wild, or foul women) and allowing only women to join their ranks.

Note that both the Carthian Movement and Ordo Dracul are relatively young, covenant-wise. If your character's mortal and vampiric origins go further than 500 years in the past, she couldn't have been a member of those covenants because they didn't exist. Of course, it's possible that they did exist in some proto-covenant state (in much the same way that remnants of Camarilla ideology still exist within the ranks of the Invictus). One of your options is to be original: invent a covenant that has been lost to time, absorbed by another covenant, or still remains today in some form or another. Once more, it's valuable to both you and the Storyteller to do a little "world-building," here. Any elements of story and history that you can conjure up helps the Storyteller so that the entire onus of creating a compelling story isn't on her shoulders. It's more about your characters, after all, so story connected to those characters is important above all else. It helps you because it ensures that you're personally connected to the stories that survive into modern nights, and it guarantees a level of emotional investment on the part of you, the player. Plus, it's fun to create something. The stories and chronicles told using Vampire: The Requiem are communal. Players contribute as much as the Storyteller, if not more (after all, without the players, the Storyteller is just a guy in a dimly lit room talking to no one about vampires).

Favored Attributes

Favored Attributes are the same here as they are in **Vampire: The Requiem** (p. 92). Certainly you should endeavor to tie the historical circumstances of your character to the Attribute chosen: if that Aztec girl we talked about earlier ends up as a Mekhet, sticking to the shadows to survive, then Wits might be how the Blood best expresses itself. The Renaissance usurer thrives on the power that greed gives him, and so the Blood alters and grants him Presence – an unnatural expression of his outward desire to dominate.

Disciplines

As per **Requiem**, select three dots of Disciplines, either taught by a sire or mystically made manifest by the character's own unconscious will. This is fairly self-explanatory, but if your character's story involves being around others outside his clan, it's a good time to make a case for out-ofclan Disciplines. Picture this scenario: a young wife waits for her husband to return from battle during the Civil War. He does, but his homecoming takes place under the fingernail moon and most importantly, he doesn't return *alive*, not precisely. He's a Nosferatu, now, a pale carrionbird who feeds off the spoils of the battlefield, but the rest of his coterie – clad in the ragged outfits of both blue and gray – are Savages, nearly feral. It's not unlikely then that the woman, if Embraced by her once husband, would manifest the traits and Disciplines of the Gangrel.

Blood Potency

The density and power of the Blood within a given vampire is represented by the Blood Potency score. It represents the mastery a vampire has over the Blood, but also the mastery that the Blood has over her (higher Blood Potency creates deeper and more complex needs, after all).

For the most part, Blood Potency is the provenance of a vampire's age. Every 50 years dead sees the Vitae within grow thicker and more puissant. However, the player can spend Merit dots (as per p. 92, **Vampire: The Requiem**) as a trade-off for dots of Blood Potency, and that can happen even if the character is only 10 nights dead. This means, of course, that Blood Potency is not only increased by age. It can instead be a mark of:

- Innate mystical power. If the character is connected to a deeper well of occult ability or is somehow better in tune with his "vampiric state" than other neonates, Blood Potency might show an increase.
- A potent sire. If the sire is of considerable Blood Potency, it's possible that the childe will have a fraction of that power, which is to say, still more than most neonates. This is not a hard-and-fast rule, of course. A sire with Blood Potency of eight dots *generally* still sires a childe with only a single dot of Blood Potency. But this works as a reason to increase one's score at character creation, given that it's cheaper and easier to increase Blood Potency at that time (using unspent Merit dots) than later in the game.

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• Reduced Humanity. Again, this isn't a concrete rule, but in theory, one's reduced humanness can contrast with an increased connection to the Beast, resulting in a bump to Blood Potency.

Increasing your Blood Potency at the early point in your vampire's Requiem can have interesting repercussions later on. Is his Blood Potency going to be unnaturally high, then, in the modern nights? Will he suffer from intense feeding restrictions? Alternately, you may want to factor into the character's story that the Blood Potency went up and then, with the many centuries of torpor, weakened.

An interesting note about Blood Potency - some vampires, though they don't really have a name for the trait itself, recognize that Blood Potency is a mark of power. Some Damned simply have a tighter connection to their Beast or the Blood, and that gives them a certain advantage. Others recognize, though, that wisdom does not come with Blood Potency. A vampire whose Blood Potency increases not with years but swells early with power is dangerous not just for the Beast within but for the youngster's lack of wisdom. Those whose Vitae grows denser with time at least have some degree of prudence to go along with it. They must, or otherwise they would've been swallowed up long before. This is something to think about when establishing early ideas about your historical character. Does his power come with age and wisdom, or without it?

Step Sin: Select Merits

Merits can be a little tricky, here. A number of Merits aren't applicable to historical characters, because they are fairly specific to modern society. Yes, these Merits might apply to the character in current nights, but not in historical antiquity. A Roman centurion with the Kung Fu Fighting Style? Probably not (yes, we recognize that Kung Fu isn't really modern, but the widespread teaching of the martial art *is* relatively new, and wouldn't have reached a Roman soldier.). An 18th-century Prussian diplomat hiding in some out-of-the-way exclave with the Gunslinger Merit? A Civil War chirurgeon with Stunt Driver? Anachronisms such as these are awkward when brought into a game, and do little to enhance any sense of authenticity — usually, they just end up being played for laughs. No good.

Buying Merits requires a little consideration. You should endeavor to purchase Merits that are going to remain with the character into modern nights, at least in some form. And, if you don't intend for a Merit to last, it might be worth *noting* on the sheet, but not actually spending the coin on it, so to speak. Noting that your character had three dots of local Fame once upon a time for being a Wild West outlaw with particularly brutal predilections is just fine, but don't purchase the dots if the modern incarnation of your historical character won't be recognized for his crimes some 150 years hence.

What follows is a brief examination of several Merits, and how they may or may not stick around for the transition from "historical" to "modern."

Allies: Allies are unlikely to remain. Allies are generally human, and plainly, humans do not linger on this mortal coil the way vampires do. An exception to this is, obviously, if your character has Allies among vampire society or among ghouls who might still be up and walking around thanks to a semi-regular infusion of Vitae into the bloodstream. If your character has Allies (Sanctified Priesthood) • • or Allies (Gravenor Ghoul Family) • • •, it's possible those dots would remain into modern nights... but in saying so, you'd better be prepared to come up with story points as to why they're still counted as Allies. Two hundred years torpid in a tomb is not great for fostering reciprocal relationships. Did you do some powerful favor for the Sanctified of the city as a neonate? Were you born into the Gravenor family and thus can still walk in the door and earn their immediate help and trust by dint of blood both living and dead? Alliances don't exist in a vacuum. The Storyteller should put you to the test and make sure you've got some great story to back up your Merit dots.

Contacts: Same as with Allies, above. Most areas represented by the Contacts Merit are human in origin, and will not survive decades of inattention. It's even less likely that Contacts stick around, but again, creating a good story can go a long way toward excusing that. If your character had membership in a covenant or has left a legacy, it's possible that some areas of Contacts have survived. If one of your dots in Contacts is devoted to "the banking industry" and that dot was born of your character's membership in the First Estate, it's possible to spin it so that the connection thrives even after a hundred years dead. Maybe the local Invictus has long made use of a series of passwords that help a vampire identify his connections both now and later (geared specifically toward those who might have gone torpid): if the character remembers that he can speak to one of the local banking CEOs and whisper the word "vanguard" to get some information, well, that right there is the dot in Contacts, justified.

Fame: Fame probably doesn't survive, because Fame is largely predicated on human interest, not vampiric reality. In other words, if your character was Marilyn Monroe, and she wakes up and steps out into the garish light of Times Square, nobody's going to think she's actually Marilyn Monroe. They might think her a fan or impersonator, but even if Marilyn Monroe *didn't* really



die, she'd still age, right? The Storyteller might allow a level of reduced Fame, however. Mechanically, Fame represents Social bonuses due to recognition and celebrity, so even a Marilyn Monroe "impersonator" might earn a +1 to Socialize (meaning, Fame •), even though she's technically the real deal and once upon a time had the full Fame ••• on her sheet.

Haven: Haven can, with only a few justifications, remain into modern nights. Unless an earthquake knocked the building down (or developers came with a wrecking ball), a character's well-fortified haven might still be in the same place. Its quality is likely to have degraded, though a diligent staff of ghouls or childer might have kept the character's coffin warm over the many nights. It's even possible they *upgraded* it — but that's something you can worry about when you buy more traits for the current incarnation of your historical character.

Herd: By its definition (no, really, go look: p. 102, Vampire: The Requiem), the Herd Merit is all about mortal characters. Since humans die, it's hard to justify keeping this Merit around, but, then again, coming up with a good story should trump the "hard to justify" label any day of the week. If your character was once the patron of a powerful Crone cult or ghoul family, and that cult or family survives into modern nights, then it's not impossible that they've kept the candles lit for your character and the descendents of his original herd are still waiting to spill their sweet blood for him. (Though, one wonders at this point why such devotees aren't labeled as Allies or Retainers, but different strokes for different folks.)

Mental Merits: Mental Merits can stay without much excuse. A character with Common Sense likely maintains it through the many nights, whether torpid or not. That said, torpor can have an effect on the mind, weakening it or at least removing some of its once-held self-defenses. Encyclopedic Knowledge, for instance, might not survive the slumber: what a character once remembered with such clarity is now a damaged web of confusing information. Alternately, consider the possibility that Encyclopedic Knowledge has "decayed" into the Eidetic Memory Merit – a great deal of information has been lost, but the capacity to retain new facts remains strong.

Physical Merits: Physical Merits are unlikely to fail the character during torpor. Some Physical Merits (Fighting Styles) do rely on muscle memory and mental training, so you could excuse the loss of those through torpor or through many unpracticed years. Still, a character doesn't stop being a Giant because of the long slumber (unless his body shriveled so bad it's now stunted, perhaps).

Resources: Resources is fairly easy to explain. A bank account accruing interest? A cache of stolen Spanish gold?

A fat parcel of legacy real estate? Yes, it's possible for one's Resources score to go down (owning items that lose value, or having wealth that's pilfered by one's enemies or even one's so-called "friends"), but really, history generally only *adds* value to items.

Status: It might seem obvious that amongst the Damned, Status is easily lost as the nights pass. The torpid or historical vampire must endeavor to keep up his Status upon awakening, yes? Your character may do just that, cultivating his standing within a given clan or covenant. But can he wake up with his Status intact? It is quite conceivable, actually. The Kindred are sometimes creatures of stagnation. They have legacies. They have traditions. They also *know* that long periods of torpor are possible, and so they have built in enough clauses and loopholes to allow a slumbering creature of the night some measure (if not the whole measure) of Status upon returning to consciousness. The Invictus throw *grand guignol* parties

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OPTIONAL RULE: MERIT DECAY

Allies, Contacts, Resources, and Retainer Merits are all subject to degradation when unattended during periods of torpor. Each Merit has one dot of its total rating at risk for each 10 years spent in torpor. When emerging from torpor, make a separate roll for each Merit. The dice pool for this roll equals the number of dots for that Merit "at risk." You do not roll more dice than the Merit's rating, regardless of the duration of torpor. For each success on this roll, one of the dots "at risk" is retained. The rest are simply lost. The Storyteller may wish to impose penalties to these rolls. Such penalties may include -1 die per 50 years in torpor, -2 dice if the torpor was unplanned, or even a -3 penalty if the vampire's body is moved a vast distance during his time in torpor.

Example: Maxwell has the following merits before entering torpor: Allies 4, Contacts 2, and Resources 3. Because of a Blood Potency of 3 and Humanity of 3, he will be in torpor for 30 years. Thus, 3 dots of each of these Merits are at risk of being lost over the time of his absence. For Allies and Resources, the player rolls three dice, and for Contacts he rolls two. Rolling each dice pool, Maxwell's player manages two successes for Allies, one success for Contacts, and none for the Resources roll. Two of the three dots at risk for Allies are retained, leaving him with Allies 3. One success on the Contacts roll leaves him with Contacts 1 (the player may choose which area of awareness is retained), and the lack of any successes on the Resources roll means Maxwell has no Resources Merit after his time in torpor.

Note that the Devoted Merit (p. 65) provides a reason for some Merits, that would otherwise fade, to linger.



for those who awaken from long torpor and return to the covenant's fold. So, Status is pretty easy to excuse in its keeping – just be sure to make the effort to excuse it.

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Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Willpower

Willpower is a critical resource for any vampire, whether he was thrown headlong into his Requiem one month or one century before. For a historical character, it's important to note where the character began with his Willpower score, and where you see him ending up. Is there a transition, or has he remained at about the same level for most of his long unlife? Our Renaissance usurer from earlier examples may have started out a bit wishy-washy; socially-strong perhaps, but he went with every wind change, and so could be thought of as having low Willpower. However, time and tide have changed this vampire, hardening him against many of the awful realities of the Requiem. The result might be a higher Willpower (and this is reflected in a higher Resolve and/or Composure score, something you determined earlier on but that you might want to rethink here if the Willpower score isn't what you'd desired).

Willpower doesn't drop due to experiences in the Requiem, but it can fall if the vampire chooses to Embrace. When creating a historical character, decide whether he has ever created progeny. If he has, ask the Storyteller whether you should lower the character's Willpower by one, or just assume that somewhere over the course of his unlife he "bought" the dot back (this normally costs eight experience points). If your Storyteller wants to watch the numbers carefully and hold the character accountable for all such actions, she might want you to lose the Willpower and buy it back later, during the Historical Template (for what amounts to half price; see below). If she doesn't care so much about such things, she might just allow Willpower to be based on the character's Resolve + Composure ratings.

In any case, just as one can trade in Humanity for experience points, so too can you trade in some points of Willpower for experience. Removing one Willpower dot earns you four experience points, and you may reduce your character's Willpower by no more than three dots (gaining 12 experience points in the process). The reclaimed points are half the cost of a new dot of Willpower (eight).

Humanity

Humanity can go both ways with a historical character. Our Renaissance usurer had grown cold and cruel, and thus suffered a Humanity loss. Alternately, he may have become affronted at the callousness of his own kind and has instead striven to improve the condition of his own broken soul, gaining Humanity. The Aztec sacrifice can be similarly spun: her newfound hedonism may only be feeding the Beast within, spurring a steady Humanity leak over the countless nights of her Requiem. The flip side is, her hedonism instead fosters within her real emotion and true desire, not the stagnant false "urges" of the Kindred, and this has brought her more in line with humanity's own foibles — that might be enough excuse to raise her Humanity by a dot or two.

Gaining Humanity is easy, mechanically; simply spend the experience points. Losing Humanity has a system in place, too. As per **Requiem** (pp. 92-93), you can lose up to two dots of Humanity to gain five experience points apiece. That same system applies for your historical Kindred, but with Storyteller approval the limit does not. You can drop your Humanity down as far as you care to go (as long as it doesn't hit zero), gaining five experience points per dot removed. We certainly don't recommend going below four dots of Humanity, but you may have designs on a character with less than that. As long as the Storyteller and other players are fine with that precipitous drop in your character's humanness, feel free.

Virtue and Vice

Virtue and Vice mean the same thing to a historical vampire as they do to just about any other character in the World of Darkness — they are not the sum total of the character's existence, but they do a good job of demonstrating the highs and lows of a character, of revealing just what lurks at the north and south ends of that individual's moral compass.

That being said, historical characters might warrant some extra considerations regarding these advantages by dint of their having been around longer than most. Consider...

Change of Virtue, Change of Vice: One or both of these can change. Now, most mortal characters probably don't experience such a change. The core of a human character remains likely the same over the course of that person's life, morphing only during some cataclysm or trauma or internal paradigm shift. Vampires, though, are not limited by 80 years or so of life, and have unlives that can stretch on for centuries. And, during those many centuries it's likely that the Kindred character has experienced any number of great horrors or glorious revelations, any of which might warrant a change of Virtue, Vice, or both. Such a change requires an explanation, though. It's a great opportunity to mark that moment on your character sheet or in a character journal. Such an event becomes a defining moment. It explains not only the Virtue or Vice change, but it also speaks volumes about your character and may help to identify some great pieces of story that might survive into modern nights. The Renaissance usurer was betrayed by his sire in the late 19th century, turning his Vice of Greed to Wrath and allowing his sire to exist into modern nights as a persistent enemy (*or*, he consumed the heartsblood of his sire and now must hide the sin that mars his soul, which may also warrant a change of Virtue to Hope or Fortitude).

An Era of Reflection: Your character comes from some historical period, and you may decide to reflect that era through Virtue and Vice. The Renaissance was a time of Hope (humanism) and Greed (humanism stirring the dawn of modern banking and capitalism), and maybe you want to have a character that reflects the nature of that period. Why not? Vampires can be seen as metaphors, anyway, at least outside the "truth" of the World of Darkness, so don't be afraid to make your character mean more than just the dots on the page and the melodrama of the Requiem. The Aztec girl might accurately reflect her times, having a Virtue of Faith (Aztec religion and sacrifice) and a Vice of Wrath (the Aztecs were both brutal to their enemies *and* feared the wrath of their gods).

Vice Over Virtue: This option is actually a Merit, and you'll find it on p. 68 of this book. In short, what if your character was so long on this Earth and so debased by his time here that he could regain Willpower with Vice the same way most characters would or could with Virtue, refilling his entire pool by committing to actions that are truly impelled by his defining urges?

Step Eight: Spark of Unlife

For the most part, this step is the same as on p. 94 of **Vampire: The Requiem**. You should attempt to give some depth and context to the traits you choose – a vampire with four dots of Strength is notable, and maybe deserves some explanation. A dearth of expected traits is worth explaining, too. Why would a supposed alchemist have low Occult, or a politician have a lack of Politics? (The obvious answer is that he's quite good at faking it, but you may have a more interesting reply.)

Of course, you've got a far larger spread of time to be concerned with in regards to your vampire character maybe a hundred years, maybe a thousand. While technically you're *at first* creating your vampire at his earliest unlife, not long after the beginning of his Requiem, you're still going to take a step here momentarily to flesh out the character for modern play. Both the character's sheet and story will get major examination in the next steps, but even at the ground level it's likely that your character's focus is becoming clear. A pattern should be emerging by now. The Renaissance usurer probably has Mental or Social traits as dominant, with Physical taking a distant third, quite the opposite of our Aztec sacrifice girl, who likely was a bit of a scrapper, and thus should have Physi-

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cal dominant. The traits aren't pure mechanics. They tell a story. It's your job to draw that story out.

One way to do this, is to take all the Attributes and Skills possessed and write a note about each, just one word or one phrase that explains a bit about the context of the character possessing that trait. You can write it on the back of the sheet so it doesn't get muddled up with Specialties (though some of these notes can eventually segue into becoming Specialties). A character with four dots in Politics might get the note, "naturally gifted," which implies it's an ability with which he's always been comfortable, even at an early age. Alternately, putting the note "tirelessly practiced" next to it means it's something hard-fought, something that the character has attempted to work hard to foster every minute of his life (and now, his death). It's a tiny thing, this note, but put them all together and they start to paint a picture.

You can still roll a single die to determine how much Vitae will be in your character's system at the time of the game's beginning, but it's also possible that-you've got quite the prodigious pool available due to increased Blood Potency. Consult with the Storyteller, she may want you to double that number upon rolling it to help fill out a larger pool. (Then again, maybe she wants your historical vampire to start out hungry.)

The Historical Template

It's time now to consider exactly who your character becomes in the modern age, whether as a result of bloodyminded diligence night after night or through a forced torpor that lasted a nightmarish 200 years. Mechanically speaking, getting your vampire up to speed in modern nights is simple, albeit a bit time-consuming. You're going to spend experience points appropriate to your character. Which leads us to...

a Taste of Experience

Let's get this out of the way up front: *age does not necessarily equate to experience*. A player's character gains experience points relatively swiftly, because that character is dynamic: in the story, she's active, she's moving about night to night, coming up with and executing plans. The story is meant to capture a unique slice of time for all the players' characters whereupon they're enacting their will upon the world (what is likely a stagnant world, at that) and so they are learning and evolving. The characters are discovering what works and what doesn't. They've found lessons in spilled blood and successful coups, in leaps of cruel faith and in tumbles into dark pits both metaphorical and literal. Experience points are the measure of one's encounters and how one reflects upon those encounters.

An elder's timeline certainly captures some of those moments of dynamism, but it's also likely to comprise periods of inactivity, of waiting like a fat spider in the center of the web. The elder learns little during this time, because while waiting or planning, she's gaining little to no feedback from her peers or the world around her. She cannot know whether her blood-soaked insurrection will yield the proper rewards because that insurrection takes time to mount — months, maybe years.

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In addition, the vampire's mind is difficult to change. The older such a creature gets, the more inert it becomes, growing moribund and stubborn. (You can find an analog in any species: older adults certainly grow more rooted to their ways, and of course we've all heard the saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks.") That's not to say an elder gains no experience at all, only that it comes more slowly, more deliberately. Also, the inability to teach "old



BLOOD POTENCY: A FURTHER DISCUSSION A vampire Embraced in 1421, perhaps by a member of the *Grémio de Corajoso* on his travels (see p. 136), survives to the year 2008. That's 587 years. Let's assume that he started with one dot of Blood Potency and never committed diablerie. That means that, by the year 1921, this vampire has Blood Potency 10. If he commits diablerie, he might reach this point long before that.

Putting that in game terms, reaching Blood Potency 10 without diablerie would cost 632 experience points.

One of the reasons that Blood Potency carries disadvantages (feeding restrictions, especially) at higher levels is precisely to address this type of situation. Vampires with this kind of power are rare in the extreme, but it's not because vampires *can't* survive the five centuries it would take to "max out" their Blood Potency, it's because eventually they sink into torpor. Not all Kindred want to go into torpor, but there are multiple ways to get there, including starvation (which, of course, becomes more likely as feeding restrictions come into play).

As discussed under Willpower, above, the Storyteller might want to take things a bit more precisely, requiring the player to consider exactly how much time a character has spent in torpor, but allowing the 50-year increase in Blood Potency to happen without experience expenditure. Or, she might put a "cap" on Blood Potency, saying, for example, that a character can begin the chronicle with five dots at most, and let the player arrange the character's unlife so that the math works out.

At the end of the day, though, as the text says, how powerful a vampire becomes in what span of time isn't something that can be mathematically determined. Use the rules here to figure out what works for your chronicle, and go from there.

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dogs" those pesky "new tricks" needn't be true, either. It's certainly the reality for some, but it isn't necessarily accurate for your character.

All of this leads to the question: how much experience do I get to spend on my elder's character sheet? With the above considerations in place, it's time to think about just what kind of vampire you're creating.

Two quick notes, before we get to numbers. First, Blood Potency. Technically, Blood Potency increases by one dot per 50 years. That's true *during play*. Here, though, raising Blood Potency must be done by spending experience points. This allows you to be a bit flexible with the "50 year" rule, which is appropriate given that vampires should not conform to such rigid determinations.

The second note is about derangements, which are something that elders are likely to possess. A long slumber can cause a breakdown of one's mind. Plus, the elder has seen and experienced a great deal, and the Requiem is nothing if not traumatic.

Each mild derangement taken at this time earns you five additional experience points; each severe derangement taken at this time earns you seven additional experience points. The Storyteller must approve these for play, however; if you end up with five of each just for the experience points, your elder is going to be unplayable. A recommended limit is one of each, no more.



JUST TO REITERATE... The experience point costs for all the good stuff on your character sheet are as follows:

Trait	Cost
Attribute	New dots x 5
Skill	New Dots x 3
Skill Specialty	3
Clan or Bloodline Discipline	New dots x 5
Other Discipline*	New dots x 7
Theban Sorcery or Crúac Ritual	Ritual level x 2
Merit	New dots x 2
Blood Potency	New dots x 8
Humanity	New dots x 3
Willpower * includes Coils of th The Requiem	8 experience points ne Dragon, p. 149, Vampire:

The Sleeper (Torpid Clder)

Whether he's cutting throats in Sumeria or playing two gangs of horse thieves against one another during the American Gold Rush, it's possible that the "historical" vampire suffers a most unpleasant fate: he is cast into a long period of torpor. Someone stakes him and buries his inert body beneath the foundation of a new church. Or he starves and tumbles into an open mine shaft. Or his flesh is rent to ribbons by a pack of wolves and he manages to stagger into a dark cave just before sun-up... and when the sun sets, he cannot awaken.

Then, 50, a hundred, five hundred years go by... and something stirs him from his torpid slumber. A taste of blood. A stake pried from a splintered breastbone. An unearthed grave barrow. Whatever it is, the character awakens.

His traits are now roughly that of a starting character. No, strictly speaking that's not the rule — a torpid vampire doesn't typically find that all of his traits suffer that kind of contraction, but for the sake of wanting to play an anachronistic starting character, it's as good an excuse as any. Plus, it makes a kind of gross biological sense: the body shrivels and the mind is often trapped in its own hazy recollections and hallucinations. It makes sense that one's Attributes and Skills might suffer somewhat under the pressures of a desiccated body and a half-ruined mind, doesn't it? Certainly a vampire's Blood Potency lessens, and with that lessening any higher-end traits (above five dots) winnow down, so it's a logical step to conclude that all of one's traits might wither on the vine.

The Spider (Passive Alder)

As noted, some elders are largely passive as the nights and years trickle past. A bloated Lord sits in his parlor, ghouls milking blood into his open maw. A Succubus is content to let her lessers do most of her hunting and politicking for her six nights out of seven. An obsessive Savage paces the periphery of his city park territory, active enough within its boundary but never leaving its creature comforts (so to speak), and thus never truly surpassing his already-extant knowledge and abilities.

The passive elder isn't *entirely* passive, mind you. True passivity might as well be torpor. But they're passive in a general sense, in the way that people of power or age might reach a certain plateau that doesn't demand much in the way of struggle from them. An up-and-coming neonate or ancilla has to bite, kick, swindle and backstab his way to the top, digging his claws into the mountains of flesh that threaten to come crashing down upon him. An elder does not. If the elder bites, kicks, swindles or backstabs, it's probably because the elder gains some pleasure from it, not because he must do so to survive.

Is this your character? (Note that such a descriptor doesn't imply your character will necessarily be passive *during* the unfolding story, only that she's been passive

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for the last several decades or centuries — the nature of the story likely demands her to be far more vigorous in her pursuits.) If so:

For every decade dead, the character has 10 experience points you can spend on her. A vampire whose Requiem is now a hundred years deep gains 100 experience points that her player can spend.

The Wolf (active Elder)

Not every elder is content to wait at the center of the web while food meanders into the trap. Some elders are quite active, indeed. A Shadow leads a cult of blood-addicted sycophants, and she uses them to wage war on her eternal enemies. A feral Savage is impelled by the Beast within, and he cannot rest, driven ceaselessly to hunt the heartsblood of his peers. A grotesque Haunt will not stop until he has carved out a labyrinthine necropolis beneath the city, a place of bleak refuge for him and his "family."

The active, dynamic elder isn't necessarily out every hour of the night, but she's going to be more "spirited" in her actions month-to-month than those of her more passive peers. She has plans, and she's putting them into play regularly. Maybe she's an elder with less power, and therefore has all the more reason to scrape and scrabble. Maybe she's got the power but it's simply not enough – a prince needn't be content with the throne; her "visions" may push her to build some utopian (read: fascist) Carthian paradise. Maybe she's just crazy (madness is certainly active and dangerous, stirring its victims to actions both sensible and insane). On a night-to-night basis, this elder is moving beyond her comfort zone, acting outside of some ceaseless routine.

If this is your character, then for every decade dead, the character has 15 experience points you can spend on her development. A vampire with a century-long Requiem would therefore have 150 experience points for you to translate into new or updated traits.

The question then becomes, why not make every character an "active elder" to gain the larger amount of experience? For one, it might not fit your character concept. Trying to push a square peg into a circular hole only makes for an awkward playing experience.

Playing the active elder also has a very practical downside. The Requiem of the dynamic elder means that elder has been not only gaining resources, but she's been gaining *enemies*, too. Such potent Kindred do not operate in a vacuum; what they do will inevitably draw the ire of others. Competition is cruel. One vampire might want the elder's heartsblood. Another might want his assets, his blood slaves, or perhaps just his decapitated skull on a silver tray. Conflict is certainly good — in a story, conflict is *king* — but it means the elder begins play with forces already arrayed against her.



POINTS, NOT DOTS?

When configuring the traits of an elder vampire character, why go with the experience point model? It's a bit time consuming to go through so many points and calculations, isn't it? A starting neonate gains 5/4/3 on Attributes and 11/7/4 on Skills, so why not just go with that?

The logic is that it forces you to develop your elder character along very specific lines. A starting character is meant to be a bit of a baseline — but elders break out of the baseline, and all of them are as unique as a bloody fingerprint. Forcing you as a player to spend a specific amount on Attributes, Skills and Disciplines means you don't necessarily have the option to create a bastion of particular strength within the character — you can't, for instance, create a Discipline-heavy Gangrel or a Mekhet whose Mental Skills are off the charts (all at the sacrifice of other, weaker traits, of course). However, it *is* easier, so if you want dots instead of experience points, here goes:

For every decade dead, the passive elder gains one dot of Attributes, three dots of Skills, and two dots of Disciplines.

For every decade dead, the active elder gains two dots of Attributes, five dots of Skills, and three dots of Disciplines.

(Notice that we're failing to consider the primary/ secondary/tertiary categories — again, elders are not so easily buttonholed into predictable patterns.)

Time to Spend

So, you've calculated experience points. The Storyteller will confirm whether or not that number is in line with expectations. Alternately, the Storyteller may not want you to go through the calculations, and may instead say, "For purposes of game balance, every player gets 200 experience points to spend on their vampire characters." She'll know what's best for her specific game.

Now, time to spend those points. In a very bizarre way, this is like putting your character's Requiem into fast forward — the spending of points tells a story. As certain traits rise and others remain stagnant, you're saying something about the character. It's important to know the context of such changes, not just the mechanical benefits. A character whose early traits were more Social-focused suddenly sees a rise in Physical Skills. Why did you choose to do that? Yes, abstractly it's because you don't want your character to be left behind in situations requiring combat or other physical action. But you need to come to the table with more than that. So, what happened to make the character suddenly

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focus for a time on his Physical abilities? Was he victimized by his sire? Did a pack of feral Brood vampires come and lay waste to a Primogen sit-down, and your character escaped more by luck than by anything else? Or did he once push around a weaker individual — some slovenly ghoul or lowon-the-totem-pole neonate — and get a rush from the power? Something happened (and you can tie it to the "Tentpole Moments" we're going to tell you about below) that made the character decide to focus on those traits. It's up to you to separate your own player wishes from the character's needs, wants and fears.

If your character sees an unusual rise in his Disciplines, above everything else, that *means* something. Maybe he's got a powerful sire or mentor who's training him to focus the dark energies of his Blood, or perhaps he's grown obsessed with mystical protection and ability. Certainly your Storyteller will see where things have changed and may ask you for explanation, so it's your job to have some answers already prepared.

The experience points are spent. Your character has now — mechanically, at least — been brought into modern nights. Of course, your vampire is so much more than dots on a page, so it's time to examine the so-called "highlight reel" of your vampire's existence. Problem is, you may very well have a hell of a lot more ground to cover, what with this being a historical character and all. Normal neonate vampires have a single lifetime (give or take a decade) to hash out. Your character may have a thousand-year Requiem that demands reckoning.

The Prelude

First, take a peek at the Prelude section of Vampire: The Requiem, pp. 94-97. All the information contained there still applies. The questions to ask are still good questions, and still help to cover both your character's early Requiem and the mindset of the vampire in these modern nights.

But we're going to get into some "bigger picture" stuff, some pieces of information about your character that will help to give breadth and depth to your character's history without having to devote ten game sessions to such a massive span of time.

Heeds, Wants, Fears

Repeat it like a mantra: every character has something she needs, something she wants, and something she fears. They may be intertwined: a character's need and want might be the same thing, or a character's fear might simply be the thing standing in the way of what she wants. They might be opposites: the character needs one thing, but wants nothing more than to avoid fulfilling that need (right there is a morally-conflicted creature, most likely, a character whose Virtue and Vice, whose Beast and Humanity, are forever at war).

A character can have more than one of each, but you'll need to tell the Storyteller at least one need, one want and one fear.

So, need. A need is fundamental. It's generally fairly simple. Take a look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a pyramid that defines a human being's personal necessities in order of importance. Consider what such a pyramid might look like for a vampire.

Humanity (loss or gain), Embracing Another, Flexibility

Higher Status (clan or covenant), Power (temporal or mystical), Blood Potency

Sire/Childe Relationship, Blood Bond, Status (clan or covenant)

Haven (safe place to sleep), Resources, Health

Blood, Daysleep

Self-Actualization

Esteem

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Safety

Physiological

Technically, Maslow's pyramid works like this: when an individual fulfills one stratum of the pyramid, she can move on to a higher strata. So, once a character's most basic physical needs are met (a human has food, water, sleep), she can then concentrate on arranging the needs of her safety. A character who doesn't have the basic needs won't focus on her self-esteem if she can't put food in her mouth. You can keep all of this in mind for your vampire character, but really what you need to do is take a look at that pyramid and come up with one solid need your character possesses. This isn't something she *wants*, it's something that she's driven toward regardless of her conscious will.

Yes, a character can have the simplest need of blood. While all vampires technically have that need, by calling it out for your character it reveals a facet of her, doesn't it? If her uttermost concern is acquiring blood, it tells you that she's either in such a bad way that right now she can only focus on that simplest of needs, or it tells you that she's really a very base and unpretentious creature who's greatest urge is entirely inhuman. Now, if you say your character's urge is one of belonging, or one of becoming more (or less) human, it's safe to assume she's further up on the pyramid – her obsessive drive to, say, gain Status amongst her Carthian allies tells you that she's likely got a haven and a steady supply of blood and all that lies beneath it. Again, this is a need. Her urge to gain Carthian Status isn't necessarily conscious (though it can be), but it is something that she is driven toward, something that will hopefully fulfill some part of her very being.

Moving on to *wants*. A character is conscious about her wants. Her desires are plain to her, and she actively moves toward procuring them — or, if she resists acquiring them, this avoidance becomes just as much her focus and it certainly means there's some story there. There remains a difference between knowing what one desires and controlling that desire. An addict wants heroin or food or sex, but that's not a desire she necessarily controls, right? So, the character who wants to see her sire beheaded and set aflame knows that obtaining her vengeance is unwise. But why does she want that vengeance? Can she contain her desire, hiding it from those who would seek to expose it? Is it possible she could one night claim her wrath but in a way that doesn't come back to damage her?

Knowing a character's uttermost want is a very straightforward element you can put into play and one that will give your character some further depth and motivation. And it always exposes important bits of story. When you say, "My character wants above all else to master the Coils of Blood," already the question becomes, "Why?" The answer won't be, "Because the Coils of Blood are cool," because that's not enough reason for it to be a truly significant desire. The answer might be, "Because Ordell's trying to learn the third tier and my character is constantly in competition with that sick fucker, and beating him at his own game will be immensely satisfying." Or it might be, "Because my character plays at being some haughty Harpy when in reality all she wants is to feed, feed, and feed some more, and the third tier of the Coils of Blood will only ameliorate her grotesque gluttony." In that last example, the character's *want* and *need* are plainly in alignment, and that's perfectly acceptable.

Finally, *fears*. Everybody has fears and anxieties, and your character is no different. What makes your character awaken in the evening bathed in bloody sweat, panicked Vitae stirring her heart to beat for a hair's breadth of a moment? A good baseline is that a fear is what stands in the way of the character fulfilling her want or need. The aforementioned Ordo Dracul member who seeks to learn the third tier of the Coils of Blood might be afraid that Ordell will reach his learning first, or maybe the character fears the one vampire who might teach her the third tier, some wretched old Dragon with a penchant for mindgames. The character who needs or wants to foster growth in her own Humanity probably fears all the things about herself that will waylay her from that path, meaning she ultimately fears her own vampiric nature.

A fear doesn't *need* to be tied to a want or need. A character may fear her sire without that being in any way bound up with her need for Status or her desire for mortal wealth. But, binding those elements together provides an organic sense to the whole process, and it may feel like your character is more complete because of it.

Define your character's need, want and fear at the time she was a neonate (i.e. around the time of her Embrace, within ten years of it or so), and then *redefine* them for modern nights. All of them may change. One or all of them may remain the same. The character who feared her sire 200 years ago may *still* fear her sire in the 21st century. Nothing wrong with that — it in fact paints that fear in the stark lines it deserves, and that is something both you as player and the Storyteller can use in-game.

Tentpole Moments

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This part is fairly straightforward to describe, but may take up a good portion of your prelude session. Your character has been dead a long time, but you can't sit there and detail out what she did year after year. That would be terribly time-consuming and, most likely, not very interesting.

Think of your character, or more specifically, your character's story, as a tent. A tent can't stand without

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tentpoles. Your character and her history wouldn't be what they are today without tentpole events and moments throughout her story.

For approximately every 50 years of your character's Requiem, it's best to detail at least one tentpole moment that you'll go through in detail with the Storyteller, perhaps even taking some time to roleplay a few of the events of that timeframe. It's like a small story within a story, a scene of significance that helped make your character who she is in modern nights and *may* even be a scene with echoes still (if the tentpole moment involves letting an enemy escape, then that enemy may still be out there, haunting the night).

Tentpole scenes can be big, bombastic and eventful (the entire political structure of vampire society in the city collapses on a single night as fires rage and burn down a number of havens; your character barely escapes with her unlife) or quiet and contemplative (your character accidentally kills someone from which she feeds, and the resultant guilt is enough to knock her onto a new path; she still sees the life winking out from her victim's eyes).

Such moments and events should be organic, building to something. They may not be connected plot-wise, but some thematic ties are certainly appropriate. If they're a handful of scattered scenes, that can work *if* those scenes are truly telling about your character. They should never feel random or haphazard.

Timelines Drawn in Blood

The last bit we'll ask you to consider as an option is making a timeline. Given 100+ years of unlife, it's good to keep the salient details straight — "1918: Ordell murdered my ghoul; 1941: Accepted into the Ordo Dracul as a scrivener." Obviously, your tentpole moments should go on there, but you may also want to bridge the gap between those events with other, lesser-detailed timeline notations.

Certainly a timeline can be time-consuming to create, so it's important not to get crazy with it and slow the start of the game. But while the Storyteller runs other players through their preludes, you surely have some downtime in which to create and note the order of events in your vampire's Requiem thus far.

Example of Character Creation

Matt is going to run a historical vampire chronicle. All of the characters will be at least 150 years dead (though the game will take place in modern nights). Matt's chronicle is going to focus explicitly on the theme that "horrors will not stay buried," kind of a twist on the "history repeats itself" idea. In this game, the past will haunt the characters, both from their own histories and from events and occurrences created specifically by Matt. The mood will be one of paranoia — not unusual in a game with older vampires, certainly. As the Damned see their Requiems continue ceaselessly on, many become obsessive and suspicious. Even if the characters themselves are not at this stage yet, certainly it'll be a sign of things to come.

Travis is one of Matt's players. Matt hands Travis a character sheet, **Vampire: The Requiem** and this book. He gives him some time to think up a handful of ideas and directions.

Step One: Concept

Travis takes a look back about 150 years and sees something he really likes: the California Gold Rush, right about 1849. It seems a good place to start and features a taste of the Americana that Travis likes so much.

He thinks that going with a "gold prospector" or miner is probably too obvious. Travis does a little bit of reading and discovers that as soon as the people discovered gold, many rushed off their land and away from their work to go do some prospecting, thinking they had finally found those streets paved in gold (those streets just happened to be buried beneath the surface of the earth, go figure).

When people fled their lands to try their hand at the gold rush, squatters often moved in — they set up shop, took homes and fields as their own. Travis decides that his character was one such squatter, a disheveled and lonely wanderer who happily ransacked other people's stuff and milked them dry before moving onto the next abandoned area. Except, not every place was abandoned, was it?

Travis's character, who he names Leland Crocker, thinks he's going to squat on land that now sits unoccupied. It's a mistake, and it's what leads to his Embrace – the vampire within, a bloated Ventrue mad with age and isolation toys with Leland for countless nights on end, finally deciding that his victim's survival despite the endless tortures is noteworthy. He drags Leland from his mud-walled pit one night and gives him the gift and the curse of immortality.

Step Two: Select attributes

Prioritizing Attributes is easy for Travis. His squatter was predominantly Physical, but he's not a dolt, either, so Mental comes next in line. However, Leland's certainly not a Social creature (yet), which leaves those Attributes as tertiary.

With five dots in Physical, Travis figures Leland's tough, a bit bullish, and not particularly quick or nimble. Three dots to Stamina, two to Strength, and none in Dexterity.

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Now, time for the four dots to assign to Mental Attributes. Leland's not really book-smart, but he's got a sense of cunning. That puts Wits higher than anything else, so he throws two dots toward Wits, and splits the rest between Intelligence and Resolve.

Finally, the weakest category — Social Attributes. Travis has three dots here. Leland's not fast with his tongue, and in fact is alarmingly plain-spoken at this stage of his life (and death). He's also stubborn and can maintain a veneer of calm with some ease. Two dots to Composure, one dot to Presence. That leaves nothing for Manipulation, which is fine by Travis. He sees Leland as purposefully weak there. It's clearly something that the character cannot rely on to get him out of tough situations.

Step Three: Select Skills

Skills, like Attributes, fall into the same priority system, but it doesn't have to be the *same* prioritization, and Travis decides to do something a little different with Leland. He prioritizes Physical first, just like with Attributes. But then he switches Mental and Social; Social is now secondary, and Mental is tertiary. Why? Because the Skills present in Mental largely represent a kind of formal training, and Leland has little of that. The Skills found under Social are a bit broader, and not all of them reflect a particularly "positive" Social experience, and Travis is pretty sure he sees some places to position his dots.

With 11 dots for Physical, Travis tries to imagine the abilities Leland would need to survive in the life he's chosen (and soon, the Requiem he *didn't* choose). Survival is obvious, as is Stealth – the first to find food and shelter, the second to sneak about and remain hidden when others come poking around. Travis gives three dots to each, leaving him with five dots left over. He tosses two to Brawl (Leland can throw a punch), two to Larceny (he'll pilfer and pocket food or found items when necessary), and one to Athletics (just in case Leland has to run).

On to Social, where Travis has seven dots. Travis thinks that, for Leland, Intimidation is chief among these Skills. Leland's a brute, a scruffy dark-eyed soul with a tough, even hulking body. It's an easy decision to put three dots there. Leland can probably also lie when he needs to, so Travis puts two dots into Subterfuge. The remaining dots he splits between Animal Ken (Leland has calmed a pissed-off mongrel from time to time) and Streetwise (he knows enough about the lay of burgeoning Sacramento and Fort Sutter to get around).

Finally, the tertiary category: Mental. Only four dots here. Travis decides that Leland knows how to rig up traps from time to time, necessitating two dots in Crafts, and he also figures that Leland knows how to scout for food



the historical template - example of character creation

or potential places to squat, so the remaining two dots get dropped into Investigation.

Step Four: Select Skill Specialties

Travis has three Skill Specialties for Leland, so now the question is, what are they, and where to put them? Stealth seems key for Leland, who is always skulking about, so he gives him the "In Plain Sight" Specialty to reflect how easily Leland can hide in open spaces where other people would be easily noticed. Intimidation seems another good place, but since talking isn't Leland's high point, Travis decides the Specialty should be "Silent" — when it comes time to simply be a frightening presence, Leland's got that locked down tight. Finally, we know that Leland leaves traps, so "Traps" makes an easy Crafts Specialty.

Step Five: add Vampire Template

Time for Leland's introduction to the endless nights of his Requiem. Travis knows that Ventrue is Leland's clan, even though it's an odd choice (really, Leland seems fit more for Gangrel or Mekhet, even Nosferatu, but Leland's Ventrue sire has designs on "grooming" this wild one into a proper Lord, or at least a proper slave). At present, covenant isn't a consideration. The Ventrue lives on the fringes of both human and vampire population, and membership in a covenant out in those borderlands is pretty meaningless. The favored Attributes for Ventrue are Presence and Resolve, and at this point in Leland's unlife, Resolve seems the more apt choice (he did suffer through the deprivations and depredations of his sire, after all).

Travis has a good idea about Leland's Disciplines. He decides that Leland's sire wouldn't dare teach him the "esteemed" talents of Dominate... not yet. Instead, he allows him to learn the "lesser" abilities offered by Animalism (one dot) and Resilience (two dots). These still lend themselves to Leland's wild, unkempt ways.

Step Sin: Select Merits

Next, seven dots to spend on Merits. Three of those are going right into raising Leland's Blood Potency. Travis figures that Leland's sire is of significant enough power that his childer have more potent Vitae than other neonates.

Four dots remain. Travis finds them easily spent. Direction Sense is a quick choice because Leland's a wanderer, and it helps to know where you're going (especially during a time of far fewer landmarks and man-made structures). Strong Back seems like it fits with the tough, hulking Leland. With two dots left, one goes to Brawling Dodge (given Leland's alarmingly low Dexterity, it'll come in useful) and the last goes to Iron Stamina (which in some ways is less useful for a vampire, but it still helps obviate a penalty die from injury *and* the drawback really doesn't apply to the undead).

Travis chooses, at this point, to keep Merit dots out of the vampire-specific Merits (Haven, Herd, Status in Clan or Covenant) because Leland isn't allowed far enough off his leash. Yet.

Step Seven: Determine advantages

Travis can now add some numbers and get Leland's advantages. Resolve and Composure are reasonable, and when added together give Leland a Willpower of 6. Humanity starts at 7, but Travis thinks that's pretty generous for Leland. He drops it to 6 and takes five experience points to add to the total.

Leland's Virtue is pretty easily decided upon as Fortitude (he's a survivor), and Vice... well, Vice gets tricky. Leland doesn't really *seem* the avaricious sort, being apparently content to squat on empty properties and claim nothing as his own. But Travis rules that this is kind of a deep-seated thing for Leland, that he tries to possess what he has so far not been *allowed* to have. So, Greed as a Vice it is.

Size factor of 5 added to Stamina gives a high Health of 9. Dexterity + Composure comes together to form a low Initiative modifier of 4, and that also means his Defense is sadly pretty minimal, too, because his Dexterity of 1 is lower than Wits. Finally, Speed is calculated as Strength + Dexterity + 5 = 9.

Step Eight: Spark of Unlife

Travis has thought quite a lot about Leland during this process. He knows now that Leland's always lived a rough life, was left orphaned in his early teens by parents given over to cholera, and is thus a powerful survivor with middling social abilities. He's an unkempt drifter, a hulking squatter in rags and covered in a persistent layer of dust. The Embrace at this point has drawn him into a very alien world: a place of relative wealth and European privilege, though he really only gets to witness the pleasures, not taste of them – his sire keeps him at a distance and treats him at present like the cur that he is. He knows that Leland's got a growing hatred for his sire, but attempts to do anything about it result only in worse and worse punishments. Leland's got anger, but can't do much about it right now. Will he become more like a rabid dog, or will he soon learn to heel?

adding the Historical Template

Travis, after talking it over with the Storyteller, figures that Leland's been a fairly passive vampire, not by choice so

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much as by circumstance. His sire has kept him close to the vest. Even as Leland ages, so does his sire, and while he's earned significantly more "leash" than in decades past, Leland's still got the rope firmly tied around his throat. So, 150 years and 10 experience points per decade earns Travis 155 experience points to spend (taking into account the five points gained from dropping Humanity).

Travis spends his points on the following: Strength 4, Manipulation 2, Presence 3, Dexterity 2, Brawl 3, Socialize 3, Persuasion 1, Expression 1, Dominate 2, Animalism 2, Resilience 3, Herd 3. (Note that some of his advantages now change, too - Speed, Initiative, Defense.) It would seem that 150 experience points is a lot, but Leland's not some crazy-powerful elder; he's got strong talents, but nothing mind-boggling.

Things are shaping up... except, Travis looks back and thinks that he'd like for Leland to have a Devotion. The Body of Will Devotion (Vampire: The Requiem, p. 151) is appropriate, but Travis doesn't have the experience points for the Devotion and the dot of Vigor it would require. A dot of Vigor will cost him seven experience points; he only has 15. That puts him seven short.

Seven experience points, conveniently, is what would be gained if Travis chose to give Leland a severe derangement, which is appropriate given the treatment Leland's received over the many nights. Anxiety (World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 98) seems applicable given the stresses put upon the character. So, now, Travis can purchase the Body of Will Devotion.

The story Travis aims to tell here is that Leland's been groomed by his sire (a vampire Travis determines is named El Pavo Real, or simply, "Pavo") to be a more socially capable creature, proof that the old Spanish vampire can elevate the lowest dog to be a mighty wolf. Of course, as the story begins, Travis also knows there's a point of conflict here, but we'll get into that in just a moment.

Need, Want, Fear

Travis doesn't have to think very long, here. He's already worked hard with Leland, and knows the character in and out. He decides that Leland's in the middle of that "hierarchy of needs," and hasn't yet earned esteem. He needs independence. This isn't just a want, this is deep-seated in Leland's soul, a true need. Without independence, he'll go as mad as his sire.

His want - along with independence - is to fulfill his greedy desires. He sees the wealth all around him but possesses none of it. He deeply wishes to see that change.

Finally, his fear? Pavo. He fears not only his sire in general, but more specifically fears that Pavo, who may still be quite cunning behind his growing lunacy, will learn of his plan and may return Leland to those endless nights of torture from early in his Requiem.

Tentpoles

Travis looks over Leland's 150 years and decides on three tentpole moments in the vampire's Requiem thus far. He could do more, of course, but Travis doesn't feel like bogging down the session. The three events are:

First, the herd of slaves. In the late 19th century, California was booming. Railroads started to criss-cross the burgeoning state, put there by foreign (usually Chinese) slave labor. Pavo, the sire, wanted his Spanish mission to be converted into a true manor house, a genuine hacienda, and he needed slave labor to do it. This was the first time Leland was really "off his leash," handling a task for his mad sire. It was his responsibility to obtain and lord over the slaves who would build endlessly upon Pavo's home for decades, turning it into a mansion-like maze. This was a taste of power for Leland. He enjoyed it, and his enjoyment sickened him - a moral conundrum.

Second, the hoard of gold. The gold rush enlivened Pavo, and that carried over to another obsession for Leland's sire: the glitter of aurum. Leland was also put in charge of procuring gold for his master - sometimes he would steal it, other times he would talk others into "deals" that favored only Pavo. In the end, Pavo's monstrous haven started to include countless hidden chambers and subfloors filled with gold, both processed and raw. It infected Leland. Greed, he decided, was very good indeed.

Third, the light at the end of the tunnel. It's only been in the last 50-60 years that Pavo has given Leland enough rope to meet with the Kindred of Sacramento and the Valley of the Moon on behalf of his sire. Leland met with the seneschal of the Prince of Sacramento (who Travis knows will be handled by another player), and together they began hatching a plan to oust Pavo and take his wealth. Leland has his own herd now. Pavo still uses slave labor, but has little to no hand in monitoring those shackled migrant workers, and Leland plans to turn them to serve him instead of Pavo. Soon, he thinks, this will all be over. He will be his own man.

With the tentpoles complete, Travis only needs to come up with a short but telling timeline for Leland. The character's done. Leland's a creature of flesh, bone, and most importantly, blood. Time to play.

Storytellers, Your Turn Storytellers, we're talking to you, here. In any **Requiem** chronicle, you're going to have Storyteller characters who are clearly not neonates. Ancillae and elders will be from various eras of history. Even if the players have come up

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with a coterie of green-blooded neonates, the rest of the vampires in town are unlikely all so young and dumb. So, the whole section preceding this pertains to you, too. You don't have to go through the precise motions of counting up experience points and creating each character in stages, but the section does offer a lot of places where a little bit of thought goes a long way toward creating believable and complex characters. That being said, creating Storyteller characters with particularly lengthy Requiems has a few of its own challenges. Below you'll find some advice on creating characters for your game using characters from various eras.

