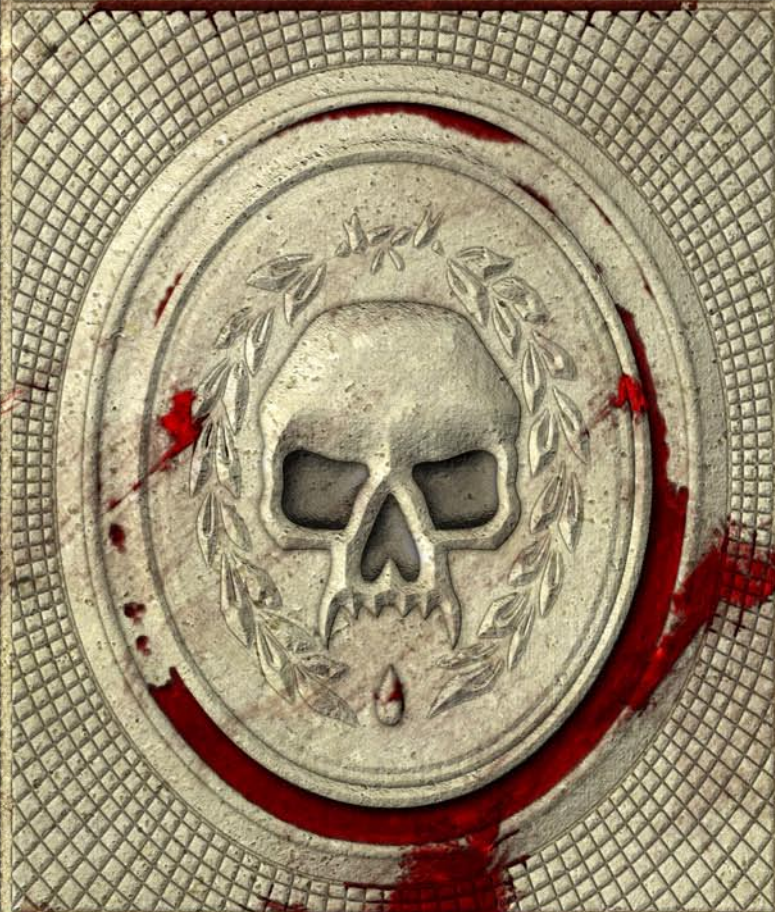


REQUIEM FOR
ROME



Vampire
THE REQUIEM



THE DEATHLESS CITY

A FOREWORD BY KENNETH HITE

LET THERE BE RIVALRY IN GUILT OF EVERY KIND... LET THEIR PASSIONS KNOW NO BOUNDS, NO SHAME; LET BLIND FURY PRICK ON THEIR SOULS; HEARTLESS BE PARENTS' RAGE, AND TO CHILDREN'S CHILDREN LET THE LONG TRAIL OF SIN LEAD DOWN... FOR CRIMES' SAKE EXILED... TO CRIME MAY THEY RETURN, AND MAY THEY BE AS HATEFUL TO ALL MEN AS TO THEMSELVES; LET THERE BE NAUGHT WHICH PASSION DEEMS UNALLOWED; LET BROTHER FEAR BROTHER, FATHER FEAR SON, AND SON FATHER; LET CHILDREN VILELY PERISH AND BE YET MORE VILELY BORN; LET A MURDEROUS WIFE LIFT HAND AGAINST HER HUSBAND, LET WARS PASS OVER SEAS, LET STREAMING BLOOD DRENCH EVERY LAND...

— SENECA, THYESTES

Rome is, and was, an eternal city — a deathless city, an undead city. Ancient Romans were bound by their dead, in a web of ancestral rituals that not even they remembered the reason for. The Romans had no taboo against suicide, although almost every culture believes that suicide leads to restless corpses. For the Romans, the dead were always with the living anyway. The Romans worshiped their ancestral spirits, the Lares, and propitiated the Manes, the shades of the dead, by blood and incense. For Romans, the world of ghosts

and the world of flesh were barely separate. The dead talked to the living in dreams and at night, lapping up blood and taking flesh. And death was all around the living: swarming in with foreigners or handed down by the Romans' own rulers. Reading the lives of the Caesars, you view a catalogue of rapine, murder, treason, poisoning and cruelty more grotesque than any Grand Guignol performance. All of it for the highest stakes imaginable, and all against the backdrop of an undying city centuries old.

I SING OF BATTLES, BLOOD, AND RAGE

"The grandeur that was Rome" was an abattoir erected on a mass grave. No wonder Rome bred vampires like a corpse breeds flies. Begin with Rome's own sons. Over the nine centuries between 500 BCE and CE 400, approximately 885,000 Roman soldiers died, to save the city and to line senators' pockets. Soldier and civilian, perhaps 300,000 Romans died by political violence — under the blades of fellow Romans — during the century from the time of the Gracchi to the end of the Second Triumvirate. Romans died for their city's amusement, as well as for its enrichment. Over the four centuries between Spartacus and Constantine, approximately 750,000 gladiators

died in the arena (not counting the 7,000 crucified with Spartacus), their blood soaking the sand along with that of 100,000 Christian martyrs and an uncounted horde of other criminals, prisoners of war and slaves.

Many of the gladiators were foreign, but foreigners hardly had to come to Rome to die for it. The legions slaughtered 80,000 Britons in the wake of Boudicca's revolt, and Caesar may have killed as many as 100,000 Gauls in his conquests. (Plutarch claims a million dead at Caesar's hands all told.) In the second century BCE, Marius killed perhaps a quarter of a million Germans, while in the third century CE the Emperor Aurelian sent 400,000

Goths and Persians to their foreign gods. During and after the three Jewish Revolts (from CE 67 to 135), the Romans practically extirpated Jewish Palestine, leaving 1,000,000 corpses behind. Tacitus said of the campaign

in Britain, "Rome makes a desert, and calls it peace." Rather, Rome makes a swamp of blood and bones, and grows fat on its fruits. As Virgil says in the *Aeneid*, "the blood of victim beasts enriched the ground."

BLOOD IN ROME'S GREAT QUARREL SHED

SO MUCH FOR CALIGULA AS EMPEROR; WE MUST NOW TELL OF HIS CAREER AS MONSTER... HIS BODY WAS CONVEYED SECRETLY TO THE GARDENS OF THE LAMIA, WHERE IT WAS PARTLY CONSUMED ON A HASTILY ERECTED PYRE AND BURIED BENEATH A LIGHT COVERING OF TURF. LATER HIS SISTERS, ON RETURN FROM EXILE, DUG IT UP, CREMATED IT, AND CONSIGNED IT TO THE TOMB. BEFORE THIS WAS DONE, IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE CARETAKERS OF THE GARDENS WERE DISTURBED BY SHADES, AND THAT IN THE HOUSE WHERE HE WAS LAID NOT ONE NIGHT PASSED WITHOUT SOME TERRIBLE APPARITION...

— Suetonius, *LIVES OF THE CAESARS*

If the Roman Empire itself is eerily vampiric — long-lived, bloodthirsty, insatiable and prone to frenzy and torpor — so, too, are the Roman emperors. Just as vampires, Roman emperors lived in a constant broil of plot and murder against their own children and progenitors, against members of their clan and bloodline. Indeed, Roman history would almost make more sense if it had been hijacked by a bickering sept of vampires somewhere along the line: Caesar "from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd" and Cleopatra, the (infernally?) seductive initiate of the Nile, suggest much to such a viewpoint. And the people of Rome perhaps sensed it as well. When the Emperor Tiberius died, Suetonius reports that the people of Rome "prayed to Mother Earth and the Manes to allow the dead man no abode except among the damned." If he wasn't there already, that is.

If Rome was diablerized under the Republic, before the Caesars, it was on a smaller scale. The "reign of terror" of the dictator Sulla killed 4,700 men — barely a patch on Tiberius's 38,000 political murders. Tiberius's degenerate, megalomaniacal heir Caligula managed only

35,000 executions before his assassination. (And, as Suetonius reminds us above, Caligula didn't lie easy after death.) Domitian had 20,000 lives snuffed out (he also liked to torture flies in his spare time). Even the "good emperor" Claudius may have executed 3,000 people for treason. It didn't get better over time, either; in CE 215, Caracalla killed 30,000 supporters of his rival Geta in a single purge. And these deaths were not the impersonal, industrialized slaughters of the 20th century but personal ones, often named by the emperor and ideally carried out by specialists. Or sometimes, by the emperor's own hand: Commodus boasted of hacking to death 12,000 men in the arena, not counting his political purges.

The personal excesses of these and other emperors redefine the phrase "absolute power corrupts absolutely." Each had his own sadistic flavor, more than colorful enough for gaming: Tiberius hosted midget sex parties and quizzed his guests about the secret truths of Greek mythology, while Elagabalus was fond of roasting people alive in bronze bulls or smothering refractory dinner partners under





mounds of rose petals. If you're looking for a Goth before the Goths, look no further than Domitian's banquets. At these affairs, everything — the draperies, the statuary, the couches, the food and the slaves — was black. Guests occasionally arrived to find their names carved on broken pillars or on tombstones scattered about the chamber, and Domitian would discuss their chosen means of execution (or their earlier deaths?) over wine and caramelized hummingbirds. He also covered the pillars of his palace with "highly polished moonstone" — perhaps to determine which of his guests or courtiers showed no reflection?

Of course, the topper is Nero's famous feast in the late summer of CE 64, lit by the burning human tallow of crucified Christians. Imagine the smell, the sound, the horror of making light conversation on music or art, all the while knowing that one false word will have you — human or vampire — writhing up there beside the illuminations. Over a mere dozen years, Nero killed some 22,000 people, including his mother, his stepbrother and both his wives,

NOVEL FEASTS OF CRIME

LET THE ANCESTRAL HEARTH
BE STAINED WITH BLOOD, LET
THE FEAST BE SPREAD — TO NO
NOVEL FEAST OF CRIME WILT
COME AS BANQUETER. TO-DAY
HAVE WE MADE THEE FREE,
HAVE LOOSED THY HUNGER
TO THE BANQUET YONDER;
GO, FEED FULL THY FASTING,
AND LET BLOOD, WITH WINE
COMMINGLED, BE DRUNK
BEFORE THINE EYES. I HAVE
FOUND FEAST WHICH THOU
THYSELF WOULDST FLEE...

— SENECA, *THYESTES*

the second of whom he kicked to death while pregnant. Even in that record, Nero's execution of the philosopher and poet Seneca, Nero's old tutor, stands out. Because Seneca's blood "flowed too slowly" to die by the sword, and because (as Suetonius reports) his "peculiar diet" made him immune to poisons, Nero finally had Seneca smothered in a steam bath after yet another banquet.

But all this talk of banquets has made us thirsty. Let's recline here, for a few minutes, and watch a play. Octavia, the estranged wife of the Emperor Nero, recounts his atrocities, and tells us her dreams of divorce, exile and death. Nero enters, ordering murders and glorying in his tyranny until he is confronted by the bloody shade of the mother he murdered, Agrippina. She prophesies his death, and Octavia's supporters raise Rome in revolt. In response, Nero orders her killed and Rome burnt; he marries Poppaea, who is herself haunted by the revenant Agrippina. The play ends with Octavia's dying lament at a Rome that wants only blood from its favorites.

The play is *Octavia*, credited to Seneca although it seems to refer to events that took place after his death. (Or perhaps Seneca rose from the fatal bath and returned to write a play about it. Suetonius records that Octavia's blood, too, flowed not at all from a knife wound. Did art imitate unlife?) Even if *Octavia* is not by Seneca, the play is nonetheless a fully Senecan tragedy. It shares Seneca's three-part structure: the play opens with a cloud of evil, demonstrates evil's defeat of reason and concludes with the triumph of evil in horror and catastrophe. Senecan tragedy strongly influenced Shakespeare: *Titus Andronicus*, *Macbeth* and *Richard III* are all shaped to the Senecan framework. *Hamlet* is another Senecan tragedy, specifically a revenge play. Such plays open with the appearance of a ghost or Fury, transform the hero into a killer and end in bloody ritual revenge.

Seneca lovingly brings the shades of the dead onstage, frequently invoking witchcraft and the supernatural. Incest, mutilation, torture and corpses are his building blocks, telling a claustrophobically brooding tale of crime and death. Seneca is obsessed with crime and violations of morality; his princes, driven by ambition, commit ever-greater atrocities until the almost unimaginably bloody climax. As Seneca writes in *Agamemnon*, "For crimes, the way to safety

always leads through more crimes,” or in *Thyestes*, “One does not avenge a great crime save by out-doing it.”

Some scholars hold that Seneca intended his plays not for the public stage but for private readings, perhaps after a banquet, in which a few friends would take the parts and follow the tragedy to its terrifying, cathartic conclusion. In short, Seneca might well have been writing **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicles. And if you can bear the touch of his cold, dead hands on yours, if you don’t mind a whiff of myrrh (and a lot of blood), he can guide your story as well.

Seneca re-cast the stories of Greek myth for a contemporary Roman audience, one terrorized by Nero’s purges and madness. Consider taking a sheet from Seneca’s codex and adapting Seneca, or Suetonius, or some other Roman author not just to Roman tales but to modern ones. Just as Orson Welles adapted *Julius Caesar* for contemporary Italy, you can recreate Seneca’s Rome in modern Gothic dress. But not in modern feel.

Senecan chronicles aren’t subtle or realistic, but wild and dark and terrible, what we would call “operatic” — even melodramatic — today. Even the Roman naturalists weren’t naturalistic, so why should Roman chroniclers force themselves to play small ball? Senecan Storytellers liberate themselves from modernist constraints and bathe in blood and rage and excess. Characters are trapped between duty and desire, with rich rewards and dark despair waiting in abundance for the bold monster willing to wade through gore to get them. No one is immune to danger or horror; there are no privileged “Storyteller’s pets” in Seneca’s work. Antagonists and relatives and retainers and trusted mentors, and mayhap even fellow player characters, should die in droves — they can always come back as vengeful ghosts (or something even worse) if need be.

Are we all quite rested? Refreshed by the heady perfume of stage blood? Ready to resume our peregrination through the sanguinary streets of Rome? Excellent.

In *Natural Questions*, our bloody-minded (and slow-to-bleed) Seneca writes, “Some say that they themselves suspect that there is actually in blood a certain force potent to avert and repel a rain cloud.” Or to draw one: like calling to like, as below, so above. High on the hill-tops, unliving priests of deathless gods raise their faces to the heavens, waiting for the fat red drops to hit. The first known rain of blood on Rome occurred during the reign of Romulus, in 737 BCE.

From that time, rains of blood seem to have been regular, though never normal, occurrences, a portent recorded when such things could be spoken of aloud. Repeated rains of blood fell on the Volcanal, a shrine to Vulcan on the slope of Capitoline Hill. (Livy gives the last

BLOOD RUNS DOWNHILL

I AM QUITE AWARE THAT THE SPIRIT OF INDIFFERENCE WHICH IN THESE DAYS MAKES MEN REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THE GODS WARN US THROUGH PORTENTS, ALSO PREVENTS ANY PORTENTS WHATEVER FROM BEING EITHER MADE PUBLIC OR RECORDED IN THE ANNALS. BUT AS I NARRATE THE EVENTS OF ANCIENT TIMES I FIND MYSELF POSSESSED BY THE ANCIENT SPIRIT.... TWO DISTINCT PORTENTS HAD APPEARED IN THE TEMPLE OF FORTUNA PRIMIGENIA ON THE QUIRINAL HILL: A PALM TREE SPRANG UP IN THE TEMPLE PRECINCT AND A RAIN OF BLOOD HAD FALLEN IN THE DAYTIME.

— LIVY, HISTORY OF ROME

date of such a rain as 181 BCE.) There was a rain of blood on the Comitium, at the Forum and at the Capitol in 197 BCE during the Macedonian War, and again in 183 BCE, the year Hannibal (lord of the child-burning cult of Carthage, which almost put Rome to the True Death) died. At his approach, the sacred shields of Fortuna in Praeneste sweated blood. But as Livy mentions above, at some point the portents were no longer “made public or recorded in the annals.” Perhaps they had become too gruesome, or too frequent — or too closely aligned with the city’s vampiric infestation — for even Imperial historians to dare mention.

But the Romans still knew. They poured their blood offerings out to the spirits of their ancestors, and to certain of their gods. The Romans did so in increasing silence and with increasing circumspection. They might offer the blood libation into a lake that was known to communicate with the underworld, if they had country estates where such things were situated. Or, if the Romans were city folk, they had the greatest, most blood-drenched shrine in the world all around them.

Every major street and building of Rome held magical and ritual significance, along with its historical ghosts. Tertullian — who records two separate encounters with animate corpses — said as much when he wrote of the Colosseum, “It is the temple of all demons. There are as many unclean spirits gathered there as it can seat men.” (Imagine it: Fifty thousand shades, Lares, vampires, haunting the hypogea, clustering to lap up the bloody sand drifting down from the arena, their howls lost in the crowd’s animal roar.) Not just the buildings were haunted; so was the murky Roman earth itself.