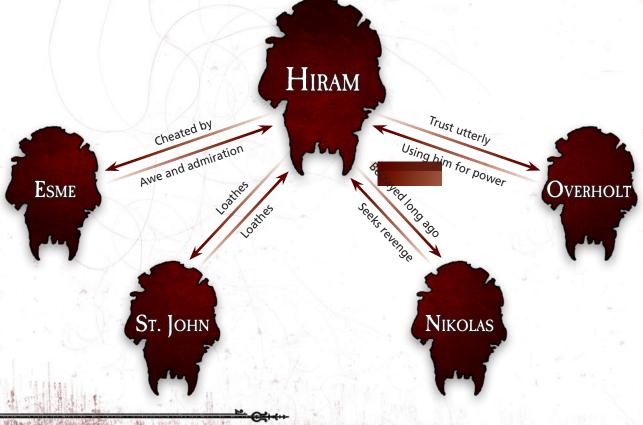
Conflict Is King

This is a small point, but an important one: in a story, conflict is necessary. Without conflict, there's no story. Storyteller characters are creatures of conflict. They both have their own conflicts to deal with, that have built up over the decades (and you should jot a couple down), and they also *represent* conflict for the characters. Even an ally can *represent* conflict — think of a patron of the characters who earned a lot of grudges even from the early nights of his Requiem, and now those enemies and resentments have come back to haunt him and anybody who's in his corner. As much as the Kindred represent a sometimes stagnant society, what's stagnant about them is that they're constantly repeating history, stirring up the same conflicts like kicking over the hornet's nest time and time again.

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Secrets, Secrets, More Secrets

Vampires are secret keepers. It's built into their nature the Masquerade itself is one giant secret, concealing an entire nocturnal society from humankind. Some vampires, as their Requiems grow in age, grow more paranoid and, inevitably, collect more secrets as a result. Other Damned are privy to secrets merely by association, and as the years stack, it's inevitable that they learn far more than they'd probably care to. In coming up with a Storyteller character from another era, imagine the countless secrets they hold. They've seen things. They know things. What secrets can they dangle over characters' heads? What secrets do they dole out for favors, or what hidden truths do they viciously strive to keep concealed? Remember that, in terms of story, the secret is meaningless if it doesn't have much connection to the story or can't be made to serve the story. Some character must care about the secret for it to matter. Remember, too, that secrets can be intimately tied to history – and only vampires from that era can even recall them (though whether they can recall them accurately is a whole other matter). A Mekhet remembers the coup staged against the Invictus on the night of Kristallnacht – more importantly, he remembers that it was one of the characters who truly fomented that rebellion, something that remains unknown even by the other members of the coterie to this night. Storyteller characters of this age and experience are likely power-players in the city, whether as prince, Prefect, or Primogen. They have



secrets. They have enemies. Something will always come back to bite them, whether it's a secret they know, a secret they don't know, or a secret that their eternity-addled minds cannot frame properly.

The Character Web

A neonate's dragged kicking and screaming into the Requiem, and he doesn't have a lot of friends, but he doesn't really have a lot of enemies, either. He knows his sire. Maybe some others of his clan. Probably a handful of other neonates or low-on-the-ladder ancillae. Characters with some decades behind their Requiem, though... well, they know everybody in some capacity or another. Drawing a character web can be helpful here. In the middle is the Storyteller character, and all around him are the names (or images, if you care to sketch or utilize Photoshop) of the other characters in and around the domain. Draw an arrow from each character to the center Storyteller character, and then an arrow right back. Write a few words or lines about how each character feels about the other in the direction the arrow is pointing. Hiram feels cheated by his lover, Esme, but Esme feels only awe and admiration for the elder. Hiram trusts Overholt with his unlife, but Overholt is just using Hiram to drag his way to the top of the ladder. Hiram loathes St. John, and St. John loathes Hiram. History makes for complicated relationships, too, and expect that some of these lines could very well note some "tentpole moments" in history between these characters: Hiram betrayed Nikolas 200 years ago in a Paris tomb, and Nikolas awakened from torpor 100 years ago in that same tomb and now seeks revenge. (If you care to, you can start drawing lines that don't connect to the central character, too, making it all the more web-like.)

Complexity of Roles

Each historical Storyteller character should have a role to play in your chronicle, and this role should be unique... it need not be a single role for all characters, or even all characters within the same coterie. A Storyteller character from the same era as one of the players' characters could be an enemy, a foil, an ally, even a confidant. But to another of the players' characters, he's a frighteningly old and powerful lunatic. To a *third* character, he's a weakminded elder. This relates to the character web, discussed above, but reminds you that Kindred society and the roles within it are rarely simplistic, and they only grow more complex with time. Whether a historical Storyteller character remains as mentor or villain, cipher or sounding board, is entirely up to you. Just know that rarely are such elder creatures able to be painted into a corner.



Many historical characters have entered torpor at one point or another during their grim Requiems. This is true for Storyteller characters, too, and can work as a powerful plot point. A Storyteller character awakening from a long slumber has big impact on city dynamics. The character wakes up, admittedly limited in power. Will he remember how the characters betrayed him? Will he remember what irons he had in the fire – building that bloody altar atop the peak overlooking the city, or pursuing the Princehood with dogged and brutal determination - when he awakens, or will he have forgotten all of that? Worse, could the Fog of Eternity have muddled it all? Does he misremember history? Could he think one of the characters an enemy when really that individual was a friend to him, and it is only the nightmarish scope of his torpid mind twisting his remembrances into something unreal and unrecognizable?

... and all That Other Stuff

Many keys to creating great Storyteller characters have already been discussed in this chapter. Go back and take another look at the "Needs, Wants, Fears" section, the "Tentpole Moments" section, and the section on "Timelines." All of these things are good for you as the Storyteller as much as they are useful for the player.

Anatomy of an Elder Vampire Age and power do not ameliorate the ravages of the vam-

Age and power do not ameliorate the ravages of the vampiric condition, but elder vampires do exist. They play the same political games as younger Kindred, but as age advances and the mind deteriorates, vampires become less rational...and therefore more dangerous.

Elder Vampires in a Chronicle

Elder vampires can be difficult to integrate in a chronicle. The implications of hundreds of years of unlife and untold layers of personal history, not to mention the raw power many elder vampires possess, make it easy for an elder character to inadvertently overstep the role the Storyteller has in mind. A way to manage this is to give the character a set role built into the architecture of the chronicle. For example:

The elder is the prince of the city in which the characters dwell. Unless you're running a high powered chronicle in which the characters interact with the upper strata of Kindred society on a regular basis, or the prince is an exceptionally active force in his subjects' night-to-night existence, this puts a potentially problematic elder character firmly in the background, to be dealt with or not as the plot requires. The same goes for elder characters who occupy official roles in the court. Unless the characters have reason to interact with the individuals holding those offices, the elder character can be used as dramatic "background music," ignorable or engageable as the situation requires. At the same time, don't be afraid to use these characters as plot hooks or motivators simply by reputation. If an ancilla expresses reluctance to break one of the prince's rules, even if there's virtually no chance he would ever find out, the characters should wonder why. Is the elder's reach really so long?

Another possibility: The characters are the brood (or wards) of one particular elder vampire and are the executors of his estate and his night-to-night interests. Consider how active the elder is (Sleeper, Spider, or Wolf - see p. 54). Some elders are active forces in the unlives of their childer, and their demands require a significant amount of attention on a night-to-night basis. Some elders are a more passive force, in torpor as a result of extreme age and Blood Potency, lost in the ennui of an immortal being, a scholar whose studies consume the majority of her attention. Some elders are very simply absent, but nonetheless exert significant influence from afar: the elder is a traveling diplomat or other mobile authority figure for court, clan, or covenant, and rarely interacts with the characters except through retainers delivering orders or missives. The elder might even be in torpor, manipulating and advising the characters through dreams and other esoteric methods (see Doorways of the Eyes and Mind, p. 70).

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Similarly, an elder who becomes involved in the characters' unlives might be a nomad of malevolent or benevolent providence. The wandering cannibal known as the Unholy represents one extreme example of this possibility. An elder who stalks other vampires for sustenance is a boogeyman for the Kindred, and any chronicle involving such a character could be used to play up the ultimate horror of the vampiric condition with great effect. On the other hand, a wandering elder could also be a wise sage or mentor figure to a coterie of young Kindred seeking answers about themselves and the Kindred in general — but where vampires are concerned, such advice is never free.

Elders Among Themselves Younger Kindred often think of elders as staid, educated

Younger Kindred often think of elders as staid, educated and cautious individuals. Yes, they are dangerous and predatory, but they don't lash out like neonates do. They keep the Predator's Taint under control, and don't circle each other snarling like uncultured animals. These Kindred might be somewhat correct in this assertion, but for the wrong reasons.

Elders *are* usually less apt to react badly to Predator's Taint, but that's because they've usually been around long enough

to meet most of the vampires in a given region, or learn some tricks to help control it. When two elders meet, they establish dominance quickly, and often away from prying eyes. Some cities are less civilized than others, though.

Elder dominance displays are often terrifying for younger Kindred to witness. Younger vampires, with their younger Beasts, often settle their instinct-driven need to establish a hierarchy with a few growls and perhaps a lunge. Elder displays are somewhat more complex, ritualistic, and often violent, particularly when clans or covenants differ. Elders of the same clan or covenant are often already heavily laden with acknowledged places in the relative hierarchies of those groups. Among elders of differing clans and covenants, however, the Beast often rules first meetings. Bloodshed is not uncommon, especially among those elders who can no longer feed on human blood, brute-force expressions of personal strength establishing rough standards of conduct. This violence is often highly ritualized in its forms, ranging from duels using rules forgotten most mortal historians to quasi-religious forums that resemble intense philosophical debates on the surface, but carry the promise of violence should one's orthodoxy prove inadequate.

Somewhat rarer, but no less dangerous, are the Discipline duels in which two (and sometimes more) elders engage each other in a contest in which they prove their mastery over the powers of the blood. A Dominate duel, for instance, might consist of two vampires trying force each other to drink from a cup containing the blood of a more-powerful Kindred. In an Obfuscate duel, both participants remain unseen until the moment is right to strike – the duel is actually to first blood, but as the Discipline extends beyond simple invisibility, it involves much more mystical finesse than a swordfight.

All of these forms vary widely from place to place, covenant to covenant, and clan to clan. The manner in which elders in Chicago establish hierarchy would not be acceptable practice in New Orleans, or the way the elders of the Circle of the Crone decide who takes precedence would not satisfy the needs of the Carthians or the Invictus. This is one more reason that neonate and ancilla practices tend to be simpler — they just don't have the experience or knowledge base to know what kind of challenge would be appropriate.

Once elders have established their pecking order, however, challenges to that order are comparatively rare. Younger vampires are more likely to seek frequent upwards or lateral advancement than their elders, who have, in general, already achieved great power and influence within their own spheres. Those elders who do challenge the established hierarchy are either ambitious, and therefore dangerous, or are acting from some strong conviction concerning the incompetence or inability of those ranked above them. Elders also do not normally waste their time and effort on challenges that do not stand to yield definite returns on their investments — they'd prefer to manipulate younger vampires into doing it.

Elders and the Maintenance of Power

Many elders have spent vast amounts of time and vast sums of money to acquire what they desire. Sometimes these things are material benefits that can only be obtained by maintaining an active interest in the rapidly changing modern world. Sometimes elders seek positions of power and influence within Kindred society. Sometimes they pursue spiritual development within the practice of their covenant's particular beliefs. Savvy elders quickly realize that none of these goals are possible to obtain and maintain alone, and that they require the assistance of competent retainers, both living and undead, to keep what they have worked for. Such assistants are made, not, born: the capacity to recognize raw ability and nurture it to refined expertise is a survival trait that the most powerful and well-positioned elders cultivate. Extremely particular elders select their servants, and occasionally their childer, in earliest childhood and slip into their lives as mentor and patron figures that provide carefully calibrated aid at proper intervals, guiding the development of their chosen mortals like an artisan gardener tending a bonsai. Others take a more pragmatic and less artistic route: they hire the tenders of their fortunes and their personal needs from professionals trained to those trades. The world never lacks for lawyers and stock brokers and personal assistants, after all, and all it takes is the blood to insure loyalty to death and beyond.

Some elders, less high-maintenance in their personal needs, take a more modern approach to the management of their finances, employing accountants and allowing computers to parcel out funds as necessary while they engage in more worthwhile personal endeavors of spiritual or intellectual development. Of course, they face the same problems as mortals who let computers pay their bills for them — a hacker can take advantage of the situation, and a bank error or computer glitch can tangle things up for months.

Elders and the Thirst

As vampires age, they grow more powerful and their blood grows more potent. Accompanying this power, though, are restrictions on what makes suitable prey. Eventually, only Kindred blood suffices.

Several methods of managing the elder thirst exist, though none is perfect or without its dangers. By far the most common is for the elder to enter a palliative period of torpor. During the sleep of ages, the blood of the elder thins and grows less potent: he loses an order of personal power but he also loses the desire to consume his own kind.

On the other hand, the elder also has the option of remaining awake and growing in power. There exists no Kindred taboo against consuming the blood of another vampire for the purposes of sustenance, only against *destroying* another vampire and devouring her soul. Some elders simply choose not the take the risks of torpor, preferring to gather and maintain a group of other vampires, generally vampires hundreds of years their junior, to serve as their herds. Often these vampires are members of an elder's own extended lineage, grandchilder and great-grandchilder, or else the offspring of members of an elder's own clan or covenant who "volunteer" them for the honor of service in order to curry favor with a demonstrably powerful and ancient elder vampire. In truth, so long as that elder is careful in his feeding practices, he can avoid the danger of this course of action: devouring the soul of another vampire in the grip of hunger frenzy. One method of managing such a strategy is to have a large herd of vampires, who can be rotated regularly into and out of service. The Kiss is not, after all, an unpleasant thing to experience or no one would ever submit to it; the same is true for a vampire feeding upon another vampire and such relationships contain more than a few undercurrents similar to a codependent sexual/emotional relationship. (Note, of course, that it is possible, though unlikely, for an elder to develop a Vinculum to a younger vampire – see p. 162 of Vampire: The Requiem.)

New Traits

Below, you'll find a series of new traits available to your historical vampire character. These new Merits, Devotions and other traits are geared specifically toward those elder creatures of the night.

Merits Devoted (to)

Note: If your chronicle does not incorporate the system of Merit Degeneration, found on page 51 in this book, this Merit does not have any mechanical effect.

Effect: When Kindred enter torpor, they often leave a number of assets, relationships, and other loose ends unattended. In many cases, mortal individuals and institutions simply forget about the vampire. On occasion, some of the groups a vampire holds an interest in simply vanish, a casualty of culture, technology or conflict. Kindred who are used to power, influence and prestige do not adjust well to the loss of their comforting control over mortal society. Gathering a host of Devoted followers, descendants, cults, or even worshippers helps to shore up a vampire's influence that he worked for before entering torpor. The Devoted can be organized in a number of different ways. A preferred ghoul and his family watch over the vampire, knowing that this dark family duty will one day be rewarded. An occult society places magical significance on the torpid vampire, shaping and evolving the secret society around their vigil. An old world crime family, bound by tradition and respect for elders, watches over the family secret and keeps a web of influence ready for the dark ancestor's return.

This Merit allows a vampire to retain a number of Social Merits in the event that he enters torpor for nearly any length of time. Social Merits affected by this Merit include Allies, Contacts, Resources and Retainer. However the player describes the vampire's Devoted, this mixed group of mortals is charged with supporting the Kindred's wealth, keeping records on the surrounding populace, and maintaining a presence in institutions in lieu of the slumbering Kindred. For each dot the character possesses in the Devoted Merit, the player may assign two automatic successes to a single at-risk Merit.

Example: Referring to the previous example of Maxwell's Merits, he also has the Devoted Merit at two dots. Of the three Merits at risk (Allies 4, Contacts 2, and Resources 3), he may choose two of them, assigning two automatic successes to those two merits' dice pools before rolling. He chooses Contacts and Resources, ensuring the retention of the entire Contacts Merit and only needing a single success on the roll for Resources in order to retain all of the dots in that Merit. The player must roll for the Allies Merit as usual.

Distant Sympathy (••)

Prerequisite: Blood Potency 6

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Effect: The normal limits of distance do not apply to the vampire with this Merit when determining what she is able to sense through Blood Sympathy (Vampire: The **Requiem**, p. 163). While a vampire is normally limited to the metropolitan area, or roughly 50 miles, a vampire with this Merit has extended this range to virtually any place in the world. This Merit does *not* allow a vampire to "transmit" across vast distances; for that, she is still limited to the normal distance limitations.

Remnant of Clarity (* to ***)

Prerequisite: Blood Potency 4

Effect: The character has one year in his Requiem that he remembers with perfect clarity. He may look back over that year in his mind and recall moments with alarming ease. The reason for this may be unclear to the character, or it may be that something happened during that year to focus

the character's mind (performed diablerie, Embraced another, awoke from torpor, or some other Requiem-changing event). The result is that when attempting to remember any event or element of that year, the character gains a number of bonus dice to that roll equal to the dots spent in this Merit. (See "Memorizing and Remembering," p. 44, World of Darkness Rulebook.) The player can also add this Merit, in the form of bonus dice, to the character's attempt to resist indoctrination upon awakening, if the brainwasher is attempting to alter beliefs or memories relevant to that year (see p. 43). A player can purchase this Merit a number of times for her character, with each instance representing one year. Those years needn't be consecutive.

Requiem Diary (• to •••••)

Effect: While some Kindred claim to have spent a century or more in torpor and remember their earliest nights clearly, others spend a mere decade in torpor before forgetting which city they were Embraced in. Because of this nigh-inevitable strain of the Requiem, some have turned to the practice of keeping written accounts of their unlives. Depending on the time period from whence a vampire came and the culture's technology, these written accounts can vary from engraved tablets to hand-written journals to blogs on the Internet. This Merit represents not only how complete a written record is, but also how organized the vampire keeps those records.

Totally assimilating decades or centuries of accounts and memories could involve prodigious study. However, a Kindred's Requiem Diary Merit is helpful for gaining an edge when dealing with one's past. Upon taking this Merit, the player should write a background for his character, especially detailing where the vampire resided, major events that he witnessed, and important individuals that impacted his unlife. The Storyteller may always reserve the right to insert additional places and time periods if it suits the story, as the vampire would not necessarily remember he wrote such information into his journal.

When presented with an issue that the Storyteller and player agree could be related to the vampire's earlier years, he may consult his Requiem Diary. Successful research provides an amount of inspiration and insight, bringing those events of the past back to his mind. The player rolls Intelligence + Academics. For each dot in the Merit, the vampire gains the 9-again quality on a single Mental or Social dice pool directly related to the subject of the research.

Depending on the nature of the information sought, penalties may apply to the roll. Researching the status of his own covenant at the time and place of his Embrace is only slightly obscure in relation to his diary, imposing a -1 penalty. Uncovering details of the specifics behind an individual rival and his weaknesses could be a bit tougher to find, imposing a -3 penalty. Based upon details and information provided by the player, the Storyteller should also assign bonuses to certain rolls. If the player has specifically mentioned a person or event that the vampire needs to research, a +2 bonus could be applied to the roll. Should a mere reference to a related group of people or time period be written in the player's notes, a +1 could still be applied. The player can choose, of course, to describe the journal in very general terms, and the Storyteller shouldn't penalize the player for not writing a novel. However, if the Requiem Diary is going to be any use at all, the Storyteller needs to know what span of time it covers and what sorts of things the character put in it.

If the character has any rating in this Merit, he gains bonuses to certain types of rolls upon awakening from torpor. See p. 43 and 44.

Taste of the Strange (•)

Prerequisite: Blood Potency 7

Effect: Those Damned who have survived long Requiems often grow to a troubling point: the Beast can only be satisfied by consuming Vitae stolen from the bodies of other vampires. This Merit can offer a somewhat "extended menu" for vampires of that age and Blood Potency by allowing a Kindred character to consume another type of blood in addition to Vitae. The vampire can still drink Vitae from other Damned, yes, but each instance of this Merit allows the character to add one more supernatural source of blood to the menu. She may possess Taste of the Strange (Werewolves), which allows her to get her fix from both the undead and from the shapechanging Lupines. Other sources may include mages, changelings, Prometheans, demons, or any other horror of the night that the Storyteller rules appropriate. The player may purchase this Merit up to four times, but only once at each stage of Blood Potency starting at Blood Potency 7 (so, the character may buy it again at 8, 9, and 10).

Drawback: Getting blood from such creatures is by no means easy. In addition, the blood of other supernatural creatures is not always kind to a Kindred's system or mind. The Storyteller is encouraged to come up with unique effects from consuming blood from other monsters. Hallucinations are not uncommon.

Tenacious Consciousness (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve • • •

Effect: Some vampires do not sleep quite as deeply as others. Your character clings to the waking world with a

desperate hold. You gain a +2 bonus for your character to awaken from torpor or daytime slumber due to external threats. In the event of being disturbed while in torpor, your character must still have been in such a state for at least the base time indicated by his Humanity (Vampire: the Requiem, p. 176).

Tomb (to)

Prerequisite: Haven •

Effect: Tomb is to Haven as a vault is to a padlock. While both provide some measure of security, a Tomb is nearly impregnable. Tombs in ancient Egypt and Babylon were built beneath havens as a matter of survival. Throughout history, the Damned have needed a place where they could sleep without fear of discovery. Gravediggers, miners and archeologists bent on raiding sacred resting places could not be allowed access to a Kindred's greatest secrets, so added security was necessary.

•	1 room, earthen, with a crawlspace leading to primary haven
•••	2 rooms, some furnishings and a tunnel leading to primary haven
•••	3 rooms, furnished, security measures in place with multiple tunnels leading to the primary haven
• • • •	4+ rooms, comfortably furnished,
	extensive security measures with multiple tunnel system leading to various locations, including primary haven
In and	r for an intruder to accord Tomb he must first

In order for an intruder to access a Tomb, he must first gain entrance to the vampire's Haven (and cope with any Haven Security measures that the vampire has in place). From there, any rolls to find or gain ingress to the Tomb suffer a negative modifier equal to the vampire's rating in Haven Security + the vampire's rating in the Tomb Merit. For example, a vampire with Haven (Size 1, Security 2) and Tomb 2 has taken over the basement of an apartment building. The basement is small, but serviceable, and the undead inhabitant has taken measures to hide his presence and keep intruders out. He has also dug a tunnel into the nearby sewer system and found a disused room with thick concrete walls – his Tomb. Anyone who breaches his Haven suffers a -4 modifier to find and gain entrance to the Tomb.

In addition, a vampire can seal the Tomb from the inside. This *doubles* the Tomb rating for purposes of figuring this modifier. In the example above, if the vampire decides to go into torpor in this Tomb, anyone trying to get in suffers a -6 to all attempts (Haven Security 2 + [Tomb 2 x 2]).



Drawback: No matter how secure the Tomb, once it's breached, it's breached. Tombs might have multiple escape routes, but once a Tomb has been discovered, it's compromised. The player can add half the Tomb rating to the Haven's Size (rounding up), but the security modifiers are forfeit.

Vice Over Virtue (••)

Prerequisite: Blood Potency 3, Humanity no greater than 5, Undead at least 100 years

Effect: The character regains Willpower through her Vice the way other characters regain it through Virtue – by fulfilling her Vice truly and profoundly, the character may once per session regain all spent Willpower points. It goes the other way, though - now, she can regain a single point of Willpower at a time by briefly fulfilling her Virtue. Elder or historical vampire characters sometimes find that the Beast's whims have overwhelmed the needs and values of their human side, and this Merit ultimately represents that time in a vampire's Requiem when her more callous, selfish urges are truly paramount. Giving into one's Virtue is now little more than paying lip service to it, performing virtuous actions more because they suit one's needs rather than because they are the "right" thing to do.

Drawback: This isn't a mechanical drawback so much as a caution to players taking this Merit for their characters: a character who favors Vice over Virtue is more likely to give into the eventual blood-slick slippery slope of Humanity loss.

Vitae Connoisseur (•)

Prerequisite: Blood Potency 3+

Effect: Kindred have the opportunity to sample tastes of blood from cultures and people from all over the world. Some vampires sample more than others, and develop a taste for favorite "flavors" in the blood. Your character has evolved such an affinity for a particular rarefaction of mortal blood. Possible examples of your character's favored Vitae include specific ethnic origins, attractive young men, people who are terrified, or any number of other specific traits. When your character has the opportunity to feed from his preferred victim, he regains a spent point of Willpower, as if he had succumbed to his Vice. A vampire with this Merit may only regain Willpower this way once per night.

Zeal (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve • • •

Effect: Your character believes. He's experienced something in his unlife that allows him great faith in something – a god, a cause, or a goal. His zeal is obvious to anyone he encounters, and this can work for or against him. This Merit provides two effects, one public and one personal.

The public effect is that your character can influence those around him. The player gains a +1 to Social rolls where the character's zeal would be helpful. If the character is a fervent Christian, for instance, the player could apply this bonus to whip up church support for the character's cause.

The personal effect is that your character can substitute his Resolve rating for a lesser Attribute score once per chapter. For instance, in a fight, the character might substitute his Resolve rating for his Strength in order to strike down an unbeliever. In a debate, he might substitute his Resolve for his Manipulation to doggedly cling to his points, even in the face of opposing logic.

Drawback: Zeal is often mistaken for (or equated with) fanaticism, which instantly turns off some people. Depending upon the group that your character is attempting to influence, this Merit could lead to either admiration or contempt. The player applies a -1 penalty when dealing with people who do not share the character's convictions. In addition, if the player fails a Social roll (other than an Intimidation roll) using this Merit, all further attempts to deal with the same targets suffer a -3 modifier, as the vampire appears over zealous.

Sluggish Vitae: The vampire's blood is thickening to the point that she has to consciously will it to move. The player must spend an extra Vitae point for the character just to wake up. To make matters worse, this particular Flaw is a continuous malady, meaning that, even while awake, any time the character remains sedentary and unmoving for more than 10 minutes at any given time, the player must expend a Vitae point in order for her to move again. If the player cannot or does not wish to spend this Vitae, the character suffers a -3 on all Physical actions for five turns.

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Lost Love: Sometime in the vampire's past, he experienced true love on one level or another. From being a proud parent to falling for an adolescent crush, he has a true connection in his past. Unfortunately, the years as a vampire and the ravages of torpor's mental degeneration have eroded those sharp experiences into dull memories. From time to time, aspects of those memories return and cause tremendous distraction. Triggers may include women with a certain color of hair, men with a certain name, or even a snatch of music that both the vampire and his love once enjoyed. Once triggered, apply a -2 penalty on all rolls until the vampire can separate himself from the situation. In addition, the player may not spend any Willpower for Heroic Effort in actions that directly confront that stimulus (though he can still spend Willpower as required for Disciplines and the like).

Derangements Aeons' Languor (severe): Only Kindred who have succumbed to torpor (voluntarily or involuntarily) can have this derangement. Emerging from the deepest slumber, Kindred awaken with a varying degree of hesitance and fear of return trips to torpor. Those who have this derangement possess a completely defeatist attitude regarding their possible return to torpor. Not only do they accept the eventuality of their return, but they expect it to happen at any time. When presented with a situation that threatens such a state, the Kindred finds it difficult to resist or fight back. Similarly, he finds little cause to emerge from torpor when an outside stimulus begins to awaken him.

If a vampire is confronted with a situation that could result in entering or emerging from torpor, apply a -3 penalty on any rolls to resist or confront that stimulus. This translates into having difficulty feeding when he is starving, rolls to awaken from torpor, and even participating in a particularly lethal fight. In the event of possibly lethal combat, the vampire does not suffer this penalty until he has taken more points of lethal damage than he has Willpower dots. A similar -3 penalty is applied to rolls made for feeding when the vampire is hungry (when he has no more than four Vitae in his system). Finally, periodic Resolve + Composure rolls may need to be made as the vampire resists urges to prepare his associates, holdings and himself for his eventual return to torpor.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (severe): At some point during the character's mortal life or undead Requiem, he experienced a horrible trauma, and he's never quite gotten over it. Often, such trauma is born of war-time violence or brutal assault, but the Embrace itself might qualify. A loud scream or a firecracker exploding nearby, or perhaps even the taste of blood not intentionally ingested, can cause your character to shut down physically and mentally. Roll Resolve + Composure when something triggers this derangement, or your character succumbs to a powerful panic attack, wherein he cannot move except to hide. He suffers a -2 penalty on all rolls for the remainder of the scene as well and Willpower points cannot be spent to bolster any rolls during that period.

Waking Nightmare (severe): Your character physically awakens and brings his nightmares with him. Upon encountering a specific trigger (agreed upon by player and Storyteller when the character acquires this derangement), the character finds himself facing the creatures or situation from his nightmares. The player must roll Resolve + Composure, with failure indicating that the character is lost in his nightmare vision. He passes out, unconscious, for the remainder of the scene. A dramatic failure is much the same, except that the character doesn't simply lose consciousness. He begins attacking anything and anyone around him, believing he is fighting off the creatures or enemies from his dreams. During this state, he is fully capable of using whatever abilities and Disciplines he possesses, but he is also susceptible to frenzy or Rötschreck, depending on the events of his dream.

Crúac: The Janus Crescent

Ianus, or Janus. The two-faced keeper of portals and doors, of beginnings and endings. Janus did not originate in Rome, despite the name, but is just another expression of older gods — the Etruscan Ani, the Akkadian Anu. With one face he could gaze toward the future, and with the other he could see backwards through time. It is this ability that allows Ianus to pursue the nymph, Carna. It's what allows him to protect Rome's Capitoline Hill from the Sabines. The doors to Ianus's temples were left open during times of war so that the god could see what was coming, and what had come before.

The story goes, then, that Ianus gave the Etruscan Kindred – those who came before Rome rose upon the seven hills – his blessings so that the truly potent and powerful among them could survive the ravages of time, could see both forwards and backwards. Other stories say that the Kindred stole this power from the gods, as they have many of their hoary rites and Disciplines, and that they will one day pay for the transgression.

The gifts (or pilfered secrets) of Ianus are the province of the Circle of the Crone, who have made Ianus's magic a part of the bloody Crúac system. The rituals below are available only to those with Status (Circle of the Crone) *3, and* who have a Blood Potency of *5* or higher. Those beneath that Blood Potency may still attempt to perform the rituals, but suffer a penalty equal to the difference of five minus their Blood Potency scores (a vampire with Blood Potency *3* trying to cast one of these rituals would therefore suffer -2 dice to the Manipulation + Occult + Crúac roll).

Rex Sanguis Sacrorum (Level-Two Crúac Ritual)

The mind does not survive torpor easily. Nightmares besiege the unconscious. Memories twist and tangle like a wall of swiftly-growing vines. Elements submerge beneath a demented fog. But for those who know this ritual, sacrifice can make it all better. The vampire must first blood-let an animal, human or vampire, inflicting a number of lethal points of damage equal to the character's Blood Potency score (yes, this may kill the creature). The blood must be spilled into a censor, where it is mingled with the vampire's own Vitae and then burned. As the acrid smoke rises, the vampire must whisper entreaties to Ianus, beseeching the god to look backward through the vampire's Requiem for some kind of clarity. For the remainder of the night, the vampire's mind is not given over to the fog of eternity, and she can remember everything about her Requiem without having to overcome torpid dementia (though the Storyteller may still require an Intelligence + Composure roll to remember certain things).

This ritual has a few restrictions. First, all the blood sacrificed to Ianus must come from a single creature. So, vampires of higher Blood Potency must sacrifice larger and larger animals... or, of course, humans. Second, the vampire may only cast this ritual once per week, with the exception being during the month of January (Ianus's month, the beginning and end of the year). During January, the ritual can be applied every night.

If the vampire chooses to sacrifice another *vampire*, however, the effects of this ritual last a full week instead of one night.

Doorways of Eye and Mind

(Level-Three Crúac Ritual)

When the body enters torpor, the vampire's mind is awash in fog and nightmare – but what if it was active? Able to see the world? This ritual ensures that the vampire can watch the world change while her body remains torpid, whether for one night or one century. It necessitates, however, casting the ritual before torpor occurs, which can be a bit tricky to guess (which leaves some vampires casting this ritual "just in case"). First, the vampire must slumber beneath a door frame, gateway, archway or other portal. When she awakens the following evening, she may cast this ritual by spilling her own Vitae upon the floor along with some bits of hair from a chosen target. If the vampire enters torpor during the next 30 nights, her mind transfers away from her slumbering form and enters the mind of the chosen target. The target must be willing to accommodate the vampire's conscious mind, however. If the target is unwilling, he'll notice and can spend a point of Willpower to eject the vampire's consciousness back into her torpid body. The target can be forced into willingness, as it were, using Dominate or Majesty.

While in the target's mind, the vampire can choose two senses to share with the target for the duration. The

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vampire can communicate with the target and the target can communicate back, but this achieves another level when the target sleeps — the two may meet in the theater of the mind, face-to-face in dreams and nightmares.

This lasts for as long as the vampire is in torpor, or until the target ejects the vampire by spending a point of Willpower. If the target dies, the vampire goes back to her body. The vampire may not access any Disciplines or make any rolls other than Social rolls (used against the target).

This ritual does nothing for the Fog of Eternity when the vampire awakens from slumber — the events that occurred before torpor may be obscured by broken memory. But the vampire can clearly remember everything witnessed while in the mind of the target.

lanus' Blessing (Level-Five Crúac Ritual)

At times, it seems like all is tied to a vampire's Blood Potency. It is the core of the creature's power, the center of his vampiric nature. This ritual borrows Ianus's ability to look and move both forward and backward in time — with it, a vampire can temporarily change her Blood Potency score up or down. She can lower her Blood Potency score a number of dots up to her Resolve score. She can *raise* her Blood Potency score by the same number. This lasts for the remainder of the night.

In raising Blood Potency, the vampire now has access to a larger pool of Vitae and can spend more per turn (most likely). Feeding restrictions may change (see "Effects of Blood Potency," p. 99, Vampire: The Requiem). Certain traits or conditions (joining a bloodline, going above 5 in an Attribute or Skill, gaining certain Merits found in this book) necessitate having a high Blood Potency, and the player can purchase these with experience points and utilize them while her character's Blood Potency is elevated. Once that rating returns to normal, she doesn't lose the traits gained, but she loses access to any of those benefits. If she joins or creates a bloodline, it's almost as if the bloodline hasn't yet "taken hold" - it remains a temporary condition until she either uses this ritual again or bites the bullet and raises her Blood Potency through time, diablerie or experience points.

Lowering one's Blood Potency means that the character's trait maximum, max Vitae pool and max Vitae per turn will all likely drop. Of course, it also may change one's feeding restrictions for a time. It might also make an elder a less-tempting target for diablerists.

Note that if the character has more Vitae in his pool than what his "max pool" eventually becomes (say, the character has 20 Vitae when his pool shifts down to a maximum of 15), that blood is violently ejected from the body out of any pore or orifice. It causes one point of aggravated damage during this process.

Thehan Sorcery: The Ravages of Time Ancient Kindred, particularly those who worshipped the

Ancient Kindred, particularly those who worshipped the gods of the dead and the underworld, considered torpor a spiritual journey where the vampire battled with demons and the gods themselves for the right to return to the living world. Many of those ancients used the power of the Blood to give them an edge in the underworld, while others relied on the tried and true methods of burying themselves with armor, ritual handbooks, weapons, and, if all else failed, gold (some of the gods, apparently, could be bribed).

A few of the eldest actually learned new rituals that would help them survive the descent to the underworld and the ravages of time that come with centuries of sleep. These rituals predate what the Lancea Sanctum discovered in Thebes and, as such, the Storyteller can use them as potential discoveries for the players or weapons in an elder's arsenal.

Lightning Rod

(Level-Two Theban Sorcery Ritual)

One Sanctified Daeva researcher dedicated his existence to finding a way to eliminate nightmares of the daysleep, or at least divert them. His idea stemmed from the belief that many such nightmares come from the inhuman and violent activities typical in vampiric existence. Guilt, or in some cases fear, the Daeva suggested, was the cause. He proposed that only through sacrificing something of great personal value to the Kindred could he hope to stave off the guilt that produced the nightmares, and his discoveries seemed to vindicate his proposal. He found a ritual that created a make-shift "lightning rod."

The vampire can cast the ritual upon the chosen object at any time. To activate the object, it only need be placed in contact with the Kindred as he lies down to sleep for the day. When the Kindred awakens, the object turns to ash, taking every memory and feeling he had during his time asleep with it to oblivion, lost forever. The vampire regains an extra point of Willpower for that night's rest.

If the vampire uses this ritual before entering torpor, he staves off nightmares for a time. Add the number of successes to the number of weeks that the character enjoys restful slumber before the nightmares begin again (see p. 28).

Offering: An object of some personal value to the caster, perhaps a picture of a loved one from his mortal life, an heirloom handed down through generations or a favorite childhood toy.

The Invisible

(Level-Three Theban Sorcery Ritual)

Sanguine Clarity

This ritual prepares a vampire for a voluntary journey into torpor and stores a small amount of the Kindred's Vitae within his body. This blood does not prevent the vampire from awakening hungry, but it does suffuse the vampire's mind and soul, mollifying the Beast.

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While in torpor, the mind and body suffer the same nightmares and decay as any vampire's would. If this ritual is performed correctly, however, the player adds any successes on the Theban Sorcery roll to attempts to retain memories upon awakening (p. 40), or to the vampire's Willpower pool for purposes of determining success or failure against a dream Adversary (see Chapter One). This Willpower cannot be spent in the nightmare, but bolsters the character's mental fortitude, making it less likely that the Adversary will defeat him. For example, if a vampire with Resolve 2 and Composure 3 enters torpor after the player achieves three successes on this ritual, the vampire has eight points of Willpower for purposes of determining victory or defeat against his nightmares. Only five of those points can be used for Heroic Effort, however.

Offering: One point of Vitae for each decade the vampire chooses to remain in torpor. The Vitae is then ingested after the ritual has been performed on it. The Kindred only knows if the ritual succeeded or failed if he awakens with his memories intact.

Whispers Through Time (Level-Three Theban Sorcery Ritual) Prerequisite: Vitae Reliquary (p. 146 of Vampire: The Requiem)

Through careful manipulation of the blood, a vampire is able to take a specific memory or thought from her mind and place it into the blood itself for later use, whether it be to remind her of something that needs to be done or to provide others a clue as to a specific event or moment in time. Once the ritual is enacted, the memory leaves the vampire's mind until restored by ingesting the blood. Upon freeing and ingesting the blood from its storage unit (whatever the Kindred chooses as the vessel is subject to the same restrictions as Vitae Reliquary), the vitae provides that vampire with the mental image or thought that was captured within. The moment is brief, lasting no more than a single turn.

The blood remains active as long as it is within the reliquary. Once shattered, the blood must be ingested immediately to activate the memory. If a full turn passes and the blood is not consumed, it turns to ash and the memory contained within is lost forever.

Offering: As for Vitae Reliquary.

(Level-Four Theban Sorcery Ritual)

An elder Mekhet belonging to the *Banu Shaitan* (p. 157) once saw her enemies converging and sought to escape the Final Death she was sure was upon her. Slipping into her tomb, she offered a prayer to Allah and slit her throat from ear to ear with a ritual blade. When her foes finally found the tomb and flung it open, it was empty.

This ritual allows a vampire to disappear during her time in torpor. She is therefore immune to sunlight, fire and predation. She falls into torpor immediately upon enacting this ritual (during which she must slit her own throat with a ritual blade), so a Kindred cannot know whether or not she has succeeded. No one knows for sure if the body does indeed disappear or if it just transforms to something else (air? dust?). Most elders don't trust anyone around them when they are that vulnerable, making such verification difficult at best.

A dramatic failure on this ritual is devastating. The vampire vanishes, but is scattered to the winds. When her torpor ends, the player rolls Resolve + Composure, with a penalty equal to -1 for every century of torpor (minimum -1). If the roll succeeds, the character awakens, but is weakened — her Blood Potency falls to one dot, and she gains a severe derangement. If the roll fails, the character still awakens, but her Humanity has fallen to zero — she is now a mindless killer. On dramatic failure, the character never appears at all. She might wander into other vampires' nightmares from time to time, though.

Offering: An object that signifies security to the Kindred on whom the ritual is targeted (splinter from the door to her haven, bullet from the pistol he keeps with him at all times, etc.) and a ritual blade. Both items are consumed by the ritual and crumble to ash.

Piece of Mind

(Level-Five Theban Sorcery Ritual)

This forbidden rite does not officially exist, since its pagan roots are quite clear. Still, a few elders do remember it, and it allows them to experience torpor without worrying that they will awaken maddened and lost. The price, however, is high.

This ritual involves the removal of a human brain. The brain must come from a human being who is at peace and who is relatively happy in his life. The only way to know for sure that the individual is an acceptable donator is through Auspex (Telepathy). Once a target has been positively identified, that person must be brought to the ritual chamber in such a way as to not cause them fear (drugged, usually). The Kindred performing the ceremony must then carefully remove the brain from the human, at which point she devours it in its entirety. When she falls into torpor, however long that sleep may be, the Kindred will be at peace, without the nightmares that usually invade her sleep. She awakens untouched by the Fog of Eternity, her memories intact.

Murdering and devouring the brain of a truly contented person, however, is a heinous act. Enacting this ritual automatically strips the vampire of a dot of Humanity (which, in turn, affects the length of the torpor). The player must also check to see if the vampire acquires a new derangement, but this can wait until the vampire awakens from torpor.

Offering: The brain of a human being at peace with his life. The brain must be consumed in whole for the ritual to succeed. The first thing the character does upon awakening from torpor is to vomit up the brain.

The Coil of Slumber

The vast majority of Dragons view the Coils and their studies as various methods of transcending the vampiric form, pushing the weaknesses away in favor of a more human state. Some rare Kindred even claim that the goal is to *become* human again. At the other end of the undead esoteric spectrum are those who want to maximize their effectiveness and experience *as* a vampire. From the ranks of these Dragons comes a jealously guarded Coil, one that much of the covenant would go out of its way to erase, or at least secure for only the eldest Dragons.

Torpor is the dreaded experience that few Kindred can hope to stave off. Even those Dragons who have mastered the Coil of Blood's second tier (Blood of Beasts), who need not fear a dwindling supply of Vitae as they age, find cause to seek out the deep slumber. Others are simply forced into it through starvation or physical conflict. In any case, Dragons recognize the need to mitigate some of the dangers associated with actually being in torpor. This Coil addresses those concerns.

First Tier: Awakening the Beast

Following the normal rules for premature awakening from torpor due to a disturbance or when attempting to wake up during a voluntary period of torpor (see p. 176 of **Vampire: The Requiem**), the vampire gains a bonus to the roll to awaken equal to his current Blood Potency.

Second Tier: Planned Emergence

When voluntarily entering torpor, the vampire may set a predetermined event to automatically rouse himself from sleep. The vampire may call for his slumber to end when touched or shaken, in a number of months or years, or even after the weakening of the blood to a specific potency. During this time, the vampire is still subject to other stimuli and possible interruptions to his slumber.

Third Tier: Slumber's Conservation

One of the greatest dangers to a vampire in torpor is the depletion of his Vitae. Emerging from torpor, starving and on the edge of huger-induced frenzy, the vampire is vulnerable to nearly any threat — including his own actions. With the mastery of this tier, a vampire can emerge from torpor with just enough Vitae to avoid an incident spurred by starvation. During torpor — whether it is voluntary or forced — one point of Vitae is used nightly as a method of healing the body and preparing it for an extended slumber. With this tier, the vampire emerges from torpor with one Vitae per point of Blood Potency at the time of awakening. If the vampire entered torpor with less Vitae than this, this tier does not produce additional Vitae. Furthermore, this Vitae may still be drained normally if another Kindred feeds on the torpid Dragon.

Devotions

The Devotions in this book are meant for elder characters. It isn't that a skilled ancilla or even neonate wouldn't be *capable* of learning these powers, it's just that they are more easily discovered and developed by Kindred of particularly potent blood.

The experience costs for these Devotions, therefore, are slightly higher than usual. For every dot of Blood Potency over five that a Kindred possesses, however, he subtracts three points from the experience cost of the Devotion. Therefore, a vampire of Blood Potency 8 who wishes to learn Fooling the Sleeping Beast would pay 12 experience points, while a vampire with Blood Potency 6 would pay 18, and a character with Blood Potency 1 would pay the full, listed cost.

Blood Shield

(Celerity ••, Resilience ••••, Vigor •••)

This Devotion is rumored to have survived for millennia as a way for vampires in ancient times to stand beneath the light of the Sun, even if for just a few seconds. In modern nights, there are other useful ways to employ this Devotion for vampires unwilling to take that leap of faith. Surviving a major conflagration is one such use.

When a Kindred activates this Devotion, he literally forces his Vitae out the pores of his skin, creating a thick, coagulated blood shield that begins smoldering almost immediately. Obviously, use of this Devotion depends upon the amount of Vitae in the Kindred's body and/or the amount of Willpower he can expend.

Cost: 1 Vitae per turn + 2 Willpower



Dice Pool: Composure + Athletics + Resilience Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: A dramatic failure results in absolutely no protection for the Kindred from the flames. Damage is aggravated (per Vampire: the Requiem, p. 172). Rötschreck automatically occurs.

Failure: Not enough Vitae covers the Kindred to protect him from harm. He still receives aggravated damage, but Resilience functions normally.

Success: The flames surround the vampire and attempt to consume him, but his blood absorbs the damage. As long as the vampire can continue replenishing the Blood Shield, he suffers bashing damage from fire rather than aggravated. He is still susceptible to Rötschreck, however.

Exceptional Success: The vampire's blood creates a barrier against which the heat and fire cannot penetrate. As long as he can replenish the Blood Shield, he suffers no damage from fire, nor does he need to worry about Rötschreck.

Duration: One turn per point of Vitae spent. This power costs 39 experience points to learn.

Destructive Might (Vigor ••••, Resilience •••)

Kindred possessing supernatural strength are terrifying to behold. However, some can perform truly monumental feats. Employing this power, a vampire shoulders his way through concrete walls, grabs and halts moving vehicles, and crushes his enemy into a bloody pulp. Truly awesome to witness, any display of this might is a terrifying reminder of the capabilities of centuries-old vampires. When the vampire forces his Vitae to fuel his rage through this power, his skin becomes as hard as steel, his hands akin to vices, and his body nearly unbreakable.

Cost: 3 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke Action: Instant

In order to activate this power, the user must have already invoked Resilience and Vigor for the scene (meaning that the total cost of the Devotion is actually five Vitae).

When a vampire activates this power, a number of changes occur. His body becomes even tougher than Resilience alone affords. He benefits from an effective Armor Rating of 2, but incurs no movement or Defense penalties. This does "stack" with anything he wears that provides an Armor Rating, as his body is simply immune to casual blows. Second, his unarmed attacks deal aggravated damage, as do his actions during a grapple. His bare-handed attacks can literally dismember his foes. Finally, with a rigidity and density that seems like steel, his Brawl attacks ignore two points of any object's Armor Rating or Durability. Shields, Kevlar vests, and even ancient breastplates are but minor nuisances to a vampire using this power. This effect lasts for a number of turns equal to his Blood Potency. After that time, the power ceases and may not be used again for the rest of the scene.

While using this power, the vampire is more susceptible to succumbing to frenzy. He has a -3 penalty to resist frenzy of any kind. If the vampire has already entered frenzy, the Beast activates the Devotion *if* the character already has Vigor and Resilience activated.

This power costs 30 experience points to learn.

Fooling the Sleeping Beast (Obfuscate •••, Resilience •••)

Few vampires are certain exactly what occulted calculus truly determines the length of one's slumber. But many suspect that as the Beast gains power over one's human side, the Beast must sleep longer in its lair before rousing its host to wakefulness once more. This Devotion gives false power to the Man for a moment, enough to fool the Beast into slumbering for less time than what it would normally require.

Cost: 1 Vitae, 1 or more Willpower dots

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

As the vampire is cast into torpor (or chooses to enter torpor), the vampire's player may spend any number of that character's Willpower dots. Every dot spent increases the vampire's effective Humanity for purposes of determining length of torpidity (though the creature's Humanity does not *actually* increase). A vampire of Blood Potency 5 with a Humanity of 3 will spend 50 years in torpor — but, if that vampire's player spends two of the vampire's Willpower dots, then when determining the time of torpor, the character's Humanity is assumed to be 5 instead of 3. Now the vampire only spends *five months* in torpor. By reducing the time factor by increasing Humanity, it assures that the Kindred will not be "out of commission" for nearly as long.

This Devotion costs 21 experience points to learn.

(Protean •••••, Resilience •••)

Kindred need protection from the elements, curious mortals, and even other meddlesome vampires during their daytime slumber. The need for protection dramatically increases during the far longer periods of torpor that many vampires endure. A vampire with this Devotion is able to transform himself into a statue that is virtually indistinguishable from carved and chiseled stone. Truly persistent foes may be able to harm a vampire under the Gargoyle's Watch, but it would be a mighty feat, indeed.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to activate **Action:** Instant

This power may be activated immediately prior to slumbering for the daytime or as part of the process of entering torpor (even involuntarily). Upon activation. the vampire literally becomes a stone statue. The transformation to stone is imperfect. The body convulses, growths of rocky outcroppings appear, and, in many cases, the excruciating experience causes the vampire's face to contort into horrible displays of pain. While in this state, the vampire is treated as an object with Durability equal to his Resilience rating, and Structure equal to Stamina + Size + Resilience. In addition, he is completely immune to sunlight and nearly impervious to fire. Only extremely hot fires can harm the vampire in this state; he can endure up to three points of damage from fire per turn without suffering any ill effect (so a fire that inflicts five points of damage per turn would only inflict two to the vampire - still enough to destroy him, given time). This power lasts until the vampire awakens, at which time the vampire's body bursts forth from its stone cocoon.

While this power is in effect, the vampire may still wake up during the daytime or during torpor, as per normal rules. Because of the deep dormant state, however, all rolls made to awaken (including from a voluntary torpor) are made at a -3 penalty.

This power costs 27 experience points to learn.

Climpse of the Abyss (Nightmare ••••, Obfuscate ••••,

(Nightmare ••••, Obfuscate ••••, Must have experienced torpor)

Nearly every vampire who emerges from torpor can at least remember that his time spent in the deep slumber was unpleasant at best. Many are able to recall that period of time as absolute terror. A select few, however, wield their collection of memories as a potent weapon. Victims of this power receive an unfiltered view of torpor's mindbending effects. These unfortunate victims stop at nothing to find solitude and escape the nightmarish hallucinations assaulting them.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare - Composure (the Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply)

Action: Instant

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Roll Results

Damatic Failure: The vampire brings too many memories of his period in torpor to his own mind instead, causing a -1 penalty on all of his own rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The subject is momentarily distracted by a minor hallucination, but it does not hinder his current activity.

Success: The victim witnesses hallucinations inspired by the vampire's memories of torpor and then amplified by the target's own fears. Every person he sees or hears becomes another hallucination that he believes to be a threat, physically and emotionally. The victim does anything possible to escape everyone he can see and hear. During his attempts to find solitude, self-inflicted wounds (gouging his own eyes, attempts to forcefully plug his ears, falling in a careless and frantic escape, etc.) and psychic trauma cause one point of bashing damage per turn. This effect lasts until the victim can find solitude and no longer sees or hears anyone who could become another hallucination. Kindred subject to this power must check for Rötschreck (requiring a number of successes equal to the successes rolled when activating this power), and other supernatural beings capable of similar frenzies or losses of control must check for this possibility, as well. Being in a state of frenzy does not protect a victim from the self-inflicted damage - even the Beast fears these nightmares.