Each of Rome’s famous Seven Hills had its own genius locus, its own lord of the land. (Seven hills — seven vast, semi-torpid monsters in seven barrows ancient when the Etruscans drove out the unknown folk before them — seven covenants?) Some hills were more famous, or more fearsome, than others. Suetonius has already mentioned the Gardens of the Lamia (the Lamiae were both Greek vampires and a Roman *gens*, which seems almost too ideal) on the Esquiline Hill. The gardens adorn the edges of an old grove of Diana, the eternally youthful goddess tied to blood and the moon. Here Servius Tullius, the sixth king of Rome, died under the wheels of his daughter’s chariot. (Pliny says that Servius Tullius, who built the first walls of the city, and whose very blood and flesh was ground into its streets, was the son of a Lar, an ancestral shade.) The Esquiline Hill also held Rome’s first cemetery, and witchcraft was common enough on that hill that the satirist Horace alludes to a sabbat there.

The historian Sallust similarly casually mentions that all the tombs and necropolises in Rome are “the haunts

of shades”; some Romans held banquets there so that their own Lares and shades could partake. But not all Roman tombs were traditional. Caius Cestius was buried in an Egyptian-style pyramid (on a crossroads, for further magical potency), which became part of the Aurelian Wall of Rome in the third century. Two other burial pyramids stood in the Campus Martius, and one (at another crossroads) across the Tiber between the Vatican and Janiculum Hills. That last pyramid stood in the shadow of a 2,000-year-old obelisk the color of dried blood and bare of inscriptions, transported from Egypt and erected in the Vatican Circus by Caligula just before his bloody (first?) death. (At the foot of the obelisk, Nero crucified St. Peter.) Caligula followed the example of Augustus, who had erected two Egyptian obelisks in the Flaminian Circus and the Circus Maximus, and Julius Caesar’s client Sallust, who had erected his own private obelisk in gardens below the Quirinal Hill.

Thus, as the savage Julio-Claudians sank their claws into Rome, they spread a network of Egyptian geomancy over the city, and perhaps other, darker rites. Under Julius and Augustus, the Janiculum Hill, outside the walls and across the Tiber from official Rome, became a hotbed of cults from Egypt and Syria. Some blended their worship with that of the old gods of the land, such as the Syrian cult at the Grotto of Furrina, on the south end of the hill. Here, a sacred fountain boiled up from the underworld; here, Rome drank more of her best sons’ blood. Here Philocrates assassinated the popular tribune Caius Gracchus in 121 BCE. Philocrates immediately committed suicide; another ghost for Syriac sorcery to call up.

THE THIRST OF THE GODS

LET THE SECRET SHRINES OF THE EGYPTIANS AND THE NECROMANCIES OF THE ETRUSCANS BE CONSIGNED TO DARKNESS.

— ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA,
EXHORTATION TO THE HEATHEN

By the time the Syrians built their shrine, they were almost the only ones who remembered Furrina. All anyone knew was that she was terrible, and thirsty. Even Cicero could but vaguely guess that she might have been a Fury, and yet she had her own *flamen*, her own priesthood, as befitted one who had been one of the first 13 gods of Rome. Before the Greeks came with their bright, sunlit versions of the myths, the Romans had their own worship. The three first gods of Rome were bloody Mars (to whom the

victorious horse in the Campus Martius chariot races was sacrificed every October 15), death-dealing Jupiter and Quirinus, a fertility god of sanguinary aspect. (Quirinus’s plant was the myrtle, which prophetically runs with blood when Aeneas plucks it in Book III of the *Aeneid*.) Quirinus’s Quirinal Hill, as we’ve seen, seems more prone than most to rains of blood.

Older even than those gods was Terminus, the god of boundaries. His stone stood on the Capitoline Hill be-

fore anything else did. By 500 BCE, the stone stood in the middle of a temple of Jupiter. Terminus had refused to move, even for the king of the gods. His lesser Termini were everywhere that a boundary or cornerstone was needed. Each Terminal stone rested in a consecrated pit, one where priests had poured blood and ashes; every February 23, on the Terminalia, the stones of Terminus once more drank sacrificial blood. The Termini remind us of the baetyls, sacred stones inhabited by gods, and perhaps also that Augustus's first obelisk was made of blood-colored crystalline porphyry, the same as a pharaoh's sarcophagus. Do the stones of Rome move at night, or do some of its gaudily polychromed statues (of marble cold as death) refresh their vermilion and ocher paint with human gore? Something did. According to Pausanias, the children of Medea returned from the dead and prowled Corinth — until the city fathers erected a statue of a Lamia.

Something prowled the Roman night — the Lemures, the restless dead. Ovid writes that that “the ancient ritual” of Lemuria “must be performed at night; these dark hours will present due oblations to the silent Shades.” By Ovid's time, the ancient ritual consisted of dropping beans behind you and not looking back, reminding one that if a vampire sees dropped beans (or seeds) he must count them compulsively until sunrise. Lemuria took place over three nights in May, which the Etruscans suggestively named Amphire. Probably just a coincidence.

FOREIGN WINE IN ROMAN SKINS

More likely, Amphire (or Ampile) is cognate with Greek *ampellos*, “vine.” That doesn't make things much better, given that Roman wine was thick, and sticky and dark red. The Romans made the same connection: the Flamen Dialis, the priest of Jupiter, could not drink blood, or eat raw meat or pass under an arbor-vine. And the Romans feared and embraced Bacchus, the “roaring god,” the god of wine and of “all the flowing liquids,” in the words of Plutarch. The Greeks called him Dionysus, with epithets such as Omadius (“Eater of Raw Flesh”), Nyctelius (“God of Night”) and Anthroporraestus (“Man-Slayer”), and

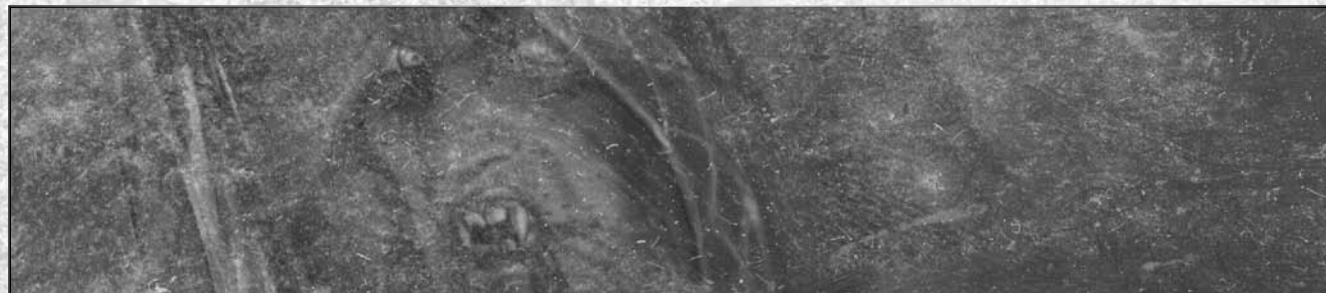
knew him also as the god of frenzy and possession, hence as the god of drama. The Dacians called him Zalmoxis, and knew he lived among the dead. They impaled a human sacrifice every five years to carry him messages. (And 1,500 years later, the ruler of Dacia, Vlad Tepes, would do much the same thing on a much grander scale.) According to Herodotus, Zalmoxis “taught that neither he nor his guests nor any of their descendants should ever die.”

Be he Dionysus, or Zalmoxis or Bacchus, Rome embraced him. Almost too fervently at times; the Senate rounded up 7,000 Bacchantes for treason, illicit rites and gross immorality in 186 BCE. Among the Bacchantes too influential to exile or execute were the Piso family. They survived and flourished; Julius Caesar's third wife, Calpurnia, was a Piso. The Pisonians plotted against Nero to restore the Republic (or was it a different set of “Old Ways” to which they wished to return?), and interestingly, as devotees of the god of the theater, their conspiracy had some murky connection to the slow-to-bleed playwright Seneca.

I AM DYING, EGYPT, DYING

Quirinus and Zalmoxis were hardly the only bloody gods of corn and death the Romans venerated. As Rome expanded, it drank in foreign gods, carried back to the Empire's heart by the veins of commerce and slavery. Osiris — who like Dionysus was torn to shreds and returned from the dead — and his sister-wife Isis came to Rome around the time of Sulla (during the bloody purges) and sank their roots deep despite senatorial bans in 58, 53 and 48 BCE, and the wrath of Tiberius. Roman cultists identified Isis with Fortuna, who, just as Quirinus, attracted more than her share of bloody precipitation. Her greatest cultist was Caligula, who rescinded Tiberius's bans and built a lavish Iseum in the Campus Martius, beneath the obelisk Caligula had raised.

Even before the Queen of a Thousand Names rose in Rome, another goddess came out of the East. In 204 BCE, hard-pressed by Carthage, the Romans brought a sacred stone from Phrygia to fulfill a prophecy in the Sibylline Books, building a temple on Palatine Hill to house it, to house Magna Mater, the “Great Mother of the Gods.” She





SECRET SACRIFICES

WHEN THIS WAR WAS COMING
UPON THEM, THE ROMANS
THEN, FROM SOME PROPHECIES
IN THE SIBYLS' BOOKS, PUT
ALIVE UNDERGROUND A PAIR OF
GREEKS, ONE MALE, THE OTHER
FEMALE; AND LIKEWISE TWO
GAULS, ONE OF EACH SEX, IN
THE MARKET CALLED THE BEAST
MARKET. EVEN TO THIS DAY, IN
THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER,
THEY OFFER SECRET SACRIFICES,
WHICH NOBODY SEES, TO THESE
GREEKS AND GAULS.

— PLUTARCH,
LIFE OF MARCELLUS

was the lover of Attis, whom she drove mad and castrated, staying ever young by bathing in his dying blood. In Attis's guise, her self-castrated priests, the Corybantes, paraded through the city on her holy day, March 24, the Dies Sanguinis, the Day of Blood. They gashed themselves with knives and howled praises to their petrified deity. (Another blood-soaked vampire stone — a baetyl bride for Terminus?) In short, the virtuous Roman patricians sold their city's soul to the bloodiest goddess in Asia, Cybele.

But needs must when the devil drives. During a Gallic invasion in 228 BCE, the Romans “buried alive on the spot” four human sacrifices (as Plutarch elsewhere describes it) “to certain strange and alien spirits.” Said spot was the Forum Boarium, the “Forum of the Kine,” to hammer the point home. Here also the Romans held their first-ever gladiatorial combats. (One imagines those two Greeks and two Gauls, or their stunted, inbred,

troglodyte descendants, hearing the swords clash above, pressing their pale faces to the bare rock to slurp up the scarlet vintage that they know will come trickling down.) The Romans also buried corrupted vestal virgins alive, perhaps as “secret sacrifices” to the underground race and its “strange and alien spirits.”

Other sacrifices were secret even from the participants. Sallust describes how the conspirator Catiline, “wishing to bind his accomplices in guilt by an oath, handed round among them in goblets the blood of a human body mixed with wine; and that when all, after an imprecation, had tasted of it, as is usual in sacred rites, he disclosed his design...” How many other oaths in blood did Roman history conceal? The rites of Mithras, bloody baptisms and communions practiced in buried chambers, were mysteries that only the innermost initiates truly comprehended. Some sacrifices were secret from *everyone*. The Lupercalia, in which two priests entered a cave at the foot of the Palatine Hill and smeared the blood of a dog on two noble youths, may have had something to do with Romulus and Remus, or perhaps with Pan. The murkiest of all Roman rituals doesn't even have a name. Every May 14, a procession of priests and vestals threw 27 *argei* (human effigies made of reeds) into the Tiber from the Sublician Bridge. None of the participants knew which god they were trying to fool with this almost-human sacrifice.

FAIR YOUTH, BENEATH THE TREES, THOU CANST NOT LEAVE

It wasn't always bundles of reeds thrown in the Tiber. Macrobius's fourth-century CE dialogue *Saturnalia* states that “in very ancient days” the Etruscans (and their Tarquin kings of Rome) practiced child sacrifice to the goddess Mania and to the Lares, as “human victims were supposed to ensure the safety of the whole clan.” Protection from vampiric ancestors? Or something else? A blood adoption into the shadowy gens of the Lares?

Some human sacrifices were purely selfish. Cicero accused the Quaestor Vatinius of practicing human sacrifice for divination and necromancy, feeding the blood of a

AND ALL THE CAVERNS SMOKED WITH STREAMING BLOOD

THIS ALSO WAS A MILITARY
PUNISHMENT IN OLD TIMES,
TO DISGRACE A SOLDIER BY
ORDERING A VEIN TO BE
OPENED, AND LETTING BLOOD.
THERE IS NO REASON ASSIGNED
FOR THIS IN THE OLD RECORDS,
SO FAR AS I COULD FIND; BUT
I INFER THAT IT WAS FIRST
DONE TO SOLDIERS WHOSE
MINDS WERE AFFECTED AND
WHOWERE NOT IN A NORMAL
CONDITION, SO THAT IT APPEARS
TO HAVE BEEN NOT SO MUCH A
PUNISHMENT
AS A TREATMENT.

— GELLIUS, *ATTIC NIGHTS*

youth to a wise shade. Petronius details a story of *striges* carrying off a beautiful young catamite, implying a strong hunger by the undead for such offerings. Domitian accused the sorcerer Apollonius of Tyana (who thwarted the Lamia of Corinth) of attempting to aid the future Emperor Nerva by sacrificing a young Arcadian boy and “imbru[ing] his hands in his blood.” Nero, Elagabalus and Maxentius likewise made such offerings to the Lemures. (The beautiful Elagabalus also offered his own foreskin — or perhaps rather more of himself — to his own god, El-Gabal, or rather to the sacred stone on the east face of the Palatine — another vampire baetyl — in which El-Gabal dwelt.) Under Julian the Apostate, sacrifice of “pure children” was apparently epidemic; even Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, was so accused.

It all joins up; it all comes full circle. The Emperor Hadrian’s lover Antinous volunteered for such a death, and was eaten by crocodiles in the Nile. Hadrian built an empty tomb for Antinous (like that of Osiris or Zalmoxis) at his villa in Tivoli, and raised an obelisk outside it. Ninety years later, Elagabalus, whose mother was an initiate of Cybele,

rededicated the obelisk to the goddess’s castrated lover Attis, splashing the thirsty stone with the blood of young boys.

What the Greeks called *haimakouria*, “blood-sating,” was common in Roman necromancy. Such near-vampirism appears constantly in Greek and Roman lore. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus raises shades, restoring them to life with a trench full of blood. Seneca’s Medea bleeds onto the altar of Hecate (to the Romans, Diana of the Esquiline) to awaken her favor. In Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, the witch Erichon reanimates a corpse by feeding it blood, and Statius’s necromancer Tiresias drinks blood to restore his vitality.

Not just in authorial fancy did Romans spill blood for the unliving. Plutarch describes blood offerings made on battlefields to dead soldiers, and the gladiatorial games began as a ceremony to spill blood in honor of (for the consumption of?) the dead. There was a whole etiquette to blood sacrifice: for example, in the *jugulatus*, the ceremonial cutting of the throat, if the victim faced up, he was being sacrificed to the gods; if he faced down, he was being sacrificed to the dead.

The Romans hedged their bloody religion and their bloody lives around with taboo and ritual. Blood was both sacred and profane. Spilled blood made the Penates, the household gods, unclean, but the Lares (as we have seen) were not so picky. The Flamen Dialis, the priest of Jupiter, could not even mention raw meat, much less drink blood, so great was his purity — or so great was the danger of getting even a little blood into Jupiter’s nostrils. Or perhaps Jupiter, god of the sky, was just a containment system for the real danger, for the vampire stone older than the city itself, Terminus. The only Terminal stone that never got a blood sacrifice was the central Terminus, in the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. Terminus’s stone was always exposed to the sky (Jupiter’s temple had a hole in the roof), open to the sun to keep him helpless. Rome would rule its gods. It would keep its shades starved and powerless. It would not look back on Lemuria.

But when the Romans needed help, or desired power or wished secret knowledge, they had no choice — or no scruple. The blood of young boys, and the agony of families, was not too dear a currency for Rome to deal in. Treacherous knives flashed in a garden, or an Imperial seal was pressed into crimson wax. The blood splattered down on the temples, or sprayed in secret rites. Victims thrashed in hidden shrines, or on deserted street corners. Patterns flared from altar to obelisk, from high hilltop and down arterial streets. Bodies fell with a muted splash into the Tiber, or with a thud into oubliettes beneath the arena. Because the Romans knew they always had a shadow behind them, and a deathless future ahead.

REQUIEM FOR
ROME™



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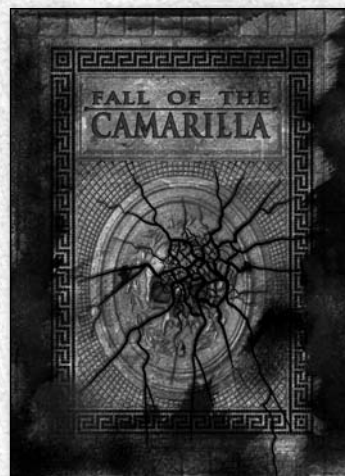
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SPECIAL THANKS

Will Hindmarch, for setting the carefully braided fuse and slapping my back while I lit it.

– Ray Fawkes

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REQUIEM FOR ROME

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Memory. Such a strange thing.