Exceptional Success: As a success, except the first three points of damage caused during this power's effect are lethal.

This power costs 27 experience points to learn.

Hidden Agenda (Dominate ••, Obfuscate ••••)

The Dominate Discipline is normally anything but subtle, and requires complete attention in order to meddle with the mind of but a single person or Kindred. Vampires skilled in this Devotion are able to partially overcome these obstacles. Disguised as part of a speech or ongoing conversation, this power's user may reach the minds of several subjects at once. Most victims are unaware of the commands given to them, as the orders are intertwined in the speech they believe they are simply listening to.

Cost: 1 Willpower + 1 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Dominate - highest Resolve of all targets

Action: Extended

With this power, a vampire is able to Mesmerize (Vampire: The Requiem, p. 125) a group of people, and he disguises his effort as part of a conversation or speech being delivered. He must engage the group of people in a conversation or have all of their attention. Direct eye contact is not needed, but each of the listeners must be able to see and hear the speaker. Acceptable settings include speaking on stage, a group of individuals chatting at the same table, a circle of socialites gossiping at a party, or a car full of passengers, among other similar possibilities. As soon as he activates this power, the vampire's audience is "locked in" and continues to pay attention until the power's results are resolved or they are forcefully removed from the scene. The potential victims actively resist removal from the speech or conversation, but if physically removed, they are unaffected by the Devotion.

When activating the power, the vampire must decide exactly who he wants to affect. Each of the targets receives exactly the same commands and conditions. The player must then accumulate a number of successes equal to the number of targets the character wants to Mesmerize. Each turn, including the first, the player must spend one Vitae as he works toward this total. During this time, the vampire appears to continue his speech or normally participate in the conversation. Listeners hear the vampire elaborating on points, restating opinions, or uttering some other expected phrases. The imperfect applications of Obfuscate come into play, as none of the listeners remember exactly the same words or replies from the vampire. Only after the power is resolved can the vampire stop talking or remove himself from the situation. If the vampire is interrupted or prematurely ends his speech before the entire series of the extended rolls has been made, the entire effect fails and nobody is affected.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire using this power believes that the effect is taking hold and continues to issue his Mesmerisms to each target with everyone around him fully aware of what he is telling those targets.

Failure: The player accumulates no successes toward the total. If the vampire does not score enough successes before he must stop expending Vitae, or he is interrupted by an outside source, the Devotion fails. Being physically restrained from speaking or removed from the sight of his potential targets would also cause this power to fail, as would an amount of noise capable of completely drowning out his voice. The crowd around him does not see through his ruse, but he has not Mesmerized any of his desired targets.

Success: The player makes progress toward the total. If the player accumulates the required successes (one per target), each is affected as per the normal rules and limitations of Mesmerize. All targets receive the exact same commands, conditions, and triggers.

Exceptional Success: The player succeeds at the final roll of the extended action with five successes more than are required. The victims not only obey, but they also rationalize what they have done as their own decisions until and unless someone questions them about their actions in depth.

Should a vampire with Auspex, who has activated Heightened Senses, observe this power's use, the two vampires are subject to the "Clash of Wills" (Vampire: The Requiem, p. 119). Piercing the deception allows that vampire to be immune to this application of Hidden Agenda.

Suggested Modifiers

-3

Modifier Situation

> User of this power is engaged in a conversation, as opposed to being the only speaker in the gathering with the potential targets.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Languor's Denial

(Resilience $\cdot \cdot \cdot$, Vigor $\cdot \cdot \cdot$)

Torpor is cruel, and often unexpected. A vampire is cast into the deathly sleep with little warning, and can do nothing to ensure protection for her body, her allies, her childer. But what if that wasn't true? What if she could, for a time, stave off torpor long enough to accomplish what needs to be accomplished?

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Stamina + Survival + Resilience

Action: Reflexive

Use of this Devotion allows the vampire to put off torpor for a number of nights equal to the vampire's dots in Resolve. Any effect that would normally send the vampire into torpor - rightmost Health box filled with lethal damage, a stake in the heart, starvation – does not do so. The vampire may continue to operate until either she's reached the number of nights equal to her Resolve score or until she takes one more point of lethal or aggravated damage. During this time forestalling torpor, the vampire appears sickly (often with jaundiced skin and a faint crust of blood around the nose, mouth, eyes and ears) and trembles. What she does with this time is up to her – orchestrate revenge on enemies? Get affairs in order? Ensure that her body will be protected during torpor's duration?

Triggering this Devotion is not without its downsides. A vampire who enters torpor due to a stake or to starvation cannot then remove the stake or fill up on blood to avoid torpor entirely. Use of this Devotion means that torpor is now inevitable, even if the stake is pried from the breastbone (although without the stake in her heart, at least she knows she'll wake up!). In addition, the vampire spends time in torpor as if her Blood Potency were one higher (so, a vampire of Humanity 5, Blood Potency 7 would normally spend seven months in torpor, but using this Discipline, she'll spend eight months lost to that ancient sleep).

This Devotion costs 24 experience points to learn.

Memory Theft (Auspex ••••, Dominate •••)

Characters who learn this Devotion are usually desperate and greedy enough to break into another vampire's mind to take the memory they need, regardless of the consequences this action may entail. This Devotion can be performed quietly, without the subject knowing his mind is even being invaded (such as when the subject is sleeping) or it can be a brutal rape of the victim's mind. If the subject is awake, she may become aware of someone attempting to infiltrate her mind. The player must make a contested roll of Wits + Intimidation + Auspex versus the target's Composure + Blood Potency. If the character wins, the target is unaware of the intrusion. If the target is the victor, however, she is better able to resist the vampire's intrusion (see below).

Cost: 1 Willpower

10-

Dice Pool: Wits + Persuasion + Auspex - subject's Resolve (if subject is unaware) or vs. Resolve + Composure (if subject is aware)

Action: Instant (contested if subject is aware of the mental intrusion)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The subject retains the memory, and any derangements the subject may have transfer to the character for the remainder of the evening. Further, the subject is aware of the intrusion and who the intruder is.

Failure: The subject retains the memory. If the subject was unaware, she remains so.

Success: The vampire extracts the target memory. She knows and feels what the subject experiences when recalling it. If the target was aware of the invasion, she can spend a Willpower point to retain the memory (it is thus "copied," rather than "stolen").

Exceptional Success: The subject's memory is taken from her. She will never be able to recall having the

memory as her own, whether or not she was aware of the Devotion's use. An aware subject still realizes that her mind was violated, but doesn't know (and never will) exactly how.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on a vampire with
	whom the user has a blood tie
	(Vampire: The Requiem, p. 162)
-3	Subject is aware of the mental
	intrusion

This power costs 28 experience points to learn.

Mercurial Form

(Protean ••••, Auspex •, Majesty •)

Even though vampires do not grow or see changes as a mortal's physiology would over the course of years, the Vitae allows a vampire to gradually increase his raw capabilities through years and decades of focus. One might grow stronger, but his actual body appears to remain the same. He might become extremely intelligent, but it is not a factor of the lifeless brain in his skull. The Vitae allows it, and this power causes a vampire to mimic these changes for a short time.

Cost: 1 Willpower + 1 or more Vitae

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke

Action: Instant

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This power allows the vampire to change his form and its Attributes. When he activates this power, he is able to temporarily "shift" dots from one Attribute to another. When shifting dots, the vampire chooses a number of dots of Attributes not exceeding his Blood Potency. These dots may be redistributed between any combination of Attributes that is desired, and for each transferred dot, the player must expend one Vitae. Any given Attribute may not be raised above the normal maximum dictated by Blood Potency, and may not be reduced to zero. Note that if the cost of this power exceeds normal limits of Vitae use, this power requires a second turn to complete before any changes take effect.

This power lasts for one scene. Any traits derived from the affected Attributes change as well. Raising Stamina, Resolve or Composure results in extra Health or Willpower dots; see p. 173 and p. 96 of the World of Darkness **Rulebook** for information on how to handle temporary increases in those traits.

Example: Jaqueline's ability to sway crowds is considerable, but she needs to be sure that her Sovereignty cannot be challenged. Jaquline's player decides that she needs to maximize her Presence, Resolve and Composure. She has Presence 5, Resolve 4, and Composure 4. One dot is removed from Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, and Intelligence, totaling four dots. The player spends four Vitae and those dots are allocated, changing her Presence and Resolve to 6 and Composure to 5. Because of her decreased Attributes, her Initiative, Speed, Health, and possibly Defense are all reduced, but her Willpower is increased to 10 (as that Trait cannot exceed 10).

This power costs 27 experience points to learn.

Preemptive Reflex (Celerity •••••, Auspex •)

Celerity is not always sufficient to keep a vampire out of harm's way. He is also limited by the possibly unknown intentions of his opponent. Sometimes, the environment around him may have a surprise or two waiting to be sprung. Those who have learned this power have the uncanny ability to react practically instantly to all of these threats.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: This power involves no roll to invoke

Action: Reflexive

This power allows a vampire to defend himself by literally removing his body from a threatening physical effect. He may activate this power at any time during a turn in response to an attack or physical threat against him. In a nearly invisible blur, he moves up to his maximum Speed, adjusted by Celerity. This most likely removes him from the threat of a punch, blade or gunshot, but may also apply to environmental conditions. If the floor gives out beneath him, he may instantly move backwards to a stable area. Likewise, a falling object provides no threat, as long as the vampire perceives it even a split second before impact. This ability negates all successes gained in a single roll to attack him and provides complete success in any roll made to determine his defense in a physical situation.

This power may only be used once per turn, but may be utilized at any time regardless of the vampire's other actions for the turn. If the vampire takes no other actions that turn, he can use this Devotion as many times as his Vitae expenditure allows.

This power costs 24 experience points to learn.

Sanguine Séance (Majesty ••••, Auspex •••)

Kindred certainly share accounts of what they perceive and remember regarding torpor, but few have any educated position about the nature of a vampire's soul. Those who have learned this power claim that they have mastered the art of coaxing a slumbering vampire's soul out of the murky depths of the Underworld and into their ritual area. There, the user of this power is able to converse with the torpor-bound Kindred for a short while before its essence is drawn back to the depths. Some Kindred claim this power merely summons a sort of psychic reflection of the target vampire, but results of this power speak for themselves.

The user of this power must either touch the target Kindred or be within close proximity to the torpid vampire... such as within the tomb or resting area.

Cost: 1 Willpower + 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult + Auspex versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Extended and contested; resistance is reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Psychic feedback strips the ability for this vampire to use Auspex or any Devotion derived from it for the rest of the scene.

Failure: No successes are added to the total. If the Devotion's user fails to accumulate the target number of successes before the victim does, the Devotion fails, and the target Kindred may not be contacted for one month.

Success: The character wins the contested roll by achieving a number of successes equal to the target's Willpower before the target can achieve a number of successes equal to the summoner's Willpower. The

vampire has summoned the spiritual presence of the Kindred in torpor. Once this has been accomplished, the summoner is free to converse with the ghostly reflection of the torpid vampire. The presence may only manifest for a number of minutes equal to the summoner's Occult skill. The power's user can employ whatever verbal tactics he feels are necessary in order to convince the summoned presence to answer questions or convey any information it might know. No Disciplines may be used to harm the presence or force it to respond, but effects of a Vinculum still apply.

Exceptional Success: As a success, plus the summoner acquires a +2 bonus on all social rolls versus the presence to gain its confidence or cooperation.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is used on a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie (Vampire: The Requiem, p. 162).
-1	Cumulative penalty per use of this power on the same target.
-3	User of the power does not know the name or identity of the target vampire.
-5	The target vampire's body is nearby,

but the power's user may not touch it. This power costs 18 experience points to learn.



CHAPTER THREE:

Relics of the Past

Things can't be too different.

— Dex Turner, unaligned Gangrel, emerging from a century-long torpor in 2001 "The history of our race, and each individual's experience, are sown thick with evidence that a truth is not hard to kill and that a lie told well is immortal."

— Mark Twain

For the Kindred, history does not reside between the covers of books. It is not etched on stone tablets or scrawled on the walls of cities preserved in volcanic ash. It is written in their very blood, engraved in their hearts and minds. Among the elders, history informs – and, in many ways, deforms – every aspect of their beings. The histories they have kept, the histories they have lost, and the histories that have been twisted and broken by the sleep of ages. Some cling to the past, no matter how cracked and painful it might be, against the greater uncertainties of the modern nights and the rapidly changing face of the world. Some shed that past forever, take on new faces and new names to hide ancient crimes or balm ancient grief. Some go on as best they can, straddling the vast gulfs of time, with one foot in the past and one in the present. And no matter how a vampire chooses to face her individual past and the moments in history in which she has been involved, sometimes those events return for her whether she wants them to or not.

This chapter details 12 Kindred from various historical periods. Most of these time periods correspond to the flash points in the next chapter. These characters are meant to demonstrate the myriad of ways that history and time can affect a vampire, and to show that even someone Embraced millennia ago has a place in tonight's Danse Macabre.

Asaremhet/Asar al-Nagada

Asaremhet was born in 1396 BCE in the village of Nubt, located in the Naqada region of Egypt. He was the first born son and expected to take on the responsibilities of the family, which included the most honorable job of preparing the dead for their travel to the Underworld. His family prospered and worshipped Set and was eventually noticed by Egyptian royalty. In 1373 BCE, a scribe for Amenhotep III, who also happened to be a vampire of the Cult of Osiris, noticed the boy's abilities and Embraced him. From that point on, Asaremhet began his indoctrination into the cult and continued his education in the preparation of the dead.

He spent the next 50 years studying under his sire, learning the art of politics, the history of the Usiri and the duties of a Royal Embalmer. His first opportunity to prove his worth to the cult came with the death of Seti I. The next Pharaoh to assume control was Ramses II, otherwise known as Ramses the Great.

Still not in a position of power, Asaremhet decided to take matters into his own hands. He convinced his sire to meet with him clandestinely, and then attacked and diablerized the elder Kindred. He then murdered the Royal Scribe and took over that position, as well as Usiri Master in the village of Abu Simbel. Asaremhet continued to consolidate his power and authority in Nubia (southernmost Egypt).

As treacherous as he was toward his sire, Asaremhet's loyalty toward Ramses, his Pharaoh, continued until the king's death. When Ramses died, Asaremhet felt a wave of paranoia and desolation creep over him. For the first time he felt terror, a complete disconnect from what he had once been. This overpowering fear changed Asaremhet's outlook on existence and, while he remained in control of the Usiri for the next 30 years, he saw that the thoughts and prevailing ideas of his country were changing dramatically. His followers were getting restless and no doubt sensed Asaremhet's own paranoia and fear. Rather than be escorted to the Underworld, as was custom, Asaremhet built a tomb for himself deep beneath the great temple of Abu Simbel, where he fell into voluntary torpor and remained, buried and forgotten, for over three millennia – until his tomb was discovered and he was awakened.

At first, madness swept over the forgotten leader. Most of his memories had vanished in the many years that he slept, and everything he now knows about his previous life and unlife has been pieced together through the study of artifacts from that time period. Even those memories are displaced, as if seen secondhand in books and pictures, rather than having lived through them. He believes his memories to be



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true, but only because he can still hear the whispers of his god, Osiris, when he prays each morning and each evening. Unfortunately for him, he may as well be a neonate recently Embraced. His long sleep weakened his blood, and the nightmares he suffered excised much of his knowledge and supernatural skill.

Asaremhet – now called Asar al-Naqada – realizes that whatever unlife he previously led is gone, and he has decided to embrace his new existence. What he learned about the Lancea Sanctum has stirred a deep and intense anger within him, for he feels that they have stolen and corrupted his own beliefs and rituals for themselves. He joined the Circle of the Crone and is zealously supportive of any actions or endeavors that go against the Sanctified. Whether his hatred of the Sanctified is due to a desire for revenge or is a power play to regain some of his missing past, Asar has a singlemindedness and focus bordering on obsession. It's a matter of time before someone takes advantage of it, and him.

Asar has made a quick study of Crúac, but it is a far cry from the power he once wielded as a priest of Osiris. Theban Sorcery, of course, would be a better fit, but his hatred of the Lancea Sanctum makes any attempt to learn (or relearn) such magic impossible. If he were to regain even part of his memory, however, he might be able to lead an enterprising vampire to a treasure trove of mystical knowledge.

Description: Asar is dark-skinned, with a narrow face and short, wiry red hair. He is short in stature, about 5'2" and has a youthful appearance. Asar is belligerent and obviously overcompensating for one thing or another (his short stature, how his boyish looks cause some to not take him seriously, the gaping holes in his memory, the fact that he feels nearly useless in modern nights, etc.). His deep baritone voice is the only thing that brings pause to people and gives them a reason to treat him as anything other than a child.

Storytelling Hints: Asar is only barely adjusting to the modern world. The numbers of people stagger him. Talking about the past is difficult for him, as there is so much he doesn't remember. What he does recall is his piety to Osiris, which brings the conversation inevitably to what the Lancea Sanctum has done to pervert his beliefs. Any conversation with Asar about religion is bound to get heated. He has a chip on his shoulder, but he is so troubled by his centuries of sleep and loss of abilities and stature that he can sometimes be paralyzed by inaction.

Asar makes a good foot soldier against the Sanctified. He is loyal to any group organized to defeat them. Any chronicle that might include ancient Egyptian artifacts as a tool of discovery or a means for accumulating power or knowledge can be used to assist in memory recall. For example, he might remember some ancient Usiri ritual that he can bring to the Circle.

Asar is a cracked lens into the past. His character can be used in a variety of ways, from loyal follower, to guide, to instigator of an all-out war between covenants. His idea of what a covenant should be like in modern nights is rooted in what he remembers (or thinks he remembers) from when he was first Embraced. Even after 3200 years of torpor, habits die hard.

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Circle of the Crone

Embrace: 1373 BCE

Apparent Age: Late teens

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4 Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2 Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Weaponcraft) 1, Occult (Egyptian Theology) 3, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Larceny 2, Stealth (Shadowing) 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2

Merits: Danger Sense, Haven Size 1, Haven Security 2, Zeal

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 5 (inferiority complex, 6)

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Envy

Health: 9 Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Derense. 2

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 2

Vitae/Per turn: 11/1

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 2, Crúac 3, Nightmare 2, Obfuscate 2, Vigor 1

Crúac Rituals: Pangs of Prosperina, Rigor Mortis, The Hydra's Vitae, Touch of the Morrigan

Melamkishi the Watcher of Hasiriyah

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Melamkishi's earliest memories are faded almost to imagination, the barest remnants of human emotion clinging to them all that makes the scattered images real. His mother's face and the warm strength of her hands, the taste of his first woman, the scent of incense and wet clay and fresh running fountains in the house of the Lord of Deep Waters, where he was priest and sorcerer and scribe. It was in this role that he drew the attention of the one who made him: the vampire who called himself Enki, ancient and powerful but no true god. It was in the service to his sire that he was forced to set aside the peaceful pursuits of his mortal life and take up the battle against the Edimmu, washing his hands in the blood of demons and using the wisdom at his command to bind and rend and destroy. When that terrible struggle was over

asaremhet/asar al-naqada - melamkishi, the watcher of nasiriyah

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he turned his back on the games of war and rulership, that so many of his contemporaries played to amuse themselves, and withdrew from the world, struggling to find himself again within the creature he had become.

It has been many centuries since he was last truly bitter about the circumstances of his Embrace, the loss of his human heart and soul. Eternity, after all, has its advantages as well. He has learned more than he could ever have hoped to know in a single mayfly human lifetime. He has spent millennia unraveling the deepest mysteries of the world and the place of the Kindred within it. Since the hour he first set stylus to damp clay tablet, the power inherent in words, in language itself, has fascinated him and engaged his imagination. He has studied the origins and development of nearly every tongue, living and dead, ever spoken, seeking the secrets of the world and its making in the primal sounds of creation and how those sounds have been passed down to each successive generation. In the modern nights, he primarily tends to this greatest of his works – his library of languages, containing tens of thousands of artifacts of literature and history from the world over. He spends his steadily shortening periods of wakefulness examining the newest materials acquired by his many descendants, extracting from them the most recent additions to his master codex of human languages, in which the interactions of primal sounds and grammatical formations take on new manifestations for each passing age. In them, he sees the shape of the world, how it was, how it has changed, and, sometimes, what might yet arise in the future.

He has come to believe that the Edimmu, the long-vanished scourge of the Kindred, may well be rising again, if in truth they ever fell. He has seen the primal sounds of their names taking shape in the tongues of the modern world and, for the first time in centuries, he has known fear. **Description:** Melamkishi is, by modern standards, a man of average size, slightly less than six feet in height and of unprepossessing build, white as salt and bald as an egg, with a neatly square-trimmed black beard. His features are strong, dominated by an aquiline beak of a nose, a notably stubborn jaw and piercing dark eyes that never cease moving. When entertaining the company of younger Kindred, he dresses in a manner appropriate for the venue: tastefully tailored raw silk suits in muted colors for formal occasions, khakis and shirt-sleeves for less protocol-laden events. He reserves the archaic clothing and adornments of his youth for those rare occasions when receiving the company of his peers and contemporaries.

Storytelling Hints: Melamkishi is a creature so ancient he is utterly abstracted from anything resembling modern interests or concerns. He has a network of childer and grandchilder and several-times-great-grandchilder to manage the mechanisms of wealth and mortal social influence that he requires to maintain himself and the demands of his great project. He possesses a sort of intense inner stillness when concentrating pointedly on something that causes the eye to pass over him or, if he's seen, to be easily mistaken for a statue until he moves and speaks. Unlike more irritable ancients, he is also gifted with great patience and even greater personal erudition, a scholarly temperament that rules him utterly. If it weren't for the faithful descendant who serves as his major domo and primary servant, he might even forget to feed regularly, so deeply engaged is he in the night to night work of compiling his masterwork in the years that he's awake. In truth, he spends the majority of each decade in torpor, waking only to work on the task he has appointed himself, to occasionally traumatize his descendants with his unreasonable demands, and to permit one Kindred scholar per decade to access his vast library.

In a chronicle, Melamkishi could easily act as an elder patron for younger Kindred of a scholarly temperament, particularly those studying the ancient history of vampires in the Near East or who have heard of his particular studies in the intersection of language and magic. If the Edimmu do, in fact, return, he might also be the Kindred's only hope for survival. The Storyteller could use Melamkishi to connect the characters with the United, to provide crucial information about the Edimmu, or to protect them while *they* frantically search his library for the one syllable they need.

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Unaligned

Embrace: circa 550 BCE

Apparent Age: Mid-30s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Resolve 4 Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3 Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 5 Mental Skills: Academics (Research, Linguistics) 6, Crafts (Sculpting) 4, Investigation 5, Occult 5, Science 3

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Physical Skills: Brawl 3, Stealth 4, Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Written) 5, Persuasion 4, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Clan Status (Mekhet) 3, Contacts (United), Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, Haven Security 5, Haven Size 5, Herd 3, Language (any the Storyteller requires), Weaponry Dodge, Requiem Diary 5, Resources 5, Retainer 5, Tomb 3

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 5 (vocalization, 4)

Virtue: Prudence Vice: Sloth Health: 8 Initiative: 8 Defense: 3 Speed: 12 Blood Potency: 7 Vitae/Per Turn: 20/7 Disciplines: Auspex 5, Celerity 3, Obfuscate 4, Resilience 3 Devotions: Fooling the Sleeping Beast Lessons in the Steel

Devotions: Fooling the Sleeping Beast, Lessons in the Steel Sir Hermann,

Marquis of Wewcastle A warrior from a world far removed from anything modern people or Kindred can comprehend, Hermann (the closest name he is able to associate with himself) lived his few breathing years as a soldier in the 10th century Byzantine Empire. Embraced just prior to the era of the Crusades, he continued his role as a faithful defender of Christendom. Kingdoms warred upon each other for centuries in the name of God and the Holy Land, and Hermann led legions of men, vampires, and the half-alive creatures who drank from his wrist.

Centuries passed, and Hermann boldly led his fellow vampires into and through new ages. Embracing the concepts of immortality, protocol and order, the knight protected the ideals which would become the Invictus. He commanded armies, ruled vast vampiric domains, and ensured a legacy that would not forget his efforts.

Years passed, marking ends to most of what he fought so valiantly for. Expedient evolutions in mortal society and younger vampires with their transition from tradition to revolution eroded his efforts and enlightened Hermann to one major revelation. The Damned cannot hide from the curse. No amount of work, skill or experience can save any vampire from the eventuality that he will, in the end, fail.

His role shifted from royalty to warlord and sometimes to lay soldier. After the explosion of nations into the New World, he attempted to find new meanings to his unlife. Never abandoning the one constant that gave him strength, he always brought the Invictus with him during his travels. Be it a childe or simply an idea, Hermann made his mark on a group of vampires before continuing his personal crusade.

In the modern nights, he has slowed considerably. Periods of torpor have sapped away his zeal, leaving him just a little more hopeless with each slumber. His childer keep him in contact with the world of modern times, providing the barest hints of relevance in the city that has grown around him.

Description: He is diminutive by today's standards, short in stature and quite thin. His complexion immediately betrays his distance from humanity. His skin looks as if it was chiseled from a slab of granite, grayish off-white and coarse from years of neglect. His eyes, hair, fingernails and other minor details all look *technically* human, but the similarity fades with close inspection. His unblinking eyes appear to be dry hollowed pearls, his hair a century-old horse's mane, and fingernails are the aged claws of a weathered predator. Only through his childer's application of modern fashion (exclusively suits) can he pass for human at all. Even then, he always appears out of his time, displaying a variety of sashes, trinkets of his past, and other accessories that serve to demonstrate his superior standing in the Invictus.

Storytelling Hints: Hermann is a relic of an age long forgotten to most Kindred. Even though the majority of Kindred around him dutifully honor his age and experience, he commonly questions his own relevance. Nothing that he once fought to protect remains. Even the Invictus (which he considers himself to be a father of) is a perverted reflection of what it was truly intended to be.

Most nights are spent in solitude. So little of the modern world makes any sense to Hermann and its residents simply frustrate him. Still drawn to the functions of the Invictus, he does little more than enforce that which he finds most important these nights: tradition and reverence. In order to keep



sir hermann, marquis of newcastle

the covenant functioning at all, he believes, the basic tenants of *how* the covenant should function must be enforced. An iron-fisted king without a throne, Hermann tolerates nothing from the rabble that calls themselves "First Estate" except perfect adherence to the protocol intended by those who pulled the Invictus from the ashes of the Camarilla.

Were it not for the continued existence of the covenant, Hermann might have no reason to cling to the waking world at all. Even with his periodic direction of the Invictus, there is precious little to keep him from taking the final step to the eternal slumber, never to return. Humanity has nothing to offer; they would not lay down for him and accept his rule. The vampires around him play pointless games like children in the fields; they deserve his fangs instead of his sovereignty.

Hermann is, of course, a walking repository for the lore of the Invictus, but he can be useful even in a story that doesn't focus on the First Estate. Consider: How did he learn one of the Coils of the Dragon? When did he acquire his taste for the blood of werewolves? He might not remember the answers to these questions himself, but either of them could easily power a story.

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Invictus

Embrace: CE 963

Apparent Age: 35

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6 **Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 4 **Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics (Invictus) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Claws) 4, Stealth 2, Survival 4, Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Canines, Training) 3, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Banking) 2, Allies (Real Estate) 3, Brawling Dodge, City Status 3, Covenant Status 5, Danger Sense, Haven Location 1, Haven Security 5, Haven Size 4, Languages (Latin and a number of lost dialects, including versions of French and German), Resources 5, Retainers (ancilla childe 5, neonate childe 4, three professional advisors 4, two ghoul mastiffs 3), Taste of the Strange (werewolves), Weaponry Dodge

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 4 (aeons' languor, 4; avoidance, 6)

Virtue: Justice Vice: Wrath Health: 11 Initiative: 8 Defense: 4

ancient mysteries

Speed: 14 Blood Potency: 8 Vitae/Per turn: 30/7 Disciplines: Animalism 4, Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Coil of Blood 1, Protean 5, Resilience 3, Vigor 3 Devotions: Gargoyle's Watch, Languor's Denial



In 1519, Hernando Cortes traveled to Mexico with 600 men with the intent of subduing the Aztecs and claiming the rich interior of the continent for Spain and Charles I. Making common cause with the *altepetl* of Tlaxcala, the unconquered rivals of the Aztecs, he marched on the great city of Tenochtitlan with a force of Spaniards and natives at his command. Mateu de Coya was already there.

Born and Embraced in Castile, Mateu was among the first vampires to depart for the New World upon its discovery, seeking to improve fortunes otherwise permanently limited by the glacial pace of advancement within the Invictus hierarchy in his homeland. Landing first in the West Indies, he made common cause with other "young" vampires whose interests lay on the Mexican mainland, where the great empires of the Maya and the Aztecs thrived. Soon an expedition was arranged, with mortal cat's-paws setting out first to create a safe arrival point for their employers and the Kindred to follow after. This was accomplished in due course but, when it came time for the true masters of the expedition to take possession of their new territories, it all went terribly wrong. Two of the three vessels carrying the Kindred west went down in a single storm, including Mateu's own. Washed ashore far from the safe harbor in which he expected to arrive, he had little choice but to make the best of a less than ideal situation.

To his credit, Mateu was never the sort to let poor circumstances stand in the way of achieving his goals. Traveling inland, he came soon to a Tlaxcalan village and promptly set about bringing the natives under his sway. Within a decade he was being worshipped as a god, having conquered and drunk dry the native pretender to the role: the mighty Camaxtli, Lord of the Hunt. Unlife was far sweeter than he could otherwise have imagined in Old Europe.

It could not last, of course. With the growing number of Spaniards came more Spanish vampires — some of whom became sacrifices offered to Camaxtli's appetite for his own kind, whose disappearances did not go unnoticed. Camaxtli was forced to take flight lest his presence and crimes be discovered, and from there he sought the sleep of ages to put distance between the creature he was and the creature he intended to become. Decades later, Mateu de Coya reemerged into the Kindred society of New Spain, where he promptly set about establishing himself as a power, respected by the native vampires as well as by his countrymen. He has

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since become one of the most powerful elders of European origin in Mexico, respected and, in some quarters, feared. And yet, if the secrets he harbors were to be discovered by his Invictus covenant-mates, it would all come to nothing in an instant.

Description: Mateu de Coya is a man of middling height but powerful build, broad across the shoulders and chest, slim of hips, with the wrists of a swordsman from early youth. His hair falls just to his shoulders in brown ringlets and his mustachio and beard are always well trimmed and perfumed with a fragrant pomade. He invariably dresses in perfectly tailored clothing in tasteful earth-tones and elegantly expensive jewelry, and keeps an assortment of equally tasteful, elegant and expensive human mistresses to adorn his arm.

When he is alone with his prey at his country *hacienda*, he dresses in a far more traditional sort of garb: painted in the black eye-mask and red-and-white stripes of Camaxtli Hunting-Lord, crowned in a headdress of the finest feathers, adorned in carved gold and jade, carrying the spear and arrows and net of his office. None – Kindred or mortal – who see him in this guise live to tell the tale.

Storytelling Hints: To Kindred society at large, Mateu de Coya is a pitch-perfect representation of an Invictus elder: dedicated to the preservation of his own power and place within Kindred society and the Masquerade in equal parts, the gatekeeper of the path which his inferiors must walk to achieve power in their own time. In many ways, this image is true, for Mateu loves the unlife he leads and the status he wields like a whip on the backs of younger Kindred whom he deigns to take as his apprentices and lackeys. And yet, he cannot resist the primal call of the being he was so many hundreds of years ago, the fierce bloodgod whose worshippers killed and died at his command. Nor can he deny the taste for the blood of other Kindred those years instilled in him. As he grows older, the desire to hunt and kill his own kind waxes stronger. He has thus far managed to avoid killing the young Kindred he takes to his isolated country house, drinking of them and then obliterating their memories of the event, but murder – or exposure – is now only a matter of time.

Clan: Ventrue Covenant: Invictus Embrace: Mid-1400s Apparent Age: Mid-20s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4 Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3 Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2 Mental Skills: Academics 2, Occult 2, Politics (Kindred) 3 Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 2, Survival (Jungle) 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation (Hungry) 5, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies (Police) 2, Allies (Agri-business Magnates) 3, Clan Status (Ventrue) 3, Contacts (Practitioners of native religions), Fleet of Foot 2, Haven Security 3, Haven Size 2, Herd 2, Language (Nahuatl, Spanish), Resources 4, Retainer 4

Willpower: 6 Humanity: 4 Virtue: Faith Vice: Gluttony Health: 8 Initiative: 5 Defense: 3 Speed: 14 (with Fleet of Foot) Blood Potency: 6 Vitae/Per Turn: 15/3 Disciplines: Dominate 3, Majesty 2, Resilience 3, Vigor 4 Devotions: Destructive Might

Joao Santos de Silva Fragments of his past are all that remain. Born to a life as a

Fragments of his past are all that remain. Born to a life as a sailor on the Mediterranean and later one of the brave crew to cross the Atlantic Ocean, Joao's nights are tortured by memories of his breathing days – sunrises over the Atlantic, wealth and empires built from Brazilian sugarcane, and defending his achievements from the rest of the covetous world. There was always a secondary purpose, however; someone else that he was serving to those ends.

His earliest nights as a vampire are long forgotten, washed away by the seas that he held so dear. His wealth and influence slipped from his grasp, stolen by the mortals who could walk during the day, and he had to reinvent himself. Once again taking to the oceans, Joao controlled captains, sailors and every rogue using the deck of a ship as a method for finding a better life.

The majority of his unlife has been spent leading the seedy underbelly of society. From pirate captains in the 18th century to the North American immigrant gangs of the 19th century, Joao kept himself in the middle of exposing and exploiting the rich. Never minding the fact that *he* was becoming one of the rich and powerful in the process, he kept repeating that cycle of ascending to power and later feeling it crash down around him.

At the end of each of his "lives" or eras, Joao would escape to a new place, drifting in torpor until his minions found a new city far from the host of enemies he had garnered over previous years. The tactic has technically worked so far, except he no longer remembers exactly *who* those enemies were. Nor does he recollect exactly who *he* was; reinventing one's self becomes exceedingly confusing when you just might be adopting aspects of your former enemies, allies and anyone else you may have had contact with.

Description: Unmistakably of Mediterranean descent, he is tall, lean and swarthy. His wardrobe has become a signature of his eccentricities: fedora hats, impeccably tailored suits, and an affinity for walking with a cane. Indeed, he is acutely aware of his choice of slightly outdated styles. It provides a distraction from his inhuman demeanor and dulled, lifeless eyes.

Storytelling Hints: Joao is a modern day scoundrel and pirate. Flamboyant, charming and magnetic, it's easy to imagine him swinging into view with a saber in hand. As with most aspects of an elder's unlife, however, this is a complete façade. The years have not been so kind to Joao, and his two visits to the abyssal slumber of torpor served no other purpose, as he would state it, "except to rob me of who I really am."



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Bits and pieces are there. He knows he was a sailor, and he has a couple of treasures that indicate where he came from. Some memories of his nights in the Caribbean are quite vivid, but he feels eternally lost. Almost homeless. His current city is where he sleeps, feeds and keeps his possessions. But, it isn't *home*. How can you claim someplace as home if you don't feel at home in your own body?

Adding to his crisis of identity is the recent development of his compulsion for true cannibalism. The blood of the average man or woman simply will not satisfy him. Whether this is his own fault, a manifestation of his frustrations, or some bizarre curse, he does not know. Joao simply acknowledges the fact that he must have the blood of other Kindred to survive. More important than the schemes of his covenant and far more fulfilling than a cargo ship laden heavy in the water with stolen containers, his nightly search for Vitae has become all-consuming.

His unlife has changed as a result of his new condition. There are only so many Kindred in his city, so some must be allowed to continue with their own nights. Most don't remember their interactions with Joao, and none have any idea who assaults them for their blood. However, there are a few favorites Joao has fed from repeatedly. Kindred with a working knowledge of vampire physiology would point out to de Silva the threat of the Vinculum. Joao, mostly ignorant of that threat, instead favors one vampire or another. A combination of the taste of their blood, an attraction to their nature, and *something* that he just cannot understand, has caused him to cultivate a small herd of young vampires.

Joao's presence in a chronicle can, at first, simply seem like another elder playing games and using the neonates as pawns. While this is certainly true, it's not quite that simple. Those Kindred that he secretly directs, influences and sometimes controls are far more important to him than disposable pawns. He has at least the first hints of Vinculi to many of his "crew." Thus, he is not the despotic tyrant. Rather, Joao can be the stern father to his brood of miscreants.

Clan: Ventrue

Covenant: Carthian Movement

Embrace: 1560 (made a ghoul in 1436)

Apparent Age: late 30's

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4 Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3 Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4 Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Boats) 2, Investigation 2, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 3, Survival (Navigation) 2, Weaponry 3
Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Inspiring) 3, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Allies (Dockworkers' Union) 4, Allies (Mafia) 2, Allies (Smugglers) 3, City Status 2, Contacts (Dist. Attorney's

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office, Dockworkers' Union, Mafia, Police, Smugglers), Covenant Status 2, Disarm, Distant Sympathy, Fleet of Foot 3, Haven Location 3, Haven Security 4, Haven Size 3, Languages (Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), Resources 4, Retainer 4, Tenacious Consciousness

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 5 (depression, 5) Virtue: Fortitude Vice: Pride Health: 8 Initiative: 7 Defense: 3 Speed: 11 Blood Potency: 7 Vitae/Per turn: 20/5 Disciplines: Dominate 4, Obfuscate 4, Protean 2 (wood), Resilience 2, Vigor 1 Devotion: Hidden Agenda

Dhanavati, Maharani of Negapatnam The girl who would become known at Dhanavati was

The girl who would become known at Dhanavati was born under fortunate stars. For years beyond counting, her family had served the gods — both those who walked by day and those who walked by night — as priests and priest-kings, concubines and the mothers of the god-chosen. The girl was born in a city by the sea, with the marks of great promise already upon her. Her parents, minor members of a minor branch of the great family, brought her trembling before their elders, and while she was but a child too young to open her eyes she was declared to be a goddess in flesh, to be worshipped all the days of her life and beyond.

It was thus that she was raised: taken from her mother as soon as she was weaned and given over to the care of the priests and attendants who would be her only companions. It was thus that she was taught: to hold herself forever apart and above all others, to sit upon her throne of lotus blossoms and nine-fanned serpents and accept the prayers and adoration of those who heaped flowers at her feet. It was thus that she learned to bow before a god greater than herself and accept his cold caresses, his burning kisses that brought her such terrible pleasure and, when the time came, to offer herself to him to be made into a goddess twice over -agoddess who walked in day and then in night, called by her new name: Dhanavati.

Within the brood of gods-in-flesh and demons-in-flesh who made up her sire's court, she was among the favorites. She had learned her lessons well and more. She had acquired patience and persistence, diplomacy and statecraft, when to act and when to remain still. And when her sire chose to retire to the sleep of the ancient and powerful, he also named



her to succeed him as ruler of the temple-city of Negapatnam, the crossroads of a half-dozen faiths.

The politics of the living world intruded upon her peace. Wave upon wave of mortal invaders broke upon the land and brought with them god-kin of an unusual nature, creatures who did not recognize their own divinity and disputed with those who did, who seemed to follow no *dharma* or at least none whose precepts made any sense. Dhanavati took counsel with her fellow rulers and found discontent among them. She was personally not pleased with the activities of the most vocal of the invaders, who seemed intent on not only pillaging for resources but tearing souls away from the true path of *dharma* in order to glorify their own alien gods. Still, she did not think that open warfare against the invaders was wise; the *brahmin* were too few, the invaders too many, and the *kshatriya* far more interested in fighting among themselves than mounting a unified resistance.

And then another option presented itself.

A newcomer came to the court of Dhanavati, who approached using the proper forms of respect and reverence, seeking to pay homage and offer counsel. For months, the outsider acted as a go-between for Dhanavati's court, her allies and the intractable invaders, in an effort to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the hostilities between them. His fervent belief that peace could be attained without unnecessary bloodshed between the factions convinced Dhanavati to open her court to more western envoys and prevail upon her allies to do the same. It was this decision that sealed her fate. In 1857, long-simmering resentment erupted into open rebellion against the British Raj in the north. In the south, the invaders took advantage of the sudden distraction among the southern courts and struck. Precision assaults against courts hosting western diplomats, by Kindred assassins in-

serted into their entourages, literally beheaded many of the native principalities. Negapatnam was one of these.

Dhanavati does not remember how she fell, or at whose hands, nor who prevented her final destruction. She descended into torpor in 1857 and did not rise again for nearly a century. When she finally did emerge from the sleep of ages, she was as weak as a kitten and was forced to spend decades relearning the radically altered shape of the world. It took a great deal of time, and she still has not regained all that she lost, but it doesn't matter. Before anything else, she desires a reckoning.

Description: The *maharani* was a beautiful girl at the time of her Embrace, her hips slender and her breasts barely budded. This deceptive appearance has worked both for and against her. Now, she affects an older appearance with elegantly applied cosmetics and modern clothing that disguises her relative lack of figure, wearing her waist-length black hair generally unadorned. When presenting herself among elders of her own and other clans, she adopts the more proper costuming of her clan and caste: hair done up in an elaborate crown of braids, a *choli* and *sari* of the finest silk to be had appropriately patterned in golden lotus blossoms, hands and arms painted in hennaed swirls that denote her age and rank and lineage.

Storytelling Hints: Though she doesn't show it, Dhanavati is nonetheless furious, bitter and vengeful. When interacting with others, she affects a serenely confident, silken-smooth surface, elegant, wise, and disinclined to hasty or violent action, preferring a path of peaceful diplomacy whenever possible. She learned well from those weapons being used against her. Among the fire-eaters of the *brahmin* and *kshatriya* castes she wears a different face, that of the cruel and bloody-handed goddess whose sense of *raja dharma* and purity have been viciously violated. Her long torpor completely erased some of her memories of the time immediately preceding her downfall and crystallized others into permanent sources of outrage against western Kindred, the British, and any of her fellow clan and caste-mates whom she feels have betrayed her or the traditional ways of their people.

In a chronicle or story set in the East, particularly in modern-day India or Bangladesh, Dhanavati would make an excellent elder mentor/patron figure for any younger native Kindred, though she would particularly favor those whose clans or castes continue to nurture hereditary bitterness against western Kindred. Otherwise, she is the sort of intractable, clever and vicious antagonist whose capacity for vengeance would give even other elder vampires pause, and it's by no mean impossible that she would leave India to track down someone who she feels deserves that vengeance.

Clan: Ventrue

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Bloodline: Canda Bhanu (see p. 117) Covenant: Brahmin (see p. 117) Embrace: Mid-1600s

Apparent Age: Early teens

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3 Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts (Painting) 3, Occult 4, Politics 5

Physical Skills: Athletics (Acrobatics) 3, Stealth 1 Social Skills: Animal Ken (Snakes) 3, Empathy 3, Expression (Dance) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 4, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies 1 (Provincial Police), Allies 1 (Provincial Government), Contacts (Religious Scholars; High Society), Caste Status 1, Clan Status (Ventrue) 1, Haven Location 1, Haven Security 2, Haven Size 1, Herd 2, Language (English), Meditative Mind, Resources 2, Retainer 2

Willpower: 7

Humanity: 3 (fixation – maintenance of ritual purity, 4)
Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 9

Blood Potency: 4

Vitae/Per turn: 13/2

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Dominate 2, Majesty 2, Nightmare 2, Resilience 1

Elizabeth Fyrie

Elizabeth Fyvie, daughter of a Scottish whore, knew no life outside of brutal rape, stealing to survive, and exploring extremes for pleasure. Throughout her mortal life and well into her nights as a vampire, she existed in a cycle of destroying the life of anyone who desired her, taking control of their assets, and provoking her next victim.

Were it not for the Occult Revival of England's late 19th century, she would have continued her decent into madness. Victorian London had already attracted her, sparking an interest in the humans who made up that world. Dickens, Darwin, the first World's Fair, and the supposedly dehumanizing modern architecture showed her that people actually had the capacity to be intriguing in their own right. Such an opinion of mankind didn't last long. By the end of the 1800s, Elizabeth saw the rise of widespread prostitution, the legal subjugation of women's rights, and the hedonism behind the era's social movements. She, of course, took part in the degeneration of "proper" society.

The Ordo Dracul and the mortals' numerous occult societies provided a way for her to more effectively channel her base urges. She became a charlatan of mysticism and host-



ess to drug-infused orgies. She joined and led a number of secret societies, most notably Aleister Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis. There, Elizabeth discovered that she could simply let people *give* her money, influence, and even their own pathetic lives. Unfortunately, World War II ushered an end to the era and an end to her unlife of accessible excess.

Without focus or direction, Elizabeth returned to her existence as a destructive leech on society. Looking for one fulfilling sensation after another, her escalating need for *more* led her into the role of a diablerist. Tempered only by a passive awareness of the weight of her actions, she stepped onto the path of true damnation. Time and experience have given her a hint of discretion, but Elizabeth is truly lost to her own vices. One victim at a time, she adds meaning to her unlife by consuming the essences of others.

Description: Elizabeth would not be considered to be a beautiful woman. She does not possess the curviness and manicured appearance that modern standards demand. Her long brown hair and unique fashion sense do, however, capture the eyes. Mixing styles from across the decades, Elizabeth manages to attract attention without looking like an anachronistic waif. Not always prominently displayed, she continually wears the valuable charm of the Tree of Life given to her during her initiation into the Ordo Templi Orientis.

Storytelling Hints: Elizabeth is a dangerous vampire. She looks back to the sins of her past and embraces them, welcoming those experiences as inspirations for her future. She barely clings to her sanity and carefully monitors her tenuous hold over the monster that drives her. Vanity, ego, and a callous disregard for life define this creature.

An intense greed drives Fyvie. Alliances mean nothing to her. Any person or vampire who has anything to offer is worth her time and effort only as long as it takes to get what she wants. Compromise, a totally alien concept, is always a hollow gesture. She feels no need to give anything to anyone else, though she recognizes that sometimes a payment of sorts is required to ensure future deals and to minimize complications. The one desire that consumes her thoughts on a nearly daily basis is the addiction she has for vampires' blood and the diablerie of their souls.

Elizabeth, in her pursuit of her next victim, needs to make a number of preparations. Alternate havens must be arranged, alibis need to be constructed, and a new identity must be ready to be assumed. During that time, she simply cannot sit idly, ignoring the rest of the Kindred who tease her covetous gaze. Not only can she not resist what others possess, but she simply *knows* any of it can be hers. Prized ghouls, indispensable servants and the safety of material wealth all could be targeted. It is not a matter of which Kindred she takes from, but when each vampire contributes to her insanity.

She would be a terrifying opponent, but her plans tend to be shallow. Elizabeth can easily be led into a trap or tempted by a patient hunter. Her overwhelming ego and desire for anything anyone else owns is also her weakness. With the erosion of her sanity, she also finds it difficult to consider the ramifications of her nightly plots and schemes. She could be discovered, and could then be turned on an enemy as a vicious pawn. The risk, however, is dire. She has no conscience preventing her from exacting a hideous revenge.

Clan: Daeva

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Embrace: 1803

Apparent Age: mid 20s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3 Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2 Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3 Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Occult (Kabbalah) 4, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Indoctrination) 4, Socialize 2, Subterfuge (Misdirection) 2

Merits: Allies (Ordo Templi Orientis) 3, Covenant Status 1, Devoted (O.T.O.) 2, Haven Location 1, Haven Security 3, Haven Size 2, Languages (Hebrew, Latin), Resources 3, Retainer 3, Status (O.T.O.) 3

Willpower: 6

Humanity: 4 (power fetish obsession [her Tree of Life pendant], 5; narcissism, 6)

Virtue: Faith Vice: Greed Health: 7 Initiative: 5 Défense: 2 Speed: 9 Blood Potency: 5 Vitae/Per turn: 14/2 Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Coil of Banes 1, Coil of the Beast 1, Dominate 1, Majesty 4, Resilience 1, Vigor 1 Devotion: Sanguine Séance

Sarah Patricia Reese

Sarah was born in St. Charles, Missouri in 1789. She was the oldest of 11 children and learned from an early age to assist her parents at wrangling the younger kids. At the age of 15, however, she was married off to the son of the mayor of St. Charles, who was only two years her elder. Over the next twelve years, Sarah gave birth ten times to thirteen children, four of whom didn't survive past their first year. Her husband worked in the fields upwards of sixteen hours a day, and by the time he turned 30 was fighting chronic back pain. The older boys helped as best they could, but when their father died of a heart attack in the fields on a cold November morning, Sarah found herself in dire straits.

One evening, a gentleman caller named Gerard Neilson stopped at the family farm and offered to buy the place. He would even agree to let them continue living on the farm, as long as they went about their daily chores and such. Sarah said she would consider the proposal and would give him her decision within a month. The Bank of St. Charles refused to extend her a loan and her neighbors were struggling just as much, so they couldn't offer much assistance. When Neilson returned, Sarah agreed to sell. The gentleman made one more stipulation, one that seemed odd to Sarah at the time, but with little choice, she accepted it. The gentleman caller wanted to move into the house, specifically the basement. He was never to be disturbed, either during the day or night. If he needed anything, he would get it without troubling her or her children.

Keeping secrets from children is nearly impossible, tragically. One afternoon, the eldest son took it upon himself to sneak down into the basement. He never came back up. Sarah, close to panic, also went down to the cellar, where she found her boy's bloody remains. It was the last thing she saw as a living human being.

Neilson liked, even admired, Sarah Reese. She was *exactly* what he has been searching for, but he also needed to know if she could endure the pain of loss. His ultimate goal for Sarah remains a mystery, but she sees his atrocious actions every day in her dreams.

Over the course of the next week, Gerard brought down each of Sarah's children and locked them alone together. Each night, Sarah survived anew, thanks to the blood of her children. On the last night, when her youngest child, a baby girl, was carried down in Gerard's arms, Sarah attacked. She latched onto him and drained him of blood and spirit. It was the only time she has ever committed diablerie, but the damage had been done, as Gerard's last action was to snuff out the life of her youngest child.

Sarah fled westward, eventually arriving at the base of the Rocky Mountains near present day Denver, Colorado. She stayed close to the settlements, feeding off the random miners and wagon-trainers who crossed the area. She decided to approach a small ranch house on the outskirts of town and turned the occupants, a father, mother and two teenaged sons, into ghouls. Over the course of the next 80 years, Sarah and her new family uprooted and traveled up and down the spine of the Rockies, moving every five years or so to avoid suspicion. During this time, suspicion and paranoia began to insinuate itself into her thoughts. She was certain people whispered that she was barren and an unfit mother. She needed to prove them wrong. It is from this time on, near the turn of the century, that Sarah began to collect children and shepherd them from place to place. When a child would die, Sarah would replace it with another. Her ghoul family assisted her with abductions and with moving. Sarah is now obsessed with proving to the voices that she is a fit mother. Every child who dies, however, is another blow to her fragile mind.

Description: Sarah is of medium height and slim. She keeps her long, blonde hair pulled back tightly and her hazel eyes shift endlessly to and fro. Her clothing is functional and simple. She always seems a little bit suspicious when dealing with others, as if expecting a predator to leap from the nearest shadow at any moment. She is, therefore, constantly alert for any signs of potential trouble. When Sarah speaks, her voice is strong, authoritative and calm.



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Storytelling Hints: Sarah is a basket case, although she comes across as completely in control and even maternal. Her own lack of control, however, is evident in the trail of little corpses that dot the Rocky Mountain Range. Can her phobia be cured? Can she evade local investigators who question the number of missing children in the area, over the decades? Can torpor finally grant her a release of the nightmares she carries of murdering her own children?