Sometimes it seems impossible to contain memory. Like a clay pot overflowing into your hands, you find yourself unable to catch it all. Memory overwhelms with details, death by a thousand cuts. The night I handed the knife to Decimus and watched as he chopped up my brother and cooked him in that wide-mouthed cauldron, the body bobbing in bubbling wine. My first night in Necropolis, struggling in the mud as the torchlight at my back faded to a pale glow. My first kill, a young waiter with gammon, fish guts, on his breath. (Or was it the Magister Convivii who first fell to my hunger? See? Even now my memory is callous.)

Other times, I struggle for scraps, unable to summon a single detail. Memory comes then only in waves of sensation: a red, wet flash of heat in my mouth, a coldness on my shoulder as I fall into a mockery of sleep, a distant recollection of skin abraded from dead muscle to cleanse me of some impurity or another. When such sensations are upon me, I struggle through them, submerged as I am by them, trying to find some kind of context to these feelings that rush into me. But it's forever too murky.

Sometimes, after I awaken from a long rest, I remember that I have my strongbox with its lion's feet and iron lock. When I am able to remember this, as I have now, I go to the box and I open it with the iron key that I have bound about my wrist. And I pore through what I have written, trying to make sense of it all.

ABYSSUS ABYSSUM INVOCAT

I was a fan of the Greens. That I remember. My partisanship in chariot racing is ingrained on my heart, as if cut into the muscle with the tip of a knife. I loved the races. The thunder of hooves. Spray of mud or sand. What came before: the processions, the musicians, the dancers. What came after: the trumpeting of victory, the magistrate handing out tokens to the triumphant. Gods help me, I loved it when a man would die out there, trampled by a horse, perhaps dragged behind the cart. I was bloodthirsty even then, even when alive. Then again, looking back, maybe all of Rome was bloodthirsty. An Empire of vampires who never fully committed.

You'd look down on that nowadays, maybe. All the false morality going around. I don't know that we had that, then. The Christians, maybe. But not the rest of us. The gods willed that blood be spilled, I think, libations to their might. (You can ask Decimus about that, can't you?)

You'd find no public betting on the races, but private betting? Undeniably. I was a betting man. A fool, because a soldier did not earn any great luxury — some earned more than others, I as one of the principes infantry earned more than some, but less than many others. I had to buy my own gear — armor, shield, gladius. But I couldn't stop pissing my money away. On the Greens. Always on the Greens.

I lost more than I won.

One night, I lost a great deal more. My writings give me some of the details, but this night needs little refreshing from these pages.

I was drunk. Sodden on thin wine. I had earned a few pieces from the race and went to collect my winnings from a man whose name I cannot remember but whose fat-slick face will always come to mind. He wasn't happy about giving me what I was owed because for once it was more than a little, and he thought to dig at me. He thought to insult the Greens, claim that the Blues were the mightier faction.

Fighting words, especially to a common man drunk on thin wine. I meant only to threaten him, to press my knife against his neck and make clear that disparaging my favorite charioteers would earn him a slit in his neck through which I'd pull his tongue. I don't remember how it happened. Maybe I meant it to.

But I killed him. I stumbled forth, and the knife slid across his windpipe, opening a second mouth in his worm's neck.



At least, I thought I killed him. He felt at the neck slit with grubby fingers and told me that I shouldn't have done that. Hands emerged from the shadows. They choked me. I felt a knife slide between my ribs from behind.

So cold, that knife. I can feel it still.

BIS VIVIT QUI BENE VIVIT

Decimus was a pale slip of a man. The way he grinned, the way one eye rotated in his head differently from the other; he looked like an ill fox, hairless but infinitely pleased. I don't remember where he was when they took me to him. In Necropolis somewhere. Away from the torches. My writings recall a wall of terracotta urns like many in the deep dark of our underworld. Slumbering chambers.

When I awoke, wrapped in cloth, hands lifted me up so that I could see him. He told me that I was dying. My life, bleeding out of my back. I recall the wetness only; no pain, not then. (Though sometimes my body reminds me of a great numbness at that spot, icy and soft, just before retiring for the night.) He had two women next to him, I could not see their faces though they remained silhouetted by a strange glow. They were feeding him. Putting squirming dormice in his hand. He crushed the life out of them. Bitty bones breaking. Then he squeezed them into his mouth the way you might milk the juice from a plum. One at a time he did this, pouring the mouse blood into his grinning mouth, licking noisily at his hands after every one. This is how memory is strange, because I want to transcribe how this went on for nights — and maybe, just maybe, it did. Though isn't it possible that it only felt like so many nights when in reality I was dying, fading from life, and all things seemed stretched and distorted?

At some point he measured me. Sized me up, orbiting me, running his hands up and down my arms, wriggling them beneath the cloth and gripping my leg muscles with vice-like fingers.

Told me I was strong. But stupid. I felt his fingers squirm into the wound at my back, numbly groping at a rib. That was enough. That was enough to kill me. To send me to the Elysian Fields, where I might be allowed the good fortune to attend to the charioteers.

Decimus, of course, had other plans. As you well know, for here I am.

Not dead. Not exactly.

SPERMQUE METUMQUE INTER DUBIIS

The things that he did to me. The crimes that Decimus demanded. I had been denied my trip to Elysium. I had been made to drink blood like a reviled shade. But that was only the beginning, was it not?

Decimus would cut me. Spill the blood that I had taken only hours earlier onto the floor as a libation to Bacchus. Bacchus the Liberator. Bacchus the Mad. He Who Releases. (I believe in the gods, I do, but there is another memory I possess that my writings do not support: Bacchus, standing fat-bellied in his chariot pulled by wild cats, barreling down upon me in the streets of Necropolis. This memory cannot be real, and yet, I feel it in my bones as if it was. Did I see some tapestry or frieze that burned this image into me? Or was I witness to something like it when fuzzy on poppy-sodden blood?)

Decimus would hang me by my wrists, feed me blood from fools force-fed ivy leaves and poisonous berries. Their blood became poison to me. The things I would see. That I would experience hanging there, my dead muscles corded to their limits. For nights I would dangle there, hearing things that couldn't be heard, seeing across the worlds and witnessing the spirits that lingered at the periphery. (Like Bacchus, perhaps? In his chariot? Could be, could be.) Decimus watched it all.

Like others of my station, I slept in a large clay urn like the many that lined the walls of dark Necropolis. Upon waking within the columbarium I would be allowed to partake in the blood dole, but Decimus demanded that I hold the blood in my mouth and bring it to him . . . where I would spit it into his open man. He knew if I spat something other than the blood taken from the chained slaves, and to this day I can't imagine how (even my tastes, as refined as they have become over the centuries, are unable to muster this mastery of flavor). It is impossibly difficult to hold sweet blood — especially when you're hungry most nights — in your mouth for an hour or more. Excruciating. Almost impossible. The desire to just . . . tug on one of those old dead muscles and swallow the blood down deep into the rotted cistern of my guts . . . it's a wretched, wretched thing to do to a man (or even to a shade that passes for one). And I failed most nights. Decimus punished me every time.

What punishments? For Decimus, they seemed the same as his rewards. He'd cut me. Kick me until my bones tore free of their moorings and speared through the flesh. Break my fingers, let me heal them, break them again. He would drag me deep into the Black Spring where light was a curse and therefore disallowed, and in the pitch dark Decimus performed untold sorceries upon me — here, again, I recall no details, only fierce impressions. The boiling of blood in my body. My eyes turned to ash (followed by the sound of him blowing the ash into the faint moaning wind that sometimes wound its way through the Fons Ater, the door to the caves slamming shut soon after the howl). Spirits whispering elaborate heresies into ears (ears cleaned of flesh by the tip of Decimus's dagger).

My sire visited upon me innumerable sins.

I have since visited those same sins upon my childer. As you well know.

DE RERVN NATVRA

So much I could not see or understand. The great spinning of wheels above me, a grand machination of blood and death poised far over my head. I heard bits of the stories, but at the time, I was at the nadir — socially little more than the worms (or the Worms), mentally just a tortured man with no focus other than surviving each night until morning.

What of Gerontius? Ruddy-cheeked, fat and smiling, a pedantic fickle twit by all accounts, always bowing, always scraping. What of how he went to the Black Chamber to meet with a senator but somehow let the Beast out of its cage? The stories say that the senator excused himself for a moment to the toilet, and something in Gerontius just broke like a brittle twig. He followed swiftly after, massacring the plebs before emerging — blood-stained and beaming if you believe the tales — to try to slake his thirst on the slave boys. He never made it that far, of course. Destroyed, his soul left unconsumed, for who would want to drink deep the soul of an uncontrolled fool? No honor there.

What of the many debates between Septimius the Worm and Phineas of Africa? Two creatures arguing over the nature of verna — not the children of slaves born in a mortal's household, but here the children of one's own ghoul servants. Is it proper to give them a taste of the blood, gifting upon them the legacy of their slave parents? Or should they be freedmen until they do something that puts them in debt bondage with one of our kind? (I recall someone, maybe me, once suggesting killing the little pigs in their cribs, for no good can come of a thrall's line — but perhaps it wasn't me, wasn't me at all.)

Dare I speak of the adherents of Isis, stirring in their temple, playing with the so-called Blood of Isis — a grim sorcery whose mark and meter is seen today only as a fraction of its one-time potential? (Oh, of course they'd be banned by the Christians over the centuries, but do you think none of the Cult of Isis exist today? Continue to believe that. Hide your eyes from the heresies performed in the deep dark below the cities. Such ignorance brings you comfort, doesn't it?)

Or should I write of the many murders of our kind, Kindred cast to ash against the Obelisk Campense in the Piazza — so much blood and char cast against the red granite spire? What of Paulina's war against the Nosferatu, all because a black stone — a meteorite, you'd say now, but others say it was a fallen god, a god whose name dare not be spoken by mortal men — told her to? What of the parasites that stalked the tunnels of Necropolis or the forests outside the city? Or Tatiana, said to speak to faeries? Or Old Servius, said to have been born undead when the land rose up out of the sea and lightning illuminated the sun, one of those ancient Methuselah beasts existing contrary to the rules we know?

So much above my head, so many gyres whirling and turning. Still are, even now. I'm old, too old, but even in these nights, I still feel the great weight of a thousand conspiracies pressing down upon me. A stone balanced on an egg.

TRAHIMUR OMNES LAUDIS STUDIO

A creature of the gutter. That's what I was. The pride crushed out of me. I once longed to serve the simple life, retiring with some honor or killed in a field of whispering wheat (for then wouldn't my blood mix with the soil, becoming the grain that would eventually feed the common men of a great city? What a destiny that would be!).

A soldier. I once was a good soldier. A reasonable man. But then I became a shallow, desperate monster. Wretched and hollow, thanks to Decimus.

Then . . .

Lucretia.

She found me licking the dry dust of the tunnels beneath the Colosseum (you see, men would fight men or beasts would fight beasts, and blood would drip down below, spattering in the dust . . . the dried blood did nothing to satisfy hunger in the long run, but there is a madness in hunger as you well know). I was pinching the dark dust between my fingers, sometimes letting it fall to my tongue in the hopes of getting a taste of that tang (and even now I imagine I can hear the dull hit of a short blade hitting a curved shield or denting the blood-crustled pectorale worn awkwardly across the chest).

So given over to my obsession of taste and imagination that I didn't hear her come up behind me. She cleared her throat, a delicate sound (even now, with her probably gone to ash nearly a millennia ago, I think of little bells tinkling — surely an impossible thing that she would make such a sound, but there's no accounting for truth in my remembrance), and I turned to see her, the monster within me ready to leap to the surface and tear her to bits. But in the way that one charms a hooded snake, those opaline eyes glimmering in the darkness of the tunnels calmed me instantly.

She was kind to me. Do you believe that? Kind. Even now I like to think it was sincere. She complimented me — admittedly, she did so in the way one might flatter a robust ox or praise a particularly plump olive — but I couldn't remember the last time someone had truly said anything nice about me.

Lucretia helped me feed that night. I had been so weak and so self-abused that I couldn't even manage my own food anymore. Too loud. Too rough. Those few fools who dared travel the streets of the city at night fled swiftly, and so that was why I found myself sucking at dust beneath the amphitheater. Lucretia, though, provided me with kills, allowed me to sup on blood and regain strength. Not just the strength of body, but the strength of mind.

And then she would leave me.

The beautiful witch did this night in, night out. She would come. Reward me with honeyed tongue. Help me feed. Then — gone, again.

She was beautiful, a marvelous crutch, a gleaming-eyed Augur, and when she

came to me many weeks or months or even years later and told me what it was she wanted me to do, how could I refuse? Because I was in love, or whatever serves as love for our kind (sometimes it seems that self-hatred is what makes for the strongest love, for in such self-loathing we shackle ourselves to those who would punish us again and again, always with a smile, always with flashing eyes). A hollow mockery of the thing that mortals feel, but I felt it nevertheless. I agreed to the first thing, and it then only made sense to agree to the second — her blood, in my mouth and down my throat, supped from a neatly bisected wrist (which she cut with a sharp piece of black volcanic stone).

I drank her blood.

I loved her.

And I agreed that together we could destroy Decimus. My sire. My lord. My monster.

SUMMUM IUS, SUMMA INIURIA

That is what you wish to do to me, my childer, isn't it? Destroy me utterly? You'll read this over my greasy ash, pondering over my words. You didn't even know I was this old, did you? Ancient Rome, you'll say, and scoff. Impossible. Maybe it is. Maybe in poring through old records you'll find that I was lost in the mist of my own memory, inventing things whole cloth, pulling them out of history books or old poems or even my own addled imagination. But I remember it.

I remember the things that Decimus did to me and how I destroyed him, and I remember those terrible things I did to you and how you will destroy me. It all comes again, the rot of the world, the sickness, the cycle of the whole violent affair coming again and again to haunt us. The dance of the gods comes again, doesn't it? Hide in your chapels, childer. Hide in the shadow of the cross and the spear.

Morning comes soon. Which means you have decided to forestall my destruction another night. So be it. Tomorrow night I shall write more. And the night after that if you'll allow me the luxury of more time. It's nice to think of myself as something less than immortal. Something common. A man, just a man waiting out his final nights.

Remember this: if an Empire as great as Rome can crumble to dust, then nothing is eternal. Not even us.



INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency to see civilization in terms of present circumstances and morality. What is now seems, somehow, as if it has always been — or at least as if it is the inevitable expression of what once was, as if the past amounts to nothing more than an inexorable march toward the now, moving through lesser iterations in clear progression.

This is a thoroughly modern conceit. The truth is that civilizations come and go, wholesale, and those that fall are replaced, not renewed. The world that is marks its society with inheritances from the world that was: new cities are built on and around ruins of old, new language warps and recalls ancient phrases and new ideologies adopt and rework the ideals and beliefs of the past. Our society is one re-imagined, wholesale, from the wreckage of the ones that came before.

For the Kindred of **Vampire: The Requiem**, this is no less true than it is for mortals. Before the modern covenants, before the uneasy alliances and the political struggles of the last millennia, another undead civilization stood and fell, as different from contemporary vampire society as mortal Europe under rule of the Roman Empire was from the confederation of the European Union today. That civilization is just as legendary, just as unreliable in portrayal and just as much a deep-set ancestral influence.

Requiem for Rome presents the opportunity to play **Vampire: The Requiem** in that vastly different world, allowing players to explore the pinnacle of a lost civilization and enjoy playing through the path that would lead to the civilization's dissolution and destruction. **Requiem for Rome** provides alternate styles of play and an opportunity to understand the forces that have always been a part of the Requiem, and those that are unique to the times.

This book also lends immediacy and a new element of fragility to the modern setting. If the Kindred of Rome were able to create a society as functional, as reliable and as stable as the Camarilla, only to see that society fall to ashes, there's nothing to say that the same thing can't happen again in the modern world. Players and Storytellers can see how a position of apparently unconquerable strength could lead to collapse, and if they wish, they can allow it to inform their play in the modern setting. Maybe the Invictus and the Lancea Sanctum aren't as strong or as permanent as they seem. Maybe the defiance of the Circle of the Crone

isn't as enduring, or the rebellion of the Carthians isn't as progressive as they would have it. Maybe nothing can be taken for granted, nothing can be assumed.

The Camarilla lasted for a thousand years. The Kindred who populated it must have believed it would go on forever. Now, they are forgotten.

All of their trials are here in ancient Rome. All of their victories, all of their beliefs, all as they truly were: not as they are believed to have been. Everything that made them and sustained them, and everything that would shatter one night, leaving only scattered ash and bone for the foundations of the future.

CLANS

As in the modern setting, each vampire in **Requiem for Rome** is a member of a clan. Four of the five modern clans exist in the setting, and one — the Ventrue — is replaced with a uniquely Roman line called the Julii — a line that may or may not be the predecessor to the Ventrue. Many of the Kindred of Rome associate certain clans with foreign peoples. The Mekhet, for example, are generally believed to be African in origin, and even those Roman-born citizens who become Mekhet tend to be treated as foreigners.

THE CAMARILLA

In ancient Rome, there are no covenants of Kindred. The whole of vampire society falls under the umbrella of the Camarilla, a governing organization initiated by the Julii of Rome and overseen by a legislative assembly. Four official "wings" make up the whole of the Camarilla: the ruling body of the Senex, the military arm of the Legio Mortuum, the religious union of the Cult of Augurs and the lower-class catch-all of the Peregrine Collegia. Every Roman vampire in good standing pays service to at least one of these wings, finding a place in the overall operation of the Camarilla. A fifth, unofficial (and, depending on one's perspective, potentially criminal) faction of the Camarilla has emerged in recent years, and is quickly rising to challenge the status quo: a religious offshoot of the Peregrine Collegia known as the Lancea et Sanctum.

THEME AND MOOD

The thematic core of **Requiem for Rome** is *disintegration*. As with all Kindred, the vampires of Rome struggle

to maintain their Humanity. Unlike their modern counterparts, though, the majority of Kindred in this setting do not abide by an ideology that acknowledges sin or redemption, so they believe that the progression of internal rot is both inevitable and purposeless — an unavoidable feature of their curse.

The setting itself reflects this theme. The glory of Rome is slowly collapsing under pressure from both inside and out. The once-staggering achievements of conquest and construction are decaying dangerously, threatening the very civilization that founded them. And to some of those who can see it, the future degradation of Rome is also inevitable, and also cannot be explained in terms of a greater purpose.

THE MYTH AND THE REALITY

Rome is not what any modern vampire thinks it was, no matter how well informed or clear-headed one might believe oneself to be. The following statements outline the popular modern perspective of the undead, clarifying their truth or falsity in **Requiem for Rome**.

The Camarilla, at its peak, was the most successful vampire society in history: Fact. While far from perfect, the Camarilla once represented the largest, most diverse and most internally peaceful organization of vampires ever known. Its traditions and practices spread outwards with the expansion of the Roman Empire, and some of the Camarilla's legacies still inform Kindred behavior tonight.

The Invictus embodies the traditions of the Camarilla: Myth and fact. The Invictus, as it stands today, is the result of a combination of the ideals of the Camarilla and those of European Dark Ages feudalism. Some half-remembered traditions of the Camarilla endure in the Invictus today, but those that do remain are almost completely distorted by the passage of time and self-serving rationalization. If a vampire of the Camarilla found himself suddenly transported to the present, he would not recognize or understand the operation of the Invictus.

The Lancea Sanctum was nearly destroyed by the Camarilla: Fact. The Lancea Sanctum, during its early years, struggled to be recognized by the Roman Kindred. Many of the scattered faiths of the Sanctified were illegal, and practice of Theban Sorcery was punishable, for a time, by Final Death.

The Circle of the Crone existed in Rome: Myth and fact. Some remnants of the Cult of Augurs survive in the modern Circle of the Crone, but many of the ancient faiths that comprise the Circle tonight were bitter en-

emies of Roman Kindred and were not tolerated by the Camarilla. There was no official organization to speak on behalf of those faiths.

The Ventrue are clearly direct descendants of the Julii: Myth. On the surface, the Julii and the Ventrue seem to have a lot in common. Any modern vampire who claims direct lineage to the Roman clan, though, is either lying or misinformed. There are no reliable records linking the Julii directly to the Ventrue.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is broken up into numerous chapters, each dealing with a set of topics related to the setting of Rome and the way to apply it in your games. This **Introduction** is meant to provide some grounding, going over the differences between the ancient world of vampires and the modern perception of it, as well as a few ideas about what **Requiem for Rome** might mean for your chronicle.

Chapter One runs through the legendary history of ancient Rome, from its founding in 753 BCE to the collapse of the Empire in CE 476, relating mortal and Kindred tales of the era. This chapter reveals the establishment of the mortal Republic of Rome and the near-concurrent founding of the Camarilla, the transition to Empire, the glories of mortal and Kindred Roman civilization and their inevitable decline.

Players will find a complete guide to Roman vampire characters in **Chapter Two**, including information on the clans of Rome, the Camarilla and its factions, as well as Merits, Disciplines, Devotions and Skills unique to the setting.

Chapter Three describes the society of Rome and its reflection in the Necropolis of the Camarilla. This chapter also provides a map of the city and a detailed list of locations, both iconic and general, for use in a chronicle, as well as a description of a new “formal debate” system, which plays a prominent role in the night-to-night function of the Camarilla. This chapter is a “flavor” resource for players and Storytellers, meant to add dimension and background to characters and the setting.

Advice is offered to the Storyteller in **Chapter Four**, including an elaboration of the themes unique to the setting of ancient Rome and a detailed description of the major antagonists in the setting. This chapter also includes a resource for Storytellers who wish to set their stories at the fringes (or outside of) the Roman Empire, and provides a number of sample allies and antagonists for use in a chronicle.

SOURCES AND INSPIRATION

The Roman setting provides a rich backdrop for any number of stories, and has been well mined in fiction. The following is a selection of titles that might help inspire or inform chronicles for **Requiem for Rome**.

FICTION

Julius Caesar, by William Shakespeare. The picture of Roman politics and intrigue painted by this play remains one of the most inspiring and powerful contributors to the mythos of Rome, even today.

Titus Andronicus, by William Shakespeare, is a bloody, horrifying examination of the clash of cultures between the Romans and the Goths, and the personal costs of their great wars.

Sejanus: His Fall, by Ben Jonson. An exploration of corruption and decadence at the uppermost levels of Roman society. The content of this play could inform stories set in the Roman Fora, and would certainly add flavor to any story involving the Julii and the Daeva.

I, Claudius, by Robert Graves. The examination of Roman society's trade-off between liberty and security is not only a great source of inspiration for the operation of mortal and Kindred politics in the setting, but raises interesting and engaging moral questions that suit the central conflicts of **Vampire: The Requiem** perfectly.

Under the Eagle, by Simon Scarrow, offers a fantastic soldier's-eye view of Roman life and warfare. Stories involving the Legio Mortuum could take inspiration from this and other *Eagle* books by Scarrow.

FILM

Spartacus, directed by Stanley Kubrick and starring Kirk Douglas and Sir Laurence Olivier, provides an excellent interpretation of a legendary slave revolt and the martyrhood of its leader.

Satyricon, directed by Federico Fellini, for a weird, surreal exploration of the taboo-shattering debauches of Roman nobility. Stories involving the decadence of the Camarilla and the depredations they visit upon the mortals would find relevant inspiration in this film.

Gladiator, directed by Ridley Scott, starring Russell Crowe and Joaquin Phoenix. Provides several great perspectives on Rome: the soldier's, the slave's and the Emperor's.

Rome, the HBO/BBC television production. A fantastic, two-season show detailing the end of the Republic

and the beginning of Empire, including atmospheric and engaging set-pieces arranged in noble houses, on the battlefield and in the slums of Rome.

LEXICON

The following terms are part of the vernacular of the Kindred of Rome, and are commonly known by every member of the Camarilla. This lexicon includes a pronunciation guide for its uncommon vocabulary.

Agricola (ag • ree • KOH • ah): A vampire who keeps a herd. Literally, a farmer.

Appian Way: All roads lead to Rome, but this is the one most people take. Spartacus' army were crucified *en masse* along here.

Arena: Where people fight and die for the public pleasure: **gladiators**, beast-fighters and criminals publicly executed. *Arena* is Latin for "sand," and refers to the sand sprinkled on the ground before the festivities to soak up the blood. Not be confused with the **Circus**.

Arians: One of the two main Christian factions, along with the **Nicenes**. The Arians say that Christ was of the substance of God, but was not God. Constantius II, son of Constantine, is an Arian.

Aventine: One of the **seven hills** of Rome. A dangerous economically poor area of Rome.

Blues: One of the two great **Charioteering** factions.

Bread and Circuses (*Panem Circensesque*): What you need to keep the people happy in Rome. No one ever pays to go to the **Circus** or the **Arena** — the man putting on the show foots the bill. Likewise, since the days of Caesar, the **Corn Dole** has guaranteed everyone a ration of grain. Fail to supply enough grain or public entertainment, and riots ensue.

Caelian: One of the **seven hills** of Rome. One of the more affluent areas of the city.

Camarilla (CAM • ah • ree • la): The overarching government of all Roman Kindred

Capitoline: One of the **seven hills** of Rome. Highest point of the city. On one side is a steep escarpment, and at the bottom, the **Tarpeian Rock**.

Charioteering: The main popular diversion, more popular even than **Gladiators**. Fans of the different factions (**Blues** and **Greens**) can get violent and dangerous on race days.

Circus: Where the chariot races happen.

Consul: During the Republic, the highest official in Roman government. Under the Emperors, it's just an honorific title.

Corn Dole: The free grain ration due to every Roman, ever since the days of Caesar. Miss it for any length of time, and you're asking for a riot.

Cult of Augurs: The organization of Kindred seers and priests charged with performing the official religious ceremonies of the Camarilla.

Dominate: The government of the Roman Empire after Diocletian, where the Emperor is **Dominus**.

Dominus: Lord and Master — the title given to Emperors after Diocletian.

Edict of Milan: The edict of Constantine and Licinius in 313CE that made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and decreed freedom of religion for all.

Equites: The Roman middle class.

Esquiline: One of the **seven hills** of Rome.

Goths: The most visible and dangerous of the barbarian tribes who endanger the Roman Empire.

Greens: One of the two great **Charioteering** factions.

Irrumator: 1) An insulting term for a weak or useless vampire. In living slang, a male who fellates other men. 2) A Daeva who manipulates others from a position of apparent weakness.

Julii (JOO • lee • eye): The founding clan of the Camarilla.

Jumentum: A derogatory term for a Gangrel. Literally, a beast of burden.

Lancea et Sanctum (LAN • kay • uh • et • SANK • toom): A rebellious assembly of illegal and oppressed faiths threatening the prominence of the Cult of Augurs.

Legio Mortuum (LEE • Gee • oh • MOR • toom): The military wing of the Camarilla, responsible for protecting the Kindred of Rome from threats both domestic and foreign.

Leno: A vampire who grooms mortal vessels to conform to the tastes of Kindred. In living slang, a pimp.

Meretrix: A derogatory term for the Daeva. In living slang, a prostitute.

Necropolis (neh • CROP • oh • liss): The network of underground tunnels and chambers that conceal the majority of Camarilla gatherings and havens.

Nemesis (neh • MEH • sis): The undying, enemies of the Camarilla. Applies both to the Striges and their vampire servants. See "Strix."

Nicenes: One of the two main Christian factions, along with the **Arians**. The Nicenes believe that Jesus Christ was both wholly God and wholly human.

Ovation: Like a **Triumph**, but not as good, because the victorious general has to walk.

Palatine: One of the **seven hills** of Rome. The Imperial residence is here.

Patrician: The Roman nobility.

Princeps: First Citizen — the title given to the Emperor before Diocletian.

Principate: The government of the Roman Empire after Augustus and before Diocletian, where the Emperor is **Princeps**.

Propinquus (pro • PIN • quous): A vampire of Rome, Embraced from native Roman stock. Plural is "Propinqui."

Quirinal: One of the **seven hills** of Rome.

Senex (Sehn • ECKS): The legislative, ruling wing of the Camarilla, acting as proxy for Aulus Julius Senex, the elder founder of Necropolis.

Seven Hills: The hills on which Romulus and Remus built the original city of Rome: the **Aventine**, **Caelian**, **Capitoline**, **Palatine**, **Esquiline**, **Quirinal** and **Viminal**.

Strix (STRICKS): A fleshless, horrifying creature believed to be an ancestor of the Julii. See also: Nemesis. Plural is "Striges."

Suburra: The notorious slum district of Rome, situated between the **Viminal** and **Capitoline**.

Tali: A Roman dice game, often gambled on, and popular with everyone, rich and poor.

Tarpeian Rock: The steep rocky cliff on the south side of the Capitoline Hill. In ancient times, the Romans used to throw traitors off the top of it. In a hidden cave at its base lies the Camarilla.

Toga: The traditional adult dress of a Roman man, a robe made of a single piece of cloth. Its color denotes status; the more purple in the toga, the more important you are. Only the Emperor is permitted a wholly purple toga.

Traditores (TRAD • ee • toh • rez): The only legal reference to an unnamed clan, destroyed and erased from history by the Camarilla.

Triumph: A lavish triumphal procession, where a victorious general rides on a chariot at the head of his army, surrounded by a parade of wealth and prisoners. After Augustus, only the Emperor can celebrate a triumph.

Umbra: A derogatory term for the Mekhet. In living slang, an unwanted guest. Literally, a shadow.

Veneficia (VEN • eh • fi • kee • ah): The sacred, blood-fueled rituals of the Cult of Augurs.

Vermes: A derogatory term for the Nosferatu, adopted by the clan itself. Literally, "worms."

Viminal: One of the **seven hills** of Rome.



SPQR

CHAPTER I: AB URBA CONDITA (THE HISTORY OF ROME)

DO WHAT YOU
WILL WITH YOUR
DAYS. I WILL
REWRITE THE
FACTS OF YOUR
TIME ON EARTH A
HUNDRED TIMES
OVER THE NEXT
THOUSAND YEARS.

— SEVERUS
THE SHADOW
OF THRACE

IT MAKES YOU WANT TO LAUGH AT THE STUPIDITY OF
THE PEOPLE WHO THINK THAT THE TYRANNY OF THE PRESENT CAN ERASE
THE MEMORY OF THE GENERATION TO COME.

— TAKITUS, ANNALS IV. IIIV

This is Rome: the fount of all glory and pride, the shining gem in the vast diadem of Empire. This is Rome: the most corrupt of all cities, the heart of all hypocrisy. This is Rome: all that is good about humankind, and all that is evil walks these pungent streets. But Rome's glories are fading. This city is the heart and womb, but not the seat of Empire, and the old rituals and the old gods have been displaced by a new faith that does not recognize the heritage of Romulus and Augustus.

Know that this decade will see the death of the bloodline of Constantine, last great Emperor of Rome, and the beginning of the long fall. The *chi-rho* of the Christians has replaced the eagle as the standard of Rome. The Catholic and Arian churches fight over who will decide the future course of the history of the West, pushing the old religions to one side as an irrelevance. Julian, last champion of pagan Rome, will try to restore the Empire's ancient rites and fight back against the rule of the Christians. He will fail, and with his failure, the old ways will begin to fade and crack and crumble like a painted fresco left in the open wind.

By the time this decade is over, 11 centuries will have gone by since Romulus crushed his brother's head with a shovel and made this city's name his own. The Propinqui, the Romans' dead "Kindred," like to believe that they walked in the nights of antiquity as the living Romans walked through the days, sharing in the nights of Rome's imperial destiny ever since that day.

The Propinqui are Rome's sin. They are *nefasti*, the inauspicious ones, walking, hungry signs of Rome's shame. They are the secret sins that exist in the dark of Rome's glorious day.

The time came when, by day, Brutus the Liberator threw down the last of the Tarquins, and founded a republic, and when the Republic grew old, Caesar ended it. Caesar died, but through his death he laid the foundations for Empire. The Senate dwindled in authority, but its dark complement, the Camarilla, the Small Senate of the Propinqui, waxed and grew in influence, becoming the final authority under which the Kindred existed, the ultimate rule by which Kindred existence was measured.

For two centuries, the Empire endured. Some Emperors were competent and imaginative; some were corrupt or inept. Some deserved lasting infamy; others were truly great. Caligula, Nero, Vitellius and Domitian ruled Rome, but so did Vespasian, Trajan, Antoninus and Marcus. The Camarilla's vampires continued the way they had for centuries, in times of war and peace and civil strife alike.

A third century of monarchy brought collapse. A succession of barbarian invasions, usurpations, civil wars and costly foreign conflicts brought the Roman Empire close to ruin. Plagues, wars and natural disasters cut down swathes of the population. The great public works that had made the Empire the envy of the world fell to ruin. Sewers clogged up. Baths fell derelict. Aqueducts filled with silt. Armies grew smaller. Lines of communication snapped, never to be repaired. The stakes became greater and smaller at the same time, and a succession of common soldiers took on the mantle of Emperor, only to die in battle or to fall victim to murderous conspiracies. And the Propinqui suffered, too. Some vampires survived only through warping their blood to draw their sustenance from the victims of the endless run of plagues. Others became as the carrion crow, following the constantly moving armies of the day, preying on the wounded and dying on a hundred fields of battle.

When Diocletian came to power and brought order to chaos, the Roman Empire was barely recognizable. But the Camarilla continued. The Propinqui endured. The Eternal City may not be the capital of the Empire anymore, but Rome is the heart, and every Roman, from Anatolia to Eboracum, knows it. The same is true of the Propinqui.

But in this 11th century since the foundation of Rome, things have changed in a way no one could ever have imagined. A religion that denies the ancestral gods of Rome has become ascendant, a sect outlawed since Nero and nearly extinguished under Decius and Diocletian became, under the tutelage of the victorious Constantine, the religion of the state. It seems that they take their revenge on their former persecutors in a thou-

HISTORY ISN'T IMPORTANT

Actually, history is really important, but within the context of a game, telling a story is *more* important. Serious students of ancient history might think we're taking an uncritical approach to ancient narratives, apparently taking the scurrilous lies and fanciful inventions of writers who should have known better as gospel. And such students'd be right. We are. No one is going to pass an Ancient History exam using this stuff as source material. And we think that's OK, because it's about telling exciting stories, not getting a degree in Classics. The Romans understood this. In the ancient world, history wasn't about re-telling what happened. It was about presenting things that might have happened, and things that *should* have happened. History had to be *true*, but it didn't have to be factual. To a Roman, "truth" went beyond "facts." It was about *universal* truths, moral truths. Besides, a lot of Roman history was made up. In 390 BCE, Gaulish tribesmen invaded and sacked Rome. They burnt Rome's hall of records. Every one of the annals of Rome up to that point was gone. Historians and storytellers reconstructed what they could find from hearsay and myth, but in the end, the sources they used weren't always all that honest.