Sarah is a character who is haunted to the core of her being by her own depraved acts. She hates what she is and can barely remember what she used to be. She has a desperate need to take care of children, but her very nature makes that impossible. How can her ghoul family assist her? How does Sarah's increase in age and power make her even more dangerous to the mortals she professes to care about? Finally, are there others out there who can help her, or at least help end her suffering?

Clan: Gangrel

Covenant: Unaligned

Embrace: January 10, 1809

Apparent Age: 29

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2 Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4 Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2 Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Larceny 1, Stealth (Lurking) 2, Survival 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion (Children) 4, Subterfuge (Seeming Innocent) 4 Merits: Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fresh Start, Iron Stamina 3, Meditative Mind, Quick Healer, Strong Back

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 4 (suspicion, 5; paranoia, 7)

Virtue: Charity Vice: Gluttony

Health: 9

Initiative: 8 (with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 5

Vitae/Per turn: 14/2

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 2, Protean 4, Resilience 5

Dr. Renward Price- Mars

Dr. Renward Price-Mars thought of himself as a misunderstood genius. This was probably an overstatement; he was no genius, and while the authorities in England didn't understand his predilections for slicing up living things *while* they were still alive, they didn't approve, either. A man of science, no matter how dubious that claim might be, he



rarely permitted the objections of his intellectual inferiors to seriously impair his search for knowledge. It wasn't as though anyone was going to miss the filthy little urchins he snatched off the streets of St. Giles, anyway, and he was probably doing them a favor. Nonetheless, he found it necessary to depart London rather hastily, leaving all but his most useful research journals behind.

With the law nipping at his heels, Dr. Price-Mars took a ship to the east, hoping to find anonymity in the more heathenish bits of the Empire. What he found was the attention of an admirer. One who had watched the evolution of his studies with interest; one who slipped aboard his ship and accompanied him on his exile. The good doctor's follower had watched him for months as he went about the course of his experiments, the selection of test subjects, the disposal of the detritus left over, and had crept into his rented lodgings by night to read the journals in which he kept his detailed experimental notes. The admirer was, indeed, duly impressed by the insights contained within those works, and decided to preserve the mind who produced them — as well as to give the mortal *scientist* a new perspective on matters he had touched on tangentially in his research.

By the time the ship of Dr. Price-Mars ran aground on some nameless little island in the Indian Ocean, there was nothing left alive on it, as the unfortunate locals discovered, and only one thing undead. The good doctor proved to be an unpleasantly quick study, though he didn't quite grasp everything his sire tried to teach him before he disposed of the hideous wretch that had afflicted its horrible countenance on him. Before the month was out, he had turned the little island on which he had found himself into an experimental laboratory such as he could only have imagined back home. Some of his experiments survived, some did not. Eventually, he departed when the opportunity, and a passing ship, allowed. This has been the pattern of his existence: seeking out a quiet place in which to set up shop, acquire experimental subjects on whom to test his current theories, fleeing when his activities inevitably attract the attention of the local authorities – Kindred, mortal or both. Of late, his researches have taken a turn for the dangerous, involving not just humans and beasts, but beginning to incorporate young and unwary Kindred into his studies of physiology as well as the creation and development of the soul...

Description: Dr. Price-Mars was not a healthy looking individual even before his Embrace, and the process of becoming a vampire did him no particular favors. Already quite tall, he now appears as though something grasped his various limbs and stretched them almost to their breaking point, rendering his arms and legs ungainly in their length compared to his trunk. His fingers likewise seem unnaturally long and weirdly jointed, as though a few digits have too many joints and others not enough. His face is cadaverous, green eyes sunken deep into his skull, lips pulled back from his teeth in a permanent rictus that makes the length of those teeth disturbingly obvious.

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Storytelling Hints: Contrary to his own opinions on the matter, Dr. Price-Mars is in fact a raving lunatic. He possesses no particularly great insights into human or Kindred nature, and his experiments — informed by a combination of Victorian era British cultural chauvinism, eugenics, and poorly understood transhumanist philosophies cribbed from the Ordo Dracul, of whom his unfortunate sire was a member — yield less insight than confirmation of his pre-existing biases. While not a member of the Ordo Dracul himself, he nonetheless considers them his "patrons" of a sort, and is prone to rendering regular reports on his experiments to the ranking members of the covenant wherever he happens to be, usually just before he quits the area. The good doctor is *crazy*, not stupid.

In a chronicle, Dr. Price-Mars could serve as a particularly unpleasant antagonist. He's the sort of deranged elder vampire who regards younger vampires as ideal test subjects, much in the same way as he regarded human children. It would take quite a special individual – i.e., one similarly deranged or else an extremely skilled fast-talker – to avoid vivisection. Dr. Price-Mars would very much like to include older vampires in his experiments, but he has thus far not been fortunate, or skilled, enough to obtain such a subject.

Clan: Nosferatu Covenant: Unaligned Embrace: Mid-1800s Apparent Age: Mid-forties Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3 Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2 Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 4 Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 1, Investigation (Autopsies) 4, Medicine (Vivisection, Surgery) 3, Occult 2, Science (Biology) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Scalpels) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Ambidextrous, Contacts (Medical Students, Nontraditional Medicine), Encyclopedic Knowledge, Fast Reflexes 1, Resources 2

Willpower: 8

Humanity: 3 (narcissism 5; megalomania 4)

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride Health: 7

Initiative: 9 (with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Blood Potency: 3

Vitae/Per Turn: 12/1

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Dominate 3, Obfuscate 2, Resilience 2, Vigor 2

Tyigane Dvorysak, the One-Eyed Dragon

It was a year of revolution across Europe: 1848, the year that shook governments from east to west and served notice for the social and political upheavals yet to come. She was only a child then, a Magyar girl of sixteen years, enthralled by the events surrounding her, the declaration of Hungarian independence from the rule of Austria. She learned the fiery rhetoric of freedom at the knee of her elder brother, himself a scholar and revolutionary ... but not a soldier, of which their country was soon in dire need. The newly independent Hungary was at war on three fronts and facing invasion by the armies of Imperial Russia, the allies of their Austrian former overlord, when young Tzigane took matters into her own hands. She cut her hair, stole some of her brother's clothing, and volunteered to join the Honvédség, the army marshalling to defend Hungary from its many enemies, using his name. Known to her comrades in arms as "Zoltan," the girl served well and competently, distinguishing herself for bravery during the bitter campaigns in central Hungary and Transylvania against both the Russians and the Austrians, fighting in the battles of Segesvár and Temesvár and the innumerable smaller guerilla engagements in the mountains. She and her unit were still in arms when the news reached them of General Artúr Görgey's capitulation to the forces of the Tsar and surrender of the Hungarian army. Vowing to never bend knee to their country's invaders, Tzigane and more than half her comrades defected from the army and melted away into the mountains, intent on continuing the struggle for independence.

It was not to be.

Struggling to survive in the bitter winter with dwindling supplies and no hope of reinforcement or further centrally supported uprising, the rebels took shelter in a series of caverns high in the mountains. There they awoke something far more terrible than even the worst invader: a creature that hunted them through the darkness underground and through the ice-bound mountains, taking them one by one in a perverse game of predator and prey. In the end, Tzigane was the last survivor and the only one to earn the monster's idea of a reward for her cleverness and courage - and for having the temerity to strike a blow against it. The thing took her life, and her left eye as a trophy, and left her choking on its blood in a snow-bank. Staggering through the mountains, half-mad with grief and newly awakened bloodlust, the being who would become her surrogate sire and mentor found her, an elder of the Ordo Dracul who aided her in coming to terms with what had befallen her. She gave Tzigane a new path to follow in an effort to transcend her maker's bloody example. In the intervening years, she has followed her mentor's path, becoming a guide and teacher to novices of the Ordo Dracul as well as a fellow-seeker, wise, compassionate and calm of spirit.

Description: Tzigane is a tall woman, slender and muscular, showing little in the way of curves. What shape she possesses she tends to conceal beneath loose-fitting clothing of deliberately asexual style. Her black hair was cut relatively short at the time of her Embrace, a now-modern look that emphasizes the handsome angles of her face and her single,



vivid blue eye. She covers her empty left eye-socket with a patch when interacting with others, as she is aware that the unhealing wound is a disturbing sight, but otherwise simply wears a gauze bandage over it to keep the blood off her face.

Storyteller Hints: Despite her outward serene confidence, Tzigane is a haunted being: haunted by the horrors of her past and the uncertainties of the future, but mostly by the knowledge that the creature that created her still exists and that, one night, she must face it to forever move beyond what it made her. She knows this, desires it and dreads it in equal measure, and hunts her sire with alternating intense commitment and extreme reluctance. When not engaged in her own private spiritual struggles, she attends to the needs of the younger Kindred who come to her seeking tutelage and advice. She has been a rock of stability and nurturance to so many younger adherents to the Ordo Dracul in her homeland that they have taken to calling her Mati-Syra-Zemlya (Mother Earth). Her compassion for younger vampires is as genuine an emotion as the Kindred can claim.

A Storyteller can use Tzigane as a mentor figure for young Dragons, obviously. Vampires being what they are, such neonates will probably spend their time looking for Tzigane's angle – surely she can't *really* be the mothering figure that others think she is? Whether that's the truth of it, of course, is up to the Storyteller. She might really *be* what she projects, or she might be grooming a coterie of hunters (read: bait) to track down her sire. Somewhere in her breast, too, the heart of a revolutionary might still linger, unbeating. A coterie of Carthians could do worse than to listen to her wisdom.

Clan: Mekhet

Covenant: Ordo Dracul

Embrace: December 1849

Apparent Age: Late teens/early 20s

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4 Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2 Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3 Mental Skills: Academics (Literature) 3, Investigation 3, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Mountains) 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy (Personalities) 4, Expression (Written) 3, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Academia), Covenant Status 3, Haven Location 1, Haven Security 1, Haven Size 2, Language (English; native Hungarian), Meditative Mind, Requiem Diary 3, Resources 2

Willpower: 7 Humanity: 7 Virtue: Charity Vice: Sloth

Health: 7 Initiative: 5 Defense: 2 Speed: 9 **Blood Potency: 3** Vitae/Per Turn: 12/1 Disciplines: Auspex 2, Celerity 1, Coil of the Beast 2, Obfuscate 1 **Devotions:** Quicken Sight

Jacques was a typical country boy from Mametz, France. He was born in 1898 and his 18th birthday arrived just in time for him to hear, while serving his country, that his entire family had been slaughtered by the German army. For five months, he begged his superiors and friends in the French Army to help him return to his home. He was told to have patience. Then, in July, the Battle of the Somme erupted. Hundreds of thousands of men died, but Jacques managed to survive those initial days. Once the Germans had retreated, he discovered his town had been mercilessly raped of all its resources, its infrastructure obliterated and all the women and children taken away. The men of the town lay in carefully constructed piles of bodies set ablaze and left to smolder. While France had already declared war on Germany, this was the moment that Jacques personally declared war on every German alive.

Then, one evening in October of 1916, as Jacque slept in a trench less than a hundred yards from the enemy, he felt soft, gentle hands caress his body. He couldn't move, couldn't call out. Only his eyelids seemed to work. He opened them and instantly relaxed. He knew what was straddling him could only be a nightmare, that what he saw could not be real.

Jacques felt razor-sharp fingernails scrape along his face and skull, opening up his skin. He felt his blood ooze out from the wounds and streak toward the back of his skull, as if trying to hide from the moldering horror that lay atop him. He felt her grind her body against his and he felt his own body react to the sensation. Her tongue snaked out and tickled the scratches. Her teeth then penetrated the soft flesh of his neck and he felt an overwhelming ecstasy consume him, even as his blood rushed out his neck and into the horror above his dying body.

Whatever possessed the monster to Embrace him, Jacques did indeed awaken once more. No longer was he in the trenches. Now he was, literally, underground. He found himself in the company of six other creatures, several of such disgusting appearance as to make him want to retch. He controlled himself, however, as the monster from his dreams appeared before them. They had been chosen, recruited, she said, to help end the destruction raining down upon them



by the Germans. Mortals had brought war upon one another and, during the light of day, they would continue to do so. But, she said, the Nosferatu of the Somme would take the war to the enemy in the darkest hours of night. There would be a Great Feast and they would provide information and intelligence to their Kindred cousins in the West.

Jacques reveled in the chance to take his anger and revenge out without having to sit in trenches and wait for gas or mortar attacks. He once again declared war on the invaders. He would give his eternal soul to the cause of French independence. The enemy would die at his hands, in his hands, and their deaths would feed him so that he might continue the struggle. The other creatures would follow him, or he would leave them behind.

When the Great War ended, Jacques felt vindicated and cheered. He adapted to peace and, 30 years later, when the Germans once more invaded and desecrated his homeland, Jacques once more enjoyed the reckless chaos of the world at war.

He sometimes traveled with the French troops, unbeknownst to them, of course, so that he could continue to bring death to France's enemies wherever the fighting took him. However, Jacques always returned to the country of his birth, as if the very soil of France brought him peace.

Various covenants made overtures of recruitment to Jacques, but he remains, to this night, unaligned, his loyalties to one thing and one thing only: France. The pettiness of politics and religion is meaningless without a place or a people to defend. He has no qualms, however, of temporary alliances, as long as the enemies of his country suffer.

He is wary of the Carthians, however. Such anarchy, as he sees it, is a poison that must be rooted out and utterly vanguished.

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Description: Jacques is 5'8" and tips the scales at 135 pounds. He has extremely pale skin that stretches taut across his thin skull. The bone on both sides of his head has sunken and his bright green eyes bulge out slightly. Brown stubble grows from his skull and wispy spokes of facial hair jut from his chin, as if his 18-year-old face has decided that all hair growth should appear only at that spot. His teeth are mostly rotting and the muscles of his face do not allow him to smile at all. While he was Embraced at the age of 18, he looks more like a man of 75.

Storytelling Hints: Jacques is passionately patriotic. In his eyes, France can do no wrong and, in many ways, his love of country defines his Requiem. He has fought, died and murdered for France and can see no reason why he should stop doing so. Over the years, he has witnessed war come and go, and desperately waits for the next enemy to declare war on his beloved country so that he can get back to the business of patriotic slaughter.

But war is different now than a few decades ago, and the enemies of today don't always announce themselves. They fight with cowardly, underhanded tactics. They fight with suicide bombs and angry rhetoric from half a world away. They fight with lawsuits and demonstrations. They fight with words, and Jacques doesn't understand that kind of fighting. As the years have worn on, anyone who speaks out against France has become a target — and if he must travel across the globe to reach those targets, he will.

Jacques is mad, obviously. He is so defined by his zeal that he wishes for open warfare just to have a chance to express it. It's a wonder that no covenant has held his interest, but if he learns about the history of his country and how it figures in to the development of the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum, he might finally choose a side.

Clan: Nosferatu

Covenant: Unaligned

Embrace: October 19, 1916

Apparent Age: 75

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2 Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4 Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2 Mental Skills: Crafts (Repair Item) 2, Medicine (Battlefield) 2 Physical Skills: Athletics (Throwing) 3, Brawl 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weaponry (Bayonet) 2 Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Danger Sense, Disarm, Languages (English, German), Zeal

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 5 (fixation – anything associated with France, 7) **Virtue:** Fortitude

Vice: Wrath Health: 9 Initiative: 4 Defense: 2 Speed: 12 Blood Potency: 4 Vitae/Per turn: 13/2

Disciplines: Celerity 1, Nightmare 2, Obfuscate 3, Vigor 4



CHAPTER FOUR:

FLASHPOINTS IN HISTORY

He said I got it all wrong, but for the first time, I got it all right. Ten years they've been lying to me. Smiling those smiles, those broad, shit-eating shark grins. Woke up out of the long sleep, and they been keeping me in the dark. But memory has a funny way of coming back up out of the shadows, and sometimes we find moments of clarity, a shining light in a gray haze. I remember things, now. I remember how it all happened, and it's high time to hang some liars.

> — John Bartholomew, Invictus elder

"Lucifer is the dark side of cosmic fecundity, the cutting blade of the sculptor's knife. Nature does not abhor evil; she embraces it. She uses it to build. With it, she moves the human world to greater heights of organization, intricacy, and power. Death, destruction, and fury do not disturb the Mother of our world; they are merely parts of her plan." —Howard Bloom, "The Lucifer Principle"

Neonates have heard tell of those elders lost to the so-called "Fog of Eternity," the haze of memory that settles on the mind during a long and torpid sleep. It's not far removed from how humans think of their own aged: they're seen as confused, doddering, as foolish as newborn babes.

It's a dangerous assumption, especially for young Kindred who think they can pull one over on their senile elders. Yes, elders may find that certain details and events are lost in the fog, but think of the way *real* fog works — it obscures only the valleys, while the mountainous peaks remain clear, poking through the clouds.

History has its peaks and valleys, too. The valleys are those times that get lost in the fog, that sink beneath the haze and only appear when the clouds part. The peaks are those seminal moments in history, events that are truly perdurable in the minds of those who experienced them.

The scope of Kindred history has many such peaks, times when the vampires found change, discovered hope, or suffered beneath persecution. These moments, be they wretched events marked with spilled blood or lasting triumphs celebrated by the music of vicious paeans, are indelibly etched into the annals of Kindred history.

The elders remember these flash points. They will not lose sight of these peaks.

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT: The Great War (CE 1914-18)

I understand that across the pond, some of the people — the living ones, obviously, but I imagine many of us as well — have this thing about the American Civil War, how it's still something of a sore point in some places. So you get people in the South with that flag with the oblique cross and the stars on it, and mentioning it gets people to go a bit animated.

Well, look. When I was alive, I worked in a newspaper, and we ran a piece on the Great War, and one of the things we had to do was make sure we were sensitive, because it was still close to home for many people, even though the whole thing had finished about ninety years ago. And it's true. It's this massive part of our history over here, and the massive part of what made us.

A whole generation of young men bought all the songs of glory and went to war, and either they didn't come back, or they did and they were maimed or screaming. And the kings and queens and aristocracies all tumbled down, and although everyone tried to put back the pieces and come up with something equitable, only the dictators sprung up in their place. We went mad for slaughter for four years, and we shaped the 20th century.

God abandoned the living, and the dead took so much advantage of that.

Everything changed for us. Revolutionaries took apart the crumbling old orders to build new night-states. And the creatures who grew fat on the slaughter are still up and walking around (if you ever meet a vampire from France or Germany with the English name "Jones," be very, very careful).

You have to understand this if you want your dealings with us to work. We might have the same language as you, but living or dead, we think in radically different ways, and you can trace it all back to the war. Mention the war. You have to.

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Frances

ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

Phosgene Angel

HW Barnett

26

He visited us unexpected, unasked

- As we sat in our pit, and shared our jokes, and ate,
- Strode past the mess, through the panicked masked
- Throng, past each empty table, each abandoned plate,
- Set his green eye toward one who had not taken swift note
- Of the coming, reached out smoky hand to clench
- Fingers around a boy's innocent throat,

The better to steal, to strangle, to wrench

- Eye from socket, tongue from palate, life from man.
- He drank bloody phlegm coughed up by the dead,
- Rose, moved on from my brother's corpse. I ran In his pursuit, I raised my gun, I challenged him.
- I said:
- "Why feed on us, angel? Why add to our misery? Why today?"
- He smiled and shrugged. I shot him. He walked away.

I understand that most living scholars think that Barnett's "gas angel" is a personification done for artistic effect. Good for them. – FB

Anthem for Doomed Youth It was the last gasp of the Great Imperial Game. A cascade

It was the last gasp of the Great Imperial Game. A cascade of disastrous decisions, one country after another joining in like children in a playground scuffle. And their toys were their young men, inspired to enlist by the millions with promises of patriotic glory.

And they died by the millions. The failure of the great adventure brought with it the final collapse of more than one Empire, and sowed the seeds of an even more devastating war barely a generation later.

And during all this, the vampires thrived, or at least some of them did. This was a time for neonates. The parasitic structures of the old guard had collapsed with the nations



родная Воля

Russian, c. 1918. The slogan is "People's Will" which is also the name of a much older revolutionary/ terrorist group. Note that while the Bolsheviks portrayed their enemies as caricatures, they did not normally resort to presenting them as supernatural monsters.

- FB

they fed upon. Revolutionary monsters experimented with new ways to build a society of the dead. The old guard dug in their heels, but pious killers and mystics found they had little place. Harsh ideology and the brutal science of war won the night as well as the day. Elders found the world they understood blasted away. For the undead, who exist in a world characterized by the illusion of stability and eternity, the destruction visited by people they had mocked as simple "mortals" gave them cause to fear in a way they never had before. The elder thinks himself invulnerable to bullets, yet falls prey to machine gun fire. He feeds on the patients of a hospital, and finds their blood fouled by gas and disease. Two decades later, the world would change even more drastically, many more people would die, and the undead would learn that vampires were mere children in the hierarchy of horrors - when compared to the evil of "mortals." But somehow, the vampires would be ready for that change in a way that they were simply not in 1914.

ROAD TO DISASTER

On the 28th of July, 1914, a Serbian named Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz-Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Serbian Military Intelligence was involved in the assassination. Ultimatums were issued, and Germany offered Austria-Hungary unconditional support. Russia mobilized in support of Serbia. Germany and Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia. France declared war on Germany. Germany invaded Belgium to gain access to France, and hence Great Britain declared war on Germany. Turkey, originally adopting a position of "armed neutrality" got nervous and declared war on France and Britain.

Italy, originally neutral, would declare war on Austria-Hungary. Britain's Commonwealth (including Australia, New Zealand and Canada) and colonies (including India) would send huge numbers of troops to fight and die for little reward or recognition. And in the last twelve months of the war, even the then-isolationist USA would send a force to Europe. The governments of Turkey, Germany and Austria-Hungary collapsed; Russia withdrew from the war altogether as revolution and civil war destroyed the empire of the Tsars.

An entire generation of young men died in the trenches of France and Belgium, in the snowcovered killing fields of the Alps, on the beaches of the Dardanelles, on the sea, and in the sky. The age of modern war had begun. The tank, the fighter-plane, the machine-gun and the U-boat all saw their first real use in the Great War. And the result of it all?

The 20th century.



The lost Generation

No one had ever seen death on such a scale. Over the course of those four years and four months, nearly 20 million people died, more than half of those civilians, and most of those fell to the terrible famines wrought by the war. The UK lost over 900,000 of its young men, and had to cope with 3,000,000 men who returned injured or maimed. About half that number again came from Britain's colonies. Over 1.4 million of the young men of France would never come home, and among those who did, 5,000,000 were wounded. And the Russians, who had their own problems quite apart from the war, suffered the deaths of 1.8 million men. More than a million Germans died, as did about the same number of men from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Ottoman Empire collapsed, having lost 800,000 people.

It is difficult to wholly grasp the speed at which vast numbers of young men were sent into the meat-grinder. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the 1st of July, 1916, Britain alone suffered the loss of 57,240 soldiers, of which 19,240 died — it was the single bloodiest day in British military history. By the end of the battle in November, the Somme had claimed the lives of about a million men, and more than 620,000 of those were French, British, or from the British Empire. Compare that with Vietnam, where over ten years 58,000 young American men died. Or consider the ongoing war in Iraq, where, by June 2008 (the time of this writing), the US has lost just over 4,000 men.

Of course, these are just numbers.

Let's put it another way: out of the thousands of villages, towns and cities in England and Wales, only 32 villages did not lose someone to the war. In France, only the village of Thierville in Normandy escaped without someone dying in battle. Or to put this in an even more graphic way: if you were alive in Britain, Belgium, France, or Germany in 1918, and you hadn't fought yourself, someone you knew died in the trenches. If you had gone to war yourself, the likelihood of you missing an eye or a limb was extremely high. The chance of you suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome or a health complaint caused by exposure to chemical weapons was even higher than that. Hardly anyone got out untouched. And as it was for the living... so it was for the dead.

Dead Men in the Trenches

It didn't take long for the armies of both sides to realize that the rules of war had changed. Blue-coated Frenchmen marched into the forest of the Ardennes, and entrenched Germans with machine guns mowed them down. Cavalry regiments staged spectacular charges, and never even got close to their targets.

Trenches dominated the strategies of both sides on the Western Front for practically the whole course of the war. The lines of both armies comprised vast networks of fortified ditches. And in the middle, between the two lines, was a No Man's Land, an area open to the fire of both sides. If either side was to make any gains at all, the men would have to go over the top, and most of them would face certain death from machine guns and snipers.

Months would pass, the men living in the most squalid of conditions, surviving under a pall of constant dread, their lives punctuated by letters from home and gas attacks. And then the call to go over the top would come, and with it near-certain death.

For the vampires, the networks of trenches were in some ways a model community. The trenches gained corners and alleys that no one knew about. Abandoned cul-de-sacs in trench networks became the homes of outcast vampires from the cities and villages, who created their own kingdoms with new childer and new rules. The Carthians profited massively from this; the newest of the great covenants had gained little respect in the old nations of Western Europe, and now they had their own nations, their own societies, their own Elysiums, all hidden in the mud and filth of the trenches. The strongholds of Carthian power that exist tonight in Western and Eastern Europe were born in the trenches. This was the most successful vampire community the Carthians had ever created, a perfect working anarchy. Perfect for the undead, that is.

The vampires of the trenches were not creatures of finesse. This was a war, and they had no interest in grooming their victims or romanticizing about their state. They hungered; they fed. They took what they wanted.

Blood was plentiful, and if soldiers went missing, deserters were not uncommon. The offensives were so bloody and chaotic that no one noticed that a few men died from no bullet, but from the monsters waiting behind them in the trenches, ready to seize them and drink them dry. They were going to die anyway.

Coteries of vampires, still in full military dress, continued to take orders and report erroneously on enemy positions, hoping to destroy their rivals in nearby ditches. Living soldiers found themselves attacking their own trenches, and the dead were there to feast on the wounded in the confusion.

From the Battle of Ypres on, both of the entrenched sides used poison gas of various kinds: mustard gas, phosgene, chlorine and others. The dead, who didn't need to breathe, found the gas attacks no more than a minor inconvenience. The living – who, thanks to supply issues, often had no more protection from the gas than rags soaked in their own piss – fell by the thousands.

Most of the undead found that drinking the blood of men choking to death from gas poisoning was, if no less nourishing, vile-tasting. A few, most notoriously a Mekhet named Jones, however, found that they had developed a taste for it. By the end of the war several of these vampires were changed because of their proximity to the toxins from the chemical weapons, an attribute that they became able to transmit through the blood to their childer.

Not all was perfect, however. The Kindred themselves fluctuated wildly in numbers. One night, a Carthian democrat might manage a coterie of a dozen vampires in a well-appointed cul-de-sac. The next night, all signs of the group will have vanished. Some Kindred told wild stories about dead men, possessed or animated by spirits in the gas, who shambled and flailed blindly through darkened trenches and preyed on the vampires who had preyed on them. Others mentioned the vast numbers of ghosts who screamed through the dug-out maze night after night, snatching up any who got in their way. And still others advised their fellows not to underestimate the soldiers, for small groups of men with an urge to hunt the Damned seemed to thrive in the inactivity and paranoia of the trenches.

Tanks saw action for the first time in the Somme, and by Cambrai in 1917, the British forces were using them *en masse*. A number of Kindred used a tank as a mobile haven for a time, until a lucky shot — or possibly an aimed shot — from a German shell laid them all bare to fire and daylight.

ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH What passing-bells for these who die as cattle? Only the monstrous anger of the guns. Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle Can patter out their hasty orisons. No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells, Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, — The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells; And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all? Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes. The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall; Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds, And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds. — Wilfred Owen

goodbye to all that: the great war, 1914-18 103



Between 1916 and 1917, the vampires of Northern Italy found themselves in the middle of the 12 Battles of the Isonzo, waged across the Trentino, Dolomite and Caporetto mountain ranges between Italy and what was then the edge of Austro-Hungarian territory. Troops, drawn from villages that were barely a couple of miles apart in some places, took to killing each other on the orders of their commanders. Some soldiers, captured by one side or the other, found themselves issued with new uniforms and set to killing their erstwhile platoon-mates. Here, too, the opposing forces resorted to trenches, and the vampires used these corridors as a place to set up a kingdom of the Damned, with its own rules, and its own conflicts.

As the Battles of the Isonzo progressed, the weather took a turn for the worse, and hundreds of the woefully under-equipped troops of both sides died of nothing more than the cold. Armies fortified their trenches with frozen corpses. The dead might feel the cold, but it doesn't slow them down, and the vampires who profited most successfully from the battle were those who learned how to burrow under the snow, taking advantage of the darkness and cold in their hunting.

Avalanches claimed more lives than gas ever did. Each side accused the other of firing cannon at the sides of mountains in order to bring the icy slides down on their enemies. For the men trapped under the snow, suffocating and freezing to a slow death, it barely mattered who the culprit was. The burrowers, the *Caporetti*, considered the avalanches to be their best friends, great sources of easily accessible blood, preserved in ice. Some even got hold of guns and did the firing themselves. They created vast buried larders of frozen dead men, and fought savagely for control of their rivals' resources.



After Caporetto

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity.

Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms

The 12th Battle of the Isonzo, or the Battle of Caporetto, on the 24th of October, 1917, was the worst military defeat Italy ever faced. Austria-Hungary's forces took over 275,000 prisoners on that day. Tens of thousands of Italian men lay dead in the snow. Meanwhile, the vampires of Austria-Hungary seized the trench-born kingdoms of the Italian Kindred. A self-made Austro-Hungarian Prince declared an amnesty on diablerie committed against Italian vampires over the entire Autumn of 1917, but although the trenches came firmly under Austro-Hungarian control, living and dead, the new masters of the night-time lines could not locate the caches of frozen dead, nor could they ever locate the burrowing Caporetti, who retreated up the mountain.



The Great Powers fought campaigns over Palestine and Greece throughout the war, and while the result was the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, their enemies faced a bloodbath.

In 1916, tens of thousands of ANZACs (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) died in the horrendously mismanaged Dardanelles campaign. They landed on the beaches of Gallipoli, and the Turks ground them to nothing. In the Middle East, Britain and her colonies fought against the Turks for control of Palestine. Greece, North Africa and the Balkans became battlegrounds.

The Kindred profited in the South. The war caused huge movements of people, which the undead equated with a new influx of prey. Kindred who had slumbered under the sands of Egypt for centuries awoke to find vastly increased populations of refugees and soldiers, lost in chaos and ripe for the harvest. Coteries nominally belonging to the Lancea Sanctum began to gain in popularity among neonates.



AND THE BAND PLAYED WALTZING MATILDA How well I remember that terrible day, How our blood stained the sand and the water. And how in that hell that they called Suvla Bay, We were butchered like lambs at the slaughter. Johnny Turk he was ready, he'd primed himself well.

He showr'd us with bullets, he rained us with shell.

And in five minutes flat he'd blown us all to hell Nearly blew us right back to Australia.

But the band played Waltzing Matilda, when we stopped to bury our slain.

We buried ours and the Turks buried theirs, then we started all over again.



AND REAL PROPERTY OF

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They had always held to a series of doctrines that bore little relation to the European or American Sanctified, but now they adopted the tactics, if not the beliefs, of *jihad*. In the end, although the Jihadist Sanctified remain even tonight, they were not numerous enough to gain absolute control. But for a period during the Great War, it looked like they might gain the upper hand.

At Sea and Air

It was a German U-Boat attack in 1915 on the civilian ship *Lusitania*, which numbered among its passengers many Americans, that created the impetus that brought the US into the war, although it took a long time and a number of unique diplomatic events to finally convince the US that sending a military force was necessary. The *Lusitania* itself wasn't unique; it had in its cargo military goods, and was, like much merchant shipping, seen as a valid target. The U-Boats were Germany's most powerful weapon at sea, and until the Battle of Jutland, they more or less ensured German naval supremacy.

Legends of a U-Boat captained in the North Sea by a man who was already dead, and who kept a hold full of half-alive people for his provender are to most Kindred who hear them just that — legends. But not all of those submarines counted sunk or lost were accounted for. And even now, sailors in the North Atlantic report sightings of what looks like an old submarine, coming to the surface. Furthermore, ships are still lost; yachts and merchant vessels still inexplicably lose crew. What changes would the Blood have wrought on a coterie of vampires grown accustomed to living under the sea?

Meanwhile, the first flying aces came to prominence towards the end of the war. They developed their own superstitions and legends. Some would tell tales of unnaturally huge bats, and ravens, and, most threatening of all, creatures like great insubstantial screech-owls. The German flyers would make light of it, telling their friends that these creatures were death, waiting to swoop down on their enemies, and that they were honorary angels of war. The British flyers said that to talk about it was bad luck, and when you're thousands of feet in the air with nothing but a canvas-and-wood frame keeping you from certain death, you need all the luck you can get.

Ever since the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, the Empire of Russia had been in turmoil. The more the proletariat became unsettled, the more tyrannical and vicious the Tsar's regime became. An attempted revolution in 1905 brought even more repression. The dead had always seen themselves as the secret masters of Eastern

Revolution

Europe, and local versions of the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum had more or less sewn up the politics of the Kindred since the time of Dracula — although the Ordo Dracul was a growing force, and the Circle of the Crone, though weak, had never gone away.

But as the first two decades of the 20th century progressed, Russia gained a number of Marxist and anarchist ideologues, and inevitably, members of the growing populist movements received the Embrace. Particularly notable was one Georgi Gregorivitch Herzen, who joined the Kindred in Petrograd in 1915. Herzen took some time to abandon his human allegiance to the Bolshevik party, but inevitably, his perceptions twisted by the change of priorities the Embrace inexorably brings, he began to move among the Carthians, openly calling on the neonates to loose the reins of patriarchal control from elders who had ruled with the most inflexible of iron hands since the Middle Ages.

If he had lived, perhaps Herzen might have become an enthusiastic lieutenant of Lenin or Stalin. As a vampire, he was destined to martyrdom. In 1917, as the revolution raged among the humans, he fell foul of a plot conceived by a coterie of Invictus Kindred. They had, with the lack of understanding of human affairs characteristic to their covenant, believed him to be responsible for the human revolution that had disrupted their hunting grounds so badly. Their plot didn't work out exactly as planned. They all met their Final Deaths in the Palace of Justice as it burned down, but not before Herzen's coterie-mates saw exactly who had destroyed their beloved leader.

Revolution happened among the Kindred, first in Petrograd, and then in Moscow, and then in Volgograd, and then among all the Kindred of Russia, city by city, as ghouls and slaves of the new Carthian order swept across Russia with the Bolsheviks.

The Carthian Revolution ended differently. While the Bolsheviks had the weight of numbers, the support of the people, and in some places even the backing of the foot soldiers of their enemy, the Carthians were outnumbered and nowhere near as powerful. On the other hand, the Carthians had more recourse to human agents, making especial use of a terrorist sect calling itself Narodnaia Volia - "People's Voice." They became adept at organizing cells of monster hunters and directing them at their enemies, all the while hiding their own natures. But the old guard had the structures of power in place to hold the Carthians to a standstill, no matter how many humans they had duped into joining their cause. In some places, the Carthians took control. St. Petersburg – the former Petrograd and later Leningrad - was Carthian until only a few years ago. And in Moscow a Soviet-style Diktatorat has tried to control the city's nights since Lenin came to power. But in the vast numbers of cities, towns and villages of Russia, the Carthian revolution of 1917 brought with it the birth of an uneasy balance between the covenants, not too dissimilar to the equilibrium that persists in the West.



THE PALACE OF JUSTICE BURNS

The roof had already fallen in, the fire crackled between the walls, and red and yellow wisps like wool were creeping out of the windows, throwing a sheaf of paper ashes into the black sky of the night. No one made any attempt to extinguish the fire... A tall stooping man in a shaggy sheepskin hat was walking about like a sentinel. He stopped and asked in a dull voice: "Well — it means that all justice is to be abolished, doesn't it? Punishments all done away with, is that it?"

No one answered him.

— Maxim Gorky

Legacy of the Great War Until the First World War, most of the people of the British Isles saw themselves as Christian, and imagined that Britain had a sort of divine mandate for Empire. But the horrors of the war brought with them the realization that if God was watching the United Kingdom, he was not on Britain's side. Across Europe, people came to terms with grief and horror.

Grief and horror had always been the constant companions of the vampires. But even so, the psychological scars visited upon the living had their echoes in the dead. The Kindred began to understand change in a way they hadn't before, and began to realize that the weapons of human science *could* harm them — but could also be used as tools. New modes of transport, new weapons of war, both chemical and mechanical, and new political ideologies suddenly came under the notice of elders, and to a greater extent, neonates. They had the means of destroying vast swathes of their enemies' food supplies; vampires who had become dependent on poisoned food, notably the childer of the Mekhet Jones, found that they had to keep poisoning the masses just to survive.

The Flu Pandemic

If some Kindred felt they had to poison their prey, others found that vast numbers of their victims were disturbingly sick. In 1918, a global pandemic of Spanish influenza struck. The war hadn't caused it, as such, but the vast movements of people across the world and the flu strain's unusual virulence led to millions dying. Furthermore, the disease affected mostly young, healthy adults. And so, the survivors of the generation who had not been taken by the war fell prey to disease.

Among the Kindred, the most major effect this had was the steep rise in numbers and power of the ancient, outcast Mekhet bloodline called the Morbus (see p. 244 of Vampire: The Requiem). In some cities in the Western world, elders even organized open hunts on the diseased Kindred, in hopes of reducing their numbers, recognizing them as a threat to the food stocks, since the Morbus themselves spread disease as a matter of course while feeding.

The Morbus bloodline's numbers would fall again as a result of this, and the Morbus' attempts to keep their heritage secret would increase once more. But a new factor added itself to the Morbus psychology, the element of martyrdom. A Lancea Sanctum Morbus made a bizarre prophecy in 1921 of the return of the "Plague Angel," who would bring a final judgment of pestilence and wrath on the Morbus' persecutors.

Of course, no one really believes that he might come back.

Carthian ascendancy

The Carthian Movement made massive gains in the years following the Great War. Devastated cities across Europe saw Kindred authority shaken, if not completely destroyed by the progress of the war. Elders who had sometimes accidentally fallen prey to shells and fires left vacuums that a new, harsh, utilitarian philosophy was all too ready to fill. As the austere doctrines of Communism spread across the East, so too did a new kind of austerity take its hold over the Kindred – that, and a growing sense of dread that the new order would not hold.

In the end, this was partly true. But the changes wrought by the First World War made the Kindred ready for the Second, and when that war came — and many, in all covenants and clans, saw war coming far earlier than they had 25 years before — they were able to take advantage of the chaos in ways they had not in the years between 1914 and 1918. They were able to use technology to defend themselves, and sometimes even find boltholes in which to sit the whole thing out.

Even so, the structures that arose in Kindred society at the end of the Great War are now, after less than a century, beginning to fall apart. A different kind of revolution is coming, and once again, the Kindred may not be ready for it.

FLASHPOINT IN MODERN NIGHTS

The Great War's legacy to the Kindred is ongoing. Not even a century gone, the war was perhaps the beginning of the rapid advancement of science (and thus warfare) that bedevils so many elder Kindred tonight. Below are three story hooks relating to this flash point that might be useful for your chronicles.

- During the wild series of changes, several bloodlines arose during the years of the war; of these, some were long gone by dawn on Armistice Day while others still hunt modern nights. Among the most successful of the bloodlines created in this era is the Brothers of Ypres, who, as the 20th century progressed, flourished across the world in range, if not in number. Their flaw, that they can only feed from those who suffer from poisoning of some sort, leads them nowadays to profit from industrial accidents and dirty wars alike, and sometimes even to attempt to engineer them. A majority of the Brothers active in the Second World War took advantage of some of the most callous deeds ever committed by human beings. In the 1950s, one of Jones' childer flourished in smog-ridden London. A Brother has made Bhopal his playground ever since the Union Carbide plant blew its gas across the city. And one or two in the Middle East sit on private stockpiles of illicit chemical weapons that no UN inspector will ever find.
- Vampires who profited from the trenches, or the childer of those vampires, begin to experience visions of war. Spectral gasmasked youths in bloody uniforms re-enact scenes of carnage on the streets of the vampire's turf. Whispered, off-key war-songs interrupt the car stereo or the TV. And the mindless ghosts of the war-dead cry for justice from the creatures who robbed them of their natural fate. What is causing this? Perhaps it's as simple as a single soldier's plundered keepsake, forgotten for ninety years in a box and worn as a trinket by an elder who never even took notice of its original owner. Perhaps the members of some rival vampiric faction have found a way to bring old sins upon their enemies, even unto the seventh generation. A variation on this concept is that the war-dead begin to spontaneously rise as zombies, or even as vampires of a sort, and seek out not only the vampires but the innocent as well. Whatever happens, the characters bear the responsibility for what is occurring, whether it's their torment, their inadvertent revealing to the outside world, a burden on their hunting ground, or even the first signs of the End of Days.
- The larders of the Caporetti and it's just about conceivable that some of them spread across the world are just waiting to be found by the living. What happens when the first thaw in decades reveals the larder of a long-destroyed Caporetto, on the doorstep of the characters? Frozen, partially exsanguinated corpses flood down the side of a mountain. The press gets involved. So does the government. Monster hunters, smelling something decaying and terrible, begin to converge on the region. And while the characters try to fix a threat to the Masquerade bequeathed to them by the Great War, a Caporetto (or a coterie of Caporetti) turns up and claims the rights to the larder. Perhaps some of the corpses get up and shamble away, or one of the dead is in fact the owner of the larder, long since lost in torpor.

Blood Flows West: The Montrose Party (CE 1839-69)

I would have hated myself back then. Just as I hate my own childer, now. I recognize the spirit of youth, the treachery of that age, the desire to carve out one's own niche in this world. But I recognize it the way you do an old photograph or a deeply distant acquaintance. That distance assures that my remembrance spurs little in me but a cold curiosity, a long look back under a magnifying glass or a microscope. I would've hated me, back then. would've done whatever I could have to undermine the efforts of Esau Montrose and we monsters who stood at his elbows.

The people, the mortals, they went West for a multitude of reasons. Land, mostly - all that free land, hundreds of thousands of acres given to those willing to cross the deadly map, willing to accede to the unknowns. Gold was what beckoned for others. Some wanted to claim what the Spanish and Mexicans once had. Others wanted to escape bad debts or worse wives. They packed up their wagons, and with them they walked westward. Suffered blisters. Broken bones. Wrecked wagons. Drowned children. And why? For just a little piece of something to call your own. A stamp of land in the approximate middle of nowhere.

OBJECT ID: 11.07.03zd

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: Petra, Jordan (Info from Accession Record)

DATE OF MANUFACTURE: Approx. 1st century, AD

PLACE OF MANUFACTURE: Petra, Jordan

- MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUE/MATERIALS: Oiled sheepskin (linseed oil), wooden handle, ten metal fasteners (oxidization suggests iron). Often, animal skins (sheep, goat, cattle) would be used to form bags in which to carry items. Fur would be scraped off, hide would be salted, preserved with vegetable matter, then oiled. Hide dried to become leather. An awl made of bone would be used to puncture holes, with gut thread used to bind bag together at sides or at top. This is a vessel for carrying water (or other liquids). Here, leather strips secured corners and also helped attach a wooden handle for carrying.
- SIZE: Approx 29 cm length at top, 22cm at bottom, 21cm in height, likely would hold just over 1 gallon of water (or other liquid).
- LOCATION FOUND: 30 miles south of Independence Rock in Natrona County, Wyoming. Unburied near Prairie Schooner #4 (10.31.03sa). See file: Montrose Party, Oregon Trail, Wyoming, Kistler, 2003.
- PURPOSE: Normally, purpose of these water skins was to hold water. This bag did not hold water. It held human blood.
- DESIGNS/SYMBOLS: Leather stamp near top length of bag; stamp believed not to originate with the artifact but added much later. Stamp indicates an owl (similar to Zuni fetish design?). Two initials stamped next to it: OP.
- OTHER NOTES: Jack, what's going on, here? Trust me, I'm happy to find an ancient Jordanian relic. I just don't expect to find them in Uyoming buried with a lost squadron of westward-bound wagon schooners. Never mind the fact that this 2000-year-old water bag held human blood. Human blood, Jack. Any ideas? Any ideas at all? Are the stories of the Montrose Party true? The cannibalism was an urban legend. Wasn't it?

OP. Orrin Pawlett. This was my waterskin. Well — no. This was Bunson's 'skin. My erstwhile father figure. This was passed down from generation to generation. I stole it from him when I joined the Montrose party with the other fourteen. We also kept blood in our wine bladders (the other bladders with a far lesser historical pedigree, I assure you), but I guess they never found those. It kept us fed, for a time. Not long enough, though. Thirty miles south of Independence Rock. So close. Why the owl? The owl is mine, and I know by stamping it there I damaged a priceless artifact, but so goes the foolishness of youth. I chose the owl as my mark because many have said I look a bit... owlish.



so. Why did we do it, then? Why did we accompany them? A hundred and fifty of them, fifteen of us. Keeping our hungers in check so we didn't diminish the herd. Protecting them from the things that lurked out there in the night - wolves, bears, the natives, and much, much worse. Back then, we were like children playing at being adults. Tilted our chins to the sky and claimed, "We must protect the food source." Like ranchers or farmers, moving a herd of cattle. Nothing more than that. A practical decision. Pragmatic and sound.

And a lie, mostly. It was the decision of an elder, not a young and untested creature like myself or the other fourteen. We did it to crawl out from under the boots of our masters, like worms wriggling from rough tread. This was the land of freedom and wide open spaces and hidden roads paved with gold. The night was endless, deep and dark, and we were young and dumb and full of blood, and goddamnit if we didn't want our own slice of the story. We played at being adults, but really, we were just children. Children who wanted to run away from home. And we did. And many of us didn't make it.

Years later, I'd come to find that Greta survived the incident with the Sta-au, the Cruel Ones. She passed by Independence Rock, saw what I'd carved there. She took my advice (though she is no Shadow), and found that all those who gathered there to sleep at night, on their way further west, made for easy meals. The herd gathers, and the cauchemar has his fill. A foolish thing to do, probably, to leave one's mark like that. But, again, back then I was young.

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Photo Description: "FOURTH OF JULY. SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR. THE GHOSTS OF CRUEL MEN WALK THE BADLANDS. ANGERED THEM. WE HAVE FAILED BUT I STILL WALK AND SO I CONTINUE ON. THE HERD LAYS AROUND ME, SLEEPING. SHADOWS, MARK THIS AS A FINE PLACE TO PAUSE AND THINK AND TAKE YOUR FILL."

What a weird-ass message. Took this visiting Independence Rock. I guess when ppl did the Oregon Trail (remember that video game!) they stopped here and carved all kinds of \$hit into the rocks. Msgs for others who would come the same way. Like, "Mary O'Hara slept here" and "John Nisley reminds you all to wear clean underwear" or whatever. Creepy little owl, too.

Comments

Paco: cool find.

Bonnie S.: They probably went crazy! That was a brutal trip — all on foot, because you couldn't ride in the wagons, right? It was easy to starve, plus you're all alone out there in the dark of night. Scary. Whoever wrote this message probably just went nuts! (And oh, do I ever remember that videogame. I had it on Apple IIe!)

10zen: faaaaaake, total fake.

pnutz: Dude, you coming to the BBQ this year? And o — nice pic. I can haz rock carving?

Skellington: VAMPIRES ARE REAL. THE NIGHT THREATENS US ALL! BEWARE THE OWL AND THE SHADOW, CHECK OUT THIS NETZO VIDEO FOR PROOF — <u>LINK</u>.

gather around him. Montrose is not in the one leading this party. He pretends as such. But it is not true. I see how the dozen or so others - the ones we call "the watchers" for the way they travel behind us, walking without wagons, only coming up to us as we start to bed down for the night, always watching - how they circle around him and whisper in his ear and how he nods and makes nervous smiles. He's not nervous around us. With us, he is firey, vibrant, a preacher without the Good book, but with them he is meek. Why will they not come around the fire with us? They have become more nervus of late. We have other watchers, now. Indians, that is what Bloom tells me. Blackfoot. Probably. Maybe Dog Eaters (Araphahoe, named as such because they eat the meat of dogs, disgusting). Why are we watched? I feel like a herd of cattle put out to open range - but it is never truly open. the cattlemen always keep an one on their animals. I worr, that

I think I remember this one. Matthew something-or-other. Graham? Braham? A fat-bellied button-eyed man with a wife he cuffed any time she'd dare speak up. Unpleasant and paranoid, he deserved the fate that found him. Unlike the others. I don't feel guilt about it, not really, not anymore. I did then. At the time, I felt honest anguish at their suffering — we'd led them to the slaughter, hadn't we? Now, I feel the way one must when he mistreats an animal or breaks a tool. Regret. Not guilt. Anyway. Matthew here was right: Montrose was not his own man. He was ours.

History: Promise of the West

The Westward Expansion of the United States began at the cusp of the 19th century. In 1803, Jefferson approved a clandestine expedition into French-held territory (west of the Mississippi), but later that year, the French offered to sell the entire Louisiana Territory to the United States for an easy \$15 million. Lewis and Clark charted the famous, if unused, trail in 1804. Mexico ceded its territory to the United States in 1848, and in 1849 the discovery of gold in California set a swift pace for exploration and settlement.

In those five decades between the Lewis and Clark expedition and the California Gold Rush, the ways across the vast and largely uncharted land was to follow those trails that had been forged by the pioneers who had come before – routes like the Pony Express Trail (providing westbound mail service), the Mormon Pioneer Trail (ending at the Great Salt Lake), the Cherokee Trail (a path to California forged by cooperation between whites and Cherokee Indians), and, of course, the Oregon Trail (over 40,000 traveled this rough-hewn trail into the Oregon Country).

Between 1839 and 1869, the many thousands who walked the trails did so in parties of approximately 50-150 settlers. The early Elm Grove expedition saw over a hundred pioneers travel the Oregon Trail under the leadership of New York doctor Elijah White in 1842, and those who traveled in that party helped make up what would eventually become the Oregonian government. Others, like the California-bound Donner Party, did not have such success. That group, numbering nearly 90, got caught in bad weather and strayed off-course. The caravan fell to shambles and the party splintered. They had to kill their oxen. Starving, some resorted to eating their own dead in acts of necessary cannibalism. Half of the party perished.

The West held limitless promise. The newly minted Oregon government agreed to offer free land to those who would come to their territory: 320 acres to a person, 640 for a married couple, and several companies offered free farm equipment, too (though this all changed in the 1850s). The whispers of gold didn't hurt, either — many had heard of Coronado's lost city of gold or of the seven cities of Quivira and Cibola. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, was the promise of freedom, of wide open spaces, of laying claim to a great and glorious area of God's domain.

But limitless promise remained a myth. Yes, reward waited along or at the end of the frontier trails, but such glorious remunerations came at steep cost. Many succumbed to disease or starvation. Snake bites were common. Wagons broke down in raging rivers; Elijah White may have led a successful expedition, but even he lost an infant to the rushing waters. Native attacks claimed lives (one must remember that the Indians called these territories home, regardless of who claimed them on paper). No party made it complete to the West. Some never made it at all.

One group that never arrived was the Montrose Party, a collection of 150 mortal men and women coming out of Independence and Westport, Kansas. They were not alone, however. Their purported party leader, a man

ALL SALES & MAN

No.

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named Esau Montrose, had his shepherds: a broad coterie of 15 Kindred, who saw a similar kind of promise out on the American frontier.

Promises of (and in) Blood

Fifteen of the Damned headed west with the Montrose Party. They were all relatively young (none of them more than 25 years dead), and each grew tired of the limitations placed on them by their elders. Their sires and masters were entrenched, most from the Old World, each with a claim to the burgeoning power of the American East and Midwest. The Kindred of the Montrose Party grew frustrated at the yoke thrown about their necks, and so in secret they came together and penned a document ("The Westport Decree") that confirmed their alliance.