Modern historians are fairly sure that Augustus *didn't* spend one day a year dressed as a beggar, are certain that Elagabalus *didn't* smother his dinner guests to death with rose petals, that there was no such person as Celsus. We think that Julian was probably really killed by a lucky shot from a Saracen auxiliary who didn't make it back to his own lines. It doesn't matter.

The story — and the truths it held — mattered to the Romans more than the facts, and as far as a Storytelling game goes, if that approach is good enough for the Romans, it's good enough for us.

sand different ways, and although so many of the people of Rome still cling to the old gods of the land and the Empire, it seems that the old ways will soon die. Increasingly, the pagans look to history. Through understanding where they have come from, they understand who they are and where they are going. They take the example of history, the good and the bad. Unable to truly act with originality, they use the great and terrible Romans of the past as exemplars of virtue and vice. They use these tales of war and liberation and sin and death as models for their own nightly tragedies and comedies. To the Kindred, the history of Rome exists in an eternal unbroken present. The past is forever now.

But a growing number of the Propinqui look to the God of the Christians and the certainties of the Lancea et Sanctum, and when Julian falls, they see it as a sign that the pagan Camarilla is finished. The Camarilla falls, splintering into small, fractious covenants.

The Kindred will not see the Camarilla's like again.



THE KINGS AND THE REPUBLIC

BCE

753:

Rome founded by Romulus.

717:

Disappearance of Romulus; Numa Pompilius created King.

717–510:

Six Kings of Rome: Numa, Tullius Hostilius, Ancus Marcius, Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius and Tarquin the Proud.

510:

The rape of Lucretia. Brutus leads a revolution. The Republic is founded.

510:

Camarilla founded.

449:

The Laws of Rome are codified in the Twelve Tables.

390:

Gauls sack Rome. The dictator Camillus saves the city.

c.300:

Disappearance of Julius Senex.

264–241:

First Punic War: Rome clashes with Carthage over Sicily.

218–202:

Second Punic War: Hannibal invades Italy. He is finally defeated by Scipio Africanus and Fabius Maximus.

LIB. I: SUCKLED BY THE WOLF

This is the tale of Romulus and Remus, whose destiny is declared before they are even born. A prophet tells how the sons of Rhea Silvia will overthrow a tyrant king and found a new nation.

Amulius usurps the throne from his brother Numitor, king of the Latins. He imprisons his virgin niece. Still, she becomes pregnant; the god Mars steals in at night and rapes her.

Rhea Silvia bears twin sons. The king takes them away, sends a man to drown them in the Tiber. Fate dictates that he cannot bring himself to do it. He leaves them in the forest to die, instead.

They do not die. A she-wolf, whose cubs have fallen to a hunter's arrows, finds the children and raises them as if they were wolf cubs.

A farmer, hunting in the forest, sees the she-wolf suckling the two children. The wolf stands back placidly as he takes the boys up in his arms, and carries them back to his farm. He raises them as his own, and calls them Romulus and Remus. They grow up strong. They are more than men, and they become famous. The farmer guesses their identity. When the twins come of age, he tells them their true heritage.

They lead a revolt; they kill the tyrant Amulius. And on seven Latin hills, they set about founding a city. But they disagree as to where it should be. The twins seek the will of the gods in auguries.

Remus watches the skies, and his sign is this: six vultures, sacred to Mars. But come Romulus's term, he sees 12. The people side with Romulus. Jealousy festers. Remus taunts Romulus. Remus obstructs the work in petty ways: a hidden spade, a re-filled trench. Finally, he stands by the foundation of Romulus's new city walls, a foundation that Romulus has dug himself, and leaps, laughing, across them. It is an inauspicious sign; he invites outsiders to breach the walls. Romulus, enraged, strikes his brother down with a single blow.

The stories of the living say that Romulus buries his brother. But another tradition speaks of the body left for Mars's vultures to consume, testament to Romulus's fury.

FRAGMENTS: FROM *DE MORTUO REMO*

By the 21st century, only a few fragments will survive from Macellarius Corbulo's epyllion *De Mortuo Remo*



NONE DARE DEFY THE ELDER TWIN;
AND SEE, THE YOUNGER LIES,
SKULL CRACKED OPEN,
HIS FACE HALF-DESTROYED,
HIS LIFEBLOOD SPILLED IN A SOAKING STAIN
HALF-WITHIN AND HALF-WITHOUT THESE
YET-TO-BE-BUILT WALLS.
NO BRUTE BEAST COMES TO FEED ON REMUS.
THE MOON RISES, AND HE STIRS A LITTLE,
DYING UNKNOWN
AND NOT YET WITHOUT BREATH,
HE CANNOT CRY OUT;
ALL FOR ILL-FATED REMUS IS TO OPEN
ONE EYE AND SEE THE MOON,
AND HE SIGHS, FOR AN INAUSPICIOUS
SHADOW DESCENDS.
IT HAS THE SHAPE OF AN OWL, A MAN'S VOICE.
"SON OF MARS, I HAVE COME TO
BARGAIN," IT SAYS,
"FOR THE ISSUE OF ROMULUS ARE
FATED TO RULE OVER ALL
AND TO ENDURE FOR A THOUSAND
YEARS, THIS I KNOW.
I OFFER YOUR LINE EQUAL
POSTERITY, AND MORE,
IF ONLY YOU WILL AGREE TO PAY
DUE RESPECT TO
MY OWN FAMILY, WHEN THE
RIGHT TIME COMES."
REMUS BLINKS ASSENT, AND THE OWL SEEMS TO
GROW AND OBSCURE THE SKULL-PALE MOON.
HE RISES TO HIS FEET. COME SUNRISE,
NONE REMARK ON
THE ABSENT REMAINS, AND GREAT-HEARTED
ROMULUS'S SLEEP IS
VEXED THAT NIGHT WITH VISIONS OF THE
INAUSPICIOUS TWIN.

149-146:

Third Punic War: Carthage is finally destroyed, although it later becomes the site of a Roman colony.

146:

Greece becomes a Roman province.

133:

Tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus.

123-121:

Tribunate of Gaius Gracchus.

112-105:

Jugurthine War.

109-101:

Barbarian invasion of Italy; Marius manages to get himself elected Consul five times to deal with it.

91-88:

Social War: Italians revolt against Roman rule. They are defeated by the Romans.

88-87:

The First Civil War begins, between Marius and Sulla.

87-65:

Mithridatic Wars, fought against Mithridates IV, king of Pontus.

84-81:

Conclusion of the First Civil War; Sulla is victorious.

81-79:

Dictatorship of Sulla.

78-72:

War against Sertorius in Spain.

(The Death of Remus). Macellarius wrote it in the reign of Diocletian. A mortal monk will stumble across the work and copy the parts he deems worth saving into a Byzantine epitome in 500 years' time.

What follows is well-known to the Propinqui now, but will vanish from memory over the course of centuries.

Note that the Latin word for "owl" and "vampire" is the same: *strix*. As far as the fragments explain, the Strix made a deal with a dying Remus, and the result was that his "descendants" became the Propinqui, the Kindred. In this story, which is widely told in this age of Constantius and Julian but not necessarily widely believed, Remus was the first of the Kindred, the first of the vampires of Rome. The Egyptians and the Cappadocians and the Gauls may have their own vampires, but they are not Kindred, not born of the inauspicious arrangement between Remus and the Strix.

RAPE AND CORRUPTION

This new-built Rome was won by men and built by men, and men flock from far away, exiles, criminals, freedmen and men looking for a new life apart from their own tribes. But to survive, the city needs children. Without women, it is impossible. The local tribes respect Romulus, but they fear and mistrust him. They call him tyrannicide; they also call him fratricide.

Romulus asks for wives from his neighbors. They politely refuse. Romulus conceives a plan: the Romans will hold sacred games, and they will invite men and women from the nearby Sabine tribes.

During the height of the games, Romulus gives the signal. The Roman men descend upon the Sabine women, each taking his own, each doing with her as he wishes.

The games end. The tribes go to war, but the violence ends when the Romans agree to pay reparations to the Sabines for their daughters and sisters. The Romans and the Sabines intermarry. The Sabine men have little choice. The Sabine women have even less.

This is the way the Romans deal with outsiders. The Romans take what they want, and only then do they observe the customs of civilized society. It has always been this way. It always will be, until the day Rome falls to the barbarian.

FRAGMENTS: REMUS AND JULIUS

As recorded in the Res Gestae Juli Senis by Horatius Calvus, Propinquus, I. 3:

Dead Remus watched the fruits of Romulus's theft. By night, Remus walked the streets, passing window after window, seeing in each as if a tableau of outrage. He saw the beginnings of Rome that night, in theft and vice.

It was on this night that the Inauspicious Twin found Aulus Julius, a distant kinsman of Romulus. Julius was young, only having gained his toga of manhood three summers before. Although by no means unskilled or slow of action, Julius had failed to steal himself a wife that night. Remus saw that Julius was noble and bitter, and told him that he would persevere forever. At first Julius believed himself to have been visited by a god.

Remus took Julius to a certain cave. A hidden entrance to this, in these days long since blocked with stone, lay at the base of the Tarpeian Rock; it led to the cave in which the Propinqui meet to this day.

Aulus only discovered how Remus had deceived him after he had died, and like the Twin, had failed to meet with Orcus. Julius having complained to the Twin that he had been made a fool, Remus played another dark trick on him; he set Julius to dig his way to the realm of Dis, telling him that he could yet find his way if that was his wish. Julius did not believe Remus, but he had become scared of him, for Remus had hinted that he himself had masters.

As told in the Annales Celati Propinquorum by Cornelianus Alba, Propinquus, II. 1:

Others followed, and Kindred families sprang from Remus's bloodline, and Julius's. Rome grew, and the first of the Kindred dug themselves a home, burrowing like Hecate's mouse. We made a city of our own. We used the burial vaults of the Etruscans, a place for the dead, a home for future ancestors to lie. The Propinqui took part in the building. A second city, parallel to the one above, grew around the Catacombs. This became the place to where the Kindred retreated, and where they would meet the atheist Galileans, who would retreat when the Emperors of Rome righteously pursued them.

This City of the Dead, this Necropolis as the Greeks call it, survives into this dominate of Constantine's sons, and will no doubt endure long past the fall of the City Above. Now the cramped, winding passages reflect the narrow streets of the living city; its intrigues are cramped and labyrinthine, a dark reflection of the court above. In the time of Romulus, Necropolis consisted of the burial vaults of the Etruscans who buried their dead, small vaults in which they interred jars of ashes from cremated ancestors.

ROME UNDER THE FOUNDER

Romulus is a great founder. But he is too cruel, too impulsive to be a good leader. The people of Rome fear him; they do not love him.

This, then, is Rome at its birth: by day, our city is open and vibrant, full of purpose. The walls have taken years to build already, and will take years more. Three tribes become the Romans, three clans: the Latins, the Sabines, the Etruscans. Most of the Romans have built their homes from wood and plaster. There aren't enough Romans for orders and classes to have developed beyond those few noble-born families who have always walked among the poor. Romulus himself walks on foot among the people, and takes his part in the building of his land, even while casting edicts and contriving the deaths of those who offend him.

This natal Rome is a hard place. Every open space is cultivated for food or used by the young men to train for the wars that will come. The neighboring tribes are already jealous of Rome's ascendant wealth, and have begun to gather forces and allies for four centuries of war.

There is no time here for affection or leisure; the Romans disdain such things. Captive wives bring up children for whom they can feel no love; fathers teach their sons self-reliance and martial skill.

At night, the few, still few, who would think of themselves as Propinqui stalk through silent dirt-tracks, gaining entry to their ancestral homes that they might feed on their mortal families, and committing terrible sins.

This is a city where hands are dirty and hearts are hard. This is no place for opulence, no place for the vice that will one day be synonymous with Rome. Romulus encourages this. He makes examples of those who would rest or show weakness. Families leave sickly children out in the wilderness to die, and cowards, weaklings and the idle fare little better.

Romulus will have no tomb. One story will tell that he is with the people on the Campus Martius when a fog comes down from the heavens and snatches him from mortal sight. The other version is that a group of Roman nobles

THE TROJAN REMNANT

A popular legend had it that original ancestor of Romulus and Remus was not Italian, but was in fact Trojan. Prince Aeneas, a fugitive from the Greek sack of Troy, had escaped; he fled across the Mediterranean. He stopped for a time at Carthage, and embarked on a doomed love affair with Queen Dido. She committed suicide, and her people declared themselves eternal enemies of the Trojan prince's descendants.

Eventually, Aeneas and his men found themselves in Italy. They fought the people, made peace and settled, intermarrying with the Latin peoples. Three hundred years or more passed. Romulus and Remus were born.

By time of which we write, many pagans and few Christians believe this story. The Propinqui who tell this tale use it as another rationale for their origin. The Trojans were of the line of gods, the Propinqui say. Only one with the ancient blood of Troy could have been of sufficient interest to the dark being with whom he bargained.

73-71:

Spartacus's slave revolt.

63:

The conspiracy of Catiline.

60:

First Triumvirate: Caesar, Pompey, Crassus.

60-51:

Caesar in Gaul.

54:

Crassus defeated by Parthians at the Battle of Carrhae.

53:

Battle between collegia ends with the death of Clodius and conflagration at the Senate House. Martial law declared.

49-45:

Civil War: Caesar is victorious over the senatorial forces, led by Pompey. The cowed Senate give Caesar the title Dictator in Perpetuity.

44:

Privileges of Caesar, February 3rd.

44:

Caesar assassinated, March 15th.

43:

Second Triumvirate: Antony, Octavian, Lepidus.

43-42:

Caesar's assassins are defeated in battle at Phillipi by Antony and Octavian.

took advantage of the sudden fog to be rid of the brutal king. They rush him and cut him to pieces, each taking a piece away, hidden under their cloaks.

Either way, the people of Rome will venerate the vanished Romulus: he will be a god, and they will call him Quirinus. Six other kings will follow him, and some will be great and good and others will be bad. After a while, the bad kings will obscure the memory of the good.

TYRANNY AND LIBERATION

So Rome grows. Kings come and go, and our city comes under the sway of the three Etruscan kings, the Tarquins. The last King is Tarquin the Proud, and this is how he falls.

It happens that one night, a group of rich young men sit drinking. They take to talking about their wives. Each man claims his wife is perfect, a model of virtue. Half-drunk, they decide to settle the argument by seeing for themselves. They visit each man's home in turn.

One man's wife is hosting a drinking party, without her husband's knowledge. One is with a lover. One is missing. Only Lucretia, the wife of Collatinus, is sitting at home, spinning wool, managing the household; behaving as the Romans expect their wives to behave.

Sextus Tarquin is the son of the king. He sees the beauty and purity of Lucretia this night and desires her for his own.

He comes to her later, alone, and confesses that he is in love with her. She refuses him. He beats her and rapes her.

Lucretia's husband comes home, and see, he has brought Lucretia's kinsman, Brutus. Collatinus calls out for his wife, and she comes to him and her relative, clothes torn, bruised face streaked with blood and tears. She tells them what Sextus has done, and she cries for revenge. She screams: *avenge me*. She tears at her hair and rips her clothes and entreates them in rage and anguish to destroy Sextus Tarquin and his family. In front of husband and kinsman, she stabs herself in the heart. She bleeds to death. The two men stand over her and allow no slave to bring a doctor until the marble floor is flooded with the woman's lifeblood.

They think Brutus is a dimwit, a slow-thinking, lazy young man, but there is iron in Brutus's back, and fire in his voice. He starts a revolution that day. He calls the Romans to overthrow their oppressors, and the violated corpse of another man's wife is his reason, his standard.

Brutus sets Rome alight.

FRAGMENTS: THE FALL OF THE UNNAMED CLAN

As written in the Res Gestae Juli Senis by Horatius Calvus, Propinquus, I. 26:

In the 100th year since the vanishing of Remus, Aulus Julius took it upon himself to rid himself of twin scourges: the cruel Striges and the Blood Clan whom I must not name, whom Julius proved to have adopted the mantle of the Striges' servants and voices. The Striges visited themselves upon their Roman descendants, making horrifying demands and claiming payment in heart's blood.

Julius came before the Kindred and said that they wanted more. Now, he said, they asked not only for the ancient tithe of blood and for the constant excavation of new tunnels under the Capitoline, but for a tithe of mortal relatives from the noble families, whose corpses the Striges were desecrating, dwelling therein and using them to perform acts of unholy vice that I must not name.

For the Propinqui, the indignities heaped upon them had proven too much to bear. It was enough to have shamed their mortal families by failing to die; to be made to betray them and leave their bodies to be desecrated and left unburned was an outrage beyond measure.

From the Annales Celati Propinquorum by Cornelianus Alba Propinquus, II. 1:

The Kindred held private debates, in those tunnels. Aulus Julius stood and claimed that there was no need for the Kindred to observe any compact, even one made by his own sire, when the cost was so dear. The Propinqui of the gens Julii stood by him. The eldest representative of the Kindred clan whom I must not name said that Remus had made a compact and that it must be observed, no matter the consequence.

Aulus Julius spoke most firmly in response. "To accept this indignity is slavish and weak. Are we not Roman? Are we not Kindred? And what are they? What are they to make these demands? What are *you* to bow your head before them?"

Recorded in the Acta Dite Patro Obiecti:

Aulus Julius threw reproaches and accusations at the errant family. He claimed that they were spared the demands of the Striges, and that they served them in return. He accused them of witchcraft, abominable to living and dead alike, learned from the foul outsiders.

The words were spoken with eloquence and power. The assembled Propinqui raised a cry of seething rage and fell upon those he claimed had betrayed them.

From The History of the Camarilla by Eutherus Secundus, Propinquus, I. 62:

On the night that the revolution began in the city above, Aulus Julius led five Kindred and destroyed the havens of the traitor clan with fire. They impaled the oldest of the Striges' servants on a stake cut that night from one bough of the sacred oak. The rest of the traitor clan followed.

By the end of that night, Julius had reduced every one of the traitors to dust, but not one of the Propinqui drank even the tiniest drop of blood from any. They collected that dust and scattered it from the peak of the Tarpeian Rock just before sunrise, intoning dire curses over any who would seek to treat with the Striges ever again.

As for the clan that served the Striges, its name was stricken from every record the Propinqui ever kept, and to speak the name was made a crime punishable by Final Death. Eventually, the Kindred who knew their name sank into torpor, or met their Final Deaths, or forgot, for the Fog of Ages obscured it. As far as we in the Camarilla know, no one walking today, alive or dead, knows what they were called. If they are mentioned at all, they are the Traditores, for they betrayed living and dead alike.

LIB. II: REPUBLICAN GLORIES

And the Republic comes to birth: a government for our city intended to survive on the merit of its officials. Centuries pass. Rome has a Senate now, and its members are the best of Rome's nobility.

Each year, the senators elect officials, and their term of office is for one year only. The Quaestors manage the treasury. The Aediles maintain the fabric of Rome's buildings. The Praetors administer justice and command small armies. The Censors keep the census and govern the moral standing of the people. Two Consuls hold final authority for the affairs of Rome, each with the power to veto anything the other does, with the hope that one man could not ever seize power again. A Consul must have served as Praetor, and a Praetor must have first served a term as a Quaestor. Only Consuls and Praetors can command Roman armies; after they serve their terms of office, they have the right to govern one of Rome's growing number of provinces. In an emergency, the Senate can suspend their business and elect a Dictator, who will lead our city through the darkest times and lay down his power when he is done.

Later, civil unrest leads the Senate to allow for the election of Tribunes of the People, who are born of common lineage and who will have power to veto any law passed by the Senate and to pass laws through votes taken at vast assemblies of the plebs, the commoners of the city. It will be the closest the Romans ever come to democracy, and for a time, it works, through times of foreign invasion, civil strife and imperial expansion.

Gauls sack the city, and the Dictator Camillus saves it, and the Republic endures.

The mercenary-king Pyrrhus of Epirus defeats Rome on the field, but loses so many of his men that he loses the war. The Republic endures. Rome takes cities and nations under its wing as puppet-states, and they become so numer-

33-31:

Civil war: Octavian versus Antony and Cleopatra.

27:

The Senate gives Octavian the name Augustus. He is now the first Emperor of Rome.



THE PRINCIPATE

CE

14:

Death of Augustus.

14-37:

Reign of Tiberius.

c. 27:

Death of Christ.

37-41:

Reign of Gaius, called Caligula.

41-54:

Reign of Claudius.

43:

Conquest of Britain.

54-68:

Reign of Nero.

c. 57:

Vision of Longinus.

60:

Rebellion of Boudicca in Britain.

64:

Great Fire of Rome. First persecution of Christians.

64:

Near-destruction of the Camarilla in Rome during the Great Fire and its aftermath.



ous that the city's resources creak under the strain, but still the Republic endures.

FRAGMENTS: THE CAMARILLA FOUNDED

From the Res Gestae Juli Senis of Horatius Calvus, Propinquus, II. 5:

Aulus Julius, although he wore the semblance of a youth, was given the name Senex by the Propinqui as a mark of respect for his seniority in age and wisdom. Senex instituted a Senate house of his own in that first cave at the base of the Tarpeian Rock. He named it Camarilla, for it was, he said, a Small Chamber to complement the great hall of the Senate House.

From The History of the Camarilla by Eutherius Secundus, Propinquus, I. 97:

He claimed no official role of his own, but took pride of place in the Small Chamber, and woe to the member of the Ala Senecta who dared to pass any law without

Senex's approval. After a while, the Ala Senecta and the Old Man became, for the dead, the same word, and to this day, the Council that rules in Senex's place are called Senex.

Julius Senex and the magistracies he created for our society of the dead demand far less of the Propinqui than the traitor clan and the Striges had ever done. In the center of Necropolis, Julius Senex declared a region he called Elysium, as a sardonic nod to the peaceful afterlife denied us. The tradition remains. In Elysium, no violence is tolerated.

ON JULIUS SENEX

Elysium is not only a safe ground. It is the Forum Propinquorum, where the vampires of Rome meet and decide how they will govern themselves and, if they deem it necessary, influence the society of the living. Julius Senex approved of the Kindred desire to influence the ways of the living and encouraged the Propinqui to bend the society of Rome to do their bidding. He understood the need of the vampire to strive for power, but knew

also that it was a way for the Kindred to remain close to the living. To the Roman Kindred, vampires are *nefasti*. They do not share the right of the living to inherit the earth.

The people of Rome live as long as the Empire endures by omens and auguries. They fear werewolves and witches. They do no business on inauspicious days. They fear to linger too long at a crossroads and flee from the screech of the owl. Every Roman family with a mind for pagan tradition has its Lares and Penates, hereditary spirits and beneficent ancestors who guide the conduct of the good Roman and watch over him from the afterlife. And every family has its Lemures and Manes, the ancestors who didn't get to the right afterlife, the malevolent, unfortunate and inauspicious ones who bring disaster if the right propitiation was not made. These are the Propinqui. They are the dead. They are hungry shades. They are ghosts bearing flesh.

Senex knows that for all the supernatural power of the Kindred, they will always be less than the living, because the Kindred are not alive, and because they have not died with true honor, and they have been denied the afterlife. He works carefully to craft an institution that will endure, long after he has gone. Senex understands what it is to be a monster. He is a fine example of a fiend himself.

He feeds on the blood of children and grown men. He casually destroys those who disagree with him. He keeps close to the human clan from which he has come. To the Julii, who will one day bring forth Caesar, he is both Lar and Manes. Senex takes a secret hand in guiding the ambitions of this most ambitious and debauched of noble families.

To the Julian patriarchs who know about him, he is the family devil, the guiltiest secret in a line that already has more than its share of hidden sins. They are his slaves. He owns their blood; his chains extend to their minds. As time grows on, the Julians gain a reputation for immorality, for strangeness.

The ancient Manes manipulates them, working the rods like the puppet master in the Forum. He dispenses advice on all subjects, from finance to marriage; his relatives have no choice but to take it, and prosper through it. He says a word, he waves a hand. They forget his face until the next time he comes; they remember his advice. He slakes his passions on Julian sons and daughters, none of whom will ever remember more than a nightmare on waking — if they awaken.

There is a Julian *paterfamilias* who tries to break free of the family curse. He falls ill and dies without anyone knowing why. He keeps trying to tell his family something as they wait beside his deathbed, but he goes blank, forgets his words, as if some hole has been gnawed in his mind. He dies, and his eldest surviving son discovers exactly what he wanted to say one month later, when the old Family God returns.

A great-grandson of that rebellious Julian finds his beloved children eaten by feral dogs one morning; the slave who, blank-eyed, let the animals in, has fallen on a kitchen-knife.

This man's grandson tells the Family God that he will not prostitute his children to a dead senator whom Senex wishes to please. The grandson awakens in his bed beside his virgin daughter, a child but no longer a virgin. He does not remember the act. The family leaves the child in the street to die.

69:

Year of the Four Emperors: Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian.

70:

Siege of Jerusalem.

69–79:

Reign of Vespasian.

79:

Mt. Vesuvius erupts on 24th August, destroying the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

79–81:

Reign of Titus. Completion of the Flavian Amphitheater (a.k.a. the "Colosseum").

81–96:

Reign of Domitian.

96–98:

Reign of Nerva.

98–117:

Reign of Trajan.

101–106:

Trajan conquers Dacia.

117–138:

Reign of Hadrian.

122:

Hadrian builds a colossal wall across the width of northern Britain.

136:

Hadrian adopts Lucius Aelius as his deputy and successor. Hadrian keeps the title Augustus, and gives Aelius the title Caesar. Future Emperors will follow this system. Aelius dies six months before Hadrian, and Hadrian adopts Antoninus in Aelius's place.

Sometimes, Senex torments them because he is angry. Sometimes he plays with them out of whimsy. If a Julian feeds his dinner guests a stew made from the flesh of slave-children, it amuses Senex. It pleases him. He takes delight in playing with memories and desires, driving them to suicide and madness. Julius Senex plays with his human kin, and the Propinqui follow his lead, throughout their history.

Sometimes the family serves his purposes. That same Julian hosts feed his guests, on three different nights, a most delicious blood sausage imbued with his own Vitae; and two future Consuls are his.

Senex demonstrates the things he can do to them, torments them any way he wishes, even as he shows them how to advance themselves among the society of the living. He loves them. He hates them. He wants the best of them. But one night, he simply stops visiting his relatives and does not return.

More than 300 years after his incomplete death, Julius Senex falls into torpor. The Propinqui, who still describe the leaders of the Camarilla as “the old man” in his honor, sometimes whisper that there is a solitary *columbarium* somewhere deep in Necropolis where he lies and whence he might be awakened. Some of the elders of the Camarilla might even know where that is. They never tell if they do. Most of the Propinqui think that it is for the best.

The Camarilla survives without him for more than seven centuries, and the groundwork he laid ensures that the Camarilla remains strong. Only when the Christians seize the Empire does the Camarilla begin to weaken.

DELEND A EST CARTHAGO

Hypocrites: this is the charge laid against the Romans by all who know the fate of grand Carthage, doomed Carthage. This is the charge, but few press it for fear of meeting the same fate.

The Carthaginians, the Poenici, have gathered an empire now as grand as Rome, and have learned pride to match. This is enough, for it is inevitable that two expanding powers in the same arena will clash. And clash they do, over the question of who controls the island of Sicily. But Sicily and Spain are just a rationale. This First “Punic War” happens simply because two nations get in the way of each other. The Romans win, by land and sea, and they make the Carthaginians suffer. The Romans humiliate the conquered.

The Carthaginians cannot see the end of the first war as final. There is a highborn child who sees his people lose control of the Mediterranean; his name is Hannibal, son of Hamilcar, a general who lost the first war. When he comes of age, he raises an army, screaming for vengeance against the Romans. He invades Spain.

He brings with him a host of war-elephants; the Romans fear nothing so much on the battlefield. Hannibal annihilates three Roman armies, killing hundreds of thousands of men. Sicily and Gaul declare for Hannibal.

The fighting continues for years. Eventually, two Roman generals of unusual talent and imagination, Fabius Maximus and Cornelius Scipio, drive Hannibal back to Carthage and make peace. Scipio becomes a great hero of Rome. They call him Africanus. Hannibal returns to his own people, but the nobles of Carthage grow tired of his honesty and his declarations against corruption, and they drive him into exile.

A JUSTIFICATION

YES, YOU BOTH GO IN,
FOR I SHALL NOW SUMMON
A MEETING OF THE SENATE IN
MY MIND, TO DELIBERATE ON
MATTERS OF FINANCE, AGAINST
WHOM WAR MAY BEST BE
DECLARED, SO THAT I CAN GET
SOME MONEY THENCE.

— PLAUTUS, *EPIDICUS*

The Romans break the treaty. Barely 50 years after Scipio Africanus finally defeated Hannibal, Carthage falls upon hard times. An invasion from nearby Numidia, a kingdom allied with Rome forces the Carthaginians to raise an army. The Romans begin to worry. In the Senate, the calls for war begin. Chief among those baying for Punic blood is Marcus Cato the Censor, Cato the arbiter of morality, Cato the miser. Such is his fear and hatred of the Carthaginians that at the end of every speech he gives in the Senate, he adds the same words: *and also, I believe that Carthage must be destroyed.* And the Romans destroy Carthage.

Scipio Aemilianus, heir of Africanus, burns the city to ashes. His men massacre the Carthaginians or take them as slaves. And when the fires have stopped, the Romans plow up the earth and sow the furrows with salt so that nothing will ever grow there again.

And the other nations of the Mediterranean see this, and wonder which of them might be next.

SWEET HELLENIC SINS

And now the people of our city enter an age of prosperity. The Romans know that the world is theirs for the taking, if only they have the courage and skill to seize it.

They do. The tribes of Italy fall to the Romans now, and the people of Spain. The Romans conquer Greece, trampling the lion-standards of once-mighty Macedon beneath their sandaled feet, putting Athens, Sparta and Corinth to the torch and plundering their ancient treasures. A new class arises in the city, the *equites*, the knights, and they profit greatly from the Empire's wealth. Although not senators born, they are the proof of the adage: money is power.

Wealth brings a flood of slaves from Africa, Asia and especially Greece into Rome. The Greeks bring with them the arts: history, poetry and song. A senatorial family maintains its standing in society through the purchase of an educated *paidagogos*, to teach the children classical culture. The Romans become known for the parties they throw. They roast whole pigs and stuff them with fruit and blood sausages. The Romans pickle dormice. They serve up raw fish alive, allowing them to die at the table. Most prized of all, the Romans learn the secret of *garum*, a rich paste made from the entrails of raw, rotting fish.

This is the age of the *hetaira*, the highborn slave courtesan, who entertains with intelligent conversation and skillfully played music, whose mouth and hands are experienced in the arts of song and flesh. Roman women secretly begin to learn the same skills, try to elicit the same wild desire from their men, all the while undermining the traditional strictures of Roman womanhood. Senators keep the outward semblance of their ancient dignity, but common is the noble who keeps near his bedchamber a beautiful boy with oiled ringlets and pale limbs, stolen from his parents and trained in the art of feeding Roman desire.

"Captive Greece captured her wild captor," is how the poet Horace puts it, but he is wrong. The Romans disdain the Greeks for their lax morals, but in truth they are no worse than the Romans. It is an *idea* of Greece that lures the Romans into depravity, stories of sweet Hellenic sin far more attractive than any reality. They are ready to abandon the virtues they have long espoused, and they create a fiction of Greece that can accommodate them.

This is the age in which the Roman hypocrisy reaches full flower.

FRAGMENT: THE KNIGHT AND THE *HETAIRA*

This story appears in one early manuscript of the Florida, a collection of anecdotes compiled by the philosopher, jurist and wit Apuleius of Madaura sometime during the reign of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius.

A Roman *equites*, a youthful man, fond of leisure and luxury, held a dinner party for three of his friends. They received an unexpected guest, a *hetaira* whom no one remembered buying, a Greek woman whose skin was marble-white, the darkness of her shining hair matched only by the darkness of her eyes. An evening of wine and laughter preceded a night of unearthly pleasures for the three men and their wives.

138–161:

Reign of Antoninus Pius.

142:

Lollius Urbicus constructs the Antonine Wall across northern Britain in the Emperor's name.

161–180:

Reign of Marcus Aurelius, who is co-Emperor with Lucius Verus, son of Aelius, from 161 to 169.

165–180:

Antonine Plagues: Plague ravages Empire in waves, claiming the lives of Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius. Two thousand people die each day during the height of the plague. In total, the plague kills some 5,000,000 people.

175:

Avidius Cassius attempts to usurp the Imperial throne; he rules Egypt and Syria for two months.

177:

Marcus Aurelius appoints his son Commodus as Caesar.

180–192:

Reign of Commodus.

193:

Year of the Five Emperors: Pertinax, Didius Julianus, Clodius Albinus, Pescennius Niger and Septimius Severus.

193–211:

Reign of Septimius Severus.

194:

Death of Pescennius Niger.

In the morning, all except the host were bloodless corpses. His wife, his friends and their wives were all dead, and more: every slave in the household was dead, and so were the knight's three children. The *equites* could find no one to offer him succor in his grief. His contemporaries knew him to be tainted with ill omen, and they would not receive his visits, or acknowledge him in the street. His enemies could find no worse fate to bestow upon him, and left him to suffer. He consulted the haruspices,

and they would not tell him the signs they saw in the entrails of the ox.

One night the *hetaira* came back to him. She asked him to leave with her, telling him that he had no family to shame. He freed his remaining slaves, one of whom was the freedman who told me this story and who was present at this last conversation. The *equites* left with her, no one knows where. His friends, meanwhile, never spoke his name again.

LIB. III: CONFLICT AND COLLAPSE

And now the Roman Empire has grown too large for the Republic to govern. The cracks begin to show.

Men such as Cato try to rescue their society's failing morals. They pass laws to limit opulent clothing, the amount a senator spends on wine, the number of guests he has at a dinner party, the number of slaves a man can own. But as governments will find for hundreds of years, it's hard to legislate what goes on in a private chamber. The Romans grow ever more decadent.