Truthfully, the Montrose Party couldn't have existed without the support of those Kindred; yes, ex-preacher Esau Montrose sought to flee the debt he had incurred with a trip west under the auspices of "missionary work," but no backers were buying it. Without buy-in, Esau couldn't afford to put the party together (see sidebar, "What They Carried," for the inventories that went into such a caravan west). The vampires were able to supply funding — stolen from their own sires, certainly a risky maneuver — provided that Montrose agreed to a partial Vinculum from all of the supporting Damned.

He did, and the Montrose Party formed. The Kindred had more to gain than just their own independence, of course. Financial rewards could be significant; in Kansas, they had little territory to call their own. In Oregon, they could freely gain over 300 acres apiece, and could certainly take more if they so chose. Plus, the lack of competition would be key. Thousands of mortal beings traveling westward with few Kindred to feed from them? That herd stood fat with unclaimed blood. Stories were already creeping in, though, of parties lost to the perils of uncharted wilderness - and foolishly, the Kindred believed themselves masters of the environment, enough so to keep the Montrose Party protected when necessary. So convinced were they of the brilliance of the plan that they were unprepared for what they found out in the deep dark nowhere of the trail.

agree to put aside our bonos to family, to lineage, to generation. We agree to put aside our bonds to compact and covenant. We agree to put aside our bonds to blood. Our own contract may end once our destination (the Oregon Country) is reached, but not before then, by penalty of meeting the wrath of the sun's own judicious face.

Signed on the Twentieth of April, Eighteen Hundred and Forty-Three,

Walter Brunvand

Greta Devenpeck

Samuel England

trenaryne Justice

Marilyn Roos

Orvin Pawlett

The shame of it is how well the Decree held up. All but one of us stayed true to the next. The only betrayer — Liam Finnegan, a suckling slave to his sire's Vinculum — was staked to

Finnegan, a suckling slave to his sire's Vinculum — was staked to his sire, Jaffre, and that wouldn't do. If the wicked spirits hadn't taken us, I think we might've even found harmony even after reaching our destination. Then again, I always was an optimist. Was.

The First Months

The Montrose Party left in mid-spring, hoping to get to Independence Rock in Wyoming by July 4th. The journey was about 2,000 miles, and was expected to take from four to six months in travel.

The first months – May into June – went fairly easily. Yes, tragedies occurred, but those that did resulted in far less than the standard "two in ten dead" statistics that assailed most settler parties. In late May, an accidental rifle discharge left Ainsley Profy disfigured and, five days later, dead. In early June, a little girl by the name of Abigail Johnson fell from the tung of the wagon and, according to a letter sent back east, "got mashed dead by the wheel and died then and there." Hans Lehner fell into a ravine, breaking his neck. And so forth.



THE THINGS THEY CARRIED

Most who undertook the many-months journey down the trail were poor. They had to sell what they could to claim supplies for the trip. The Montrose vampires helped their party at a distance, providing the herd enough supplies to keep them alive. What kinds of provisions, then, went with the settlers on the trail?

First, the wagon. The big Conestoga design didn't work traversing mountainous territory, so a smaller "prairie schooner" wagon saw heavy use. The wagon carried over 2,000 pounds, and was meant to float. But, because it held supplies, the settlers had to generally *walk* the entire distance. Only children rose in the wagons, typically. With the wagons? Not horses, but mules. About a dozen. Other animals made the trip. Oxen, mostly.

Then, tools: picks, shovels, axes, hammers, saws, spare wagon parts, rope, cooking utensils, hunting implements (guns, gunpowder, bows, arrows, traps).

Food: hardtack (hard biscuits also called "tooth crackers"), flour, sugar, rice, beans, dried fruit, coffee. (Coffee inadvertently saved lives; it necessitated boiling the water, killing deadly bacteria.)

Finally, spare luxuries: bibles, photos, journals, school books, mirrors, clocks, small furniture pieces, jewelry.

Not a lot of material for modern treasure hunters, really, but as the journey went on, the trail became home to so-called "leeverites," i.e. items that had to be discarded, usually luxury goods. (The name comes from the phrase, "Leave 'er right here.") Mormons using the trail would often gather up the discarded piles of leeverites and sell them to fund future trail journeys.



But the trail was home to happiness as well as tragedy. Joy Waldrop and Henry Stanton got married during the early weeks, and one Missus Caroline Silt bore twins along the way (Carlton and Charley). The weather was good; sure, they suffered under some terrible storms, but no tornadoes or floodwaters.

In those first two months, all seemed well. It seemed as if nothing could go wrong; the settlers could smell independence like a floral perfume caught on the westward wind.

Kight Trails

Traveling such a trail is no easy task for the nocturnal Kindred. The humans traveled during the day, when the vampires could not. The Kindred were forced to sleep in their own wagons as the caravan continued on during daylight hours, sealing themselves in tightly-bound leather canvases (think body bags) or using Haven of Soil to merge with the mud, dust and dirt for the night. Then, once darkness fell and the humans settled down to eat and sleep, the vampires would catch up, watch over the resting "herd," feed from those deemed appropriate by the contract, and wait till morning when they would once more proclaim how they'd "stay behind" to ensure that no danger was following the group.

Blood was not easy to come by, though. That many Kindred meant a lot of blood was necessary and feeding from the settlers had to be minimal (from a system standpoint, feeding incurs lethal damage, which can be more troubling during exposed conditions out in the middle of nowhere). Some vampires hunted and fed from animals. All brought some measure of blood contained in leather skins, but that wasn't a long-term solution by any means. The Kindred had small "lesser" herds among the party that sufficed for occasional feedings, and many had ghouls walking amongst the wagons, too. All that being said, they were still forced to keep on the edge of hunger at all times - a hard line to walk, for to starve means frenzy, but to feed wantonly means to weaken the herd and potentially spook the humans. To feel the Beast gnawing at one's insides, faintly growled whispers reminding the Kindred that it would be the easiest thing in the world to simply wade in, teeth bared, and gorge on the bounty of blood... that remained a nightly concern for the Damned of the Montrose Party. Once more, the alliance resulting from the Westport Decree provided a crucial backbone to the party's survival. Cooperation between the vampires – sometimes manifesting as five of the Damned held one of their hungry brethren down while he thrashed and snapped his teeth – was critical in keeping their monstrous natures from surfacing.

Still, the Kindred generally were helpful regarding the survival of the settlers during those early months. A simple thing such as keen eyesight and an ability to see more easily in the dark gave them an edge at hunting, and often the vampires would bring substantial kills (bear, elk, mule deer carcasses, all cleaned and far more significant than rabbits or ground squirrel) to the camp. Certain Disciplines make hunting fairly simple for the Kindred (Animalism to summon, Protean and Celerity to help with the hunt itself). Plus, they could watch for threats from bears, mountain lions and Indians, though the latter danger was generally more legend than anything else. Yes, periodically the Shoshone or Blackfoot Indians would stage a successful attack on a frontier party, but generally speaking the settlers brought disease, and the disease swiftly diminished native populations. It seemed a strangely ideal situation, the monsters protecting the herd. Little did they know, worse monsters lurked out in the deepest shadow.

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The Sta-au: The Cruel and Wicked Ones

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The Oregon Trail was not a single, easily marked path, especially in 1843. Weather made quick work of wagon routes, with wind, snow and rain washing them away or covering them up. And so it happened that the Montrose Party lost its way. The caravan was not wildly off-course, only missing the "true" trail by about 30 miles or so, but how can one know without road markers or landmarks? Having no way of getting their bearings or truly correcting course, they continued on as best they could.

It was into Wyoming when they first saw that they were being shadowed, both during the day and at night. Dozens of shades, watching them at a distance, never closer than 200 yards, always on the horizon, standing tall on the crest of a ridge or behind the trees of a thick forest. Indians, the settlers said. Must be. Panic settled in. When would an attack come? Wyoming was home to the Shoshone, and the settlers already knew all the (false) stories of Shoshone barbarism — cannibalism, beheading, necrophilia, worship of demons and other false gods. The Kindred, too, became concerned. They sent several of their number out to investigate, but the shadows always fled, leaving behind no sign of their passing. No broken branches, no footprints, only the faintest odor of gamy, rotting meat.

Five nights later, the shades sent their first emissary. It was an emaciated Indian, a young brave with jaundiced skin and hands stained dark from the juices of june-berries. His pupils were tiny dark points, and his mouth a nest of crooked, sharpened teeth. He was dead, most certainly one of the Damned, though not strictly of the Kindred (he bore no signs of clan or covenant and could not have belonged to their nocturnal society). He seemed to plead with them. The stink of death clung to his skin and his leather leggings. The Montrose Kindred thought to capture him, but he easily became a wolf and fled.

The next night, the shades sent their second emissary. The Kindred first thought him an Indian, too, for his dark skin was jaundiced in just the same way and he wore similar native adornments. But this one spoke Spanish. One of the Montrose Kindred, Henry Rudolph, spoke a little Spanish and attempted communication. The man said he was Mexican, and that he was dead. He warned them away from something, something that Rudolph translated roughly as the badlands, or "the Lands of the Dead." Once more, he seemed to be pleading with them, but his words conveyed some manner of undisclosed threat. They sought, as before, to capture the stranger, but he easily became mist and fled on the wind. The next night, another emissary. This one, a British man in torn garb, a long beard down to his bare and pale chest, his eyes haunted and his teeth filed to cruel points. This is what he said to the Montrose Kindred: "I am dead, as you are dead. They have sent me to speak with you, to tell you to turn back now before you enter the Land of the Worms. We are the Sta-au, the Cruel Ones, the Wicked Ones. Soon you'll enter our territory, our land, and we will not be able to stop what happens to you. The humans will die. You may, too. Some of you will be forced to join our lands, from which you can never return. Please, turn around now."

They asked him a few questions. They were plainly not all Indians? "No," he answered, "some of us were traders, furriers, but most are Blackfoot or Arapaho dog-eaters."

Where were these badlands, this so-called Land of the Worms? "You will know them by the skulls on the trees. Once you pass the skulls you will not return."

And how many among the Cruel Ones? "We are endless," he answered.

The Montrose Kindred thought only for a moment about the visitor's words. They were ready, this time. A wooden shaft pierced the emissary's chest from behind, and with an axe, they cut off his head and left his ashes by a sap-smeared evergreen.

Land of the Worms

Two days later, the settlers passed into a dry, desolate area. They walked over an empty creek-bed lined with the skulls of wolves and coyotes.

That night, the Montrose Kindred followed after awakening from their slumbers. They too crossed over the creek-bed. An hour later, they found the remains of the Montrose Party. Most were dead, torn asunder, great bites taken from their thighs and stomachs and necks. The oxen were slaughtered, heaped atop dead mules. Nothing was taken except some of the children and women.

What happened next? The few Kindred who survived don't precisely know. The attack was swift and brutal. The shades emerged with alarming speed. They had men like dogs — snarling, feral wild men harnessed on tight lengths of leather cords. Wooden arrows found swift purchase, punching through breastbone. Hatchets hurled toward skulls, splitting them easily. Most of the Kindred were slaughtered in minutes. Three escaped. Two were taken.

And that was the end of the Montrose Party.

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Legacy of the Montrose Party An initial examination of the Montrose Party by Kindred

An initial examination of the Montrose Party by Kindred scholars probably yields little legacy. Vampires wandered off into the great wilderness and perished. So it goes. What more is it than a warning? Much more, to those who care to examine it.

First, it's proof that the Kindred can work together. The Montrose Kindred were not from a single clan or covenant. But they had purpose, and, despite what they may have spoken aloud, they had *vision*. The Damned are often thought of as stagnant, as unchanging as a bleached bone on the baked desert ground, but here lies proof that the Kindred can have a genuine vision and be bound together to that ideal. One might even suggest that it was vaguely *human*-seeming, not at all the dream of monsters. Second, it's proof that power lies in youth. The Montrose vampires were all relatively young, and easily escaped the fetters of their sires, both through their own secret plotting and through the dull expectations of the elders themselves. In addition, they survived in a situation where most elders, grown comfortable in their routines — would perish. A nomadic trip through uncharted frontier? Death for most vampires.

Third comes the negative lesson, and is perhaps best summed up in a letter from Orrin Pawlett to Greta Devenpeck nearly a hundred years after the death of the Montrose Party: "Truth is, there's always a bigger monster." The Sta-au represent a *still* mysterious threat, an example that one's monstrousness can always be overshadowed by something far crueler and far stranger.



FLASHPOINT IN MODERN NIGHTS

Kindred remember the circumstances surrounding the Montrose Party — some revere those neonates and ancillae who braved the untraveled darkness to carve out a niche for themselves, while others revile them for their foolishness and impetuousness. Elements of this flashpoint are still evidenced in modern nights, though, and the following story hooks will help you use the echoes of the Montrose Party in your **Vampire: The Requiem** game:

- The Sta-au must have been exterminated by now, right? We've covered every inch of this country and none
 remain, surely? Wrong. This nation has huge tracts of land hardly touched by human hands (the author was
 recently in a place in Colorado where cell phone signals disappear and where satellites can't pull up an image or
 a map, and it's that way for miles in every direction; just think about how many humans, or creatures, can dwell
 in a single square mile). The Sta-au survive, having carved out strange blasted territories across the American
 West. Nomadic vampires or human travelers could easily run afoul of the mysterious Cruel Ones.
- Orrin Pawlett and Greta Devenpeck survived the ordeal of the Montrose Party. (Others may have, too, if you
 so decide certainly some were taken by and absorbed into the Cruel Ones.) To a point, both Pawlett and
 Devenpeck are now elders. Use them in a game as a reflection of the callous maturity that some Kindred grow
 into. Once, they were idealistic vampires, and now? Perhaps they're just greedy keepers, seeking personal power
 at any cost. They've possibly become that which they once hated (though maybe one still retains a rebel's edge,
 having joined the Carthian Movement).
- Tales of the Montrose Party survive, similar to the horror stories told of the Donner Party. Certainly the way they were killed remains potent. It seems as if cannibalism came into play, though that's not strictly true. Regardless, the ghosts of the Montrose humans are surely still out there. Esau Montrose himself may be a sad specter wandering the Wyoming badlands, howling and keening and preaching the words of the Worms (or maybe he was Embraced by the Sta-au, and is both more and less than a human ghost). Kindred looking to investigate the Montrose Party may have occasion to go digging up remnants of the lost wagons, and may even find some of the artifacts kept by the Montrose vampires themselves. Or what about the oft-repeated assertions that the Sta-au are keepers of some secret, ancient truth as well as the guardians of a resurrection relic known as the "Worm Pipe?"

Age and Treachery: The Great Rebellion (CE 1857)

To this night, I do not truly understand precisely what happened, or how. I have, in fact, spent whole decades of my unlife contemplating just that: attempting to piece together, if only for the sake of my own sanity, how things came to be the way they did, and if there was anything I could have done differently, or better. I do not know. I will probably never know.

If my memories do not deceive me - and yet they may, and that is the worst thing of all - I arrived in Bombay at the beginning of the summer monsoon season and was confined to the city by the intensity of the weather for the best part of a month. I was advised by those clanmates of mine whom I encountered to take no risks by going into the mountains or the jungle or the high desert during that season, for I would find nothing but unpredictable floods and earth too marshy to sleep in for hundreds of miles in all directions. I accepted the offer of hospitality that one of my clanmates extended to me and dwelt most of the early summer in his house at the edge of the city. There, I learned what he could teach me of the Kindred who called India their home.

Within their way of arranging rank, he had been named kshatriya, for his willingness to act as a guardian to travelers and for his martial skill, and this honor allowed him access to higher regions of the local ruler's court than others within the city could acquire. He arranged my introduction to the local raja, who was also of kshatriya caste though of a different clan - what we would call Daeva in the west - and she received me graciously, listened to my plans of travel, and advised me on how best to proceed with my goals. She also took counsel with her advisors and had me brought into the presence of the city's resident scholar-priest, who examined me closely for several nights, questioned me deeply concerning matters of faith and scholarship during that time, and, finally, declared me to be of brahmin caste for my scholarship, at least. I rather think he felt I would convert, given sufficient time to do so. I cannot actually say that I wouldn't have, or did not.

Toward the tail end of the monscon season, I set out from Bombay and headed southest on a course parallel to the coast, intent upon seeing those cities both ancient and modern that lay within Malabar and the Western Ghats - for there was much of our kind's history hidden in the monuments and temples along those shores. I intended to make a full circuit of the southern end of the Indian peninsula, but was somewhat unsure about my course beyond that. I desired greatly to travel to the interior, but those regions were, at this time, a hotbed of mortal warfare and greatly disordered as a consequence. It required the best part of five years to complete my journey south, for I lingered in several places where the company of fellow scholars was convivial, before rounding the southern-most end of the peninsula and coming to the city of Negapatnam. During that journey, I learned a great deal of the past and observed a great deal about the present situation among the native and western Kindred.

The Mughal rulers were scholars and the patrons of scholars, intellectuals in their own right, but much of what they patronized dismissed the legacy of earlier peoples, their cultures, their faith, their histories. It was the same among those Kindred who emulated the Mughal example, particularly in the north; in those places, much of the ancient history of our people had been wiped away in vandalism and self-righteousness. In the south, much had been lost as a consequence of petty internecine struggles and the battles against the Mughal invaders, the destruction less deliberate but no less terrible. I alternated between helpless fury and terrible sorrow over the waste of it all, and recorded what I could, packaging my materials and sending them back to Europe to an Agonistes colleague to add to her library. A plan was slowly developing itself in my mind, sketching itself in bare bones, on how to join together the rulers and scholars of the south to preserve our shared heritage and seek the sort of political stability that would allow that heritage to be studied and disseminated. In Negapatnam, I met the one whose support and belief I hoped would help me achieve that goal.

But something stopped us. Treachery. Betrayal. I... cannot remember Whose, or how. But we failed. I failed. And now all I have left is those old journals, the papers, the annotated maps. I want to go back there, and see What the passing years have wrought... and at the same time, I do not quite dare, lest I learn something about myself that would destroy all that I have become in the years since.

I do not know what to do.



Figure 4.3B

As you can see in the provided examples, the seals used by the Indian Kindred bloodlines both in antiquity and the modern nights are fundamentally identical to those found at archaeological dig sites related to the Indus Valley Civilization in Pakistan and northwestern India. Note the animal motifs; it is the understanding of this author that the Indian bloodlines associate themselves not only with particular patron gods from whom they claim immediate descent and the ritual attributes of those gods, but also with a usually edifying beast, which invariably appears on the seals of the elder vampires of the line in question. Linguistic representations are almost never in Sanskrit, instead being written in the as-yet-undeciphered Indus language in the classic mode, no more than seven characters in length. This author finds it a matter of deep personal intrigue that the Indian Kindred should maintain this tradition, even after the effective death of their "covenants." It inspires the question: are there elders among their number who actually speak and read this particular tongue?

The Mughal Empire Falls, the British Raj Rises

In 1505, a young Mongol war chief and ruler of the city of Kabul by the name of Zahir ud-din Muhammad began the 20-year series of wars that would finally unseat the internally unstable Sultanate of Delhi. The victor would eventually become known as Babur, "the Tiger," first of the Great Mughal Emperors of India, and for the next two centuries he and his successors carved out a territorial claim that stretched from Afghanistan, through the heartland of northern India, and deep into the southern reaches of the subcontinent.

India of the Mughals

At its 18th century height, the Mughal Empire ruled most of the Indian subcontinent and some portions of modern Afghanistan. This empire encompassed a vast territory of one and a half million miles, tens of millions of people, a bewildering profusion of ethnic and religious divisions, and at least a dozen internal provinces, all linked together by the central political mechanisms developed by Akbar the Great, the most far-sighted of all the Mughal Emperors. The heart of the Empire lay in northern India, in the territories originally conquered by Babur and his immediate successors, and included the provinces of Kabul, Qandahar, Lahore, Agra, and Delhi, all of which contained a city that had, at one time, been a capitol of the Mughal Empire. Much of the north practiced some form of Islam, not only the common forms of Sunni, Shiite, and Ismailia, but also Sufism and some of the stranger mystic variations that incorporated elements of Hindu philosophy.

The southern provinces — the largest of which were Golconda, Vijayangar, Bijapur, and Ahmadnagar — were conquered largely through the efforts of Akbar the Great's successors and tended to be Hindu in religious character and inclined in general toward periodic rebellion against their theoretical overlords. Along both coasts, the great European colonial powers — Portugal, England, France, and the Dutch — established trading posts and monopolies over the purchase of certain goods with the blessing of the Mughal rulers, who profited handsomely from these commercial alliances.

The Mughal Emperors also tended to vary considerably in their level of interest in their Indian possessions. Babur conquered northern India in an effort to prove himself worthy of the rule of Samarkand, possession of which was his ultimate, never-achieved goal. His son, Humayun, regarded India as an insignificant cultural backwater compared to the glittering Muslim cities of art and learning in central Asia, and he clearly perceived its natives as unwashed, barely lettered idolater barbarians. Babur's grandson, Akbar, held India to be the heart of his family's now-hereditary dominions and considered the Hindu Indians as his countrymen. Akbar pursued a rather eclectic course of religious education while simultaneously carrying out a series of military campaigns that vastly expanded the Empire for his successors. The imperial structures of power instituted under Akbar's rule persisted for decades after his death, holding together a vast and cosmopolitan empire whose ruling class consisted of imported Muslims (Turks, Persians, Afghans), native Indian Muslims, and Hindu rajputs integrated into the new order by conquest or diplomacy. All was not well, however.

The golden age of the Mughal Empire came and went. In between repeated succession issues and the subsequent wars that arose from them, political crises of assorted intensities kept the empire in a constant state of unrest: repeated revolts in the north, on-going strife in the perpetually rebellious south, the slow but steady bleed of authority away from the central government, the gradually dwindling imperial income. Soon, the Emperor ruled India in name only, directly controlling little more than he could see out the windows of his palace in Delhi. The governors of the increasingly independent provinces exerted more day to day control over matters of trade and war than the central government. Riddled with instability and insecurity, the Mughal Empire would technically continue to exist for another hundred and fifty years, in a state of slow decline.

To hear the British tell it, they ended up ruling the Indian subcontinent entirely by accident. In many ways, this perception has some validity. The British East India Company had a rather strict policy, famously articulated, against getting involved in land wars in Asia. In truth, it took an extraordinary confluence of circumstances and handily available war-making capacity to cause the British to abandon their diplomatic dealings with the tottering Mughal Empire and its assorted successor states and take up arms in defense of that most sacred of all rights: profit. And, naturally, the endeavor didn't even start with anything originating specifically in India. In Europe, the British (who traded in India) were at war with the French (who also traded in India), and both sides managed to heavily involve themselves in the bloody clashes of local potentates, essentially fighting several proxy wars through

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Sanātana Dharma - the Eternal Way of Hinduism

Developed over thousands of years, Hinduism is an ancient and complex system of religious philosophy and practice. Dozens of internal variations exist and few doctrines within the faith are truly universal, though there are some themes that manifest in broad observance. Those themes include *dharma* (the practice of caste-related ethics and duties), *samsara* (the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth), *karma* (action and reaction), *moksha* (liberation from the cycle of reincarnation) and the practice of the *yogas*, the paths to spiritual enlightenment. *Bakhti* is the devotion to a particular deity within the vast Hindu pantheon of gods and usually manifests through the observance of particular rituals, pilgrimages and festivals.

One of the most visible manifestations of Hindu practice is adherence to varna — the castes that separate society into four major divisions. The varna are, from highest to lowest: brahmin (teachers and priests), kshatriya (warriors, nobles, and rulers), vaishya (farmers, merchants, and businessmen), and shudra (servants and laborers). Beneath these four accepted varna are the pariahs, the casteless untouchables who are believed to exist outside of *dharma* and defile all that they come into contact with. Strict observance of varna requires individuals of higher castes to limit their contact with individuals of lower castes, because such contact is believed to be spiritually defiling and requires ritual purification afterwards, as well as adherence to the particular cultural duties and taboos associated with each caste. For example, a shudra who took up the arms of a warrior would be sinning greatly against the dharma of his caste, as would a kshatriya who lowered himself to sweep floors or till fields.

The Kindred of India observe varna, as well. Each clan possesses at least one bloodline that belongs to each caste, and some possess more than one. The Canda Bhanu, for example, are the brahmin bloodline of the Ventrue clan. The Amara Havana serve as the oldest and most powerful kshatriya bloodline of the Daeva. In many ways, varna takes the place of covenant within the culture of the Indian Kindred.



native succession skirmishes. Matters escalated rapidly from there.

Between 1750 and 1820, the British East India Company, with the aid of both mercenary troops paid for and trained by the Company itself and more traditional British regular military units, conquered all of Bengal, most of Mysore, and accomplished what no Mughal emperor had ever managed — breaking the power of India's independent southern rulers in a series of bloody wars. By 1820,

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huge swaths of India both north and south were under the direct administrative control of the British. Among the conquered proto-states of post-Mughal India this meant being taxed into penury to pay for all those wars of conquest, as well as to make them worth something more than bragging rights.

Initially, there was some noise among the newest conquerors of India of governing in accordance with the existing traditions and institutions of state sovereignty. "Orientalist" British administrators, fascinated with the rich and ancient culture of India, held to the idealistic notion that the British could govern according to the local customs and so win the adoration of the governed. By 1850, this idealism had faded and any possibility of the British ruling in a manner inoffensive to the locals had been crushed. Extensive corruption and maladministration by governors sent from England stirred up local trouble. Meanwhile, stirring up trouble seemed to be the explicit intent of Christian missionaries back home in England, who inveighed against the wickedness and depravity of the Hindu religion and agitated aggressively for the opportunity to evangelize against it. Eventually, that wish was granted.

More corrosive and insidious was the introduction of an educational program intended to create "a class of persons, Indian in color and blood, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." This intense scorn for and disparagement of not only the native Indian religion but also its languages, arts, literature, and sciences created not only a cultural chasm but immense outrage amongst both Indian Hindus and Muslims. Further adding to the numerous outrages heaped upon the natives, the British Raj adopted a policy of aggressively applying the doctrine of "right of lapse" to their new Indian possessions. In effect, the right of lapse allowed an imperial power to assume the sovereignty of a state whose ruler was either patently incompetent or who had died without an appropriate male heir. The principle was applied regardless of the existing Indian right of a reigning sovereign to adopt an heir if he possessed none of his body or of the rights of widows to accede to their husbands' thrones either in their own right or as regents for minor children. The final straw was the decision to annex the rich province of Awadh on the grounds of incompetent rule, an act that succeeded in demolishing what little trust remained in the rulers of Awadh's neighbors. This act solidified preexisting resentments, and served to heat those resentments to the boiling point of outright rebellion.

In 1857, the northern heartland of India erupted in what the British called "the Sepoy Uprising" and the "First War of Independence," and what everyone else called "the Great Rebellion." Confined largely to the north-western provinces (modern Uttar Predesh, northern Madhya Predesh, and the region around Delhi) and Awadh, the rebellion was relatively short but fierce, with abundant provocations provided by both sides. Both armies committed outright murder of civilians – including women and children. Indian troops massacred outnumbered British troops who had surrendered their arms and agreed to terms of expulsion from their garrisons. When the rebellious capitol of Delhi was retaken, much of the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar's immediate male line of succession faced summary execution. The British burned villages lining one of the major northern thoroughfares and hanged many of their inhabitants.

The major cities of Delhi, Cawnpore and Lucknow were all seized by the rebels and were all retaken by the British after a series of bloody, increasingly brutal sieges that saw massive material destruction and loss of life, and virtually unrestrained looting after their recapture. The few set-piece battles that were fought heavily favored the British forces. Despite their numerical inferiority, the British possessed a superior grade of discipline and considerably greater firepower. The rebels were, for their part, hampered by both a lack of centralized authority and long-standing internecine rivalries that prevented the development of such a body. The rebel armies, such as they were, were driven more by the personalities and individual agendas of a handful of charismatic leaders than by any totally coherent goals. After a series of demoralizing defeats - particularly at Jhansi, Kalpi, and Gwalior - that saw the most influential of the rebel leaders killed or forced into flight, the rebellion petered out into scattered pockets of resistance and guerilla actions. By 1859, the last gasps of the rebellion had been decisively crushed. The bloody retribution against the rebellious provinces had begun some time before.

The British desire for vengeance – driven by hyperbolic newspaper reports of atrocities committed against British, Christian civilians – swept the subcontinent in what the Indians called "the Devil's Wind." By the time it passed, hundreds of thousands had been executed or dispossessed for the actions of a few, in an orgy of retaliatory bloodshed powerfully underlaid by Victorian cultural chauvinism and outright racist loathing of the Indian people.

The Imperial Ambitions of the Damned

In 1510, the Portuguese claimed the port city of Goa, on the western coast of India, as their imperial territory and primary trading post on the subcontinent. Shortly thereafter, the first western vampire arrived in that city with the explicit mission of discovering what, if any, Kindred

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presence there was in the subcontinent. He no doubt felt himself extremely ill-used, having been sent to the barbaric hinterlands of the pagan East with a handful of ghouls and the fond wishes of his superiors that he not get himself unnecessarily killed. He was certainly not entirely enthusiastic, or particularly politic, in his approach to uncovering the native Kindred and introducing himself to them.

While the general society of Europe, and of European Kindred, was definitely divided into different classes, these divisions were primarily economic and social in nature. Among the Indian Kindred, social division was much more rigid, religious in origin and orientation, and reflected in their own covenant-like observation of caste structure. Rightly or wrongly, the ambassador was regarded, among the native Kindred, as no higher than vaishya caste in rank, due to his arrival in the company of merchants and traders. Thus, he could obtain no direct access to native Kindred of higher caste ranking, as such contact was considered defiling to the souls of the higher castes. His attempts to use those vaishya caste contacts he managed to acquire to obtain that access were at first politely rebuffed and then, when he grew more aggressive and obnoxious in his efforts, more forcefully rejected by the kshatriya who served Goa's Kindred prince. He fled home to Lisbon in fear of his unlife and immediately issued reports to his superiors in both covenant and clan that the Kindred of India were incomprehensible heathen savages.

This perception filtered out from the Portuguese Grémio de Corajoso (see p. 136) and colored the attitudes of the Dutch, French and British Invictus who involved themselves in matters of trade and governance, and to the Lancea Sanctum, whose interest in India and its Kindred was of a more spiritual character. Meanwhile, other Kindred were pouring into India's newly opened ports who owed no allegiance to the goals of either the Invictus or the Lancea Sanctum. These newcomers were often unaligned adventurers seeking their fortunes in a new land as-yet free from the calcified medieval power structures of Old Europe, or were scholarly adherents to the Circle of the Crone attempting to contact the ancient vampires of the East in an effort to seek more knowledge of the Mother of Monsters and her origins. The native vampires of India were somewhat more inclined to respond graciously to such overtures: several Crone scholar-



Figure 4.3E

It was not uncommon, in the days of antiquity and occasionally into the modern era, for elders of the Indian Kindred to commission statues of themselves in the guise of their bloodline's "patron deity," wielding that deity's particular divine attributes. In this case, the adaptation appears to derive its symbology from at least two deities one benevolent, one warlike

priests were ranked *brahmin* for the purposes of easing interaction with native scholar-priests. Unaligned vampires were, unless they proved themselves unworthy of the honor, generally considered *kshatriya* or *vaishya*. Proving oneself unworthy of the honors bestowed by the natives, however, carried a heavy price: the immediate revocation of caste-rank and reassignment to *pariah* status, which meant that no one – native or westerner – would engage in even the shallowest social or professional interaction lest the dishonor taint by association. The Lancea Sanctum arrived through the trading territories claimed by both the French and the British, in two separate waves, and caused a stir among both native and western Kindred. By dint of diplomacy enacted through appropriately ranked neutral third parties, many individual Sanctified managed to achieve *brahmin* rank and set to work on missions of conversion.

The advent of the British Raj brought a certain degree of stability to the situation for both Kindred and kine, but it remained to be seen what use would be made of that stability. The Lancea Sanctum had been making slow but steady in-roads among the disaffected ranks of low-caste vampires for decades, but their overall forward progress had slowed to a trickle. The Invictus, whose mercantile interests were well-served by the rapacity of anyone who held the reins of power, preferred the British to a patchwork mess of local potentates and doddering dictators. The representatives of neither covenant were entirely pleased with the situation: the Indian Kindred and their strange, insular culture were immensely resilient, the result of dwelling for centuries in a country prone to being invaded and conquered, and while certain westerners had attained a level of acceptance and access to the courts of the local rulers, such alliances were few and far between. Additionally, the native Kindred operated far more openly than the Invictus could stomach, not only considering themselves to be the literal descendants of gods and demons but openly accepting the worship of the kine as their due. Friction between the Kindred princes of Indian cities and Invictus newcomers was rife, simmering on the edge of bloodshed. The European Invictus and Lancea Sanctum Kindred took counsel among themselves and with their native converts and a rough agreement was made to watch the native Kindred closely for signs of weakness or internal instability that could be used to break their hold on the territories they ruled.

Conflict Among the Castes

As malignant fate would have it, such an opportunity eventually presented itself: unrest within the *kshatriya* bloodlines, occasioned by several powerful elders retiring to the sleep of ages simultaneously and leaving behind relatively unseasoned successors to rule in their names, erupted into open inter-caste conflict. Among those elders to retire was the *Chhatrapati* – the *kshatriya* of *kshatriyas*, the foremost elder of the entire warrior caste – and he did so without naming a successor from among the circle of his senior attendants and advisors. Being both proud and honorable, negotiations among the *kshatriya* elders to settle the *Chhatrapati*'s succession began civilly enough. Being vampires, however, the civility rapidly declined when no one was prepared to yield an inch.

The Amara Havana, the eldest and most powerful kshatriya bloodline of the Daeva, in particular refused to bend knee to the claims of any bloodline younger or, as they put it, less competent to rule than their own, to the vast insult of their contemporaries among the Mekhet and Nosferatu kshatriya. No one quite knows, in the modern nights, who was responsible for ordering or executing the first blows of the ensuing conflict, and the origination mattered little at the time. Blood flowed in the streets by night as the Amara Havana and the Rakshasa, a kshatriya bloodline of the Nosferatu, made clear their differences in perspective on the dharma of rulership with knives, claws and murderous sorcery. Subtly encouraged by Invictus provocateurs and native agents willing to betray their own people for the promise of eventual reward, the kshatriya internal conflict widened, eventually drawing much of the caste in the southern principalities into what was rapidly becoming an all-out blood feud. The brahminranked members of the Lancea Sanctum, for their part, marshaled their forces and prepared to strike when the time was right.

Meanwhile, a Kindred social movement was developing around the theory that India was one of the ancient cradles of vampire culture, perhaps the origin place of all the first vampires, and that efforts should be taken to preserve what remnants remained of that early history. This movement, calling itself the Southern Cities Alliance, encompassed the rulers of all but two of the major southern Indian cities and a considerable number of western Kindred who shared its views and goals. The Alliance undertook considerable efforts to enlist the sympathy of the Invictus, who only capitulated in order to obtain greater access to the courts of the Allianceaffiliated princes, and to at least negotiate a pact of mutual nonaggression with the Lancea Sanctum. The outbreak of the kshatriya inter-caste blood-war was a major trial to the young Alliance, who attempted, unsuccessfully, to intervene diplomatically. They also made overtures to several princes of northern cities in an effort to enlist their assistance in ending the blood-war as well as to bring them into the Alliance itself. A number of the Alliance's most influential diplomats and proponents were actually in the north when the Great Rebellion began, generating great consternation as reliable communications were cut. While the attention of the mortal political administration and military force was directed northward to quell the rebellion, the equally vicious kshatriya civil conflict spiraled beyond the control of anyone involved in it or outside it, consuming the streets of the southern cities by night. The Rakshasa were broken by it. The Amara Havana and the Ananta Naga (the principal kshatriya bloodline of the Mekhet) conspired to assassinate a dozen Rakshasa elders, plunging the bloodline into internal chaos, and then turned their knives on each other.

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The Lancea Sanctum, who had agreed to mutual nonaggression with the Alliance's membership, dropped any pretense of adherence to that commitment and struck, using their own forces and also a particularly skilled selection of mercenaries and assassins. Within weeks, the Alliance had been beheaded. All but one of its native member princes was killed or driven into torpor. The sole survivor, the ruler of Kolhapur, fled north with his brood to take shelter with his blood-kin. The kshatriya involved in their own inter-caste conflict were first stunned and then enveloped in a greater struggle simply to survive. Their power in the south was broken in a series of vicious nocturnal battles, the survivors crawling away to lick their wounds and rebuild the foundations of their caste as best they could. Afterwards, the Invictus, with its hand-selected puppets and assorted individuals willing to betray their own countrymen to obtain wealth and power, flowed into the resultant vacuum. The Lancea Sanctum, having done a good bit of the dirty work to obtain that result, were almost entirely frozen out of the benefits deriving from it, in a last bit of treachery on the part of their erstwhile allies. Their mission evacuated the last of its membership in 1880 and never again enjoyed a substantial stake in the fate of the Indian subcontinent.

The legacy of the Southern Cities Alliance

The Southern Cities Alliance left behind a bitter legacy for almost everyone who survived its rise and fall. A great experiment in cooperation between rival covenants and Kindred of wildly divergent cultures, its failure left deep scars on those who promoted it and ultimately did those who opposed it no favors, either. The native Kindred of India withdrew from contact with their western kin for more than a century, struggling to reconstruct their broken society. Even the most forbearing among them regarded the ultimate fall of the Alliance as a base betrayal aided and abetted by ignorance and incompetence. Many of the kshatriya bloodlines in particular vowed to never again be so trusting of outsiders and to avenge themselves on those who had abused and betrayed that trust in the first place. Quite possibly the only positive outcome of the entire disaster was the end of the kshatriva blood-war. as the Rakshasa and the Amara Havana buried their differences and made a common cause of plotting and executing extensive, creative vengeance against the Invictus on the Indian subcontinent, a process that has recently begun following the western vampires home.



FLASHPOINT IN MODERN NIGHTS

India is no longer a troublesome provincial backwater of the vast British Empire. It is now a rising power in the world, a nuclear power, an economic power, one of the most densely populated nations on Earth, and the Indian Kindred can no longer be seen as savages sitting on top of a fortune in strategic mineral rights. Uses for this flashpoint include, but are not limited to:

- Vengeance is a dish best served bloody, and the kshatriya of the Indian Kindred have had little to do but rebuild their strength and meditate on the essence of karmic retribution for the ills visited upon them by the Kindred of the West. Already a number of Indian Kindred, who were neonates or ancillae 150 years ago, are now influential elders with substantial power of their own. Modern modes of transportation and communication have opened up avenues of reprisal previously closed to all but the most reckless. Certain factions of the Rakshasa have ventured out to take the measure of what their former oppressors have become and have returned with pleasing news.
- On the other hand, many young Indian Kindred are of a more cosmopolitan mindset than their elders. The Carthian Movement is the most popular nontraditional covenant among their numbers, and many feel that chewing over the inequities of the past does nothing but perpetuate a cycle of violence and folly. Similarly, young western Kindred who find cause to visit India are often treading in the footsteps of earlier scholars, seeking the ancient origins of the Kindred. Such scholars often find common cause with their fellow youngsters and, between them, they have as much potential to bring about peace between their elders as war — provided they can get anyone to listen to them.
- All is not well within the ranks of the Indian Kindred, either. The *Chhatrapati* was one of the elders deliberately
 marked and sought out for destruction by the Invictus, as were his senior advisors. Those who were not destroyed
 or forced into torpor by the blood-war were assassinated by the invaders. Since those nights, the *kshatriya* have
 lacked a single, guiding intelligence, a true leader to best manage their actions; some among the caste think that
 such a leader is needed before any further efforts are made against the westerners. Naturally, who that leader
 might be is a topic of controversy, to say the least.

FEEDING THE FIRE: THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION (CE 1791)

I remember what it was like in Saint Domingue as a mortal child. I wasn't supposed to watch the ritual, not until I was older. But I never could resist climbing up to my hiding place in the brightly painted old mahogany tree, and watching from afar as Papa danced by the flickering, golden light of the fire, splendid in his tall top-hat and long, black tail-coat. From the safety of my perch, I sat chewing the sweetness from the tough fibers of a stolen piece of sugarcane, listening to the beautiful, wild chanting rise into the night from the shabby, makeshift peristyle far, far below. Mama always said that the gods reside in the trees. Maybe that's why I always felt safe there.

Papa was a powerful Houngan, and that night he was calling on the Baron Samedi to grant him a favor. Mama had had an accident while she was working in the mill, and the long gash on her leg was angry and red, swollen with yellow pus. Mama was laying by the fire, her brown skin burning hot as the flames beside her, eyes rolled back into her head. Many others had gathered that night to attend the ritual and make their own requests of the Lord of the Dead. They brought with them gifts for the loa: grilled peanuts, black coffee, cigars, bread, and liquor flavored with spicy peppers all the more valuable for how difficult it was to obtain.

As the drums echoed across the clearing, Papa began the ritual, falling into a trance to lend his body and voice to the Baron. I saw Papa's limbs go rigid, but before the loa could fully enter his body, Master Apollinaire arrived with the Changed.

Master Apollinaire, white as a maggot, rushed at the gathered slaves from the rows of sugarcane, and cut through the crowd like a bloody reaper. With him were dozens of others who used to work beside us in the fields. I watched from above, frozen in place, unable to move, unable to look away from the horror unfolding below a helpless human child. Master Apollinaire and his brethren ripped open the throats of our friends, our family, drained them of blood and carelessly tossed aside their desiccated bodies. Hennrick was there. He used to tell us stories before he went away to work in the plantation house. His dark eyes used to twinkle mischievously in the firelight, but now his eyes were cold and dead. I watched him descend upon Mama. He drained her just short of death, then snapped her neck.

It was Master Apollinaire who finally murdered Papa. As Papa bent over Mama's broken body, Master Apollinaire fell upon him, and sank his fangs into his vulnerable neck. From far above, I thought I saw Papa's eyes connect with mine as the light dyed away. The Baron had him, now.

Master Apollinaire took Papa's top-hat and mockingly placed it upon his own head before tossing the corpse into the fire. Then he turned to Papa's special box, the one with the intricate veves drawn like pale spiderwebs across its surface, where Papa kept all of his most valuable and sacred treasures. Master Apollinaire took Papa's box and left with the Changed, leaving dozens of drained corpses behind to be buried by the broken, weeping slaves who still remained.

From that night forward I vowed to Baron Samedi that I would work toward taking back Papa's treasures, even if I had to take the darkness into myself to gain the strength to do so. I learned the mysteries of Vodoun, and when I became one of the Changed I took back what was stolen from my people. When the fires of the revolution burned in Haiti, I was ready. We all were.

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FETISH EXHIBIT - MARCH 15 TO MAY 18

Gatekeepers of Ghede were known to drive wooden nails into a doll, image or likeness of their enemies. With proper ritual and sacrifice, a foe's likeness could be "staked," rendering him paralyzed until the nail was removed.

THE NEW ORLEANS HISTORIC VODOUN MUSEUM

I found this doll in the cellar of the plantation house. I was able to salvage it before the fires came. It's one of the first distinctly vampiric items in my collection, originally belonging to Bokor Apollinaire of the Gatekeepers (now allegedly deceased). This peristyle, little more than a flat, tin roof supported by a number of well-placed wooden posts, is illustrative of a typical site for Vodoun ritual. The center post of the peristyle, the porteau mitan, is perhaps the most important feature. Loa are said to rest in the porteau mitan until they are summoned to the Vodoun ritual by chanting and the beating of drums. A small distance from the peristyle, a bonfire is kept burning in honor of the loa of the Vodoun pantheon, and trees surrounding the entire area are painted and decorated with the colors and symbols of the gods.

Opposite Page:

From the personal essays of Mambo Brigitte of the Ordo Dracul, honorary curator of the New Orleans Historic Vodoun Museum, and owner of the largest known private collection of Kindred-related Vodoun artifacts in the United States. This particular porteau mitan depicts the Kindred symbol for the "goat without horns," a euphemism for human sacrifice. While sacrifice of animals (such as pigs, goats, chickens and pigeons) was common among mortal practitioners of Vodoun, it was Kindred Houngans who sacrificed humans to the log in return for divine favors.

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A New Religion The First Nave

Sometime during the 18th century, a wave of Kindred settlers broke on the sandy shores of French-controlled Saint Domingue (modern-day Haiti). Ravenous and exhausted from the lengthy voyage from Europe across a bloodless salt water wasteland, they emerged from their desiccated fleets and into a land of plenty. Scattered across the fertile countryside, like fiery motes in the night, were isolated coffee and sugar plantations, and the existing mortal system of slavery was ripe for exploitation by the Damned.

A number of these vampiric nomads were originally members of the Lancea Sanctum that was prevalent throughout much of Europe at the time. Many were expelled due to beliefs that strayed from the accepted norm, or were simply seeking to expand their territory. Others were vampires who felt the toll of the Thirty Year War, which had shaken loose foundations in Kindred society, and had fled to Haiti in search of a fresh start.

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Kindred of the first wave were typically wealthy by kine standards, and the aristocratic undead quickly and easily integrated themselves into society, often as plantation owners. Slavery was an accepted norm, and it was not uncommon for a coterie to band together and collectively administrate a plantation, masquerading as a legitimate business by day and showing its true nature as a hedonistic, bloody abattoir by night. Extreme brutality against slaves was common and accepted in Haiti, even among the kine: a slave-cook who spoiled dinner might be thrown alive into an oven without a second thought. A few dozen missing slaves was certainly not cause for alarm.

The Haitian Gold Age

A Blending of Cultures Haitian plantations differed from North American plantations in one key element: the coffee and sugar plantations of Saint Domingue required vast amounts of labor. As a result, the mortal slave population outnumbered their European Kindred (or mortal, for that matter) masters by a terrifying margin. The slaves, also, by their sheer numbers were able to retain much of their culture and establish more-or-less independent social systems. Between days of back-breaking labor, and nights spent in wide-eyed sleeplessness scanning the darkness for the sinister creatures picking off workers one by one, it was only natural that the enslaved cleave ever more closely to their spiritual beliefs. Many slaves turned to Vodoun: a belief system derived from the traditional West African religion, Yoruba, in which they found comfort and solace from the nightly horrors confronting them.

I remember those nights, clear as lead glass the terror we feel back then. So tired. Beaten down from the heat of the sun, blisters weeping on our ruined hands and feet. But we don't dare sleep. We huddle together, with our eyes turned wide to the blackness. We know they was out there, out in the night, pale figures rustling through the canes. And the wailing we hear from the mills, our brothers, our sisters, our children... Ghede help us.

In Saint Domingue during the 1700s, slavers brought their human cargo from West Africa in droves. Mortal investors and landowners, vastly outnumbered by those they held in bondage, remained either unconcerned or unaware of the long-term consequences of their actions, believing instead that an overpopulation of slaves was the key to wringing more profits from the overworked land. Newly established colonies of Kindred actively supported and reaped the benefits of this practice. The Damned of Haiti relied heavily upon their mortal slaves, both as a means to support their ongoing appearance as a legitimate business, and as an easy, captive herd on which to feed. By the end of the 18th century, Kindred colonies in Saint Domingue were solidly established and new traditions began to emerge from this new, indolent lifestyle. While the vast majority of slaves were field workers that the vampires considered nothing but prey, slaves who worked more closely with their Kindred masters were often turned into ghouls. These ghouls performed necessary duties during daylight hours, while their masters slept in the solid safety of their lavish, French-colonial plantation houses. They became specialized household servants and even slave drivers themselves. Eventually, it became common practice to gift slaves who had proven

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themselves particularly useful or deserving in some way with the Embrace.

The perceived need to build broods and essential bases of power further fueled the practice of Embracing from the slave population. Haiti during the 18th century was a region in which no true elders held sway. In this virgin territory, the Beast-driven need to dominate the other predators fueled the desire to Embrace. Those with the most followers held uncontested authority, and any minor conflict of interest was reason enough to sire a new childe. Caught in a frenzied race to obtain dominance, European Kindred colonists often Embraced carelessly and with little regard to the worthiness of the childe, endeavoring to bring personal interests to the forefront while simultaneously stomping out opposition through sheer force of numbers. They also forced their own childer to Embrace others, thus personally avoiding the strengthening of the Beast that creating chider brings.

It was through this practice that neonate Kindred borne from West African slaves quickly grew to outnumber their masters, resulting in a union of West African culture with European Kindred tradition. This amalgamation of cultures gave rise to a localized covenant centered on the traditional belief system brought to the new world by those held in bondage: Vodoun.

A Merging of Beliefs Mortal slaves transported to Haiti from West Africa

Mortal slaves transported to Haiti from West Africa brought with them the religion of Vodoun, a syncretistic belief system in which they sought solace and comfort. Practitioners of Vodoun believe, in accordance with widespread African tradition, that there is one God, or *Bondye* (taken from the French *Bon Dieu*), who is the creator of all. However, Bondye abandoned his creation, so worshipers instead turn to the spirits, or loa, for help and for guidance. As slaves were Embraced into Kindred society, they continued to look to the teachings of Vodoun for answers, as they had done in their mortal lives.

Born from African ethnic groups that readily adapted foreign elements into their culture, Vodoun is unique as a religion because it is inclusive. Kindred Houngan and Mambo (priests and priestesses of Vodoun, respectively) were more than willing to integrate rituals from other belief systems into their own – believing it safer to err on the side of inclusion rather than risk offending higher powers. A Catholic influence is especially apparent in Vodoun iconographic forms, not only due to this practice of inclusion, but also because of mortal laws banning all traditional West African religious practices and imposing Catholicism as the only authorized religion in the colony.

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THE LOA

The Loa are spirits of divine origin who serve as intermediaries between Bondye, the Creator (who is both distant from and disinterested in the lowly affairs of creatures that crawl upon the earth), and practitioners of Vodoun. Loa are not necessarily West African in origin, due to the additive nature of Vodoun as a whole, but can be representative of a blending of saints and angels, devils and divinities from any culture that the religion has come into contact with over the years. Each Loa is a distinct being with his or her own drastically varying personal likes and dislikes, sacred rhythms, songs, dances, veves (ritual symbols) and related rituals. They expect to be served and respected, rather than simply prayed to, and may take it upon themselves to grant favors in return for loyal service.

In certain Kindred Vodoun Ceremonies, the loa are summoned by the houngan (priest) or mambo (priestess) to take part in the ritual, receive offerings and grant requests. The loa possesses the ritualist during the ceremony, and may grant that individual powers of terrifying magnitude if the offering is sufficient, or if helping a particular practitioner furthers their own mysterious agenda.



Integration and totality are paramount in the Vodoun conception of the universe. All creatures, Kindred included, have their necessary place within it, under the ever-watchful eyes of the loa. As a result, neonate practitioners of Vodoun readily incorporated existing vampiric belief systems into their religion. It became customary for the practices of Crúac and Theban Sorcery to be integrated into existing Vodoun ritual, as both the Lancea Sanctum and the Circle of the Crone were present and Embracing West African slaves (the fact that neonates were then forced to Embrace others only sped the process). Vodoun was an instigator for an inclusive blending of vampiric beliefs the likes of which had never before been witnessed.

At first, the West African tradition of Vodoun was overlooked or simply seen as no cause for concern among the European Kindred of the first wave. Acolytes saw Vodoun simply as another means of reaching a similar end, and some were even interested in exploring the religion's potential in regard to Crúac. While Kindred of the Lancea Sanctum were keen on converting the practitioners of Vodoun, the oldest and wisest of the Sanctified were willing to allow the young time to find their own way to the Soldier – at least for a while. It could take a childe decades to come to terms with undead existence, and vampires have all of eternity to discover the one, real, truth.