Senators curry favor with the people, the so-called mob, with ever-increasing rations of free corn and lavish gladiatorial shows, feasts of blood and murder where whole families bay for the spectacle of death, feasting their hungry eyes upon it. The people never seemed to be satisfied.

Civil strife grows. Roman soldiers return from wars in which they have willingly served to find their land usurped by the rich and their homes confiscated. A Tribune of the People, Tiberius Gracchus, resorts to mobilizing the mob in vast popular assemblies in order to gain justice for the soldiers. Senators, horrified that anyone might challenge their authority, contrive his death. But the soldiers get their land, taken from Italians around Rome who soon begin to cry for justice themselves. Tiberius's brother Gaius follows in Tiberius's footsteps and suffers the same fate.

When Gaius Gracchus dies, Rome erupts in chaos, and the Senate crushes the people.

MARIUS AND SULLA

Ambitious Romans see that gaining power over the mob means gaining power over Rome. Their opportunity

comes through war, against rebel kings in Numidia and the Near East, against barbarian invaders in the north of Italy.

Enter Gaius Marius and Cornelius Sulla, talented military commanders, both hungry for power, and both carrying the conviction that what they want is best for Rome. Both begin their careers late in life. They fight as colleagues in the beginning, enemies in the end. Their private war lasts 30 years.

The sculpted portraits of these two men adorn the city of Rome for centuries. Consider those faces, imitated so perfectly by the artist. Witness the haunted squint of Marius, the beetling brows and scarred face of Sulla, the heavy lines that mark both faces, the forbidding scowl they both bear, the expression that speaks through the centuries and says: *I have treated with death.*

Both seize power. Marius first, and then Sulla. Marius leads his forces into Rome and consumes himself with vindictiveness. His terror lasts 17 days; he dies of old age, a husk, hollowed out by hate.

Sulla takes Rome back. The Senate elects him Dictator, and he unleashes a terror of his own. He cripples those who oppose the Senate. He creates a list of proscriptions. Sulla frees the slaves of the men murdered as a result, and gives them his name. He employs many as his enforcers.

Unofficial secret police units, composed of dozens of ex-slaves, all with the name Cornelius, roam the streets. Senators and *equites* live in fear of being dragged out of their dinner parties and bedchambers, never to be seen again.

Sulla returns Rome to the Senate after three years, and retires to a villa in Padua. Pale worms begin to teem in his flesh, eating him from the inside out. He dies in honorable retirement, but in agony.

PROSCRIPTIONS

For a citizen of Rome, being sentenced to death was bad. Exile was worse. But getting proscribed was cause for the greatest shame. In a time of "emergency," the leaders of Rome had the right to make a list of their enemies. They published it openly, accompanying it with an official statement that no one who killed these men would be prosecuted, and that anyone who did the deed got a cut of the men's property. And then the government sat back and let human greed and personal grudges take their course. Many Romans made their fortunes from the proscription lists.

The worst part of being proscribed was living in fear. The killing blow could come from anywhere. The closest family, the surest allies could try their chances at any time.

Most Romans who found out that their name was on the list tried to flee. Few succeeded. No one got on the list without having enemies, and a name posted on a list was all the encouragement most Romans needed.

POMPEY, CRASSUS, CAESAR

Sulla's lieutenants come to the fore. Enter Cnaeus Pompeius, "Pompey," who ends wars with Cilician pirates, eastern kings and rebel armies, who crushes the errant children of Rome. And Marcus Crassus, who defeats the slave army of Spartacus. Spartacus the gladiator defeats two Roman armies and tries to get back home to Thrace. He fails.

The Romans only take 300 of Spartacus's men alive. The Romans crucify the men, one after the other along the Appian Way, the main entry into the city, a screaming reminder to all who come to the city of the power and mercy of Rome.

And then there is Julius Caesar. He doesn't look like much: prematurely bald, thin-lipped and hawkish of profile. But he is charming and forceful; his core of absolute self-belief wins over many. Aged 30, he weeps at the statue of Alexander the Great, for Alexander had conquered the world and died at such an age, and what had Caesar done? But his time comes.

He is a military genius: the 10-year conqueror of Gaul, killer of a million men, women and children. He is the first Roman to set foot in Britain. He betrays his friends, revenges himself when it suits him, shows clemency when he is in the mood for it. His appetites are unequaled, and they call him *every woman's husband, every man's wife*.

He allies himself with Crassus and Pompey. They control Rome for a year behind the scenes, a Triumvirate, a three-headed monster that eats all who stand against it. But Crassus dies, and Caesar's victories in Gaul frighten Pompey, who sides with Caesar's opponents. Caesar marches on Rome and fights against his friend. Caesar wins, easily. Pompey escapes to Egypt, and the Egyptians, in the middle of their own civil war, kill him. They present Pompey's head to Caesar. Caesar avenges Pompey and wins the war in Egypt on behalf of Queen Cleopatra, whom he takes as a lover.

He becomes Dictator for life. He ends the Republic. He makes enemies. He dies in the Senate House, at the hands of those he spared and those he thought his friends.

197:

Death of Clodius Albinus.

211–217:

Reign of Caracalla, who murders his brother and co-Emperor Geta in 212.

212:

Constitutio Antoniniana: Caracalla extends Roman citizenship to every free man within the bounds of the Empire, mainly for the purposes of revenue — citizens pay more tax.

217–218:

Reign of Macrinus, Praetorian Prefect and assassin of Caracalla, alongside his son Diadumenian.

218–222:

Reign of Elagabalus.

222–235:

Reign of Severus Alexander.

232:

First Rite of the Lancea et Sanctum.



THE AGE OF CRISIS

235–238:

Reign of Maximinus the Thracian.

238:

Year of the Six Emperors: Maximinus; the elderly Senator Gordian I is co-Emperor with his son Gordian II for 21 days; he is followed by Balbinus, co-Emperor with Pupienus for 99 days. The Senate finally elects the boy Emperor Gordian III, son of Gordian II.

CRASSUS ON THE STAGE

This is how Crassus dies: he leads an army against the Parthians, and suffers a terrible defeat at Carrhae. He surrenders. The Parthians kill him anyway. They take his head to the Parthian capitol. The king is watching a production of Euripides's tragedy *The Bacchae*, which ends with a messenger presenting King Pentheus's head to his mother, who had inadvertently participated in his dismemberment.

Rather than interrupt the king's entertainment, the messenger substitutes the head of Crassus for the prop head. The king gets the message, and derives more enjoyment from the play than he had expected.

FRAGMENTS: THE PRIVILEGES OF CAESAR

From a private letter of Caesar, dated the Kalends of February, in the year of his Dictatorship:

I had a dream last night, although it seemed like I was awake. I was in my bedchamber, and I awoke, and Sextus Caesar came to me. You will not know of my uncle

Sextus. My family never speaks of him. I remember that I saw him a few times when I was a boy, shortly before he disappeared. I remember being nine, and asking where he was, and being beaten harder than I had ever been beaten for even mentioning his name. When I became *paterfamilias*, I found that Sextus's fate was one of the great secrets of the Julian clan to which I became party. My father was the last to know what Sextus had done, and had died without telling anyone. And so, in my dream, Sextus came to me, appearing just as he done when I was a child, but pale like a ghost. With him were two women, full of bosom and soft and white of limb.

Sextus asked me, in the manner of a familiar friend, how my health fared and if my business in the Senate went well. I said that I was well and my business was well and I asked after his health and he said that he was dead, but that he was all the better for it, and he laughed, and the two women laughed with him.

I asked him why he had come, and he said that he had business to pursue and that he must pursue it with me. He lifted a finger, and one of the women left the chamber, and returned in a moment with a scroll and a pen, and a tablet of ink.

He told me that it was a decree, and that I must sign it. I asked if he was my superior. He said, no, he was my ancestor. I read the decree. It declared that as I held authority



over the day, Invictus should rule in the night, and granted this Invictus other privileges of access and property. I asked my uncle who Invictus was.

He said, "I am Invictus." The women with him laughed, and each said, "And I."

"Then are you my kin also?" I said, and received no answer but laughter. "But why should you rule over the night? I rule over night and day," I said.

My uncle sprang forward faster than I could see and grasped my throat. "You are greedy, Gaius, This shall be your downfall." He lifted his hand and let me go, and he told me that it was my duty to my ancestors. He named a list of Julii, but I did not know any of their names.

The woman with the scroll came forward and sat beside me on the couch. The other joined her, and laid her arms across my shoulders. Her caresses were cold, and I could see something, I know not what, in her face, and I knew that she also was dead.

I signed the decree, and Sextus Invictus took the paper from me. He asked me if I would like to spend the rest of the night in the company of his women. I said that I would not. And he said, "Sleep," and I fell into a deep sleep and did not awaken until the second hour after dawn.

I have never placed store in prophecies and dreams, except when it suits me. But I have had no dream like this. I consulted the library of the College of Pontiffs that day for the first time outside of my duties; I could find no book of prophecy to tell me its meaning....

ROME IN FLAMES

Picture the streets of Rome in the age of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus. Caesar is in Gaul. Crassus has just gathered his armies to invade Parthia. Pompey is the elder statesman of the Senate, loved and feared.

Our city is an ancient city, but still a century away from its greatest glory. The city's sewer system is a model of engineering. The streets house people from all over the world. To walk through the streets by day is an education: a dozen languages assault the ears, smells sweet and sour, fair and foul fill the nostrils. Merchants sell bolts of cloth, almost-fresh vegetables, meat with hardly any flies on it. Slavers hold daily auctions for fine, strong-toothed stock from Syria, Greece and Africa. Street entertainers and soothsayers fill the market places.

On the Capitoline and Palatine, men wearing purple-edged togas and attended by well-dressed slaves stride through well-kept streets. Their wives, bedecked in gold and fragrant oils, ride in curtained sedans, peering out behind the silk, communicating with those they pass with the smallest of smiles, offering favors with the slightest movement of an eyebrow.

Among the towering *insulae* of the Suburra, huge apartment blocks made of wood and concrete, poverty reigns. People here fight over their meager share of the corn dole. They raise families of 10 or 12 in a single room. Some sell themselves or their children into slavery. Boys and girls of marriageable age take up the oldest profession just to survive, finding a pimp or vanishing into one of the city's labyrinthine brothels. A young man begs to be admitted into the army for 20 years, if only to escape.

Obscene graffiti marks every exterior wall and brings to light the scandals of the highest families in Rome. A man can learn more about his rulers through an hour reading the tenement walls of the Suburra than through

238-244:

Reign of Gordian III. He dies, aged 19, while at war against the Persians; no one knows exactly how.

244-249:

Reign of Philip the Arab, former Praetorian Prefect.

249-251:

Reign of Decius, with his son Herennius Etruscus.

250:

Julius Valens becomes pretender Emperor in Rome for a brief time during Decius's absence, before Valens's execution.

250-251:

Decian Persecution: Decius orders the systematic persecution of Christians.

251-266:

Plague of Cyprian: Disease again spreads across the Empire.

251:

Decius and his son die in battle against the Goths at the Battle of Abrittus, becoming the first Emperors to die in battle against a foreign enemy. Hostilian, the younger son of Decius, becomes Emperor in Rome but dies of the plague within weeks.

251-253:

Reign of Trebonianus Gallus, with his son Volusian.

253:

Reign of Aemilian the Barber as Emperor for three months.

spending whole weeks listening to the debates in the Senate House.

By night, small-time criminal overlords hire well-known gladiators as muscle. Drunken ex-soldiers pick fights with passersby and with veterans of rival legions. Blonde-wigged whores, their skin already developing cancers from the white lead they use to paint their skin, make lewd suggestions to any likely client. Syrian fire-breathers and Corinthian dancers ply their trade.

The convert priests of the Magna Mater publicly castrate themselves, giving themselves up to ecstasy and pain. The Galli parade through the streets, playing tambourine, pipe and drum, chanting praises to Attis and Cybele, blood streaming down their legs: *Hyes attes! Attes hyes!*

The theaters, packed with people high and low, present highbrow Greek tragedies and sexually explicit farces, often in the same bill and often with open political content. Storytellers huddle around street-corner campfires, telling pungent Milesian tales to anyone who will pay a few *denarii* and pay attention for a half-hour.

Above ground, Rome smells of sweat and cooked food and horses and fresh dung. Below, the smell of decay, of damp and mold and of corruption, assaults the senses, fills the mouth. Only the dead can endure it for long.

Necropolis is nearing the height of its glory. The Propinqui still burrow, but in the twilight of the Republic, they have slaves to do this work, among them whole families of ghouls who have never seen the light of day, who live only to dig. The Camarilla meets in that same cavern in which they have always met, now a stone-clad hall adorned with busts of the most noble of the Propinqui. The dead spill out of its arched doorways and into tomb-lined corridors. They crane pale necks, prick dead ears, trying to hear the debates of the underworld, debates that often hold little meaning beyond a need they have to show that they can still do business like men, that they still have something in common with the living.

Two men hold the streets of Rome in their hand, even more than the Senate, more even than Caesar and Pompey.

Clodius Pulcher lays down his senatorial rank in order to become a Tribune of the People. Few drink as hard as Clodius. Few care less about the religious niceties of Rome — only Clodius could defile the rites of the Good Goddess, dressing himself as a woman to infiltrate a rite known only to the vestals for centuries. Fewer still fight so hard or so dirty. His sister Clodia, sometimes called

THE LAMENT OF ATTIS

A WOMAN I, A YOUNG MAN,
A BEAUTIFUL MAN I, A CHILD.

I'VE BEEN FLOWER OF
THE GYMNASIUM; I WAS
GLORY OF THE OIL.

... SHALL I NOW BE CALLED
GOD'S HANDMAID AND
CYBELE'S SERVING GIRL?

AM I TO BE A MAENAD,
HALF-ME, A MALE UNMANNED?

— CATULLUS, LXIII

Lesbia, is just as infamous in her way. It seems to some that she discards her lovers for a new one when the phase of the moon changes, and everyone knows, even her husband, who does not care.

For most of the decade, Clodius has been Caesar's man. He leads a *collegium*, which is supposedly a tradesman's guild. In reality, it's a gang of enforcers. They look out for Caesar's interests with strong-arm tactics, as long as the money is good and Clodius is amenable.

Titus Milo is the Senate's man. His *collegium* exists only as a counterpoint to Clodius's. Milo's men are just as threatening, just as violent, and there are just as many of them.

Things get out of hand. The night belongs to violence.

It suits the Propinqui, to begin with. When people die without warning, it becomes easier to hide mistakes.

But things get worse. It seems that every night Rome's streets dissolve into riot. Pitched battles between factions of torch-bearing street fighters erupt in quiet districts. The fires begin to take on a life of their own. Eventually, the night comes when Clodius dies fighting with Milo's men. Clodius's own men, frenzied with grief, take his body to the Senate house and build a funeral pyre for him. The fire gets out of control. The Senate burns down.

The Senate declares martial law. They exile Milo, but the city is not calmed. Soldiers march through the streets. Fear reigns, and the Romans begin to see Caesar not as a hero, but as a threat.

CHANGES

Suddenly, it's a bad time to be a monster. Fire consumes. Soldiers run wild. When Caesar finally comes, Rome becomes a ghost town at night, emptied of ready sources of blood.

Nights come when ancient, paper-skinned monsters, set ablaze in the endless fires, leap howling into Necropolis, run through the ancient passages and vanish into the depths, leaving nothing but a scream that echoes eternally. Elders rise to the surface, intending to feed on the families they have preyed upon for centuries, finding them all dead. The elders fall into torpor or vanish altogether in the chaos of the world above.

A scramble for seats of power — vacant for the first time in centuries — ensues. Mortal families suffer as much from the vampires as from the civil wars, as rivals send minions to wipe them out and deprive noble Kindred of their childer, their food and their support. A contender for a seat with the Senex steals a beloved youth of 15, the only son of his opponent's family, and Embraces him. The contender adopts the boy into his own family of the dead, binds him with the Vinculum and parades him before the Senex. Another vampire returns to his underground haven to find his *columbarium* defaced, the urns of his mortal family broken, their ashes scattered. A vampire drinks

253–260:

Reign of Valerian, with his son Gallienus.

257–260:

Valerian orders the extermination or forced conversion of Christians in the Empire, the burning of Christian books and the confiscation of their property.

258:

Martyrdom of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, Popes Sixtus and Stephen and Lawrence, deacon of Rome, among many others.



from a drugged slave. Disoriented, the vampire is unprepared for the ghouls who invade his home that night and drive a wooden spear through his heart. They leave him in one of the deepest of the catacombs in Necropolis, a dank pit where no one ever goes.

FRAGMENTS: CLANS NOT OF THE PROPINQUI

From the second book of the De Geographia Sociisique Mortuorum, by Julius Piso Minor, Propinquus:

Remus was the first of the Kindred, and the Kindred, as we well know, are first among the dead. But there are other, lesser dead, who share the hunger of the Propinqui, but who are not Kindred. As the representatives of the conquered peoples come to Britain, so, too, come these who are not Kindred.

Here are the Vermes, whom the barbarians in Britain and Gaul call the worms of the earth, whom the Cappadocians and Dacians call Nosferatu. They are not Kindred. They spring from the open graves of the earth when certain signs come to pass: a cock lays an egg, a snake coils around a grave *stela*, three owls alight on a dead man's house, a child is born at the moment

of a nearby death. They are doubly inauspicious, for they repel the living and rise from corruption. They are not Kindred.