Houses of Haiti

The struggle for dominance in Haiti, among Kindred of the first wave, gave rise to a number of independent coteries. As Kindred carelessly raced to build their broods from the slave population, and the practices of Vodoun infiltrated Kindred tradition, competing groups of vampires hunted and killed neonates nearly as quickly as they were sired. Coteries were often recognized by the unique method they employed to kill their enemies.

The Servants of Agoué

The Servants of Agoué were a coterie of vampires who revered Agoué, the Vodoun loa of the sea. Servants of Agoué made their havens on cargo ships transporting slaves from West Africa to Haiti during the 18th century. They were tyrannical slave lords, preying on their human cargo by night, and using ghouls to sell slaves in the markets by day. The existing brutality of the transatlantic slave system provided an easy means of obscuring the existence of the coterie. Even among mortal slavers, extreme violence was usual (including rape, murder and torture) and went utterly unpunished, as slaves were considered personal property. Servants of Agoué were known to perform ritualistic sacrifices to their patron loa, in exchange for favors and calm seas.

Enemies of the Servants were often sacrificed to Agoué. Kindred were bound with heavy chains and leaden weights, loaded onto small rafts, and set adrift at sea. If the raft remained afloat until morning, the vampire was believed to have been deemed unworthy by Agoué, and was consumed by the light of the sun. If the raft sank, the Servants believed that Agoué had accepted the sacrifice: the ill-fated Kindred was trapped on the ocean floor, away from the unlife-sustaining blood of mortal prey and forever distant from sunlight and final death. Eventually, the incarcerated vampire would fall into torpor in the murky depths of the sea, where, as the Servants believe, they will sleep until such time as Agoué reawakens them to serve.

The Keepers of the Lutin

Expelled from the Lancea Sanctum due to their strange beliefs, the Keepers of the Lutin were a coterie of extremist vampires originating from Kindred of the first wave. Believing themselves chosen by God to pass judgment upon the undead, the Keepers were known to collect and care for Kindred who were Embraced as children. Feral and insane in their unlife, these orphaned "children" were called the Lutin (taken from the term for the ghost of an unbaptized child in Haitian Vodoun).

The Keepers believed the Lutin were the very essence of innocence and purity, and were known to throw their enemies to the starving children as a test of faith. If a vampire thrown to the Lutin survived a night among the children, her purity in the eyes of God was proven and she was permitted to go free as one of the pure. More likely, however, the starving children would quickly drain the unlucky vampire thrown into their midst, diablerizing her soul in the process. The Keepers believed that the diablerized soul was purified through the children – evil consumed by the innocent.

The Plague Bringers

The Plague Bringers were an unusual coterie among Kindred of the first wave. Members were easily recognized by the weeping sores that covered their bodies. The mysterious disease that cursed these vampires was believed to have been passed to them from Sousson-Pannan, a monstrous loa who was afflicted with similar disfiguring sores. These lesions were thought to be a blessing and a mark of favor among the followers of the loa, and those who bore the "boils of Sousson-Pannan" were said to be granted supernatural abilities along with their disfigurement.

The Plague Bringers were known to infect their enemies with the disease they carried. While the followers of Sousson-Pannan suffered no ill effects from their condition (aside from cosmetic damage), the sickness rapidly consumed those they infected. An infected vampire would quickly succumb to Final Death unless Sousson-Pannan himself descended and allowed the afflicted one to continue unlife as a carrier of the plague.

Sousson-Pannan himself was said to drink liquor and blood. As such, the Plague Bringers often made their havens on sugar plantations where sugarcane could be distilled into rum and mixed with the blood of slaves. This elixir was believed to bring the strength of Sousson-Pannan into the drinker and heighten existing supernatural abilities already granted by the loa. The rum produced by plantations also served as a popular medium of exchange that helped to promote the practice of slavery.

The Gatekeepers of Ghede

The Gatekeepers of Ghede were followers of the loa Ghede (also associated with Baron Samedi). Ghede is the lord of death and the keeper of graveyards. He controls the eternal crossroads that mark the paths between life and death. The Gatekeepers of Ghede were a cryptic coterie of Kindred with unusual supernatural abilities that they claimed were granted to them by the Baron himself. Followers were said to have the ability to converse with the dead, and were rumored to create zombies from mortal corpses to attend as undead, speechless servants entirely without free will.

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A zombi created by a gatekeeper of Ghede was completely under the control of the Bokor (evil sorcerer) who created it. A zombi created by Vodoun rite was rumored to be recognizable by its listless gait and empty, soulless eyes. It can hear, possibly talk, and is said to be entirely without memory of its mortal life until its mouth touches salt. The taste of salt is believed to bring the zombi back to its senses, and it will hurry back to the cemetery to return to its grave. There were a number of strange practices unblemished, p within living sla Saint Domingu greater than th An uprising was see the signs. T control under The second of Vodoun bef

salt. The taste of salt is believed to bring the zombi back to its senses, and it will hurry back to the cemetery to return to its grave. There were a number of strange practices believed to prevent a person from being brought back from the dead as a zombie. Due to the Vodoun belief that a corpse must answer to its name before it can be raised from its grave, the lips of the dead were often sewn together so that the corpse could not speak. Needles with broken eyes were also buried with the corpse, should the first safeguard fail. It was believed that the dead would spend eternity in a futile attempt to thread them.

The sticking of wooden nails into a doll, an image or likeness of an enemy was a device that the Gatekeepers were known to use on their enemies. With proper ritual and sacrifice, an opponent's likeness could be "staked," rather than the enemy himself, which rendered the foe paralyzed until the nail was removed. Traditionally, Gatekeepers would then string up the helpless victim at a crossroads to be consumed by the rays of the morning sun. If an enemy was less fortunate, or particularly offensive, any number of brutalities could be performed on the paralyzed body of the unlucky Kindred before the relative peace of Final Death.

The Revolt

The Second Wave

Near the end of the 18th century a second wave of Kindred settlers arrived in Haiti from Europe, representing the infamous, combined force of the traditional Lancea Sanctum and the Invictus. It is widely believed that this second wave was brought about due to news from those Kindred of the first wave who continued to remain faithful to the European tradition. When it became clear that the old ways were being threatened by the emergence and burgeoning force of a new Vodounist covenant in Haiti, there was an outcry for support from the old world. Indeed, the perceived threat was so great that for the first time, elder vampires were known to have stalked the shores of the island, poised to annihilate the threat to the European way of unlife.

Burning Down the Plantations Even the mortals could feel a growing, quivering ten-

Even the mortals could feel a growing, quivering tension, like insects seething beneath a thin membrane of unblemished, pale skin. The festering hatred that swelled within living slaves was coming to a head throughout all of Saint Domingue, and the fact that their numbers were far greater than those of their masters did not escape them. An uprising was clearly imminent to any who chose to see the signs. The second wave of Kindred would regain control under the cover of mortal revolution.

The second wave was intent on destroying the threat of Vodoun before it spread from the isolated shores of Saint Domingue. In a country already ripe for a revolution, it was easy for Kindred of the second wave to stoke the fires of unrest among the mortal slave population. Indeed, the masses of mortal slaves only needed the smallest push. A few well-placed mortals, under the control of the second wave, were all that was needed to start an all-out civil war.

Also fueling the fire were a number of slaves-turned-Kindred, many of whom still harbored unforgotten hatred from their mortal lives. These Kindred were more than willing to turn on their sires. Kindred aligned with the European tradition fled the island, as the whispers of rebellion grew to a wild cacophony.

No one knows for certain if or when the majority of the mortal slave population became aware of the true nature of their undead masters. But on August 22, 1791, the thousands of mortal slaves rose up to overpower their oppressors, living and undead alike. The Damned were dragged out of their havens by mobs of rebelling slaves, only to be consumed by the light of day. Utter chaos reigned, and the fires of revolution burned bright and fierce throughout all of Saint Domingue.

In the eyes of the kine, the Haitian revolution was entirely driven by the passions of women and men who had been enslaved for most, if not all, of their lives. These were people who didn't simply desire liberty, they wanted vengeance. Over the following weeks, the Haitian slaves burned every plantation throughout the fertile regions of Haiti and executed every oppressor they could find. Many of the Kindred who survived fled to the relative safety of New Orleans, or other nearby seacoast towns. Those who remained in Haiti after the revolution were systematically destroyed by Kindred of the second wave.

The legacy of the Haitian Revolution

The island of Saint Domingue during the 18th century provided a backdrop for an unprecedented blending of cultures and beliefs, giving rise to a number of notable coteries whose bloodlines still exist tonight. As the fires of rebellion burned, Kindred fled from Haiti and scattered throughout the world, taking the religion of Vodoun with them. Many found a new haven in the infamous City of the Damned, New Orleans.

Kindred practice of Vodoun occurs tonight in many forms, from the archetypal Houngan lurking in the murky swamps of Louisiana bayous to the aristocratic socialite ensconcing a lavish, secret altar in a concealed chamber. While so many other belief systems fear new and unknown ideas, Vodoun merely warps and absorbs new Kindred rituals, cultures and traditions into itself, becoming ever stronger for its inclusiveness.



FLASHPOINT IN THE MODERN NIGHTS

The Haitian Revolution was just over 200 years ago. Kindred still feel its effects and those of the blending and dispersing of cultures and beliefs that preceded it. Indeed, that fateful summer night in 1791 is vivid in the minds of many of those who survived the fires and fled the island. Consider the following story hooks to help bring the echoes left by the Kindred settlers of Haiti into a chronicle set in the modern nights:

- To many Kindred, especially those aligned with the Sanctified, the practice of Vodoun is a very real threat. (Notably, Prince Vidal of New Orleans is particularly outspoken against practitioners of the religion, due to the fact that he is a practicing Catholic as well as a member of the Lancea Sanctum.) How does an established governing power respond when threatened by powerful, mysterious Kindred practitioners of Vodoun? Consorting with the loa may grant an undead Houngan formidable abilities, but at what price? Can the spread of vampiric Vodoun be stopped? Should it be stopped, or can these Kindred become useful allies?
- In the remote, maritime town of Anywhere, USA, one might hear rumors of salt-encrusted rogue vampires who
 reek of the ocean, and who have launched a series of attacks on mortals and Kindred alike, with no regard to
 maintaining the Masquerade. When confronted, the strange Kindred attack any who stand in their way, and say
 nothing but, "The will of Agoué be served." Where do these Kindred come from? Can they be made to regain
 their senses, or should they be destroyed without question? What prompted these foolhardy attacks? Have the
 Servants of Agoué returned, or is this the work of the notorious loa himself?
- A mysterious new vampiric disease has the city's Kindred close to panic. Rumors of vampires covered in weeping
 sores sweep the city. The infected vanish or quickly succumb to Final Death. Scholars have record that a Haitian
 Coterie known as the Plague Bringers suffered a similar affliction, but the secrets of the cult were thought to
 have been lost long ago. What is causing this mysterious disease among the undead? Have the Plague Bringers
 really returned, or has a new group of Kindred merely uncovered secrets that were thought to have been lost?
 Can the spread of the disease be stopped?

THE LOST GENERATION: THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR (CE 1618-48)

I slept through the revolution. Clashing ideologies. The young against the old. The death of the erstwhile society, when the church and state were one.

I lost three childer. Their deaths poisoned my slumber. Though I had been prepared by the old rites and even attended to by one of the Agonistes, their pain seeped into the drop of Vitae left at the core of my still heart, and then I dreamt.

I dreamt of my head being slowly hewn from my shoulders with a dull bronze blade, as ragged neophytes held me to the ground.

I anoke in an inferno, my haven lanrning about me, the fires gonging my flesh as the Fear tore at my spirit. But that was a dream, as well.

I dreamt that we drew the attention of the church again, that they found me, that they slowly flayed my flesh from my lones before pronouncing funeral rites above my thrashing limbs.

And finally, I dreamt that so much Vitae soaked the earth that I, entombed deep beneath Magdeburg, was nonrished even in my sleep. It seeped between the cracks in the wet soil and slid between my lips, desperate to find its way in. To find a new home, a new immortal shell. not the foremost of the oddities of the period. Towards the end of the sirteen forties, an imperial valet de chambre named Friedrich Hirsch died. His belongings were erhaustively inventoried in great detail. Among his effects were three hundred books and manuscripts, many on topics as diverse as chemistry, metallurgy, pharmacy and astrology. The inder also includes a complete alchemical laboratory numbering seven rooms. The laboratory contained hundreds of artifacts, including at least a dozen furnaces and an athanor, an alchemical device best described as a self-firing oven.

Mr. Hirsch was not one to skimp, apparently, I've been trying to hunt down the original document of which the author speaks, that I might find where the mentioned effects ended up (not much interest in a furnace or an athanor, given my issue with fire, of course. It's the stuff that he leaves unmentioned that might be intriguing). No luck so far on my end, so I'm passing it off to you.

Possibly in the hands of the Ordo Dracul?

In service of Ferdinand III; his great uncle Matthias imprisoned Erzbet Bthory. Her family ruled Transylvania. Ferdinand's successor, Leopold, executed Bthory's grandson, Ferenc Ndasdy. Another Dragon connection?

Who is Volker von Geheim?

I believe it was a dream. I pray it was but a dream.

No luck on the Hirsch collection so far. Came across this text in Magdeburg. The prince gave it to me of all people. I did you the favor of translating it, since I know your Deutsch was never any good. It seems awfully Carthian for something I've dated to the early 17th century. Let me know what you make of it.

If we have learned anything as a culture in the last two centuries, is it not that nothing should be taken for granted? We are named as Damned by the church, yet do they not claim to do the Lord's very work? They would have it both ways: we are chosen by God, and we are cursed by God.

I say no heavenly Father chose us and cursed us, but our sires. It is they who exalt with one hand and lay low with the second. The Church has fallen far, bound and tied by twenty lifetimes of Catholic esoteric ritual. One enters a church of the herd on Sunday evening and hears the same prayer and the same hymn he heard the night before at the Spear's Mass.

No more, say I. We do God's work no more than we do our own. It is our sires' dark fantasies we fulfill. Longinus was never Kindred to any of us. Longinus never supped on the blood of Christ. Communion is ours, and a heavenly kingdom awaits. A kingdom of our own making. A kingdom without kings.

The Ashes of the Inquisition

The Danse Macabre changed significantly for the Kindred after the fires of the Inquisition decimated their society. Infighting between Kindred lords had risen to a fevered pitch after the collapse of the Invictus's attempt at Empire. They had brought large broods of childer into the Requiem, throwing them at their enemies' holdings at night, even as ghoul soldiers led mobs of mercenaries in battle against rivals during the day. The desperate madness drew the attention of the Inquisition, and many of those Kindred not murdered by their own kind found themselves too weak of will to fend off the mortals when they came armed with crossbows and torches. Eventually the Inquisition lost steam, but no longer could Kindred move so openly, in such direct violation to their own instinctual need to hide themselves from the living hosts.

Instead, Kindred learned the value of intermediaries, wars of politics and the power of the merchant class. The Damned learned patience and politics through the long nights of the Holy Roman Empire, and, along with the size of the cities, the importance of covenants again grew as connections between Kindred became more complex than simple oaths between sire and childe, liege and lackey. As covenants grew in importance, the differences between them became more pronounced. Regents, Kindred with nigh-autonomous authority over a domain within the larger domain of another Kindred, began to appear within larger cities, an impossibility in the earlier age when any threat to a territorial Kindred's lands spurred the loosing of the dogs of war.

Toward the end of the 16th century, the survivors of the burning times took stock of their surroundings. A great gulf had formed in Kindred society. Large cities were dominated by small coteries of elders supported by their neophyte childer, while smaller towns and villages typically supported a lone elder or a small group of neonates. The elders clung to their traditional society in which no great division existed between church and state, while neonates lobbied constantly for numerous changes. Most felt that the overwhelming influence wielded by the few elders (who, they claimed, survived the burning times by standing on the backs of their childer) seemed disproportionate with their number, while others took specific issue with matters of theology or philosophy. Most commonly, neonates of both covenants pushed for their leaders to distance themselves from their allies across covenant lines. In short, for a variety of reasons specific to the Kindred espousing them, many neonates pressed a wider division between the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum.

While the humans wrestled over issues of ceremony and papal authority, Kindred society buzzed with expectation. New ideas and philosophies began to blossom among the young and some Kindred began experimenting with occult theories long considered heretical by the Lancea Sanctum. Young Kindred even took up travel, passing from one small town to the next, carefully making their way to centers of culture to join others in spirited debate. Some Kindred even took to calling the Requiem a "second life," a term almost incommensurable with both earlier and later attitudes towards the Kindred condition.

With such a large majority of the Kindred being neonates, the night seemed to belong to the young. The air of anticipation bore a dangerously sharp edge, however, and the axe of autocratic authority fell several

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times on those who took their newfound freedom too far. Without a strong population of ancillae to bridge the chasm between the young and old, a large-scale conflict between the traditional and the revolutionary seemed inevitable.

Habsburg Occultism

Exploration of the educated occult flourished in Austria during the 17th century. So long as certain societal and religious conventions were followed, an individual might dabble in almost anything. Of particular interest to the educated were alchemy, astrology, chiromancy (palmistry), metoposcopy (divination through lines of the forehead), physiognomy (a cousin to phrenology) and Cabala. The occultists of the time approached their studies in a quasiscientific manner, such as when astrology was applied in medicine to determine appropriate times to administer medication for its maximum efficacy.

Cabala, alchemy and astrology all stood as major fixtures in Renaissance thought in central Europe, and they continued to have a strong, if somewhat secretive, following thereafter, prompting travelers at the time to write of the strange secrets of those learned individuals. The preoccupied Austrian government failed to print the Index of banned books during the period between 1576 and 1726. Even official Catholic spokesmen claimed some merit in the Cabala, despite the fact that most Hebrew literature held a perennial (if nominal) position on the Index. Members of the Counter-Reformation engrossed themselves in such illicit arts, though they often claimed to do so to uncover just how illicit those arts were.

While the upper classes accepted a study of the educated occult, they viewed folk superstition with open derision. The use of astrology to understand the divine plan of God by examining His creation was deemed acceptable, for example, while its use for superstitious determination of future events was not. Students upheld the value of Cabala even while denigrating the faith that produced it as superstition and blasphemy. One text, the *Kabbala Denudata seu Doctrina Hebraeorum* presented the *Zohar* in Hebrew and Latin with commentaries, explanations, a lexicon and observations about how the Jewish population should be tolerated, understood and peacefully converted. Meanwhile, the Cabala was being integrated into Christian Hermeticism.

Obviously, Catholic thought was somewhat flexible in regard to the occult. The attitude that persisted throughout the period held that some individuals could be trusted to interpret religion, while others needed their opinions dictated to them for their own good, so that they wouldn't fall into superstition or heresy. The Church didn't consider occultism itself heretical (there were numerous occult facets of the faith, from the spiritual hierarchy that included ghosts, angels and demons to the rites of exorcism), but rather frowned on the superstitions of the uneducated.

An interest in the occult blossomed at the very highest levels of the imperial family. Ferdinand III, who succeeded his father Ferdinand II, the emperor whose actions directly led to the Bohemian revolution, was far more amenable to the study of alchemy than one might expect based on his father's totalitarian and religiously fanatical actions. Ferdinand III exchanged letters on the science of alchemy with his brother Leopold Wilhelm, even as his armies clashed with the Swedish. Meanwhile, witch trials, fueled by the frenzy of war and plague, reached a fever pitch that only began to fade after 1650.

In enlightened culture within Germany and Austria, the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum shared the living's interest in the occult. Young vampires of the First Estate might discuss the newest treatise on gemetria without drawing one another's scorn, while Sanctified priests explored the concept of the monad in its relation to the miracles of Theban Sorcery. As the Ordo Dracul slowly wormed its way through Europe, many of these Kindred joined the secret society, applying their esoteric knowledge to the Great Work. Most retained their former affiliations, as well. One group of Kindred, the brood of a Ventrue known to history only as Geheim, thrived in the occulted environment. They pursued political and esoteric power in equal measure, establishing contacts among the Habsburgs even as they created poisons that ignited a Kindred's Vitae, burning him from within.

The Collapse

The abrupt rise of the Invictus Empire in the Middle Ages and its equally precipitous collapse ended the covenant's designs on a multinational ruling body for all Kindred. The fall of the empire quickly became a cautionary tale about the danger of centralized authority among Kindred (albeit a self-serving parable for the Kindred princes spreading it). However, while travel between domains became more dangerous with the increase in Kindred territoriality, the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum considered themselves largely a single society of Kindred with a single set understanding of that society and the methods of its governance. The Invictus maintained Kindred law while the Lancea Sanctum provided for the spiritual yearnings of the Damned. While rivalries between specific members of the two covenants often became quite heated, the two groups as a whole tended to work together more often than they clashed. The Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum

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effectively served as the twin leaders of a Kindred society that dismissed other vampires as outsiders.

Lines of communication among the Kindred flourished after the burning times as Kindred reached out for one another, seeking solace in what remained of their society, partially spurred by the nomadic movement of the youngest Kindred, but largely due to a sense of shared culture across the continent, a culture that had weathered the most terrible of storms. When the Habsburg dynasty seized control of Spain, the Kindred of the Holy Roman Empire, long the cultural center of the Invictus, sent envoys (usually ghouls trained to recognize Kindred) to Spain, a nation characterized by numerous bastions of Sanctified power. Elders established long-distance alliances through these envoys, agreements to trade information and assist one another in reforming Kindred society in the wake of the deleterious Catholic witch hunts. Spanish Kindred, having been hit first and hardest by the Inquisition, seemed eager to open communication with the eastern Invictus. Groups of elders who had never met worked together to take advantage of Habsburg power, sending thralls and even the occasional Kindred to the far reaches of the world.

While the relationship between the Spanish and German Kindred was never as close as that of their mortal Habsburg rulers, both groups were united in their dislike for the Kindred of France and projected an air of alliance far stauncher than what actually existed. The French First Estate and Sanctified returned the distaste, considering themselves culturally and faithfully superior to their neighbors, coveting their territory but unwilling to make a move for fear of drawing the wrath of their enemies' allies. Deep-seated mortal prejudices rarely faded with entrance to the Danse Macabre.

The importance of Christianity among the mortals of Europe largely decimated the Circle of the Crone, leaving the faith a shattered set of far-flung cults hiding in the shadows of the largest cities and the hinterlands alike. Meanwhile, a combination of the scientific, pseudoscientific and outright occult ideas of the Renaissance blended with the brutal, self-aggrandizing philosophy of a tyrant in the depths of Transylvania, birthing a new group of often-violent intellectuals who claimed the land beyond the forest as their own. The structure, ranks and general philosophy of the Ordo Dracul (as laid out in their guiding thesis Rites of the Dragon) were in place by the dawn of the 17th century, and the budding covenant's militaristic expansion combined with their overtly heretical beliefs drew the ire of Lancea Sanctum and Invictus princes alike. Both the nascent Ordo Dracul and the crippled Circle of the Crone hid in the shadow

of Protestantism, where the Lancea Sanctum's power often faltered.

Indeed, the Lancea Sanctum had found its influence on the wane. Much of the order's early membership had involved itself as closely as possible with the mortal Church, and many of those same Kindred were the first targets rooted out by zealous mortal hunters. The face of the Sanctified changed significantly as a few elder theologians attempted to enforce orthodoxy over a wide base of neophytes, many of who were left without guidance when their blood relations were put to the pyre. Young Kindred took the prohibition against the Embrace less seriously than their elders, and those in power did not work to discourage the influx of new blood as they struggled to rebuild the faith's ranks. Much of the new blood came from Protestants, however, and even among those Kindred willing to take up the Longinian faith, many questioned the Catholic trappings so prevalent in the covenant's ritae. Similarly, many young Invictus princes began to resent the power and influence of the dogmatic Lancea Sanctum whose strictures and Traditions severely curtailed their power.

These tensions led to an inevitable sundering. For three decades in the 17th century, the careful cold war that had defined the end of the 16th was shattered. The conflict began not by any act of the Kindred, however, but by the mortals. As vampires used the human war to strike against their rivals, the newly forged bonds of covenant and the careful society of the Damned unraveled in the face of instinctual Kindred territoriality and greed. Mortal borders imposed themselves on Kindred institutions as cultural boundaries split vampires who disagreed on the fundamental philosophies of their covenants. It began as pressure from agents of traditional members of the Invictus and Sanctified encouraged the rise of Catholic absolutism in the Holy Roman Empire. Turning their eyes towards Transylvanian Dragons and Hungarian Acolytes, the Lancea Sanctum declared a crusade against Hungary and Transylvania, leading dozens of princes and archbishops to lend wealth and agents to the mortal quest to reclaim the two nations for Catholicism. The Kindred of both countries met the mortals with their own fangs in the shadows of the Carpathians, giving rise to many of the folktales about the region that remain to this night.

The campaign into Eastern Europe engendered a schism between traditional Invictus and Sanctified and those who had converted to or been Embraced from Protestantism. Even among Invictus elders, for many of whom religion rated as a secondary concern at best, several Kindred converted to Protestantism as an excuse to eject traditionalist Lancea Sanctum from their domain

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(or to hold onto a domain filled with young Protestant Kindred). The reformers decried the actions of the hardliners against the mortal populace, often claiming that it violated the edicts of Longinus to bring death on so great a scale to faithful kine. This caused tensions to escalate, leading to a number of small, violent conflicts between the powers of the night. When the mortal populace of Bohemia and its allies revolted against the Habsburgs, however, the Kindred of Austria and Germany followed the kine into all-out war.

The Thirty Years' War Among the mortals, the Thirty Years' War began as a

Among the mortals, the Thirty Years' War began as a religious conflict within the Holy Roman Empire. Clergy and nobility of the Calvinist and Lutheran faiths had been claiming territories within the Holy Roman Empire since the middle of the 16th century. As the century came to a close, the empire began forcing reconversion to Catholicism in some of their domains. The Diet of Regensburg in 1609 called for the return of all bishoprics that had converted to Protestantism since 1552, a demand that incensed numerous powerful Protestants and spurred the creation of a military Protestant Union. The imperials responded with the formation of their own Catholic League. Tensions escalated as Frederick, a Protestant, became king of Bohemia, granting an important electorship (the position that elects the Holy Roman Emperor) to a non-Catholic.

In short, the root cause of the war lay in the Catholic imperial Habsburgs' attempts to retain Bohemia, described at the time as a land of religious liberty, within the orbit of the Habsburgs while reversing the gains made by the Protestants in the 16th century.

The war raged for almost three decades, heavily employing mercenary armies who were given leave to loot and plunder the areas through which they passed for supplies (known as the wolf strategy). The Protestant princes sought allies in the form of the United Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, while the Catholics called on the aid of Habsburg Spain, the most powerful single political entity in Europe at the time. France, fearing the power of the two Habsburg-controlled states of Spain to the west and the empire to the east, was pulled into the war in opposition to the Imperialists, despite their own strong Catholic ties.

The Swedish, fearing Habsburg power along the northern coast of Germany, entered the war, initially to the chagrin of the northern Protestants, who were no more interested in foreign Swedish rule than they were in Catholic imperialism. The two forces found themselves allied, however, when the Catholic army slipped from General Tilly's control and razed the city of Magdeburg, slaughtering the vast majority of the population (and inspiring terms like "Magdeburg mercy," which means no quarter). The Protestant defeat at Nördlingen, a massacre of 12,000 troops, prompted Swedish withdrawal from the war, but the prospect of an Imperial victory drew the French to intervene. The whole of Europe engaged in bloody battle across the face of Germany. Ferdinand II died in 1637, and with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the decades-long conflict ground to a halt.

The people of Germany shouldered the brunt of the war. Between the damage and theft of property and crops caused by the wolf strategy and the siege and destruction of cities and towns, many German communities were never the same again. Some villages simply vanished into the night. Estimates of the total population lost vary, but some indicate the war cost the nation over thirty percent of its people and half of its males. The Swedish army alone claimed the destruction of over twenty thousand castles, towns and villages.

Meanwhile, the violence roiling in Germany inspired other nations to look to their neighbors with avaricious eyes. Poland, for example, took advantage of the bloodshed to invade Russia, putting a Polish king on the throne of Moscow for a brief time. Transylvania used the war as an opportunity to invade Hungary, regaining some of its losses from the Imperial invasion of the previous century.

The long-term results of the Thirty Years' War included Spain's loss of the Netherlands and its position as the dominant power in Western Europe, a role now claimed by France. Sweden gained control over the Baltic Sea. Switzerland left the empire, the United Netherlands became an independent republic and several member states of the Holy Roman Empire were granted full sovereignty, forever breaking the empire's power. Indeed, the ancient notion of a Roman Catholic empire headed spiritually by a pope and temporally by an emperor fell away, establishing the modern structure of Europe: a community of sovereign states.

The Anarchs' Revolution

As war broke out across Austria, the Kindred initially reacted as they react to most human conflicts: they attempted to hide and ride it out, deflecting assaults against their domains as best they could and providing what resources they could spare to those who would strike at their enemies. Unfortunately, a group of militant Transylvanian Kindred accompanied the forces of that nation's mortal prince as he took advantage of Ferdinand's preoccupation in Bohemia to conquer Hungary. These Sworn of

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the Axe, led by a tyrannical military mastermind called Mara, cut a bloody swath through Hungary, apparently less interested in actually taking the Invictus cities than exacting vengeance for the covenant's invasion of her homeland.

As Hungarian elders fell before the Sworn of the Axe, the nation's neonates fled into southern Austria and Bohemia, increasing the Kindred population of cities in those areas. City rulers attempted to crack down on the newcomers and force them out, but, in a rare case of Kindred banding together for a common goal, the local neonates backed the refugees. Some of the elders, their influence waning in the face of so wide an opposition, adopted more draconian tactics, killing out of hand those young Kindred who ignored the law. Bands of neonates fought back, armed with muskets and axes, and several small cities fell to the rising wave of neophytes.

Word spread quickly through the Holy Roman Empire of the revolts to the south, and northern princes began sending ghouls and thralls south in an attempt to slaughter the neonates where they slept. Several of these missions met with success, but news of the elders' actions were responded to with anger from the neonates in their own domains. Soon several cities revolted, driving elders to gather in large cities in central Germany and Austria. The elders branded the revolutionaries "anarchs," and promised death for any who took up their cause.

Chaos spread across the Holy Roman Empire, and the entrenched elders sent requests for assistance from their allies in Habsburg Spain, receiving a pittance of ghouls and thralls in return. The elders made the most of the gifts, however, using their carefully built webs of influence to place agents in the camps of the major generals. While the neonates possessed the advantage of numbers, the elders had connections, the experience necessary to wield such influence in the most effective manner, and sheer eldritch might. The forces of the Habsburgs put down the Bohemian revolution, and the elders' counter-attack by proxy destroyed dozens of young Kindred.

As Emperor Ferdinand II turned his attention to Transylvania, a nation already willing to cut a deal due to the threat of Ottoman invasion from the south, the elders of the Invictus and Lancea Sanctum found to their surprise that the Sworn of the Axe had already melted away. Little did they know that the Ordo Dracul had begun infiltrating their ranks and subverting Invictus and Sanctified Kindred to their own purpose. The Transylvanians were no longer, however, an immediate threat. Unfortunately, the Swedish flooded Germany from the north, bringing with them several cults of Acolytes and unaligned vampires. These Kindred traveled in packs, as numerous as the southern neonates and far more vicious, and destroyed several elders along the northern coast through sheer dint of numbers. Fortunately for the traditionalists, the northern anarchs did little to differentiate the neonate revolutionaries from their elders and clashed with both groups, falling upon them like rabid wolves.

The neonate anarchs began to organize in the face of this new threat but were too late. They had the profound misfortune of choosing Magdeburg, a sizable city in central Germany that had once hosted Martin Luther himself, as their center of operations. In 1631, only weeks after anarchs began to arrive in the city, the mortal General Tilly laid siege to it. Records from the period indicate that the anarchs, cut off from outside sources of food, may have turned on each other, killing one another before Tilly's force broke the walls and razed the city. Mortal history records the destruction of Magdeburg as one of the greatest massacres in history. Of the 30,000 individuals who inhabited Magdeburg, only 5,000 survived. Kindred casualties were believed to be in the dozens.

Meanwhile, mortal armies, largely made up of mercenaries on both sides, exploited the German nation, conscripting young men, raping women and taking whatever stores they needed to feed their own troops. Kindred who claimed small towns occasionally awoke to find that their entire dominion had vanished over the course of a single day. These Kindred took to following the armies, sometimes joining the other anarchs, sometimes simply feeding carrion-like on the spoils left in the armies' wakes.

Magdeburg saw the beginning and end of the anarchs as an organized fighting force. As the population of Germany dwindled, Kindred both young and old refocused on survival. The Acolyte invaders retreated with the Swedish, and while the French Sanctified funneled money into the French army after it declared war on Austria, few French Kindred involved themselves in the fighting. The virulently anti-Sanctified French Daeva bloodline the Septemi, devoted to the protection of mortals from the abuses of the Lancea Sanctum and derisively called "the Maidens," proved the primary exception.

Legacy of the Lost Generation The Thirty Years' War cemented the xenophobic and

The Thirty Years' War cemented the xenophobic and isolationist tendencies of Kindred society that remain in the modern nights. The covenants forever fractured, and rarely thereafter did Kindred leaders in one domain attempt to enforce philosophical orthodoxy in another unless as a precursor to invasion or usurpation. The Lancea Sanctum of central Europe shattered into dozens of creeds that still dot the German landscape to this night,

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and the Sanctified and Invictus grew apart, allying out of convenience rather than tradition.

The open violence between packs of Kindred drew the ire of the Inquisition, and it blossomed again in Austria and Germany before slipping east into Transylvania and Hungary after the war. The Ordo Dracul suffered heavy setbacks in its homeland as a result of the war, the period presaging it, and the Catholic witch hunters who came after.

The first half of the 17th century bore witness to the destruction of over a third of the Kindred of Europe and three quarters of those of Germany (many of whom were Embraced during the war), resulting in the loss of centuries of history and knowledge. Even tonight German and Austrian Kindred over four centuries old are an extreme rarity, and most of those who still exist were in torpor during the war. Rumors circulate regularly regarding the effect of the violence of the war on the psyche of those Kindred who slept through it. Each suffers more scrutiny than most elders of their age and experience.

While the anarchs were reformists, young Invictus and Sanctified seeking change during a period of profound freedom due to minimal oversight (and then chafing under the overreaction of elders trying to regain control), their war shattered Kindred society and broke the monolithic grasp of the traditional covenants. Though the scattered remnants of the traditionalists increased their draconian tactics in the wake of the war, the Ordo Dracul and Carthian Movement gained the room each covenant needed to grow into what they have become in the modern nights, and both groups first appeared in the geographic area of what was once the Holy Roman Empire.



FLASHPOINT IN THE MODERN NIGHTS

Among the Kindred, the period before the Thirty Years' War seemed a time of youthful exuberance and blessed respite from the Inquisition without the stifling society of elders crushing down upon them. Yet these ideas existed in an overarching society of common assumptions. The question wasn't, for example, whether or not Longinus existed, but what was the proper way to venerate him. The widespread violence of the period threw these assumptions to the wind and left many who would have otherwise furthered them as little more than greasy ash on the surface of the Rhine. In short, the Lost Generation took with it the old world and made way for the modern.

The following story hooks can assist a Storyteller in utilizing the Lost Generation in a chronicle set in the modern nights:

- The Invictus and Sanctified of the characters' city have become closer in recent years, their relationships so
 intertwined that they act almost as a single covenant with political clout that far outweighs the other covenants.
 Can the characters find evidence from the anarchs' revolution that can turn the tide, sewing mistrust between
 the two groups? Or will they take advantage of the new power bloc to strike at their own enemies?
- Some among the Ordo Dracul claim that unusual entities given birth during the war haunt Austria, Germany and the Czech Republic to this night. They congregate about Kindred, unsettling those mortals around them. Are these spirits of bloodlust, betrayal or murder, or are they the hungry ghosts of the Lost Generation seeking the familiar? What of the rumor that they can enter the dreams of a vampire in torpor? Can the characters uncover their true nature? Can they stop them?
- An elder Dragon offers the characters something of great value if they will brave traveling the world to the lands of central Europe in search of a hidden Habsburg library of occult tomes and devices. Can the characters survive the harsh existence of a nomad? And what of the eldritch Kindred lords who claim Austria and Germany as their domain? Can the characters hope to stand against monsters forged during the anarchs' revolution and hardened over the course of two world wars?

IBERIAN NIGHTS: Grémio de Corajoso (CE 1415-1580)

The most influential Rindred of the covenants drive it into our heads that they are in charge. Whether it is one covenant or another, the Big Five have a monopoly on Rindred power and control. Ristorically, it's been either the Invictus and their kingdoms of blood or the Lancea Sanctum and their self-appointed connection to something divine. Other covenants come and go, but these two claim that they came directly from the ancient Camarilla itself. Maybe they did. Maybe someone really gives a shit.

fistory, however is important. It's not all about dates and people and names and places. It's about why things went down the way they did and what happened because of it. Armed with that sort of knowledge, we can show the elders in charge that things can be changed. But... knowledge is not always enough, and it really isn't the most alarming thing to throw into the elders' faces.

Change and the progress of the world can topple any Rindred empire; a bunch of young neonates bringing relevance to it in the courts and Elysium just adds insult to injury. While normal living people don't have the immortality or gifts of the blood that we have, one would have to be a damned fool to deny their craftiness and ingenuity. And by the time any of us distract ourselves from the endless Requiem we are bound to, it is easy tor us to lose track of what those mortals are doing.

Once in a while, though, one of us catches on to what the breathing world is up to. When we do that, everything changes. Throw the rules out the window and reset the playing field. That's efactly what happened when the Europeans made their first steps out into the world beyond their protective borders. Just don't fool yourself and don't look for heroes or brave explorers. Dampires don't go off in search of new lands and people in order to unite the world or anything altruistic like that; power still calls out to us, but sometimes we can give our unlives a bit of purpose in the process.

lived of all of the modern European colonial empires. along the coastlines and harbors. The end of the world With the capture of the island Ceuta in 1415, Portugal was supposedly not far away, allowing unprepared ships started a tumultuous period of seafaring discovery and and crew to fall off of the Earth and into Hell. Hideous imperial colonization. Within 200 years, the empire had creatures roamed the oceans and could crush entire ships colonies and trade routes crossing the globe. Africa, the with their jaws or tails. Even first reports of expeditions to Middle East, the Orient, the islands of the south Pacific, newly discovered lands carried tales of evil spirits and foul and South America all held colonies and the influence of creatures roaming wild. Superstition ran rampant among this enterprising country.

get involved with these "suicidal" expeditions across the such superstitions. In fact, their own existence gave those expanses of the sea, much less actually partake on these voyages. Aside from the sheer danger of vampires being trapped in a confined space with a small number of sailors were forced into stowing away on one vessel or another by and the ever-present threat of being exposed to the sun by spiteful elders or sadistic sires. Most were lost, taken by

The Portuguese Empire was the earliest and longest a foolish or careless crew member, other stories spread the sailors and anyone who had any concern at all about Most Kindred of that time were not initially eager to the oceans around them. Kindred were not immune to stories at least a small amount of credence.

Some Kindred, however, did brave the unknown. Most

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Entwined Destinies

attempts at Kindred presence on the seas were disastrous. A small collection of Kindred, various elders residing in Lisbon and important port cities, patiently watched and waited. From the beginning of his successes on the sea, these Kindred evaluated King João's decisions and subtly became indirectly involved with the frequent journeys into the ocean. Prince Henry the Navigator and Joäo's other sons empowered the Portuguese throne and allowed the king to spend more and more resources on these maritime ventures. The elder Kindred of Lisbon eagerly and efficiently involved themselves in the voyages. In a matter of a few years, the Kindred elders of Lisbon had achieved a substantial amount of presence in the domestic benefits of this oceanic exploration, and had learned that there was a much larger world of secrets to be uncovered.

the sea, sun, or unsuspecting mortal sailors. The earliest

These elders formed a grémio, inspired by Portuguese trade guilds. The grémio was deeply involved in most of Portugal's naval efforts and colonies. As the captains returned to port with valuable commodities such as gold, ivory and spices from the east, the wealth of the nobility grew to enormous levels. Kindred-influenced nobility, merchants and craftsmen were certainly among those who became immensely wealthy. The grémio, fat from the spoils of the seas, continued to concentrate on matters in Portugal. They formed a larger alliance, recruiting from disillusioned members of the fractured Lancea Sanctum as well as expatriate members of fallen Invictus regimes across Europe. Before long, the grémio had eclipsed the influence of the Invictus in Portugal. They had also earned the ire of the Sanctified, who accused the guild of heresy and association with demons from other lands. For decades, the grémio firmly held most of Portugal and almost completely controlled any Kindred activity in the colonies and known trade areas.

However, the Invictus-dominated Aragon and Sanctified-dominated Castile did not idly watch the upstart Portuguese coteries. A vicious enmity grew between the Kindred of the Iberian Peninsula. Had the grémio waited any longer before taking advantage of their king's impetuous maritime exploration and subsequent widespread colonization, their efforts could have easily been halted by the covenants outside of Portugal. Even with the unification of Castile and Aragon (forming what is now known as Spain), the guild had resources and holdings all over the world to help ensure their continued domination of Portugal. Unfortunately, the Spanish Inquisition and Philip I of the Habsburgs did not allow the guild to continue faring as well.

Sailing into the Olyss The roots of the grémio predate the pivotal naval victory at Ceuta, which marked the beginning of the Portuguese Empire for mortals. A number of Ventrue Kindred of the Iberian Peninsula all traced their lineage to a vampire named Afanso. Afanso ruled the Kindred of Portugal and the eastern portions of Castile and Aragon for a number of years, supporting his distant Invictus masters. For a period of time during the 14th century, Afanso vanished; most of his childer and descendants assumed that he had succumbed to torpor. The truth, however, shook the Iberian Invictus to the core and shaped Kindred history forever.

With other Invictus dynasties crumbling across Europe and loyalties coming into question far more often, Afanso's elders had conspired with each other in an effort to ensure Portugal's Kindred would not cause turmoil in response to other alliances across Europe and around the Mediterranean. This conspiracy aimed to destroy Afanso, which would have caused his network childer and grand-childer throughout Iberia to fall into disarray. The resulting power vacuum would have facilitated any sort of move for dominance that the covenant wanted. Afanso was far cleverer than his would-be assassins realized however, and had set up a network of spies and informants. Preempting an attack, he fooled the Invictus minions into thinking they had destroyed him. Afanso went into a self-imposed exile, hiding in France. He reviewed his goals and means, noting that his primary asset was his close-knit childer. Afanso then returned to the Iberian Peninsula. He had visions of a Portugal united by bonds so strong, no degree of subterfuge could shake them. It took very little time after his return for Afanso to set his plans into motion.

His meetings with his childer and his return to Lisbon were all completed in total secrecy. Afanso made no immediate moves against the mortals in charge of the country, and only very slowly allowed his childer to glimpse his plans. Decades passed as Afanso arranged his childer, dug his fingers very subtly into the mortals of Lisbon, and developed new techniques of channeling his Vitae. As soon as news spread about King João's victory at Ceuta and his sons' earliest journeys into the sea, Afanso knew he had to act.

He invited his childer and their childer to a monastery not far from Lisbon, proclaiming a revelation and a new vision for the future. Afanso told his audience about the

King's exploits and recognized a great change coming about in the near future. Each of the Kindred present was assigned his own part in monitoring King João's activities - and their results. In one evening's collaboration, nearly all of the domains of Portugal claimed a formal secession from the Invictus as a whole. This obviously infuriated the Invictus Inner Circle located in northern Aragon. Outside of Afanso and his own descendants, none of the Kindred had any idea exactly why a formal declaration of leaving the Invictus was so important. Afanso never gave any reason. Each time he was asked, he simply stated that he had seen a vision of a prosperous domain. The domain would flourish, according to him, because Portugal itself would bring the world to a new age. He made it known that the Invictus would only serve to pervert such progress. A scant few years after the loss of nearly all Invictus influence in Portugal, the Iberian Peninsula entered the new age.

Wars had raged across Europe, and large cultural shifts had begun throughout much of the Mediterranean. It took Kindred longer to rebuild their societies and find moments of peace than it took the living. Portugal, however, was reaping the benefits of naval expeditions and the resulting newly discovered lands and prosperous colonies in those lands. Carefully coordinating with his childer around the country and wisely sharing the spoils with most of the other Kindred under their praxis, Afanso and his *Corajoso* brood had solidified their rulership and found a new purpose.

Formally Declaring the Grémio Throughout the first part of the 15th century, the Iberian

Throughout the first part of the 15th century, the Iberian Peninsula was chafing under the increasing presence of foreign men coming across the Mediterranean and off of the caravels that had been contacting strange civilizations. Most of these foreigners were chased out of town after town, denied any sort of peaceful existence. Kindred were no exception to the rule. The *grémio*, along with the subjects of the Portuguese throne, recognized the value of these foreigners. In fact, the Portuguese were partially responsible for them. To varying degrees, these outsiders were allowed a place in Portugal – or, more accurately, a role in crewing the increasing number of vessels plying the trade routes around Africa and into the seas beyond. With this influx of people from places known and otherwise, came a neonate named Angelo de Cangas.

De Cangas was initially enthralled by the stories of the "benevolent" reign of the *grémio*. Simply considering the fact that Portuguese Kindred were so accepting began to bring hope to the vampire's dead heart. Devout as a boy in his breathing days, Angelo was crushed by the Lancea Sanctum and its take on God and His children. He left his home near Rome and wandered until he heard of Afanso and his standards of allowing Kindred to stay in Portugal. Those preconceptions were unfortunately shattered as soon as he arrived. Afanso may have seemed benevolent, but he was still one of the Damned. Portugal, its role in exploring the world, and his place in the era were all meant for one purpose: to establish a tremendous legacy. Time and time again, Angelo attempted to gain the Prince of Lisbon's ear. Afanso, too busy with his own affairs, repeatedly ignored de Cangas' requests. De Cangas researched Portugal's tradition of the grémio and learned of two cultural practices Afanso's grémio had not yet adopted. The first, seemingly unorthodox for Kindred to look to, was the choosing of a patron saint. The second tradition held by Portuguese guilds for centuries was an identifying banner. Angelo commissioned a banner specifically for Afanso and his grémio.

The banner was an exquisite work of art. The embroidery colorfully depicted a caravel sailing under moonlight with a reflection of a cross laying in the water. The ship in the banner was named Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. He wasn't sure what the catalyst was, but Afanso realized that he had lost a portion of the vision that inspired him to turn the Kindred Courts of Portugal into what it had become. Calling to meet the person responsible for the banner, Afanso found de Cangas. According to Angelo, he was not only chosen for a particular path by God, but his brother from his breathing days was none other than the Saint Nicholas of Tolentino. De Cangas, whether it was through genuine inspiration or something else entirely, helped to breathe life into Afanso's grémio. Thus, the Grémio de Corajoso was formally founded. Angelo was charged to set out into the unknown world, delivering the new mission for the Grémio's presence throughout the Portuguese Empire.

Angelo and the *Grémio* set out as planned, not on a mission for God or enlightenment, but one of discovery. Legends of the Camarilla bore tales of contact with Kindred from distant and exotic places. More often than not, encounters with these Kindred resulted in relatively peaceful meetings. Angelo was not deluded enough to think that other Kindred would welcome him, but he was confident that opportunities could slowly be developed. Afanso hoped that these avenues could be traversed before the major covenants entered the picture with goals of domination and subjugation. Indeed, Angelo and the other members of the *Grémio* charged with exploring the colonies' domains encountered a number of different Kindred.

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this flag was used by sailors around the time of chris columbus... why does Prince Juaquin have the same thing in his office?"

The Corajoso in Africa

GRÉMIO DE CORAJOSO, CA. 1480-1580

Even prior to the explorations of Bartholomeu Diaz, Kindred had a significant interest in Africa. They were acutely aware that a number of Mekhet claimed to trace their lineages back to the continent south of Europe, but knew little else. Afanso and his *Grémio* decided at an early date that there should be an attempt at finding other signs of Kindred in Africa. Surely, they believed, even primitive cultures (primitive to their perceptions) must have Kindred among them. A few of the more famous expeditions around Africa and the colonies included a Kindred stowaway and trusted mortal keepers, but there were certainly a handful of voyages that received less fanfare and recognition that carried even more Kindred up and down the coastal areas of Africa.

One of the earliest contacts with African Kindred was nothing if not a horrible failure. Word of the exact outcome of the meeting never got back to Afanso, but later expeditions revealed more information. A member of the *Grémio* had discovered evidence that Kindred have a long history in Africa. Partial journals found in a cave near a sunken ship indicate a tomb of sorts was found by ghoul assistants while their master was spending a short time hibernating in a self-induced torpor. These ghouls found stone discs with pictograms and strange symbols, and they attempted to take them back to the ship before it set sail for the next leg of the journey. According to the information found in the journal, the ghouls managed to return to the ship that night. The owner of the discs followed unnoticed. Awakened by tremendous shaking in the boat and loud crashes, the lone Kindred on board found that the ship had drifted to the rocky shoreline and crashed against the rocks. The crew members had been completely exsanguinated. A later journal entry states that the Kindred was going to attempt to return to the shipwreck on the shoreline in order to retrieve the mysterious discs that he was forced to leave behind during an attack by tribesmen. Finally, the last page of the torn journal refers to "bloodless tribesmen...shaped like a human, but completely black...one tried to drink *my* blood...They are returning in greater numbers." The author's identity is not known.

Later expeditions enjoyed better results. A colony had been established near modern day Ethiopia, and it was a very successful experiment in dealing with the native communities. Among these native peoples was a single brood of Kindred. They had no desire or need for a structured society such as the covenants, but were nonetheless curious. Allegedly, one of these East African Kindred, calling himself one of the "Adroanzi," accompanied a Portuguese ship back to Lisbon. His fate was not recorded in known records, but he seemed completely disoriented in an urban setting. Once he was able to escape to the wilds outside Lisbon, he literally vanished into the countryside. The animals and trees around him all seemed to hinder efforts to give chase.

Subsequent contacts with the Kindred who called themselves Adroanzi proved to be fragile affairs. Resentful of the amount of attention, people and destruction required in order to create a settlement and build structures, exceedingly few European Kindred managed to negotiate any sort of agreement beyond mutual tolerance and separation.

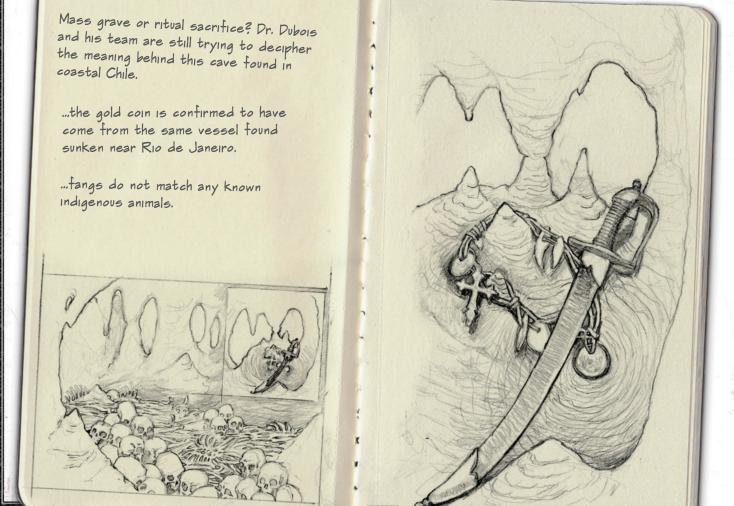
The Capitanias Experiment In 1530, King John III of Portugal allowed the organiza-

In 1530, King John III of Portugal allowed the organization of 15 "hereditary captainships." These captainships were open to anyone who had the ambition of sailing to the newly discovered Brazil to colonize it in the name of Portugal. Due to the presence of a number of French ships and crews, this idea was not all that successful. In fact, out of the 15 ships and potential colonies, only two managed to prosper.

Kindred came to early colonial Brazil in two general waves. The first handful of Kindred arrived with the captainships. In reality, a number of the captainships were financed by members of the *Grémio de Corajoso*. Unfortunately, the captains as well as the kindred who followed them suffered tremendous losses. Native tribes and the French gave far more resistance than the small handful of Kindred and ill-trained Portuguese men were prepared for. Fortunately, within a short amount of time the French had been routed and two permanent colonies allowed the exploration of South America. Subsequent Kindred interests included far more than just those from Portugal and members of the *Grémio*. Many nations and their secretive vampire colonists all wanted the resources that the mysterious continent offered, but Portugal kept its hold for several centuries.

Courage Betrayed by Prick During the 16th century, Spain's influence grew by leaps

During the 16th century, Spain's influence grew by leaps and bounds. Between Christopher Columbus's discovery of the West Indies (and subsequent voyages) and the Spanish Inquisition, the decline of the Portuguese Empire seemed imminent. Even though Portugal had extensive trade routes and solid presence from Brazil to Japan, the tiny country just proved too small to continue its myriad of conflicts with Spain. Indeed, the Kindred of Spain's major covenants began to establish a foothold in Portugal. Elder Invictus and Sanctified parleyed deals with younger members of the *Grémio de Corajoso*, ensuring themselves a place in Lisbon's elite.



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Afanso and his childer were livid at these developments. He immediately came down on his domain with an iron fist. Cooperation with either the Invictus or Lancea Sanctum carried harsh penalties. A number of bloody nights ensued throughout the first quarter of the 16th century. Unfortunately for Afanso, it was too late. Too much attention had been spent on his colonies. Too much effort wasted with chasing stories about strange and different Kindred. Too much pride deluded him about his own domain. As each year passed, more and more Kindred either came into Portugal from Spain or his own subjects left his Guild for the assured safety of the Invictus. Sheer numbers were beginning to erode the influence of the *Grémio* in Lisbon.

By 1570, Portugal was being stretched and strained on all fronts. Periods of plague, ill-trained captains frequently losing ships at sea, and wars against France in South America tested the ability of the young King Sebastian. These problems subsequently plagued Afanso and his brood of elder childer around Portugal. Their resources - the Crown's resources - were straining from its world-spanning ambition. These problems allowed periodic injections of money and resources from Spain's Kindred. While this aid did little for Portugal, the younger Kindred eagerly accepted the help of the covenants that were establishing more and more trust with each passing night. The main problem was the fact that when help was really needed, the Spanish Kindred responded with either antipathy or counterproductive advice to the Portuguese throne. One example of this was the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition.

While the Portuguese Inquisition did not match the horror and level of atrocity of the activity in Spain, it was still enough to break the spirits of most of the common subjects of Portugal. This caused intermittent chaos among the local populace, hampering Kindred influence over various aspects of the trading companies and other overseas interests. With the death of King Sebastian in 1578, much of the rest of the country was sent into disarray.

The next two years were chaotic, violent and lethal for the living of Portugal as well as for the undead. While a number of Sebastian's cousins and uncles all competed for the throne, each claiming more direct relations and legitimacy, the Invictus and Sanctified of Spain took advantage of the chance to attack the *Grémio's* activity in Lisbon and on the open seas directly. By the time Philip I claimed the Portuguese throne by force in 1580, the majority of the *Grémio de Corajoso* had been destroyed or routed and driven from Lisbon.

Portions of the Portuguese empire continued to exist after Philip took the throne, and some colonies even prospered. However, the Kindred presence in those areas fell into disarray. There was no leadership to coordinate the flow of information, and there were no longer any unified objectives regarding the quest for contact with other Kindred. Some members of the *Grémio* most certainly knew of Kindred bloodlines or ancient sites that shed more light upon the times of the Camarilla and even further back in history than that. But most of that information was most likely lost or forgotten over the centuries.

Legacy of the Grémio de Corajoso The Kindred of Europe occupied only a small part of the world. Much of the knowledge that they collected about the days of Rome and the Crusades has been lost over centuries of war, persecution and careless mismanagement of preservation. Kindred were simply forced to go back out into the world in order to find the lost secrets. Meanwhile, the landscape outside of Europe continued to progress. Not only was getting out into the world a challenge for Kindred, but the wealth of knowledge spread across the globe seemed impossible to collect.

The greatest impact that the Grémio de Corajoso had with its two centuries of existence was the diaspora of Kindred across the world, participating in their own Age of Discovery. While these Kindred were hiding in crates, sleeping for months in a ship's hull, and carefully sequestering themselves among the scant numbers of colonists, they served a pivotal role in developing modern societies of Kindred. Throughout most of the western world's recorded history, Kindred society, the covenants and the developments of bloodlines tended to follow trends in human society. This activity of reaching out to and mixing with Kindred of vastly different – if not totally alien – Kindred social models allowed them to share ideas beyond the simple covenant structure reflecting mortal events. These Kindred broke new ground by combining the social ideologies from the covenants with the ideas of newly discovered Kindred.

Some of these Kindred existed on more of a subsistencedriven level, while others had incredibly complex cultures and customs, involving networks of deities or tribal interactions. Injecting the ideas of the covenants into these ancient and well-established cultures rarely turned out positive results, but the *Grémio* and other visitors from established covenants and philosophies quite commonly learned from the "outsiders." It was not at all unheard of for even the smallest fragments of a culture's practices to find their way into one covenant's practice of ritual or another covenant's system of social identification.

For a number of years after their expulsion from Lisbon, Afanso and the remnants of his *Grémio* continued individual quests. They wandered all over the world and carefully searched for news about explorations into wild lands, maritime discoveries of uncharted islands, and any other sort of clue that might point to another previously "undiscovered" group of vampires. Each of them hoped for the possibility of passing the task off to another generation. They purposefully left a sort of trail behind them, a trail meant specifically for those they planned to pass knowledge off to as well as Kindred who might be "discovering" them for the first time. Pendants symbolizing St. Nicholas of Tolentino, a piece of cultural significance that would normally belong back with its culture hundreds or thousands of miles away, and other clues are scattered all over the world...a vampire just needs to know what he's looking for.



FLASHPOINT IN MODERN NIGHTS

Beneath the waves, forgotten in remote areas, and lost in ancient tombs, evidence of the Kindred's role in the Age of Exploration remains scattered around the globe. Vampires do not necessarily take part in heroic recoveries of lost artifacts, nor do they find a place in adventures inspired by pulp-era explorers. However, a number of different ideas can draw history into the nightly unlives and intrigues of tonight's Kindred. Here are a few ideas that Storytellers might find useful:

- Over decades and centuries of unlives, Kindred make a number of alliances. More commonly than not, these
 alliances occur as secret agreements that invite a great deal of scrutiny if they come to light. Uncovered journals,
 assembled accounts of historical meetings, and even forgotten vampires themselves could provide information
 to characters needing to enlighten themselves about a rival... or blackmail one.
- Throughout the travels of Kindred exploring the world, a number of vampires were discovered among the lost
 and indigenous cultures. Some travelers were lost to these other vampires. Kindred looking for forgotten powers
 or bloodlines could find a wealth of potential if they were persistent enough. This sort of chronicle would also
 allow players to bring their own ideas, based on history, into play. Or, this would allow you to bring specific
 historical bloodlines from Ancient Bloodlines into the game.
- Strange vampires were not the only entities found during the Kindred's exploration of the world. Other *things* were encountered, and were occasionally extremely dangerous. Parasitic spirits that fall dormant while their hosts are in torpor are unleashed when a torpid vampire is found and allowed to awaken. When the parasite jumps to a new host, the vampire begins to "remember" echoes of memories the parasite picked up from its previous hosts during feeding. Buried in the experiences of previous hosts is the secret to destroying the parasite. As the characters subject themselves (or a coerced volunteer) to the spirit, in order to find a clue about destroying the thing, they find out more than they had bargained for. Too many of other Kindred's secrets come out, placing a great deal of suspicion on the characters themselves.

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FATHER GOVERNS CHILD: THE FIRST KINGDOM OF THAILAND (CE 1238 – 1368)

ELECTRONIC TICKET

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...Since the Thai Chieftains united in this period, many consider the kingdom that followed, the Sukhothai kingdom, to be the first real nation of the Thai people. Thanks to clever uses of diplomacy and marriage, Sukhothai expanded into much of the area, finally driving away the last of their Khmer rivals. Many suggest that formalizing the state religion as Theravada Buddhism helped in cementing this vast and varied region into one nation.

There is a strong sense of nationalism in any mention of Sukhothai, with the culmination of romantic ideals surrounding King Ramkhamhaeng. In 1278, when Ramkhamhaeng took the throne after his brother, writings indicate a time of tremendous surplus in rice and fish, and a high time for art. The King himself is credited with creating the Thai alphabet used even today. In addition, he is said to have placed no tax on merchandise or roads. It is even suggested that the surplus was so great that the King would not level taxes on inheritances.

Perhaps more interesting to my own studies, according to some 13th century inscriptions ascribed to Ramkhamhaeng, his leadership style was unique and forward thinking. While there is some dispute over the full authenticity of these inscriptions, the Thai people still cling to the literature and take it as the truth. It is suggested in this work that the King hung a bell out front of his palace gate Enough boasting, childe. What you suggest is nothing new. We have all heard about your perfect meditative society of vampires, and I tell you it cannot work. But, since you are ever the brave one, I bid you take your theories and see your own history. Go to Thailand and seek out the Mayarap. They will help you to see what I have seen, that there is no peace between kindred, Buddha be damned. -Somsri

which any person could ring and be allowed to have the King personally see justice for his problems. "When commoners or men of rank differ and disagree, [the King] examines the case to get at the truth and then settles it justly for them." – Ram Khamhaeng Inscription (1292)

The image of a king serving his people in the role of investigator and judge is reminiscent of King Solomon of Judeo-Christian tradition and struck me at once as visionary. Even if these writings were created, as some suggest, some five hundred years later, the fact that this behavior is considered ideal for a king speaks volumes about the Thai concepts of equality.

Of course, Kindred are often centuries behind the times. Most of the traditional stories that follow are from oral retelling by the Sakadagami Monks, who seemed happy to tell me the stories of the birth of their order. They say that at that time the Kindred world was still backwards and ruled by fear. The ruler of that era they refer to as Asira. Sometimes he is called the Naga King of

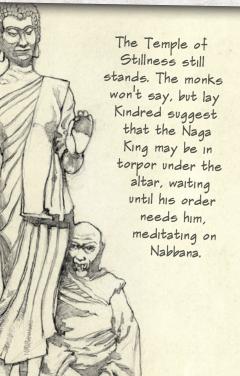
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Subject: Time waste Date: January 5 From: Silverstein, T. To: Carter

Carter:

I don't hope to understand what it is between you and that old Crone, but I have no idea why you let her egg you on all the way to some godforsaken swamp. Do you really think this thesis paper is going to sway the Prince that easily? He and Somsri have been together for centuries, what do you think you can find there that she hasn't told him? As for the notes you sent me, to be honest, the first five hundred words were dull and lifeless. I haven't read more, but if it doesn't pick up I don't know what to tell you. I saw that the header of the next set of notes has something to do with snakes. Cute touch, I guess, playing to the Prince's likes, but I wouldn't count on that alone to get your story to stick.

- Terry Silverstein, Archivist, Philadelphia



the Kindred world, and sometimes he is said to be one of the Yaksha, an order of Thai demons that have great and terrible sorcery and wicked tempers. Those who tell the stories pay special attention to how terrible his face was and say that he could drive terror into the hearts of anyone who stood in his way. His sorcerous abilities as Yaksha were often downplayed, while his blood lust and violence were emphasized. A number of stories depict him punishing enemies to great excess, killing bystanders and the guilty alike in his wrath.

At the time, traditional Indian Hinduism was still practiced among many older Kindred and the rigid caste system that ruled social and political policy



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seems indicative of strong Indian influence. Such influence might have migrated from Burma through the Khmer regime almost one hundred years earlier. Indeed, the Naga King's name is not one native to the Thai language and I find it interesting that in the monks' accounts, he hasn't been renamed.

The monks do not refer to the Circle of the Crone either, but the bloody traditions ascribed to the Naga King's courtiers and their dangerous witchcraft strikes me as distinctly Acolyte. Chief among their patronage was not Kali Durga, but a local deity the monks describe as an Ogress who they will no longer name.

While Asira did not challenge the mortal rule of King Ramkhamhaeng, it is said that he led the Kindred of Sukhothai openly and that mortals were regularly a part of the rituals and gatherings of his court, though not always willingly. The Naga King had his palace in the capital city of Sukhothai, a palace as opulent as any king's, as wealth flowed endlessly into his clawed hands from illicit mortal dealings and Kindred tithes.

Dance and ritual drama such as the Fawn Thai were just about the only local traditions regularly allowed by the Naga King in his temple, and it is suggested that <u>the only humans he ever fed from</u> and left alive were the delicate Fawn Led dancers, distinctive for their long brass fingernails and bold movements.

The Ram Nora Klong Hong is a drama dance preformed in the Northern region of Thailand. It occurs on special occasions, and tells the story of Hong, a Kinnaree or bird woman who is charming and lighthearted. In the dance she is pursued by Pran Boon, the hunter. Sounds like a Daeva to me.

How the Kaga King Learned to Cradle the Buddha

What follows is a story of the Sakadagami monks. While it is recited like a parable, the monks insist that it is literal and since we're talking about vampires it's harder to dismiss their claim.

In the smoldering summer of the seventh year of the Reign of Ramkhamhaeng the Great, Asira the Naga King held a great ceremony in honor of the terrible Ogress. This Ogress had demanded the blood of the most pure and chaste of men in Sukhothai as sacrifice, and Asira decided that seven traveling Ceylonese monks would suit the evening's festivities beautifully. The common Kindred were shocked when they entered the Palace gates and saw the monks chained to a wall for later bloodletting, but none dared speak out against the most terrible Naga King.

But first there were dancers. A line of women, two by two, danced for all the Kindred of Sukhothai with delicate candles flickering between their finger and thumb. The Naga King brooded in deep silence as the girls danced, the lights illuminating only occasional glimpses of the King's terrible brow. As the dance ended and the girls parted, there stood in the very center of the great throne room a young woman in plain white robes.

The Mae Ji stood with her hands folded neatly behind her, her shaven head tilted down in deference to the mighty King and her face etched with perfect serenity and surrender. Though she was Kindred, her Beast was so quiet that no fear or anger stirred in the breast of any of the witnesses.

To mortals, the Mae Ji are women who have taken vows but cannot become monks because the Thai government does not recognize the order of female clergy found in other parts of the Buddhist world. In Thai society, there is little to no reverence for these female ascetics.

"Who is this that interrupts my celebration?" the Naga King demanded, thundering from his throne.

"My name does not matter," said the Mae Ji, bowing deeply. "I come here not to interrupt your night, but to request the return of my brethren. These monks are simple, meditative men, and have committed no wrong worth this end. I have prayed for you and light candles on your name, O Naga King, Greatest of the Yaksha. I hold out to you goodwill because it helps to undermine anger's seductive pull."

The Naga King rose to his feet. "Let me look at you. I know of you. You are of great and noble birth and even more noble death, why do you stand here in the rags of a peasant. Worse yet, a peasant servant to peasant priests? No, cast off such silly airs and come here and sit at my side. You are of good breeding and lovely face, I would have you as my bride."

The Mae Ji merely bowed again. "I thank you lord, but my birth was only one of many on the path to Nibbana and does not matter now. Titles and birthright are distractions from the true self, and I have let go of the fetter that is a false view of self."

The palace grew silent as the assembly waited to see if the King would fly into a rage, but Asira's anger was

as fickle as he and totally unpredictable. He laughed at her words, a cold, hard, joyless sound. "You think you truly believe in your Buddha's teachings, but I know the truth of the Kindred heart. Cast aside your robes and I will have the chief of my sorcerers teach you the greatest and most dangerous of our magic." To demonstrate, the Naga King's childer stepped forward and used their blood magic to summon forth the Ogress they worshiped. "You see? Here is our Patroness among us. Where is your Buddha?"

The Mae Ji lifted her glimmering eyes for just a moment to observe the towering deity. "There stands your Patroness, lord, but I do not need to see the Buddha to understand the Four Noble Truths. I have no doubts that mine is the path to Nibbana when I am ready. I have let go of that fetter as well."

The Ogress vanished in the face of the Mae Ji's words, and the King considered the empty air where she had stood. "But still, I know you, low woman. I know your order has no place for you. You will never be ordained, or taught to meditate. You will never be welcome in the temples as clergy because the Buddha laid out no traditions for women."

The Mae Ji simply bowed her head once more. "Wisdom comes from observation of the precepts and the Eightfold Path. I do not need rituals. I need only the truth."

By now, the Mae Ji's poise and grace had set the assembly to whispering. Many watched with much interest and many asked what these teachings she mentioned were. They wondered what more they could learn from her.

The King began to grow angry. He pointed at her with a long talon of his jeweled hand. "I know you, low woman. I knew your maker. You are Kindred, but look how thin and pale you are. Hunger drags your shoulders down, why not come and feed from one of the comely manslaves I have? They are strong in the back and the legs, but could be bent to be very gentle with you." The Naga King laughed and his court laughed with him, though from fear, not mirth.

The Mae Ji smiled gently. "I have let go of cravings in order to achieve cessation of my suffering in this life time. I will feed to maintain wakefulness, but I do not hunger." Indeed, she did not flinch nor hiss when a slave offered his thick throat to her, her eyes remained peacefully on the ground. When he pierced is own wrist with a knife and held it up to her, she merely took a strip of cloth from her robe and wrapped his wrist, never reaching to taste the blood herself. The assembly murmured excitedly at the display and the Naga King grew furious. He descended from his golden throne and stood in front of the Mae Ji. He lashed out with his terrible claws and slit open her stomach from side to side. She did not flinch, she did not waver, she simply looked up at him with gentleness.

"Why do you not frenzy? Why do you not fly into a rage in the agony you must be in?" He slashed at her again and again, cutting her face and chest. She stayed still, her expression the same.

"I have filled my mind with stillness and quelled the rage in my heart. I am released from anger and no longer suffer from it." In his rage, the King lifted his clawed hand to finish her off. "These are the attainments I have achieved thanks to the teachings of my master, please, let me show you." She reached up her hand to the Naga King.

And in that moment, the Naga King was no more.

Asira, most terrifying of all the Yaksha, collapsed to the floor before the Mae Ji and declared her master. "Teach me this path to peace." And she did.

Temple of Stillness -

Life in Sukhothai After the Mae-fi

The Sakadagami write of dramatic change in Kindred affairs after the events of that summer night. Many of the court converted to laity or followed the Mae Ji's teachings to eventually become ordained. In particular, the dynastic house of Asira converted to following the Buddhist way, only slightly modified to suit Kindred unlife. The palace of the Naga King was forever abandoned in favor of a small Ceylonese temple on the outskirts of the city. Rowdy debauchery and violence were replaced with sermons and philosophical debate. The monks suggest to this night that the meditations of that era allow them to let go of their Kindred attachments.

Apparently, members of the Naga King's inner circle did not take well to his conversion to an ascetic existence, but outnumbered quickly, they went underground, joining forces with the cult of the Ogress as little more than an occasional subversive force. The Sakadagami speak of these Kindred as if they were merely a legend lost to the fog of ages. The Naga King was rumored to have a <u>complicated honor system</u> among his servants that gave them almost magical abilities so long as they were in his service. Suffice to say, none of this system is known to have survived.

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Who Was The Max -fi?

Always young Kindred ask me, was the Mae Ji real? They ask me, where did she go, why did she not stay in Thailand? When I ask them "why does it matter?" they have no answers for me. Still they come to me asking about her. I knew her as many of us did, but to know her or truly understand her are very different things.

She would not say, but the story was that in life she had been a noble woman of so much cunning and charm that a maddened viper would not strike her. Her sire, an unnamed and ultimately unimportant Kindred, stole her from the road on a trip from her family palace in Lampang to Wat Phra Lampang Laung, a temple nearby. It is assumed that he wanted her as a powerful vassal to use in his attempts to dismantle the Naga King's empire, so that he could rise to ascendancy.

What he hadn't counted on was that the woman was a devoted lay practitioner of the Eightfold Path and upon her savaging she fled to the temple. She did not know what her family would do to her now that she was a *peta*, a hungry dead.

Her choice was a good one, and correct for her, as the temple's Master being a man of equanimity,

Transcription of interview with Mom Jamak, Sakadagami Monk i observed her condition for what it was and without he fear. After meditating on the new arrival for several days he said to her finally that her suffering was no they different than any other and had the same root. If ny of she were to free herself of her desire, she would be her are free of her suffering just like anyone else. From there she happily took on the role of Mae Ji, shaving off her lovely hair every night and taking up the robes of a submissive. Suffice to say, the peace of the temple made it impossible for her sire to ever reclaim her and she spent many lifetimes in contemplation.

> So they ask me next, what happened to the Mae Ji, is she still in Thailand? Does she sleep under the temple near Lampang? Does she rest in the earth next to a fig tree? I think that none of these things are true. Years after our training was completed, entering in and out of meditative trances, decades would pass without our notice. Sometimes the Mae Ji would be there, sometimes she was gone. I have to believe in her lifetimes of contemplating the figure of the Walking Buddha, she could not sit still for long. Once, many decades ago, I saw her. She told me of a land far to the west, she spoke of mountains she called the *Kárpátok* and of a student she had taken there.

Subject: RE: Finds Date: September 16 From: Silverstein, T. To: Kiet

Kiet-

No offense dude, but don't be such a pussy. Seriously, you find a couple of imperfections in a social experiment and you're ready to face the sun? Acolyte underground or not, this has got to be the single longest standing political experiment in the world! Do you have any idea what this could mean if it got out!? No, it isn't perfection, but what the hell is? This is the third email I've sent with no answer, you're starting to make me nervous.

-Terry

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Terry-

Thanks for the heads up in regards to the hole in my research. Turns out the Sakadagami don't talk about the dirty side of kindred affairs there. I can't tell you how betrayed I feel right now. I really felt like I found the answer in these old stories. I really felt like this was truly something to back up all of the ideals of leadership through wisdom and meditation.

Divergent Paths — A Subtle War

Contrary to the Sakadagami's suggestion that there is no conflict in Sukhothai history after the conversion of Asira, rural oral storytelling has one glimmering gem to suggest that Kindred cannot maintain peace among themselves. After leaving Bangkok I headed out into more rural areas, seeking Kindred who would talk to me. Not surprisingly, I met few who were willing. When I mentioned the Naga Court I was met only with suspicion, and on at least one occasion, violence. After that, I returned to Bangkok in what I assumed was failure. Late in my hotel room one night, making preparations to return to the States, I turned to find a woman standing, unannounced in my room. I don't know how she entered as I habitually lock doors and bar windows. She wore a stunning brass mask with ghoulish features including large hideous fangs I must assume were made of ivory. On her hands she wore the long brass nails of a Fawn Led dancer. Whereas the mask was dull with age, the fingernails were polished to a brilliant shine.

"You want to know about the Bird and the Snake, do you? If you stay silent I will tell you the story, our secret story."

I motioned to my notebook. She nodded once and allowed me to take notes as she spoke. Her movements suggested the story was a drama often told in dance, and I could see it was difficult for her to suppress the need to act it out.

Bird and Snake, Or,

how Thailand Became Two Lands.

After Naga the Betrayer bowed his great head in submission to a lowly servant girl, he no longer respected the great rites and traditions of our people. The Yaksha, the Kinnaree and all the other demons of nature were ignored in the Naga's arrogant attempts to leave the world behind. Though he pretended at benevolence and compassion, we quickly realized that there was no place in his new faith for us.

The Western calendar reckons it was 1299, a spring celebration held in the open air in the night of a new moon. The dancers, devotees of an old and venerable faith, preformed the Fawn Tien, the candle dance, for the assembled. Their slow, beautiful, meditative movements were well received by almost all. All except the Naga, now called simply the Monk, as he kept his eyes closed as if in prayer.

Hong, our heroine and the greatest dancer in all of Sukhothai was greatly hurt, wounded in her great heart for the slight delivered by the Monk. And so she approached him, dressed and ready for the next dance.

"Why do you close your eyes, Snake? We dance for all to celebrate together, but you will not take part."

The Monk opened his red slit eyes and stared at Hong intently. He was new to his path, but sure of his conviction. "I do not see the point of your dance. It is a distraction from the way of peace. The point is to extinguish the flame, not to venerate it. I cannot be bothered with these old, wrong ways, and what is more, they are hence forth forbidden as they are a distraction to the Kindred of Sukhothai."

Those of the old ways were aghast and looked to Hong. Surely she could make the traitor see reason.

"You have lost your mind to hunger, Monk, and I can bare it no longer. Take back your edict, or I will take your head and your throne."

"I will not."

Hong, a Daeva who had come to be one with her wrath, flew into a perfect rage, casting a flurry of scratches at the Naga's face and neck. He retreated from her blows, now a coward instead of the noble Yaksha warrior he had once been. All of the bird children of Hong who would be called the Kinnaree and all of the snake children who would be called the Mayarap of Asira drew up to battle one another, but the beauty of their masters' fight was hypnotizing.

The Monk pushed aside every perfect elbow and knee that the dancer struck at him with, but would not lift a hand to strike back and give her satisfaction. They fought on and on like this for several nights, stopping only when the sun threatened to destroy them.

Finally, at the third night their childer joined the conflict and began to slay one another, as they were not so perfected in their paths as their elders. When Asira and Hong saw their childer and followers dying they looked at each other and ordered their bloodlines to stand down.

Hong pointed a brass fingernail at Asira and said, "You will never outlaw the practice of the old ways in Thailand, nor may any who take your throne hereafter. You will never interfere with mortals appeasing the old gods in their rituals."

Asira clasped his hands and bowed his bloody head. "You will take your dark traditions underground and not distract the Kindred of Thailand with your practices, though they remain yours to practice."

And so it was agreed that so long as those rules were abided upon, Bird and Snake would never again go to war.

After telling me the story, the women vanished and I was left with more questions than before.

For the mortals in Thailand there is little necessary distinction between Hinduism and Buddhism, in fact, many people practice the two side by side. There are noted temples to Brahma throughout Thailand. Theologians who have studied the region note that many of the rituals and superstitions of Hinduism, as well as the epic stories (such as the Ramakien, the Thai Ramayana) are distinctly Hindu, whereas if you ask someone telling these stories or participating in these rituals what faith they are, they will say they are unquestionably Buddhist.

Subject: RE: Echo of the bells Date: February 9 From: Silverstein, T. To: Kiet

Kiet, you idiot, this is exactly what she wanted! Goddamn coward!

Terry-

I'm sorry if I worried you, I had a lot to think about. I hope you can understand. I hope you can also understand when I tell you I won't be returning from Thailand now, if ever. There is simply too much to learn here that is too important to the whole world.

You were right when you said this was a very important experiment, but I'm no longer convinced that's all it is. I believe now it is the final piece to the puzzle. The way out. Peace.

I want to be free, Terry. I want to be free of the Beast, of suffering, free of controlling elders. I can't return to the states after all I've seen and felt here. I wish you could come join me.

Dai yahng sai yahng,

Formally Kiet Carter of the Carthian Movement.

Legacy of the First Kingdom Kindred society in Thailand remains as it did hundreds of years ago. Gatherings are still held at the Temple of Stillness, where quiet meditation and philosophical discussion is the norm. The Naga Monk is supposedly sleeping, the current Ajaan leads in the open style of Ramkhamhaeng. In fact, though he is a Kindred of considerable age, he keeps a bell outside of his haven and grants audience to any Kindred.

Is it a perfect system? Maybe not. The words of the woman in the brass mask are mostly true. If, during open court, one brings up the Bird Women and their blood magic, the stories are dismissed as part of the past that no longer matters, or it is turned into some kind of parable warning against clinging to the fetter of ritual.

History has shown, of course, that when Kindred find a system that seems to allow for peaceful relations, something happens to upset the balance. Vampires are predators and destroyers by nature. What might happen to turn a group of ascetics into embodiments of pure, bloody hunger? Or, as some Kindred who have traveled to Thailand suggest, has this already happened?



FLASHPOINTS IN THE MODERN NIGHTS

- The Hindu and Buddhist practices are not the only religions utilized in modern Thailand. The Southern Province has a large Muslim population, and the Lancea Sanctum's numbers grow with it. These Muslim Sanctified, like most members of the covenant, are fervent converts and conflict with the Sakadagami seems inevitable. Is it possible for the Lance and the Snake to coexist peacefully? If such is not the case, on what side of the struggle will the Bird stand?
- Rumors of an order of Kindred monks who practice meditative forms that are similar to but possibly predate the Coils of the Dragon might be of great interest to any number of Kindred inside or outside of the Ordo. It is more than possible that the stories of the Mae Ji and the traditions of the Sakadagami are hyperbole. They may simply be parable meant to inspire the novice in the order. But if they were true, what would it mean to the covenant? What connection does the covenant have to the Silent Temple and the Mae Ji who taught there?
- What sort of conflict would arise if a group of the Sakadagami were to move from the distant Temple of Stillness to a modern American city, with the diversity of Kindred there? Likely, their methods would attract neonates and elders alike seeking a way out of the struggles of Kindred existence. But then again, Western Kindred might insist upon destroying this way of unlife just to prove that it cannot work.

Clash of Empires: The Crusades (CE 1095-1300)

Even the breathers romanticize the middle ages. A time of knights, they say, in shining armor. Princesses and dragons. Perhaps not dragons, but equally childish concepts of honor and chivalry, with high-minded ideals behind every joust and a beautiful maiden behind every high-minded ideal.

The mewling of children.

J was half-surprised, when J awoke, to find my blood descendents waiting for me. J knew, in a way, that they had been waiting. J had felt them stirring in my dreams, seeking my guidance from the far side of that gulf into which J had been lowered. The undiscovered country, a playwright said just before J fell into the eclipse, undiscovered no more. Yet their questions had the qualities of dreams, and it was difficult to pare one from the other.

But they were there, and they fed me and returned this mockery of life to my ancient bones. They taught me about the present, about the centuries that had turned as J slept. And while J wept for the past, for the streets of Paris as they once were, resplendent and dark under the full moon (now the garish city lights blot out all definition, like a paint of vague color spilled across a pristine masterwork), never did J weep for the time of the Empire.

They ask me what it was like, in the nights when the Damned ruled entire kingdoms from lightless keeps and led armies of blood-bolstered warriors in noble battle against their enemies. J wept for them perhaps, for their ignorance, for the knowledge that has burned in the last millennium.

The age of darkness was nothing less than a hell, J told them, and the Empire a loose affiliation of demonic despots bent on nothing less than subjugation of all Christendom and beyond. Many Kindred died, lords and clergy alike, but never in honorable combat. Blood called blood to the killing fields without humility. Some sickness blighted the age; even the food was sick.

Jn their ignorance they disbelieved. Jn their ignorance they claimed they would aid me, they would help me establish the Empire again.

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This is why J reclaimed their blood.

At its height, the Camarilla attained an achievement that has not again been repeated in the history of the Kindred. Much as mortals marvel at the wonders of antiquity, such as the great pyramids, and contemplate how they were constructed without the aid of modern technology, so too do modern Kindred look back on the Camarilla and theorize on how the Kindred of Rome fashioned a functional society that spanned the known world and made travel between cities safer in a period before the advent of enclosed coaches, much less cars and airplanes, than it is tonight. No Kindred domain tonight matches the size of the Camarilla at its height. When the Camarilla collapsed, the world as the Kindred knew it shattered. No longer could Kindred reliably communicate across continents. No longer could a senator in the city travel to her holdings in the east with minimal fear. Outlying lands quickly fell to the ravaging hordes of godless vampires, and those Kindred who survived the onslaught became immediately paranoid and defensive, building small armies and constructing fortresses to deter their enemies. Kindred society fell into a dark age in which every feudal lord fended for himself and the Lancea+Sanctum became the chief retainers of knowledge lost during centuries of war. Unfortunately, they also became its chief censors, and many works of the Roman Kindred met the pyres.



LANCEA+SANCTUM?

What few Kindred histories survive from the Middle Ages often make mention of the Sanctified. However, scribes typically gave the formal name of the covenant as Lancea+Sanctum. Modern scholars believe the cross to be a form of ampersand, and some conjecture (backed up with texts more ancient yet) that the church once bore the name Lancea et Sanctum ("Lance and Chapel"). Eventually, the "+" stopped appearing in text, possibly because "et" was dropped from the name in common speech.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the familiar modern Lancea Sanctum seems to have been in common use throughout Europe by CE 1400 at the latest.

By the time Pope Urban II rallied the mortal lords to sally forth towards the Holy Land to reclaim Jerusalem, Kindred infighting between Sanctified sects and lords claiming to be the true heirs to the Camarilla had reached a fever pitch. Young Sanctified, determined that the world was broken and the only way to mend it was to accompany the mortal herd to Outremer and inflict God's divine wrath upon the Saracens, traveled with the Crusaders, weakening the pilgrim army from within through feeding even as it marched across Europe, disrupting established domains. Meanwhile, the powerful feudal lords of central Europe came together to consolidate and maintain their power against one another and the many childer they sired to serve as their soldiers. An Invictus Empire was born, and it reached forth to consume all of Europe only to find that much of it was already claimed.



Byzantine Shield

During the decades of the Angeloi Dynasty (AD 1185 - 1204) beggars could not afford to be choosers. This hastily painted shield boasts an early image of the cross that has become synonymous with Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The fact that this shield saw battle, despite the mistakenly upturned emblem, attests to the dire straits that the Byzantine Empire had found itself in before its ruin at the hands of the Crusaders in 1204.



Within the cathedral's walled courtyard we found a remarkably well-preserved example of the labyrinth. The typical medieval labyrinth may have been representative of the long pilgrimage to the Holy Land or Jerusalem itself. Some scholars claim that the labyrinth represents the life of the faithful, laying out a difficult path from a single entrance, which represents birth, to a unified center, which represents God. In this unusual example, the center has been decorated to appear as the sun, perhaps implying a connection to the Heavenly Kingdom.

As we traveled deeper into the French

I thought you might be interested in this. My ghoul visited the locale and reports that the entrance to the labyrinth points towards the church's graveyard. Birth indeed. The spiral towards the sun suggests that we all meet our end eventually, by one bane or another. Morbid, I know, but I doubt that the early Sanctified were known for their levity any more than tonight's are.

Cruce Signati

By the end of the Fourth Crusade, hundreds of Kindred had "taken the cross," traveling with thousands of mortal soldiers to do battle in the distant east. Along the way they clashed with local lords and abused native kine, inflicting a century of horror across Europe. The eldest of these lords were some of the most powerful Kindred known to history, ancient elders who commanded extended families of mortals, ghouls and Kindred alike. They spoke, and their word was law. With this power, they threw themselves against enemies they did not fully understand.

The Twilight of the Lancea+ Sanctum The Lancea+Sanctum never had a knack for widespread

The Lancea+Sanctum never had a knack for widespread rule, and with a booming Kindred population and a disease-ravaged mortal populace, Lancea+Sanctum archbishops often found themselves stepping aside for more politically astute Kindred to rule in their stead. These Kindred lords were often anointed Sanctified themselves, but were rarely of the studious nature necessary to become a frocked member of the priesthood. As a result, many of these princes considered themselves only nominally Sanctified, claiming instead that by dint of lineage they were the heirs to the Camarilla, the Senex (the Camarilla's ruling body), the Invictus (the eldest members of the Senex) or any number of hoary governing bodies of the Kindred past. These Kindred recognized the power and zealousness of the Sanctified, however and attributed their right to rule justly to God as well as to their blood. Most maintained strong ties and amiable relationships with their coreligionists in the Lancea+Sanctum.

The Lancea+Sanctum, for its part, kept busy studying scripture, discovering Theban Sorcery, rooting out and punishing heretics and throwing themselves in battle against the pagan Kindred of northern Europe and the Saracens of the Levant. Only in France and Italy did archbishoprics remain the fundamental division of Kindred society, and even many of those strongholds fell to Invictus administration as Sanctified took to the Crusades.

Why Sanctified Kindred were compelled to give up all they had and travel across the world is a matter of some debate. Vampires who traveled with the crusading

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armies could look forward to a harrowing journey across inhospitable land, traversed in crates or bags during the daysleep, let out to haunt the army's campfires and find sustenance amongst a zealously faithful and armed populace by night (those who were capable of doing so often masqueraded as harlots among the battalion of whores that followed the armies of the faithful, slaking their thirst as the Christian soldiers served their lust). The threat of battle during the day remained constant, and before they ever left European soil many Kindred crusaders died when their sleeping bodies were inadvertently exposed to the sun. Some historians argue that the Kindred were no more immune to the rhetoric of the papacy than mortal lords. Others believe that the Sanctified saw the holy nation they had wrenched from the hands of the Camarilla falling to shambles, and believed that if they settled in the Holy Land they could make their dream a reality.

The Rise of Das Heiligen Nacht Reich, Die Unbesiegt

After the Camarilla fell, the European territories it once governed shattered into thousands of independently held domains. The fall of their government, the Camarilla magistrates reasoned, was no reason to give up the lands they had worked so hard to maintain. The struggle between newly appointed Lancea+Sanctum archbishops and pretenders to the Camarilla name roiled for centuries, and Kindred Embraced after Charlemagne's proclamation that there would be "no lord without land, no land without lord" only fueled the intensity of the strife. Kindred princes Embraced as often as they felt able, and between lord, childer, sworn knights and other soldiers, an independent domain was able to maintain a small army of ghouls. The word of a domain's lord became law, and all beneath him were bound to it. Domain usually passed to the lord's eldest childe, when the lord fell into torpor, in a process called primogeniture (though in France, domains were often split among all of a lord's childer, leading to vicious infighting).

One of the elder princes of a domain in the Rhine valley, a Ventrue called Aelfgifu, sent a series of letters to the secular princes of modern-day Germany, Switzerland and northern Italy. She wrote of the need for the landed noble princes, the true powers of Europe, to unify to face the external threats posed by the numerous cults and covenants that rose in the shadows of the Dark Ages. Within a few decades the woman convinced a number of the most powerful elders to send representatives to accompany her to Rome, where they would meet with the Prince of Rome and gain the blessing of the ancient city's archbishop in their endeavor, which was nothing less than the reestablishment of the Camarilla's power.

The emissaries traveled to Rome and met in the very council chambers once used by the leaders of the Camarilla. Aelfgifu led the discussion, and over several months the princes codified the meaning of each Invictus title as well as the basic laws and philosophies of their covenant. They chose the name Invictus, rather than Senex or Camarilla, due to a text in the possession of one of the ancient Kindred that implied that Ceasar himself had given the Invictus the right to rule the night as the Roman Emperor ruled the day. Argument over who should actually be the Emperor of the Night (Nachtkaiser) was intense, but eventually the princes agreed to each claim the title of prince-elector (Kurfürst); this title indicates one who chooses the Emperor and whose status is higher than all save the Emperor. The Kurfürsten elected one from among their number, a Ventrue, as the Nachtkaiser, and when the Archbishop of Rome gave his blessing, the Holy Night Empire (Heiligen Nacht Reich) of the Invictus (Die Unbesiegt) was born. The recorded date was AD 1142.

Initially the territory of *Die Unbesiegt* included all of Germany, Switzerland and Italy, but the new covenant quickly stretched into areas of France, Hungary and eastern Europe. The *Nachtkaiser*'s role was that of mediator, and he resolved disputes among the *Kurfürsten* and other lesser princes (*Fürsten*). (Invictus domains throughout Europe became known as *Fürst Estat*, combining the German word for prince and the Anglo-French term for

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THE CHURCH AND STATE

Despite the tensions listed above, *Die Unbesiegt* and the Lancea+Sanctum were inextricably linked. The empire claimed divine right, as bestowed on them through God's intermediaries, the Sanctified, and the church relied on the empire for routes of travel and trade. Almost all members of *Die Unbesiegt* claimed lay membership in the Lancea+Sanctum, while many priests and bishops came to the Lancea+Sanctum from *Die Unbesiegt* when they failed to inherit domain from their sires. Members of the Kindred knightly orders (see below) usually kept ideals in line with both the Sanctified and Invictus, typically serving or joining one or both groups.

The resulting society boasted a Gordian knot of familial ties between the two covenants that stretched across the breadth of Europe. These complex lines of alliance resulted in more personal, vicious infighting, but also helped maintain Kindred society through the fires of the Inquisition.



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a noble's territory.) The *Nachtkaiser* turned the wrath and land lust of the *Fürsten* towards conquest, and wars between the mighty night empire and lands to the east began in earnest.

The Fall of Adamantes Athanatoi

The Byzantine heirs to the Camarilla called themselves Adamantes Athanatoi, the Unconquered Immortals. Their own Dominus Noctis Imperator ruled over a council of Prisci, the eldest members of each clan. The eastern Sanctified, whose practices had long diverged from those of the western creed, closely supported and advised the Athanatoi government, and the Sanctified Patriarch and Imperator ruled almost as co-princes. Within Constantinople, Kindred were divided into thema, administrative groups (usually divided by lineage) with specific responsibilities to the Kindred government who gained specific rights in return, usually in regard to where they might haven and feed. The Mystikoi, a line of Gangrel monks, served as scribes and historians, for example, and were given the right to feed from the city's monastic population.

The Athanatoi, who considered themselves the direct descendents of a more-or-less unbroken Camarilla (the Patriarch and Imperator during the Crusade Era were both said to have been Embraced prior to the fall of Rome), initially viewed the upstart Unbesiegt with amusement. They fought back the invaders along the western front when necessary and ushered them on towards the Holy Land whenever possible. When the pilgrim army of Boniface of Montferrat appeared at the gates of Constantinople at the dawn of the 13th century, western Unbesiegt and Sanctified hid among their number, ensuring the breakdown of communication and a surfeit of tension between the two mortal armies. When the army sacked the city, ghouls in service to Die Unbesiegt ferreted out the local Unconquered, putting them to the sword and stake wherever they were found.

Eastern Influence

The resulting diaspora of Byzantine Kindred into the west took with it many of the ideas on which Athanatoi governance had been based. Many larger domains soon boasted *Prisci*, clan leaders who vied for power with the local *Fürst*'s heirs, the primogen (though over time, the roles of those two positions became blurred). The Byzantine *thema* died with the Athanatoi, but similar groups responsible for matters of local administration, typically called guilds, appeared throughout Europe.

A conflict between the guilds of Florence and Pisa blossomed into a debate over the rights of members of *Die Unbesiegt* in domains outside of their own, and the resulting controversy unseated the first and only Invictus Emperor, whose name was expunged from the histories of the time. *Das Heiligen Nacht Reich* existed for just over a century, and when it fell the infighting between the Kindred of central and western Europe became even more intense than it had been before. In a way, one chronicler of the Agonistes line wrote, through the guilds, the *Athanatoi* had their vengeance from beyond the grave.

The eastern Sanctified church, which had diverged greatly from mortal Christianity over the centuries due to a Byzantine law forbidding Kindred from worshipping with the kine, added several *ritae* to the Lancea+Sanctum, which are considered traditional rites in the modern nights. While many surviving eastern Sanctified joined their western brethren, some rejected the westerners, instead traveling into the wilds of eastern Europe, Russia and the Middle East, forming their own cults and bloodlines.

Numerous smaller covenants aside from the Invictus and the Lancea+Sanctum existed during the period of empire. It was a time in which new ideas, unfettered by wide-ranging assumptions regarding what Kindred society *should be*, gave birth to new covenants. Some, like the Osites and Mystikoi, exist tonight as bloodlines. Others, such as the knightly orders, were absorbed into other covenants. Many simply fell to extinction, stamped out by the rising society built by the Invictus and Sanctified.

Holy Orders

The Others

The vacuum left by the implosion of the Camarilla led to numerous factions seeking to administrate domains. While the Lancea et Sanctum was the largest of these, and moved to dominate Europe for five centuries, it remained rife with internal division and was more a loosely aligned sect of cults than the monolithic Lancea Sanctum of the modern nights. The most traditional Sanctified devoted themselves to wiping out the wilder heresies or converting confused Kindred back to the path of truth.

One of the most widespread of these groups were the Osites, a monastic order of Kindred devoted to the study of the aspect of Creation denied to the Kindred: death. These reclusive scholars of thanatology claimed many of the monasteries of Europe as their personal fiefdoms, delving into the secrets of the dead and developing a dread magic that allowed them to commune with the spirits of the departed. Eventually the Osites were reclaimed into the Lancea+Sanctum. With the birth of the Renaissance, numerous Kindred abandoned the death theologians, leaving only a staunch core of Mekhet believers. The small order's magic eventually settled into the Osites' very Vitae,

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and tonight a Kindred cannot be taught their rites without being a member of their nigh-extinct bloodline.

While the Sanctified splintered into numerous factions, many of these groups shared a similar heresy: They rejected Longinian doctrine and strived to continue a Christian existence in the face of undeath. These Christian Kindred, who were called by different names in different domains (though modern historians of the Lancea Sanctum tend to lump these movements together under the term "Golcondite Heresies"), rejected the notion that the Kindred soul was damned, and felt that by resisting the base urges of the Beast and obeying the laws of God, they might someday receive God's blessing and forgiveness in the perfect heavenly kingdom to come. While bishops and priests who embraced the Golcondite Heresies were stamped out by the end of the Middle Ages, similar philosophies still haunt the prayers of optimistic Sanctified to this night.

Dualistic and Gnostic heresies were similarly common, from a cult of degenerate Daeva who wildly misinterpreted the tenets of Catharism (believing their role not to be the guidance of mortals towards salvation through fear, but rather the temptation of mortals to sin) to the Mystikoi, a bloodline cult of Gnostic Byzantine Kindred who blended self-abuse with a transcendental spiritualism. What was left of the latter, after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire, joined the Ordo Dracul and may have had an early effect on its philosophies. Another less-common but more-hated heresy claimed that Christ was the true savior of Kindred kind – and that Longinus was his sire.

Knightly Orders

Several secular organizations grew as well, including a number of knightly orders, some of which held onto customs of the Legio Mortuum, the military arm of the Camarilla. Most of these organizations would eventually be consolidated into the Invictus by AD 1300. Some few of the knightly orders still active in the covenant tonight claim a lineage that predates the order's assimilation into the First Estate.

Knightly orders put a strong emphasis on honor and duty (though neither ideal necessarily extended to the kine), and many placed themselves in service of a Kindred lord while others served the Sanctified or took up whatever cause their leaders championed. Kindred knights spent hours in meditation and practice, honing their abilities against their ghouls or, on occasion, against one another. Much like their mortal counterparts, Kindred knights entered duels and jousts held by regional Kindred lords to prove their honor on the field of battle. Such combats were typically to first blood. When honor had truly been aggrieved, however, a Kindred knight might invoke a duel to Final Death called monomacy. The Kindred believed that God oversaw each sacred monomacy duel, the victor determined through divine will. When two Kindred lords contested an area in a domain, they sometimes declared monomacy on one another, sending a champion from among their knights to do battle. While few Kindred would risk Final Death for another's wealth, knights who stood as champions for their lords were typically rewarded handsomely, often with the control of the very area being fought over. In this way many knights became landed Kindred, joining the ranks of the Invictus.

The oldest of the knightly orders was the Legio Damnata of Constantinople, founded in the sixth century by then-Patriarch Alexander. What the Legio Damnata possessed in venerable age it lacked in actual skill and discipline. The Legio Damnata were notorious for their shifting loyalties and reliance on the assistance of the mercenary *Tagma ton Xenon* (see below). This order was wiped out during the sack of Constantinople.

The Order of Sir Martin was an order that appeared in Jerusalem at the end of the 11th century and eventually spread throughout Europe as a bloodline. These blighted monsters haunted crusader camps and cities alike, wielding the fear of their disease as deftly as they did their swords.

Pagan Cults

War with pagans intensified during the early years of the Holy Roman Empire, and the forces of the Lancea+Sanctum and their allies among the developing Invictus routinely clashed with heathen Kindred. Pagan Kindred of the Roman Camarilla and Byzantium traveled into the darkening wilds, calling together native Kindred and warning them of the growing threat posed by the spear that stabbed so often into their lands. Through such discussions it was decided that the cults would band together for their continued survival, forming a protective orbit against their enemies. Many of these cults called on mother figures to protect them and to bring an end to their enemies. By the rise of Das Heiligen Nacht Reich, this combined Kindred front was known as the Circle of the Crone and was considered anathema in most god-fearing domains.

The Vikings, who raided Christian lands by sea for centuries, brought along with them warrior Acolytes, some of whom possessed abilities derived from the Protean Discipline that allowed them to become literally one with the longboats their retainers rowed. These warlords were renowned among their people for luck in combat, and served as the first introduction for many Longinian Kindred to the brutal ways of the Circle of the Crone. The

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stereotype that Acolytes revel in diablerie stems from these invasions. In the case of the Viking Kindred, stereotype and truth were one.

Ironically, one of the largest unmolested populations of Circle cultists existed in the heart of Christendom, Constantinople. The *Imperator* allowed occasional nomadic Kindred from northern Europe and similarly barbaric lands to remain within the city so long as they demonstrated a strong capacity for combat and were willing to serve. This *Tagma ton Xenon* ("Foreign Guard") protected the Kindred of the city in exchange for feeding rights among the city's non-Greek population and a small amount of coin from the *Imperator*'s coffers. While each member of the Guard was baptized upon induction, the Sanctified largely left the warriors to their own devices, only chastising them for their worship if they behaved in a manner deemed disruptive to the larger population.

Saracen Covenants of the Midnight Crescent Kindred traveling into the Holy Land discovered a strong Kindred hierarchy already in place. Islamic Kindred Embraced in the eighth and ninth centuries ousted the remnants of the Camarilla, most of whom were magistrates nominally loyal to the *Imperator* of Constantinople, from much of the Holy Land, setting up their own form of governance. Islam does not strongly differentiate between secular government and religious leadership, but the Kindred of the Levant evolved the same basic dichotomy that existed in the west: Some Kindred ruled as administrators while others advised as leaders of the faith.

The administrative government of the Muslim Kindred was known as *al-Amin*, "the faithful" or "the trustworthy." The covenant, while primarily concerned with matters of governance, never divorced itself from the mortal faith of Islam to the extent of the western Invictus. Kindred of this covenant favored an exoteric interpretation of Islam, and the princes, known as *Sultans* or *Caliph*, of their domains, called *Ummah*, drew their laws directly from the *Qur'an*. The strength and influence of *al-Amin* has waxed and waned over the centuries, and many of the Kindred formerly of that covenant, especially in northern Africa and Iberia, eventually joined the Invictus, becoming staunch if somewhat nontraditional members of the First Estate. *Al-Amin*, however, still exist tonight in several nations in which Islam reigns as the primary religion.

The Banu Shaitan, on the other hand, remained deeply interested in the spiritual underpinnings of Islam, mining the Qur'an and other holy texts for esoteric truths to illuminate Allah's meaning in the existence of the Kindred. Like the Lancea+Sanctum, the Banu Shaitan believed that the role of the Kindred under Allah rests in protecting and testing the faithful. Unlike the Sanctified, however, the *Banu Shaitan* had little interest in converting other Kindred to their faith or infidel mortals to Islam. The group delved deeply into the metaphysical and mystical, and when the first exhausted Lancea+Sanctum pilgrim warriors reached the Holy Land in 1099 they were shocked to find non-believers with a command of the Dark Miracles equal to their own. The *Banu Shaitan* continued as an independent covenant until the 19th century, at which point it reconciled with the Sanctified and joined the older covenant's ranks.

A few smaller covenants also existed in the Middle East, and *al-Amin* and the *Banu Shaitan* tended to be more accepting of these deviations than the Invictus and Lancea+Sanctum in the west were of their myriad heresies. One of the most widespread and loathed of these covenants, however, was the *Jinni*, "the Invisible," a group of elder monsters who followed the pagan religions of the Middle East, paying respect to ancient deities now vilified as demons and wielding vicious magic rites. The *Jinni* eventually disappeared from the night, and the few accounts that exist provide nothing other than hints as to their fate.

Other Groups

As the Invictus and Sanctified coalesced into a single body, they inevitably clashed with the splintered remnants of European Kindred culture. While the growing society branded various cults as anathema, only two factions drew universal scorn from vampires regardless of creed.

The first, the various followers of Belial and other demons, traveled in nomadic packs, torturing and slaughtering mortal travelers they came upon and leaving farmhouses (and even the occasional small village) devoid of life. Sanctified society (including most Invictus and Kindred knights) equated the Belialites with the Acolytes, and put members of both groups to the torch whenever they could. Unfortunately for the sedentary Kindred, the nomadic lifestyle of the Belialites allowed them to maintain larger social groups than many Kindred domains could support. A lone knight-protector of a small village stood little chance against a ravening, bloodthirsty pack of vampires.

The second, more shadowy group may be nothing but a myth. Several contemporary sources make reference to the Breath-Eaters, a group of Kindred aligned in some dark pact with an entity from Hell. These heretics gained foul powers through the Amaranth, magic that allowed them to drink a mortal's life and soul directly from her breath rather than her blood. By consuming mortal souls, these creatures subsisted without blood and walked under the sun without fear. Sources attribute other darker witchcrafts to them, though descriptions of the effects seem similar to some powers of Crúac.

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COVENANT ADVANTAGES

The covenants listed above get the following advantages. Only Kindred with Status 1 in the covenant may enjoy the benefits of membership.

The Lords of the Night: Both *Die Unbeseigt* and *Athanatoi* may purchase the Haven, Mentor, Resources and Retainer Merits at half cost. *Al-Amin* may purchase Allies, Haven, Mentor and Resources at half cost.

The People of the Book: Both the Sanctified and Banu Shaitan may purchase Theban Sorcery.

The Knightly Orders: Members of knightly orders may purchase Fighting Styles, Haven, Mentor and Retainer at half cost.

The Pagans: Acolytes and Jinni may purchase Crúac.



Most repugnantly, the practices of the Breath-Eaters invariably left the consumed kine a dead, desiccated husk. Were this rapacious destruction of the mortal flock and herd not enough to draw down the wrath of the allied Invictus and Sanctified, the Breath-Eaters bore some esoteric hatred for both covenants. Those few Breath-Eaters put to the pyre reportedly decried the "false prophet Longinus" and swore vengeance for some ancient wrong. Assassinations and disappearances were common during the age, and the followers of Longinus placed the blame of many of them squarely on the Breath-Eaters.

While the Breath-Eater's objectives were inscrutable, rumors of their methods spread throughout the known world. The soul-thieves slowly integrated themselves into a domain over time, becoming well-known and liked before beginning a quiet campaign of murder. When evidence began to point towards the Breath-Eater, she would disappear, taking the reasons for her actions with her.

Whatever the Breath-Eater's true powers and goals, the future had no place for them. They vanish from the chronicles of the night shortly after the fall of *Das Heiligen Nacht Reich*, the last record of them dating to 1277. What, precisely, happened to the group remains unknown to most Kindred to this night. Many claim that the Breath-Eaters still remain active in the form of VII (or, in the case of some few zealous Sanctified, the Ordo Dracul). Others argue that they never existed at all, that they were but a cautionary tale, a warning to one's childer not to trust others easily.

Legacy of the Clash of Empires The night empire of the western Invictus and the Greek

The night empire of the western Invictus and the Greek empire of the Byzantine Invictus were the closest any Kindred have come since the fall of the Camarilla to regaining that institution's strength and size. These two empires saw the birth of the Invictus in the form familiar to Kindred of the modern nights. The close relationship between the Invictus and the Sanctified cemented during these three centuries.

Clan Ventrue, which dominated *Die Unbeseigt*, came into its own during these nights, taking on the mantle of widespread leadership for the first time. The Invictus and the Sanctified of this period tended to favor Ventrue, Daeva and, on occasion, Mekhet, creating a divide between "high-blood" and "low-blood" that haunts Europe (and even some domains in America, such as New Orleans) to this night.



FLASHPOINT IN THE MODERN NIGHTS

While the rich, unstable tapestry of ideas and alliances that characterized the time period of the crusades can make for a lively setting for a **Vampire: The Requiem** game, the results of the period echo to the modern nights. The institutions that came to define modern Kindred society coalesced during this time, while the one concerted attempt of the Invictus to bring the whole of the world's Kindred under its aegis failed utterly.

- The following story hooks can help a Storyteller utilize the Clash of Empires in a chronicle set in the modern nights:
 When a member of the characters' herd is found drained of life and soul but not blood, a mentor or patron approaches them with hoary lore of monsters of the past. Have the Breath-Eaters returned to the modern nights to bring a long-denied vengeance against the Sanctified? Did they ever actually disappear, or have they been waiting in the shadows of another covenant for centuries, awaiting the right time to strike?
- The characters uncover the sordid history of the birth pangs of the Invictus and the destruction of the Athanatoi. They face the choice of what to do with information feasibly damning to the Invictus. Worse yet, Invictus elders may already know that the characters have learned the dark secrets of the covenant's founding failures. How do the characters protect themselves? Can they use this information for their own good? For the good of Kindred society as a whole?
- One of the city's elder Nosferatu uncovers evidence of early bigotry on the part of the Invictus towards his clan. He loudly proclaims his distrust of the Invictus, shifting his allegiance towards the Carthians and encouraging his many clanmates to do the same. How do the characters react to the changing power structure? Does the elder attempt to win them to his side or do they become more closely allied with the Invictus?

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BLACK STREETS OF BABYLON: THE SEVEN SPIRITS (625-539 BCE)

You bet your cold, dead ass them things are real. I first heard about the Edimmu a few months back, when Abner brought word to Mistress Inez, telling her that she needed to watch herself. The obsequious little shit was probably hoping to get on her good side, but Mistress Inez was never much for taking the advice of her lessers. Abner got what he deserved that night, if you ask me.

I was hanging around the Manor the night it happened, hoping for a drop. It'd been a while and I was starting to get all jittery. Maybe you know what it's like, and can spare me a lick for my troubles after I tell you what I seen?

Anyway, Mistress Inez had guests over, so I knew to stay the hell out of her way. I thought I'd hunker down by the old potting shed with a bottle of whiskey until they finished their business.

A gaunt old bloodsucker I'm damn near certain I'd seen at the manor a few times before showed up sometime close to midnight. The thing was, for a split second as he made his way up the walkway, I could've sworn he was walking funny - shuddery like. It was as if he had a few more bones under his skin than the rest of us. He straightened up at the doorway when Mistress Inez answered. I thought it was just my mind making shit up to fuck with me. I needed a fix, after all, and the booze only did so much.

I'd just started to doze off when the screaming woke me. It sure as hot hell sounded like folks getting murdered, and I figured that anything on this earth that could make Mistress Inez and them other bloodsuckers scream like that was well worth staying the fuck away from. I thought about running, but I was dizzy as a cat on a tilt-a-whirl from downing the rest of that bottle. I probably wouldn't have made it more than a few yards before falling on my fool ass. Thank the Lord I still had the good sense to hide myself in the shed. I kept still as a corpse for what felt like hours, long after the screaming had stopped, peering through the

When them things finally came out of the manor, I nearly shit myself out of fear they'd find me. There were seven of 'em, all moving quick and jerky across the lawn, limbs folding and unfolding at impossible angles as they made their way to the street. The one that looked like Mistress Inez twisted its face around to the shed for a split second, and I saw its eyes burning cold like starlight in the darkness.

Last I saw of my mistress she was headed to town with those other ones. I ain't had a drop since.

So, how about it?

- Jarvis Mule, witness, Magnolia Manor, Knoxville, Tennessee

Transcript collected by The United, Public Archives

Ancient Mesopotamia has been called "the cradle of civilization," and rightly so. Located between the lush, verdant banks of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and planted in what is tonight Iraq and Syria, this fertile crescent of land was both a bridge between glorious empires of old and a synergistic center of early kine progress and social development. Ancient Mesopotamia was a nucleus of birth, of constant change, of unending turmoil – for kine and Kindred alike.

It was in this region of the world, before the rise of the Camarilla, before the covenants as we know them tonight existed, that a magnificent shadow empire of the Damned was born. Under the eaves of the ancient city of Babylon, a prince with a unique and terrible gift ruled uncontested for centuries over much of the Near East. But, as history shows us time and time again, power corrupts, and it was through corruption that an even greater evil was born — a formidable creature that would decimate the Kindred of the Near East, and then inevitably draw them closer together than ever before in an attempt to contain a common threat, the Edimmu.

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Midnight Gods of the Near East The Shadow Empire of Babylon

It is commonly accepted that wherever there have been kine, the Kindred are lurking nearby. In ancient Mesopotamia and throughout the world, urbanization among mortals served as a catalyst for the growth of early vampiric populations. Cuneiform tablets containing text alluding to the Damned have been discovered that are nearly as ancient as written language itself.

It is rumored among Kindred scholars that mad and powerful Sumerian elder vampires originating from these primeval mortal settlements still return to their homeIn my research, I found this leafing through some magazines. Looks like a recent dig has dredged up some fascinating new finds. The relief panel depicts the Edimmu of ancient Babylon, a creature born of ritual that slaughtered Kindred throughout the Near East following the reign of En Isiratuu. The ornamental patterns surrounding the figure represent the seven spirits who ride the Beast. Thought it might be of interest.

land centuries later. Likely, half-remembered dreams of the cold, bloody, dawn of humanity draw them back, on an endless search for hints that may rekindle forgotten memories of the creation of the earliest Kindred.



The logistics of Mesopotamia, as a centrally-located fertile region, as well as constant invasion and war, brought wave after wave of new Kindred from neighboring empires, further diversifying and swelling the ranks of the Damned in the Near East. By the Neo-Babylonian Period (625-539 BCE), representatives from every clan of the ancient world were stalking amid the shadows of the jeweled ziggurats and sun-baked temples of ancient Babylonia.

The city of Babylon, magnificent at its height, was the capital city of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Babylon was also the center of Kindred activity in the Near East, and was ruled from within as a feudal monarchy. Like many domains tonight, a single ruler held absolute authority to bestow titles and territory. The title given to this ruler (similar to a Prince tonight) was En, taken from the Sumerian word for "lord" or "god." Numerous archaeological sources reference a singularly puissant En who held regency over much of Babylonia for twelve thousand years: En Isiratuu.

Part of the same article on the dig in Ur. Kindred Scholars kept exhquistive records on each Edimmu slain during the years following the reign of En Isirqtuu. Cunciform tablets containing lengthy lists have been found throughout the Near East, each giving detailed information such as the location of the Edimmu when slain, the coterie. responsible for destroying the creature, and records of the spirits possessing each Edimmu along with specific bans. The seal of the united can also be seen on this tablet, indicating that the information be made available to any Kindred who asked to view it. Looks like a number of them have been unearthed. We might consider translating these tablets for our own records.

Self-Proclaimed Gods of Babylonia

The Babylonians were a superstitious and ritualistic people, with a complicated pantheon consisting of thousands of gods and goddesses. Some Kindred manipulated this fact as a means to easily gain control and influence over mortals. In an ancient, tumultuous and largely ignorant world, it was easy to pervert mortal explanations of the unknown to suit the agendas of the undead. Impious Kindred of ancient Babylonia masquer-

aded as subtle gods among men, occasionally taking on the name of an existing lesser god, or even forging their own "divinity" through whispered rumors and carefully propagated myths.

While it is unlikely that most mortals of the time were aware of the true nature of these self-proclaimed gods, it was not uncommon to hear tales of divine (and often bloody) vengeance brought down upon those who displeased the gods. Not all Kindred were so irreverent, however. There were a number of devoted religious vampiric cults scattered throughout Babylonia who looked upon this practice with utmost disdain.

The Igigi was a general term used to describe Kindred who were loyal to the En and his monarchy. Taken from the Mesopotamian word for the collective name of the

black streets of babylon: the seven spirits (625-539 bce) 161

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great gods of heaven, the Igigi served the En of Babylonia loyally (or at the very least, with the appearance of loyalty), and they were richly rewarded for doing so. Much like the Primogen of tonight, the Igigi of ancient Babylon had an established system of rank and position based on the needs of the monarchy. Members served as advisors to the En, and more frequently, brutal enforcers of his decrees. Igigi were often rewarded for their fealty with grants of land and the right to preside over sections of the realm.

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The Coven of Kanaja

While cults dedicated to various Babylonian gods and goddesses were commonplace throughout the Empire, the Coven of Nanaja was perhaps one of the most prevalent during the reign of En Isiratuu. Centered in the city of Ur, and believed to draw their strength from the Babylonian goddess of sex and warfare, Nanaja, the coven had significant influence over the region. They were known to have great mystical powers and practiced some of the earliest blood rituals that can be linked to Crúac and the Circle of the Crone tonight.

Those who crossed the Coven of Nanaja were severely punished. Members of the cult were known to imbue the poisonous sting of a scorpion with a variety of curses (ranging in severity from a night of minor bad luck to Final Death). The cursed scorpions were dropped upon their victims as they slept, and the curse took effect upon waking.

While not formally a part of the Igigi, the Coven of Nanaja was often called upon by the En to serve as advisors. In return, the En permitted them to keep their lands and temples for themselves with limited interference.

The Voice of Shullat

In the Kindred society of ancient Babylonia, the widespread voice of discontent took the form of a covenant know as the Voice of Shullat. The movement takes its name from the minor deity, Shullat, a divine herald of storms and bad weather in ancient Mesopotamia. The Voice of Shullat was composed primarily of neonates and Kindred from conquered cities within the empire who were dissatisfied with the government. It was extremely dangerous to speak against the En and his Igigi, and Kindred who were found guilty of this treason were traditionally brought before the En and publicly diablerized. Unsurprisingly, then, the Voice of Shullat often worked quietly – covertly gathering followers in support of their cause, patiently waiting for a time when their numbers would make it safe to rally against the En of Babylonia.

Riders of the Beast

The Legend of the Seven Spirits For twelve thousand years, the Kindred domain of Babylo-

For twelve thousand years, the Kindred domain of Babylonia was ruled by a great Prince, En Isiratuu. En Isiratuu's rise to power was swift, and his domain grew to encompass much of the Near East.

En Isiratuu had a terrible secret. It is said that the En was visited by a dark stranger in a dream, who was impressed by his strength and greatness. This stranger returned to En Isiratuu, while he slept, teaching the Prince the secret to greater power, and bestowed unto him the ability to reign in the shadows forever. The secret that En Isiratuu learned allowed him to take the souls of those he had conquered into his body, making himself stronger, while at the same time avoiding the sure madness and subsequent years of deep sleep that comes from such an abhorrent act. In months, the stranger passed onto En Isiratuu information that should have taken centuries to learn. The stranger warned En Isiratuu that he must never drink the soul of one marked by the seven, lest tragedy befall him and his empire.

At first, the En Isiratuu used his newfound ability cautiously, knowing that if those over whom he ruled ever discovered the source of his greatness, he would lose his kingdom, and indeed, his unlife. He would only devour the souls of those whom he had conquered upon the moonlit battlefields, and with proper ritual, as was honorable for the En in those nights. He trusted no one with his secret, except his most beloved consort, Arahunaa, with whom he shared a deep bond.

During the earliest days of his reign, En Isiratuu traveled to the city of Ur to consult with the leader of a powerful coven of mystic Kindred, Nanshe Iltani. During his stay at the Temple of Nanaja, he became entranced by the beauty and grace of Nanshe Iltani's lover and student, Arahunaa. Powerful though En Isiratuu was, he suffered from the same great loneliness that curses all of the Damned, and persuaded Arahunaa to return with him to Babylon, despite Nanshe Iltani's pleading. From that night forward, Nanshe Iltani, burning with jealousy, dedicated herself to the undoing of both En Isiratuu and the woman who had betrayed her.

Using his gift, the great En Isiratuu expanded his kingdom beyond any other in the fragmented memory of the Kindred. He easily gained the support of other important Kindred with bribes of land and rank in his ever-expanding empire. There were neonate uprisings in

newly conquered cities, of course, but these were quickly stamped out by the great En's loyal Igigi. Between his own wicked ability, and the strength of his supporters, Isiratuu became corrupt and intoxicated with power. There were none who could best him in single combat and none who could disobey a direct order from the mighty En Isiratuu.

En Isiratuu became ever more impatient at having to wait for proper ritual to devour the souls of the conquered. Before too long, he was devouring the souls of his own people. Those who were supposed to be under his protection, who had broken even the most minor of laws, became victim to his unending unnatural thirst. The neonates among the captured cities of the Empire began to grow restless once more, strengthening the Voice of Shullat, and rumors of rebellion began to circulate. Even the loyal among the En Isiratuu's Igigi began to grow restless. Should not the En have succumbed to torpor many centuries before and allowed a new prince among his loyal to take his place as ruler of the empire?

Arahunaa was witness to her companion's blasphemous acts, and to the growing restlessness and suspicion of the Empire. Alone in her chamber, Arahunaa cried out to Nanshe Iltani to free her from her bond to En Isiratuu and allow her to return to the coven in safety. Centuries had passed. Surely her former lover had forgiven her transgressions.

In Ur, Nanshe Iltani heard the cries of her lost lover and appeared to Arahunaa in a dream. Arahunaa pleaded with her for sanctuary,

"He cannot be stopped, my Iltani, for he has a terrible, dark gift, the likes of which the Damned of Babylon have never seen. He is able to take the souls of his victims into himself, but with no marks on his own soul, no madness, and never falling into the great sleep. He grows stronger with every soul he takes, without consequence. I fear for my life, and I fear for the Empire."

Nanshe Iltani embraced Arahunaa tenderly, as if no time had passed since they were lovers, but her voice was cold when she replied.

"I have heard of the En's vile acts, my Dearest One, and I can help you. Take with you this scorpion and drop it upon the En as he sleeps. Its sting will plant an obsession in the mind of En Isiratuu. He will grow to fear a great warrior among his people who plots against him, a warrior with eyes the color of cold starlight — who bears the mark of the Edimmu. Do this, and I am certain that the En will fall." When Nin-Arahunaa awoke, the cursed scorpion was still clasped in her hand, and the vision of Nanshe Iltani had dissolved. Though her thoughts were troubled, Arahunaa proceeded with the plan. As the En slumbered, she dropped the cursed scorpion upon his breast. For seven nights Arahunaa watched her Lord become increasingly obsessed with the threat of the mysterious branded warrior with eyes the color of the pale light of the stars.

That night, the Coven of Nanaja performed a blasphemous rite. Seven vengeful spirits were called upon to ride the Beast, and through the power of the seven spirits, destroy the enemy. Among the neonate Kindred of Ur, one was chosen. He was staked and carried into the depths of the sacred pit. His eyes were plucked from their sockets as an offering to the gods, and he was branded with the mark of the Edimmu. Up from the black pit and into the night, the song of the seven spirits echoed in a wild chant as a secret blood ritual was performed:

"There are seven! There are seven! In the depths of the ocean there are seven! In the heights of the heaven there are seven! In the ocean stream in a palace they were born. Male they are not; female they are not! Wives they have not! Children are not born to them! Rules they have not! Government they know not! Prayers they hear not! There are seven! There are seven!

Twice over there are seven!"

There was a low, rolling sound like boiling water, then louder, like thousands of distant, broken voices howling in agony. A thick, oily blackness swarmed from the shadows around the cold, pale form of the paralyzed neonate, filling his mouth and lungs like bitumen. No scream escaped the lips of the sacrificial Kindred as the seven malignant spirits invaded his body, stretching and tearing his flesh from within to accommodate their vile essence. The neonate wept no bloody tears, as a new, cold light now burned with a singular dark purpose within his enucleated sockets. As the blackness fell away, a new predator of predators arose, the terrible Edimmu.

On the eighth night, En Isiratuu was weary and maddened from days of restless sleep. Paranoid thoughts of a great warrior plotting against him consumed his thoughts and invaded his dreams. Determined to put an end to his nightmares, the En sent his most formidable Igigi to stalk the moonlit alleyways of Babylon in search of the branded warrior. The warrior who, unbeknownst to the En, was the Edimmu created by the Coven of Nanaja. When the warrior was finally found crouching in the slime of the city's aqueducts, he put up little resistance. He most certainly bared the telling characteristics of which the En spoke. His pale eyes were the color of cold starlight, and upon his forehead he bore a strange brand. Beyond that, however, the Kindred hunched before the puzzled Igigi looked very little like a grand warrior. He was dressed in rags, and his sallow skin was filthy with grime. Oddly, the Kindred appeared to have either too many joints or not enough, and he moved strangely when they hoisted him to his feet, and led him, without incident, to the temple.

Dozens of Kindred gathered within the temple of En Isiratuu to witness the events of the night. Brought before the En and his Igigi, the warrior remained expressionless and silent as En Isiratuu interrogated him. The silence of the rogue vampire infuriated and embarrassed the En, and En Isiratuu ordered the creature be staked immediately so that he could drink of its soul while the Kindred of Babylon watched. None would doubt the strength of the En. The warrior bared its pointed teeth in a rictus grin as the Igigi drove the stake into its chill flesh.

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En Isiratuu lifted the strange vampire up before the crowd and ripped the throat of the warrior open, drinking his blood. As the soul of the staked Kindred entered En Isiratuu, something went unexpectedly awry. There was a rush of energy, but it was somehow different wrong. Wave after wave of power rolled into the En, and he could not cast the body of the warrior aside. Those attending saw the Edimmu's face frozen in a stiff mask of ecstatic pleasure.

The En stiffened, and his eyes rolled back in his head, suddenly black, as the seven spirits rushed into his body. Several members of the Igigi hastened forward, attempting to pull the Edimmu away from the En, only to find themselves transfixed, as well. En Isiratuu's skin squirmed and boiled as the seven spirits devoured him from within, body, Beast and soul, multiplying, until they were impossible to contain within a single body. There was a burst of light – cold, like starlight – and a great, roaring cacophony. A sudden silence fell, and there was nothing within the temple but thick, swarming blackness. And then the screaming began.

When the darkness cleared, En Isiratuu was no more, and the walls of the temple were bathed in blood. The mosaic floor was littered with scraps of smoldering flesh – sections of scalp and twitching, severed fingers disintegrating into dust. Then, the surviving Igigi arose, one by one, and seven hungry pairs of eyes burning with the cold fire of the stars turned to Babylon. Seven more were branded with the mark of the Edimmu. The streets of Babylon would soon be black with the dust of slain Kindred.

The Black Streets of Babylon The Edimmu

While certain details of the Legend of the Seven Spirits raise more than a few scholarly eyebrows in disbelief, much of the story reflects real events that took place in Babylonia during the reign of En Isiratuu. The Edimmu most certainly existed, and, in fact, still exist tonight. Historical evidence indicates that their numbers increased exponentially shortly after the fall of the En, and that the creatures were responsible for the obliteration of hundreds of Kindred throughout the whole of Babylonia shortly thereafter.

The Edimmu were known to be intelligent, efficient killers, driven with a single-minded purpose to destroy the Damned. Those well-versed in matters of the occult believe that the seven spirits were never meant to be called to Earth. It is the theory of some Acolytes studying the Edimmu that the seven spirits were initially bound by the rite that bought them into this world to complete a specific task (in this case, destroy En Isiratuu). Once they accomplished their objective, the spirits were unable to return to their rightful place in the universe. Free to do as they pleased and far from home, the seven spirits turned on those who had bought them into this world. It was Kindred who tore them from their paradise for selfish reasons. It is all Kindred who must pay.

In Ancient Babylon, custom dictated that it was the duty for certain Kindred in positions of authority to ritualistically drink the souls of their enemies. It was due in part to this custom that the Edimmu became a threat to all Kindred. The seven spirits fed upon the beast of the diablerizing host, multiplying by seven each time, and leaving no witnesses to tell tale of the act.



THE EDIMMU AND VII

Some scholars have suggested that the resurgence of the Edimmu may be related to VII. It is possible that the sect uses the rite of the Seven Spirits simply as a means to further their genocidal cause. While some insist the fact that the spirits are seven in number is merely a coincidence, others believe it to be proof of VII's involvement. Some historians believe VII was responsible for providing Nanshe Iltani with the information needed to create such a creature in the first place. Others believe that Nanshe Iltani, herself, was a member of the sect. While history indicates that the Edimmu were born from a ritual intending to destroy the En Isiratuu, whether they were meant to turn upon their creators after fulfilling their original purpose is up for debate. Some scholars believe it was simply the error of a Kindred coven who tampered with forces they did not fully understand. Others feel sure that Nanshe Iltani, at the very least, was fully aware of what would happen once such a monster was set loose in the world, and that it was her intent, mad with jealousy and power, to destroy the Kingdom of the En who had stolen her lover.

The Seven Bans

After the fall of En Isiratuu, Nanshe Iltani vanished, never to be heard from again. The Coven of Nanaja, once mighty in the city of Ur, scattered shortly thereafter when news spread of the Coven's connection to the pestilent creatures slaughtering the Damned of Babylonia. It was clay tablets found by the abandoned temple halls that provided clues to the final destruction of the Edimmu.

The elimination of even a single Edimmu was a long and arduous task. Each of the seven spirits within the body of the undead host has a ban — so seven bans, different for each creature, had to be collected. Once the bans were assembled, the Edimmu could be contained within a circle of the seven bans and the ritualistic chant performed, driving the seven spirits from the body of the possessed Kindred.

The government system of the En and his Igigi was utterly destroyed, and Kindred from all clans and backgrounds bound together to fight the universal threat of the Edimmu. The Voice of Shullat, no longer having a cause for which to fight, worked with the surviving members of the Igigi, now rendered impotent with no backing force. Kindred with training in the mystical arts left their temples to help identify bans and initiate rituals. Coteries formed throughout Babylonia with the sole purpose of hunting and destroying the Edimmu.

Slowly, methodically, the Kindred of the ancient Near East were able to drive back the threat of the Edimmu. Once the connection between diablerie and the spread of the seven spirits was made, the tradition of Amaranth was outlawed entirely, and enforced by even the lowliest of Kindred due to the threat of impending extermination. Kindred caught committing diablerie were immediately destroyed. This greatly slowed the spread of the Edimmu and allowed Kindred to regroup and attack their enemy anew.

The United

As coteries formed to fight the Edimmu, it became clear that a means of organizing attacks between independent groups of Kindred was needed. Thus, the United came to be. The United was a group of Kindred formed from many different backgrounds, devoted to making information on the Edimmu available to all Kindred who asked to help expedite the destruction of this common threat. Such generosity was born purely from necessity. Tonight, the United continues the tradition of acquiring information on supernatural creatures that threaten the continued existence of the Damned. Following the traditions of Babylon, once a document is marked with the seal of the United, it must be made available to any Kindred who asks to view it.

The legacy of the Seven Spirits Those seeking more information about En Isiratuu's mysterious and seemingly unique ability to diablerize the souls of his enemies without consequence are drawn to the Near East in search of the source of his dark gift. Most seek the power of En Isiratuu for selfish reasons, while others pursue it for the thrill that comes from unraveling the secrets of the long forgotten past. It is certain that if such a power was ever to resurface tonight, Kindred using such an ability wisely could quickly become a formidable threat.

In recent years, Kindred society has seen an unexplained resurgence of creatures resembling the Edimmu of ancient legend. While the attacks are few and far between, and the incidents themselves are fairly isolated, the threat remains. It is possible the blood rite that created the original Edimmu was not truly lost to the sands of time as most believe. Because of this, some scholars speculate the Coven of Nanaja still exists tonight and can be linked to the recent attacks. The secrets of the ritual may be passed through oral tradition by surviving members of the Coven, or scrawled in the dusty pages of a forgotten tome. Certainly, Nanshe Iltani's bloodline still exists tonight, and while children of the bloodline are often drawn to the Circle of the Crone, they may or may not be affiliated with the secretive Coven of Nanaja.

Because an Edimmu retains the immortality, as well as many of the other abilities, of its undead host, it is also possible that some may remain from the nights of their creation during the height of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Having fled when the tides of battle turned against them, they lie in wait for a chance to emerge more powerful than ever before.

FLASHPOINT IN THE MODERN NIGHTS

The Kindred of ancient Mesopotamia formed a glorious shadow empire that was utterly demolished by the Edimmu. While the empire itself would never be reconstructed, the threat of extinction forced Kindred to band together to fight a common enemy. Despite adversity, the Damned of Babylon survived through teamwork and tolerance, and bloodlines tonight can be traced back to these Kindred of legend. Consider the following story hooks to help bring the echoes left by the Kindred of ancient Babylon into a chronicle set in the modern nights:

- Creatures resembling the Edimmu appear in the city, and Kindred are being picked off left and right. What has caused the Edimmu to return? Are the Kindred being killed targeted by some controlling force behind the monsters, or are the deaths random? Did someone within the city deliberately call upon the Edimmu? If so, why? Can the threat be stopped as it was in ages past? Can the conflicted Kindred of the city unite to fight the threat?
- An influential Kindred of the city was murdered under peculiar circumstances. The unlucky vampire went mad, raved about being cursed, and finally killed herself by walking, seemingly with no will of her own, into daylight. The victim claimed to have been stung by a scorpion before the incident took place. Could this be the work of one of Nanshe Iltani's descendants? Why was the influential vampire killed? Will more fall to the mysterious curse when the sun rises once again?
- A cult has arisen within the city surrounding a single, powerful Kindred. It is rumored that he has the divine ability to diablerize his enemies without consequence, and that he has been sent to cleanse the city through the tradition of Amaranth. Those who follow him believe he is a god turned Kindred, and that he will show them true greatness if they aide him in his mission to "cleanse" the city. Has the cult leader rediscovered the secret of En Isiratuu's gift? Can he be stopped before he becomes too powerful?

RISE OF THE COVENANTS: Ancient Egypt (circa 1279 BCE)

Transcribed from a recording discovered by agents of the Lancea Sanctum: My name is Renfro Delaney and, as I sit here staring at this, how shall I put it, extraordinary find, I can't help but wonder what it must have been like for one of us to exist in ancient Egypt. Certainly, there could be no more than half a dozen Kindred in any specific village, unlike Rome to the northwest or even Delhi to the east. Desert sand for miles in every direction, a single strand of water your only source of life and even then, the flooding of the Nile every year had to be particularly devastating. How did they find sustenance? Were the ancient Egyptians willing sources of food? Were they that open and engaged with the Kindred of the time?

This papyri (sound of papers being shuffled about), these hieroglyphs, this tome — was religion so important to these people that they willingly offered their necks to us? True, the dead were often revered. But what about the undead? How much control did they actually have over the kine?

The Sun, our anathema, was worshipped, apparently, not just by mortals, but by the Kindred of the age. How was this even possible? How could they survive?

Who is this Renfro Delaney suy? An alias of some sort? Ask your crazy British pal what he knows! Could there be Kindred from that time period around tonight? If so, what do they recall? Certainly the fog of time would have consumed most of their memories. What secrets do they still possess? Are there more of these glorious artifacts outlining the rituals they performed over three millennia ago?

Whatever the cost, in time and resources, I...that is we, must find out!



Whoever took these photographs knows what he's doing. This appears to be the story of a resurrection of sorts and it can be interpreted in various ways — I know that. On the other hand, if you look at these hieroglyphics, we see the worshipping of a mummy, the removal of his organs after death, where they are placed into jars filled with honey and then stuffed into his sarcophagus. Then, look at this! The night after he was placed into his tomb, he arose with stories of a great battle with...is this Osiris? Yes! And like Ra each morning, he returns from the underworld having bested the god of death to bring life and renewal to his people. He rises again, only at night, without Ra

to guide him. Osiris, the god of the underworld, is his master now! Amazing!

This, of course, begs the question: Was this mindset specific only to the vampires of ancient Egypt or did ancient Romans create rituals from their religious beliefs of, say Mars or Neptune? The Acolytes were quite My god! These vampires believed this mythological bullshit! They actually played into it. How fucking brilliant!

likely babbling their gobbledygook across Western Europe by then. Certainly, the Dragons came to exist thanks to Vlad the Impaler. The Sanctified must be grateful to Christ for their beliefs, as without him, Longinus wouldn't matter a whit. The Carthian Movement, society's bitter rebels, couldn't possibly have existed without a society to rebel against. Which leads us to the Invictus and, if you ask them, they've been around since the Big Bang.

(sound of a heavy object sliding across a flat surface, followed by pages turning) This text, however, implies that several of the various cults that existed at the time of Ramses the Great centered on powerful female goddesses, figures not terribly unlike the Crone. So, did the Circle exist then? Probably in some form or another, but undoubtedly quite different from the Acolytes we know tonight. These cults might be a part of the Circle or they could be the first known gathering of Kindred into a formal covenant in our history!

It's possible, then, that there was a covenant or covenants before the Invictus ever coined the phrase and that Kindred were not simply relegated to associating with just their own clans.

> This Delaney guy seems to have a hard-on for the Invictus. See if you can find out what he has on them, or what they have on him.

168 ancient mysteries

Using inductive logic, it is difficult to believe that vampires, social creatures whether they want to believe so or not, would have to be looking for excuses to get together. It's not like they had cell phones to communicate with or intercontinental jets for travel to and fro. There had to be more basic methods. Get-togethers. The Roman Kindred did it with their Imperial Senate. How did their precursors do it?

Vampires need each other to survive, no? Even though we despise each other, attempt to murder one another and squabble endlessly over minutiae, co-existence is essential for the survival of our, would you say, race? Species?

I am having difficulty focusing. I... one moment.

(footsteps, then a door creaking, muted scuffle, and then a gasp of pain) Better. Now, let's assume that, yes, there were other covenants, groups of like minded Kindred from different backgrounds and clans of the time. These groups would almost certainly be religious in nature. Religion dictated the lives of these people, after all. Thus, we must conclude that there was some form of peaceful coexistence amongst the Kindred of the time. A covenant of like minds and beliefs. Perhaps a Covenant of Ra, made up of Kindred desiring knowledge on how to break their curse, searching for control and power in the region, searching for ways to expand their influence further, seeking information on their brethren and the world in general and hoping for the freedom to travel vast distances across the desert through day and night. There is no evidence to say as much, but, knowing what we are, what we need, isn't it reasonable, even deductively logical?

Where did they meet then? This map implies deeply buried tombs beneath temples and pyramids all across Egypt, perhaps all interconnected by a tunnel system. I mean, this one here shows the Sphinx, for God's sake!

Pardon the randomness of my thoughts. This is beyond anything I've ever seen before. The implications are enormous. Nothing of what we know today is as we were told. The Great Covenants are not the end-all-be-all of Kindred society. They were not the beginning as some would lead us to believe! They are, in fact, mere stepping stones to what we are now. But, stepping stones from what? And to what? What are we becoming? Where is the fucking map? If this exists, we need to find it before anyone else does.

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This was supposedly discovered in Thebes and not by the Sanctified. How can we authenticate it? Could it actually be text of a previously unknown Theban ritual? (crack of the spine of a book) This book suggests the existence of a cult, perhaps even the equivalent of a modern covenant, dedicated to the Egyptian god of the Sun, Amun-Ra. The inscribed rituals are suspiciously akin to those of the Sanctified, as a former associate of mine has already verified. Granted, she wouldn't say they were Lancea Sanctum rituals, but I surmised that she was holding something back that terrified her. I knew, at that moment, I would not be able to let her leave with the knowledge of what I had found. Destroying her saddened me, but I just couldn't let these beautiful texts fall into her hands and the hands of those who would destroy them. They are mine now and no one, not even a former lover, will take them from me! Make that one more thing that those sanctimonious bastards owe me. I'm sorry, Melissa. Truly. (pages turning sharply)

Where was I? Oh, yes. Carbon dating has put this tome at well over 1000 years prior to the birth of Christ, which makes the Lancea Sanctum look foolish, don't you think? If they had found this book before me, I'm sure it, and I, would have been put to the flames by now. It's nice to have something in my hands that could conceivably ruin them.

Could these rituals be that powerful? Could they actually allow a vampire to walk in the light of day? Could they allow me? (papers being gathered) All I know is that I must try. I must find a way! (tape ends) Ironically, the Sanctified claim the angel Amoniel led them to the tombs of Thebes. Further, Amoniel is a derivation of the Egyptian god Amun-Ra. Coincidence?

Can you see the implications? If the Dragons or the Sanctified hear about this, we could have ourselves a civil war. Not even taking into account a Masquerade breach, this could lead to Kindred extinction! We must destroy this material at all costs. You were right to bring this to me!

Turning Point

Did Delaney make copies?

— Gypt s 19th Dynasty The most important aspects of life in the Middle East prior to Christ's birth were the distant settlements and the difficulty in traveling between them. Slaves, taxes, military troops and foodstuffs were regularly transported up and down the Nile from Upper Egypt and the Great Delta to Lower Egypt, Nubia and points still further south. This was the quickest and safest form of travel in Egypt, although caravans crossed the harsh desert terrain both west and east of the Nile as well. Most territories in the region were made up of city-states united under a common ruler who would report directly to the Pharaoh. Travel and taxes were regulated by these city-states.

The one common theme throughout northern Africa was religion, specifically, the gods of ancient Egypt. In the late 18th dynasty, a Pharaoh by the name of Akhenaten attempted to monotheize the people. There was only *one* god, whose name was Aten, he proclaimed, and Egypt would be united under him. Akhenaten faced fierce battles within the religious "community," primarily from the Cults of Set and Horus, although the Cults of Ra, Anubis and Osiris also grumbled. Cults of the female gods, particularly Isis and Bast, were curiously silent, preferring to remain hidden and continuing their practices out of the new Pharaoh's line of sight. The plan worked, until the Cult of Set branded them all as traitors to Akhenaten's beliefs and began turning them in to Aten's forces.

A brief civil war between the Kindred of the various cults erupted, followed by numerous alliances and betrayals. In the end, the Cult of Set was said to have been utterly destroyed, the Cult of Horus vanished into the eastern desert and the Cult of Anubis was weakened to the point where it presumably absorbed into the other factions (probably that of Osiris). The cults disappeared from public view and from that of the spies of Aten, but their squabbling continued until just after the coronation of Ramses the Great as Pharaoh of Egypt.

Ramses, the progenitor of Egypt's 19th Dynasty, returned religious control to each city-state and its preferred deity. Akhenaten's previous monotheistic approach fractured and the people rejoiced at the return to power of the gods and their priests. The Kindred priests realized that there was greater strength in diversity and unified the various cults. These "covenants" worked together to keep Egypt safe from outsiders, to keep power within the

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religious sects and, most importantly, to gather greater wealth and control for themselves.

They succeeded admirably.

The One: 1352 BCC - 1280 BCC

The Pharaoh Akhenaton took power away from the various gods and consolidated it into a single deity called Aten, "*The One.*" He enforced his edicts with the support of various smaller sects, notably those of Set and Horus, who agreed to worship under Aten's name. With the military at his side, Akhenaten's dream of a united religion flourished. The followers of Egypt's "lesser" gods, however, continued to worship secretly, waiting for the moment they could emerge from Aten's shadow. The Kindred urged their herds to fight and rebel against any who would silence them. Religion had become subsumed by the politics of Akhenaten and one could not be discussed without the other.

Akhenaten received very little public support from the people, but had the military to back his edicts. Unfortunately, the commoners of Egypt were suffering and began to revolt. Poor treatment, a shortage of food and forced monotheism created a bitter rift between the nobility and the commoners. When Akhenaten died, the dynasties that followed tried to continue his legacy, but nothing lasted. The reign of the monotheistic Pharaohs was coming to a brutal end. The Cults of Ra, Osiris, Anubis, Bast and Isis came together in an unprecedented covenant of religious unity, led by Kindred from each of the clans. Their herds rose with them and demanded change from the mortal leadership, including protection from persecution by the old followers of Aten and, to a lesser extent, the worshippers of Set and Horus, as these two cults had attempted numerous uprisings against Ra in the past.

Seeing the turmoil in play, a Kindred priest of Ra, the most powerful figure in the pantheon of Egyptian gods, devised a plan. He watched the signs of unrest and felt that an uprising was imminent. This priest not only wanted to take advantage of the ensuing chaos, he wanted to control its aftereffects. He believed that a Pharaoh was needed that could unite the country and return peace to a land riddled with strife, beset by enemies and devastated by natural disasters (sandstorms and the yearly flooding of the Nile Delta had particularly devastating effects during this time). He would control the Pharaoh and perhaps even allow him to drink from the blood of Ra.

The time was finally right for the priest's plans to bear fruit, plans that would change the way Kindred survived, worshipped and thought.

The Many: 1279 BCC - 1212 BCC

That fruit came in the form of Egypt's 19th Dynasty, led by Pharaoh Ramses II, also known as Ramses the Great. Ramses proclaimed an end to Aten's stranglehold over the other gods in favor of city-state worship, with a central god to bind the others and bring them together under a united covenant.

Ra was chosen to lead. Ramses gave the "lesser" gods domain over their own cities in exchange for their support of his programs. As a result, temples of worship began sprouting up all across the country. The Cult of Ra ruled over Karnak and cities that would later be named after the Greeks who would conquer Egypt, such as Luxor, Thebes and Abydos. Anubis's main shrine was in the city of Khemennu. Cult leaders of Osiris ruled from Naqad, Bast's actually built their own city, Bubastis, while the Cult of Isis claimed the city of Tanis. The High Priest of the Cult of Ra had final say over disputes and territory rights throughout the kingdom.

Wealth poured in from all corners of Egypt and the surrounding lands. Caravans brought back riches from the East and trade was never more prosperous. Ra and Osiris gained prominence amongst the Kindred faithful, as did Isis and Bast. Mekhet joined with Gangrel, who gathered with Nosferatu and Daeva to solidify the lines of communication and caravan safety for travel to the four winds. Only the Ventrue, in general, seemed left out, preferring to organize to the northwest rather than split power amongst the others. Pharaoh Ramses was in complete control of Egypt and his subjects were happy.

This was the exact moment that the priest of Ra had been waiting for. A month into Ramses' reign, the priest struck, feeding droplets of his own Vitae to the Pharaoh. For four consecutive nights, the priest returned to the king's bedchambers and fed more of his blood to the already powerful mortal. Ramses became both a ghoul to the Servants of Ra and one of the most powerful rulers in history.

Turning Ramses into a ghoul was genius. His very presence helped stabilize the region. He ruled for over six decades and lived an unheard-of 90 years, more than three times the average age of the typical male Egyptian. He was able to retain a great deal of influence over the affairs of both the Damned and his human subjects. Fortunately, it was a time of great prosperity for Kindred and kine alike.

Aside from being a uniting influence on his people and the surrounding region, he was also known as the great builder. During his inordinately long reign, Ramses ordered the construction of the Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx and the Sanctuary of Abu Simbel to honor and placate the gods, as well as to create an eternal legacy for himself.

Ramses was also a warrior and led his armies to battle often and ruthlessly against the Hittites to the north. From a military standpoint, however, he is recognized more for crafting the first known peace treaty in human history than for the battles he waged. This treaty might have been suggested, in part, by the Kindred, who had come

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to believe that their very survival was dependant upon mutual cooperation. They also feared the growing power of Greece to the northwest and Persia to the northeast. With the Hittites as their allies and not their enemies, Egypt was able to bring peaceful stability to the region.

But the peace could not last.

The Conquered. 1212 BCC - CE 1953

Although mortals believe Ramses finally succumbed to old age, no Kindred records exist detailing how the great Pharaoh really died. What is certain is that Egypt began to slowly disintegrate. The Nile flooded more frequently and with more spectacularly disastrous results. A great drought hit the region as well, lasting for 30 years, and the people once again began to suffer from famine, disease and extreme poverty.

Four hundred years of internal bickering and strife led to Egypt being invaded for the first of many times. Nubians from the south, Assyrians and Persians from the north, and then, in 332 BCE, Alexander the Great attacked with a massive invasion force from Greece.

The Greek invasion and subsequent takeover was so complete, in fact, that entire cities soon changed their names to compliment the new regime. The conquering leaders, retaining the title of Pharaoh, took Greek names and became some of the most well known figures in history. They also allowed many of the old Egyptian ways to continue and flourish. Greece held on for almost 300 years, until Rome decided to expand her Empire.

In 47 BCE, Cesar invaded and installed Cleopatra as queen. Religion, language and society in Egypt changed once again. The Romans persecuted anyone claiming reverence to the old pantheon of gods. Kindred and human cults alike disappeared altogether or adapted and conformed. Gone were the covenants of the Sun and the Dead. Gone were the cults of Isis and Bast. In their place, Camarilla vampires basked in the glory of a new world. The upstart Christian vampires of the Lancea et Sanctum overran Thebes and discovered secrets not meant for the eyes of any but the devoted of Ra and Osiris. Only followers from the cult of Anubis survived, refusing to succumb to invasion and disappear like their brethren. The Anubi would continue to do what they always did, prepare the dead for their journey to the afterlife.

Once the Romans conquered and altered Egyptian culture, the history of the cults vanished with their Kindred followers. It is believed that, in order to survive, several bloodlines were created, their numbers agreeing to voluntary torpor so that they may one night rise again. Whatever happened, enough evidence exists for Kindred scholars to conclude that the great covenant of Egypt became fractured and dissolved due to the many outside influences of multiple conquerors. For 2700 years, from 750 BCE until CE 1953, Egypt was a conquered land. To this night, the bitter struggles of the Egyptian Kindred and various other supernatural influences from outside the region attempt to gain control over the country, her ancient secrets and those who have called Egypt home since the dawn of history.

The legacy of Ancient Cgypt The prominence of a unified pantheon of gods brought

The prominence of a unified pantheon of gods brought Kindred from all five known clans and from every spiritual belief in Egypt together, but it was the combination of isolation, threats from invaders, natural disasters and religious persecution that finally forced the disparate factions to work together for the common good.

Mekhet, Gangrel, Nosferatu, Daeva and to a lesser extent Ventrue Kindred joined forces to bring the beliefs of their various gods to their respective herds. The power of those gods was intoxicating, as creatures of shadow could, through study and devotion, attempt to actually walk beneath Ra's withering gaze. Monsters of terrible rage and mystery, through rituals of blood and sacrifice, could explore the underworld and return with horrifying stories of their travails.

The influx of Invictus Kindred into the region, however, meant that such cooperation was sadly doomed to fail. Polytheism became a relic of the past. Monotheism, in the form of Judaism, Christianity and finally Islam, began its relentless expansion across the globe. Kindred began adopting these religions as a matter of survival. Those who dared preach the old ways were hunted and destroyed, or hid from their persecutors for centuries on end.

Some Kindred proclaimed their heresies in such a way as to not threaten the new religions, preaching mythology rather than dogma. Others took their secrets with them into torpor or buried them in tombs designed never to be discovered.

Two Prominent Bloodlines Emerge — The Bak-Ra and The Usiri

The Anubi are the only previously known bloodline to come from the cults of ancient Egypt. Comprised mostly of Gangrel, the Sworn of Anubis have long pestered the followers of Longinus, but have too few numbers, resources and organizational skills to make any kind of impact against the Sanctified. However, word has recently surfaced of two previously unheard of bloodlines claiming to be descendants of the Egyptian gods:

The Bak-Ra, which translates to "Servant of Ra," was the first and most prominent bloodline to form from the fracturing of the covenant of gods. They were determined to keep the history and secrets of the sun god hidden from their conquerors. Many Bak-Ra agreed to voluntary torpor, hidden beneath the buried tombs of their ancestors,

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unaware that most of their knowledge would be lost to the very sleep they hoped would keep them safe.

The Usiri, Warriors of the Dead, also chose voluntary torpor to hide the secrets of Osiris from the invaders. The secrets of the Usiri, however, were supposedly hidden somewhere in the Underworld, where only the followers of the god of the dead could retrieve them.

In modern nights, those Bak-Ra and Usiri who have been discovered and awakened from torpor bring with them more questions and fears than answers. What secrets rose with them from their graves? What memories, if any, can be culled from their rotting shells? Most importantly, how does the Lancea Sanctum reconcile their own history with that of these bloodlines?

The New age

The Bak-Ra and the Usiri are the two newest bloodlines to emerge from ancient Egypt, joining the Gangrel-dominated Anubi. What of the traitorous Cults of Set and Horus? Did they create bloodlines before their destruction? What of Bast and Isis, whose followers are believed to have simply melded into the Circle of the Crone? Is it possible that they, too, sired specific bloodlines to protect the secrets of their gods? How many thousands of unexplored and still-hidden tombs are buried beneath the sands of Egypt? It might simply be a matter of time before something arrives to create havoc and chaos for the Kindred of the modern age. The Roman Empire brought about great change, but it was the culture of Egypt during the reign of Ramses the Great that heralded the concept of peaceful coexistence among immortal enemies for a greater good — survival.

The covenants of the modern age owe a huge debt to the first covenant of Egyptian gods. Only the Circle of the Crone can say with any amount of validity that it existed in some form or another at that pivotal temporal flashpoint. It's a pity that the Circle has little interest in its own history, as the cumulative knowledge it could have attained from keeping records from that time might have increased its power in modern nights across the region. For what it's worth, the Circle's small part in the formation of the first covenant of vampires is known by a few ancient Kindred who *did* keep journals of their Requiem.

Modern Kights, Modern Covenants — Flashpoint in Time

Most Kindred historians agree that the formation of the covenant of gods during Egypt's 19th Dynasty was the beginning of a new era. It provided a basis of trust amongst predators and their prey. Those same historians also agree that such trust simply cannot last among the suspicious, power-hungry Kindred.

But, history, as they say, is written by the victors. If that is so, then perhaps those who still sleep beneath the sands of the Nile will once again awaken to inflict their power and invoke their secrets upon an unsuspecting and unprepared world.

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FLASHPOINT IN MODERN NIGHTS

What was once unheard of during the reign of Ramses the Great is commonplace now. Kindred bicker with one another over who should control what and why. Canals and levees keep the Nile at bay and travel is not only unrestricted, but relatively safe. Monotheism has reared its single head once more and followers of Ramses who might awaken will have their hands full just trying to understand what has happened to their world. Has Akhenaten returned to exact his vengeance or has madness consumed them?

Here are a few story hooks that will bring the unknown horrors of the past to your **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle, whether it takes place now, or during some other time in distant memory:

- Tonight, the Invictus reigns supreme in most parts of Egypt, while the Circle of the Crone hides out and converts as many followers into its covens as it can. The Sanctified have fortified Thebes and allow few outsiders to venture into or out of the city. The Carthian Movement travels from city to city, attempting to excite the masses with anti-establishment propaganda. The Ordo Dracul, however, seems preoccupied with the city of Giza, an ancient home to the Cult of Ra. In fact, the Dragons outnumber any other covenant there by a three-to-one margin. Have they unearthed an ancient Kindred buried beneath one of the pyramids or have they discovered something even more terrifying?
- The Lancea Sanctum has learned that a new bloodline has crawled from the sand pits of Egypt to test their faith. Creatures called the Bak-Ra are claiming, *publicly*, that the rituals and secrets of Thebes rightfully belong to them and that they were stolen by the thieves of the false prophet Longinus. Can the Bak-Ra prove their claims and can the Sanctified even allow them to try?
- The Book of the Dead is considered by most scholars to be a simple funeral text, a collection of hymns, spells, rituals and instructions designed to give the dead a tool to overcome the number of obstacles they'll encounter on their journey through the afterlife. It is, however, so much more. In the hands of those who have been to the Underworld and fought with the spirits, communed with the gods and answered the riddles of fate so that they may return to our realm, it is a key to greater power and understanding. In Naqad, one such scholar who died and was reborn, has awakened from centuries of slumber with his sanity and his memories intact. He must be found and either destroyed, if possible, or recruited.





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