We know too many of the bestial ones, Gangrel curs who came here with the Gauls and the Cimbri and the Germans and the Goths. They are the barbarian dead, who have no gods other than half-remembered mockeries of the true gods of Rome. They are not Kindred.

From the lands of Asia come *cinaedi*, perverts who call themselves Daeva. They say they are born of their corrupt foreign gods. They claim that they have traditions of death to match our own, but they dwell in vice and filth. They paint themselves and deck themselves in silk and gold, the better to hide their decadence. They are not Kindred.

From the south, from the edges of the reed-rich Nile come the shadows, the *tenebrae*, who call themselves Mekhet. Their mongrel gods had no part in their creation. They say they are only a one-ninth part of a man, incomplete beings from whom all has departed save body and shadow, separated from the seven parts of their being for all eternity and forced to feed in their need. They admit they are incomplete. They are not Kindred.

We tolerate them. That is all.

LIB. IV: EMPERORS, MONSTERS AND GODS

Caesar's assassins fail to save their Republic. They die in battle or fall to the proscriptions. Caesar's avengers – his heir, Octavian, his friends, Antony and Lepidus – divide the Empire among themselves. They begin to quarrel. Antony travels to Egypt and becomes the lover of Queen Cleopatra, the mother of Caesar's bastard child. Lepidus tries to seize power in Sicily and loses everything except his life.

Antony declares Caesar's son the inheritor of the Roman Empire. The two men go to war. At the coast of Actium, two Roman armies fight the greatest sea battle ever seen. Mars and Minerva watch over the bright sails of Rome; the beast-headed gods of Egypt screech their defiance across the black galleys of Egypt. The issue is decided. Antony falls on his sword. Cleopatra holds an asp to her breast.

The Senate declares Octavian the *Princeps*, the First Citizen. He lays down all his powers, and makes a show of giving the Republic back to the Senate. In "gratitude," they allow him the right to sit at the head of the Senate. He has the right to speak first on any issue of policy. His

is control over the priesthoods and the armies. They give him absolute power without giving him any power at all. And they call him Augustus, the holy one, the man of authority. The savior of Rome.

He is no king. He is more. He remakes Rome in his own image, proud and hard. It's a new golden age, when the great artists, the great writers, will work. It's an age when peace comes to the Empire for a time, for the first time in centuries. It's an age when prosperity comes to Rome. In this age, the gods smile upon Rome. They bless our city's enterprises. They stand alongside the Romans. It is a time of hope, and the bitter taste of the final end of freedom is sweetened with spices and sweetmeats from far afield, with the wine of success, of victory.

It is not perfect. The Golden Age cannot last.

The parade of victory ends one day, five years from the end of Augustus's reign, when the general Varus leads three legions into a German forest. Some 25,000 men walk into the dark wood, never to emerge again. Only

a handful escape to tell the tale: their general betrayed, the legionnaires led into ambush. Augustus never quite recovers, retreating to his room in tears, crying out, over and over: *Varus, give my legions back!* The Golden Age of the Roman Empire comes to an end.

His family begins to plot among themselves. Adoptive sons and potential heirs die unexpectedly of poison or violence. Trust vanishes. It makes no difference. The people love and fear him no less. They will learn to hate his successors, and that is enough.

On his death, he leaves an account of the things he has done, erected in every city of the Empire on pillars of bronze. He becomes a god of Rome, just as Caesar before him. And from now on, the Emperors rule Rome.

THE GATES OF WAR

OUR ANCESTORS COMMANDED THAT THE
GATES OF JANUS QUIRINUS BE CLOSED
WHEN THERE WAS PEACE GAINED BY
VICTORY, THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF
THE EMPIRE OF THE ROMANS, BY LAND
AND SEA. BEFORE I WAS BORN, THEY ARE
RECORDED TO HAVE BEEN CLOSED ONLY
TWICE SINCE THE CITY'S FOUNDATION.
WHILE I WAS PRINCEPS, THE SENATE
ORDERED THEM CLOSED THREE TIMES.

— *THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF AUGUSTUS,
THE GOD*

ROME IN THE TIME OF AUGUSTUS

Augustus says before he dies that he found Rome made of brick; he says he leaves it clad in finest marble. It's true: Augustus's city is clean, and its center is brighter and finer than ever before. Pillars covered with commemorative inscriptions mark the public places of Rome. Statues of bronze or marble stand on every major street corner.

The members of the Senate retain their dignity and finery, spending more time in luxury. The Emperor passes laws decreeing benefits for married men and women, and for parents, and severe penalties for the immoral. He banishes his own daughter and granddaughter rather than break the rules. The people love and fear him alike. His concerns are the concerns of Rome. No man can enter the Forum unless clad in a toga.

People from every corner of the world come to Rome to see its new glory. Ambassadors from Ethiopia, India and even China travel to the great city. Trade is brisk. The Senate tries to ban the wearing of Chinese silk, saying its very texture drives one to acts of lust. Hunters bring animals never seen before in Rome, all the better for the people to see them slaughtered in the animal hunts.

259:

Cyriades proclaims himself Emperor in the East, backed by the Persian King Shapur. Cyriades's own troops assassinate him and return to Rome.

260:

Valerian is captured by the Persians. His generals Quietus and Macrianus get elected by the troops as Emperors, and successfully lead the troops out of Persia, only to face Gallienus, and lose.

260:

Usurpations: Ingenuus takes advantage of the unstable situation to have himself proclaimed Augustus, but dies in battle against legitimate Roman forces. Regalianus gets elected Emperor by the eastern provinces almost wholly by accident. He saves his people from the Sarmatians, and gets assassinated by his own side for his trouble.

260–268:

Solo reign of Gallienus.

260–273:

Gallic Empire: Gaul and Britain secede from the Empire for a time, under the Gallic Emperors: Postumus (260–268), Marius (268), Victorinus (268–270) and Tetricus (270–273). Tetricus deserts his own men and joins Aurelian in 273, rather than face the Emperor in battle. Aurelian rewards Tetricus with a position of responsibility in the Emperor's court. Gaul and Britain rejoin the Empire within weeks.

The dead find this new city a city of wonder. They exist in awe of the gods' son who rules. They enjoy the colors and sounds of the Roman night, and they feel an extra frisson from knowing that most are outlawed. They watch and learn new arts of treachery from the Emperor's family, foremost among them, his wife Livia, mistress of poisons.

The Propinqui see the Gates of War closed three times. They see Varus's three legions leave the city and vanish from history. The Propinqui find they have to adopt a more stringent Masquerade to survive.

The Praetorian Guard are a tool of the Kindred, but the elite city guard become the personal guard of the Emperor. Their livelihood depends on the Princeps's health. The guard, commanded by two Praetorian Prefects, keeps an eagle eye on the doings of the city. They are not incorruptible, and they are still superstitious, but they are watchful and hard. What they know, the Emperor knows.

The Camarilla changes with the end of the Republic. The new Senex, filling the vacuum left by those lost to decades of civil unrest, has remade itself. The Senex once served as the Night Senate, the shadow companion of the Senate of the living. Now the Camarilla is the extension of the Emperor's will. The Senate of the living legislates law and virtue in the name of the Princeps. The Camarilla legislates sin.

The Camarilla's character has changed in other ways. The dead of Rome taste blood from hundreds of peoples; the dead grudgingly accept ambassadors from those people's own dead, creatures who, although they have respect in their own homelands, are not Kindred. These people bring new rites, new magics, new evils to the night.

Some of the Propinqui gain initiation into the secret nocturnal rites of Mithras, a celebration of blood and death and resurrection. Augustus tries to ban Isis of Ten Thousand Names, but her worship continues here. Parades of shaven-headed priests sing and dance, sometimes coming into conflict with the growing number of eunuch-ecstatics who follow the Magna Mater with equal volume and fervor. Legionaries and gladiators serve the purposes of the Imperial family and those who would found dynasties of their own.

But above all, Augustus is inviolable. He ends a century of war and brings peace to Rome, at least for a while, and none truly challenge him, for fear that should he die, the war that follows would never end.

Augustus has a dream one night, and once a year, on the anniversary of that dream, he sits alone on the steps

of the Forum asking for alms, as if he were a beggar. Any man could kill him; there is no one watching. But no one does. And when the night comes, the Kindred, too, leave him unmolested. They recognize in him one touched by the hand of the gods. His death is out of the hands of the Kindred. They know this.

TIBERIUS AND GAIUS

By the time that Augustus is dead, nearly five decades have passed, and among the living, there are few who have any memory of what Rome was like without him.

His nephew Tiberius follows Augustus. Tiberius resents his position. He decides to make people suffer. Professional informants make themselves rich by turning their enemies in to the Emperor for the paltriest of crimes, knowing that Tiberius, in his paranoia, always decrees death. His own family is not safe. He destroys his nephew and heir, the hero Germanicus who restored the honor of Varus's defeat. Tiberius grows bored with Empire; he retreats to the isle of Capri. He is Emperor, and he realizes that he can live out his fantasies. He violates children. He keeps infants as concubines. He calls the wives of senators to a bedchamber decorated with expensive pornography and forces the women to degrade themselves.

While Tiberius indulges his urges, something happens. Far away in troubled Judea, unknown to Tiberius, the governor crucifies another suspected rebel leader, one of many. But strange omens mark the day of the man's death, and someone steals the body. The criminal's followers become more numerous than ever they were when he was alive. In time, the followers of that lowly criminal will rule over Rome itself.

The Emperor knows none of this. He allows others to control Rome for him. Aelius Sejanus cultivates Tiberius's friendship, organizes the informers, arranges his pleasures, runs Tiberius's bodyguard. And then Sejanus tries to make away with Tiberius and become Emperor himself. If Tiberius was indolent and cruel before, he becomes a true monster. Few who come under the eye of his wrath survive for long, no matter how minor their sin.

Tiberius dies, old and sick and spitting venom, smothered on his deathbed by a captain of the Praetorian guard who is frightened the Emperor will recover.

His successor is Gaius, the son of Germanicus. As a boy, Gaius was the beloved mascot of the legions. A soldier made Gaius a little suit of armor, a little sword, a little pair of marching boots. The soldiers called the

boy “the little marching boot” — *Caligula*. But the boy grew into a young man indulged in every way, cunning and vicious, a survivor in Tiberius’s court. Some will say that Tiberius chooses Gaius as a successor because the one he wants to follow him should be so evil that Tiberius’s own reign should seem a golden age. In truth, there’s no one left to take the role. Tiberius has been too enthusiastic in murdering his kin. Gaius fritters money away on gaining popularity. He showers gold on the people, throwing it into the crowd wherever he goes. He puts on the bloodiest, most spectacular games in living memory. And then, before he can face the consequences of paupering the Imperial treasury, he gets very ill. The nation holds prayers for Caligula. A dozen senators offer their own lives for his before the gods.

Against all hope, he recovers. But he is not the same. A wild energy fills his eyes. He considers himself a living god. He sleeps with his sisters and then

THE FINDING OF VARUS'S LEGIONS

A HALF-COLLAPSED WALL AND A SHALLOW DITCH IMPLIED THAT HERE A PITIFUL GROUP OF SURVIVORS HAD MADE THEIR STAND. IN THE MIDST OF THE FIELD WERE THE WHITENING BONES OF MEN, SHOWING HOW SOME HAD STOOD AND FOUGHT; SOME HAD BEEN RUNNING AWAY, SCATTERED AROUND OR HEAPED UP. NEARBY LAY THE FRAGMENTS OF THEIR WEAPONS, THE LIMBS OF THEIR HORSES AND THE HEADS OF MEN, NAILED IN PROMINENT PLACES TO THE TRUNKS OF TREES.

IN GROVES NEAR THE FIELD STOOD THE ALTARS ON WHICH THE BARBARIANS HAD SACRIFICED OFFICERS AND LEADING CENTURIONS. SURVIVORS OF THE DISASTER, MEN WHO HAD ESCAPED FROM THE BATTLE OR FROM CAPTIVITY, POINTED OUT THE SPOT WHERE THE OFFICERS FELL, HOW THERE WAS THE PLACE WHERE THE EAGLES WERE CAPTURED, AND THERE WAS THE PLACE WHERE VARUS SUFFERED HIS FIRST WOUND, AND WHERE HE FOUND DEATH FROM HIS OWN, UNLUCKY HAND.

— *TACITUS, ANNALS I. 61*

260–273:

Palmyrene Empire: Eastern provinces Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Asia Minor break away under leadership of the Palmyrene Empress Zenobia.

261:

Gallienus issues his Edict of Toleration, ending the official persecution of Christians. There are rumors that his wife Salonina is secretly a Christian.

262:

Thascius Hostilinus founds the vampire bloodline later called Morbus.

265:

Celsus gets proclaimed Emperor against his will. He gets assassinated within seven days.

268:

Usurpations: Aureolus becomes Emperor in Milan. Gallienus lays siege to Milan, but is murdered by his own men. The conspiracy includes the future Emperors Aurelian and Claudius Gothicus, who finish the siege. Aureolus dies at the hands of the Praetorian Guard, deserted by his allies. Meanwhile, Laelianus tries to carve out a small empire of his own in Germany, but dies after about a month.

268–270:

Reign of Claudius Gothicus, who fights successfully against the barbarians, but dies of the plague.

prostitutes them to the senators for the sake of the treasury. He commands the suicide of the men who offered their lives. He promotes his horse to Consul. He declares that he wishes that the inhabitants of the city of Rome had only the one neck between them. He leads an army to the edge of the English Channel and has them throw their javelins into the sea; he will make his men gather up seashells and call it a triumph over King Neptune. In the city, business grinds to a halt because nearly every day is declared a feast day.

And Caligula's murderous desires grow to outrageous proportion. He humiliates his guards. He makes a hardened veteran wear a woman's dress for a week. Each day, Caligula tells the captain of the house guard the watchword — it's always obscene or humiliating, and the other guards have no choice to laugh at his puerile jokes or be executed. The guards can take no more. Comes a day when they butcher Caligula and his family, all but Caligula's strange, palsied uncle Claudius.

CLAUDIUS AND NERO

They find Claudius hiding behind a curtain. One says that having an idiot for an Emperor could work in the guards' favor. Claudius's idiocy is not wholly real; acting dumb keeps him alive, and although not a genius, he is also no fool. He knows to pick his friends, and if he is a little quick to execute people he suspects of treachery, the number of attempts on his life at least partially justifies his paranoia. He is capable enough not to empty the treasury. It's Claudius who orders the conquest of Britain, and it's Claudius who, when he dies, is worshiped as a god, while Tiberius and Caligula's memories are officially damned, forever.

Claudius's last wife, Agrippina Minor, has a son of her own, and it suits her, when the boy grows to the age of manhood, to make Claudius appoint her son an heir and then to dispatch her husband with a plate of roasted mushrooms she gathers herself.

The boy Nero is 17 when he takes control of the Empire, and is about as suited to running a great Empire as any teenaged boy. Agrippina dominates him. They say he still suckles from her breast. But after a while, Nero's advisors — and his young, ambitious wife — poison him against his mother. He tries to kill her. He bumbles several subtle attempts. In the end, he sends his soldiers to kill her openly. She rends her dress and tells them to strike at her accursed womb. And they do.

Nero gives himself up to every indulgence — he has his pleasure with whosoever he wishes, he watches dozens of people at a time degrade themselves in front of him, he fancies himself a playwright and an actor — but the people love him. His games are spectacular, and his generosity is enough. He is open to petitioners. He gives freely, but not, with his advisors in tow, unwisely. He has Seneca the Philosopher at his side to advise on matters of government. He has Petronius the Arbiter of Elegance, to advise on etiquette. Nero ignores the Senate, and the senators grow to hate him for his popularity and his desire to please the common mob. The senators grow to hate him. They begin to plot.

A Roman officer in Britain commands the beating of a queen and the rape of her daughters. The queen, Boudicca, leads the Britons in open rebellion.

And then the fire comes.

THE GREAT FIRE

Ten years into the reign of Nero, Rome burns and stays afire for five days. The blaze begins next to the Circus Maximus, in the area of shops surrounding the stadium. The fire spreads across the city. By the time the fire is over, four of the 14 districts of Rome are gone, and seven more lie in ruins. The fire takes Nero's palace. Nero watches from outside the city. Some say he plays the lyre while the city burns. Some say he performs a tragic soliloquy on the destruction of Troy, using the burning city as a backdrop to his private stage.

In truth, he watches, aghast.

When the flames die, Nero opens up his own vast gardens and his remaining palaces to the homeless, where they can sleep and be fed until he can rebuild. He conceives grand designs, vast, bright palatial complexes, wide marble streets, bronze colossi at the gates of the city. He imagines glorious boulevards and well-fed, happy people.

He runs out of money. He grows increasingly frustrated. The more he tries to get money for his enterprise, the less willing the Senate is to help. He raises taxes across the Empire. And then the informers return. The reign of terror begins again.

He blames the fire on the Christians. They are a new sect, suspected of atheism and misanthropy and rumored to engage in cannibalism. He has them sacrificed to beasts. He holds a garden party, and as evening comes, he lights it with Christians hanging from stakes and covered with pitch; he makes the music louder, just to drown out the screams.



Nero's advisors try to counsel him to moderation. He is deaf to their advice. He makes Seneca kill himself. Petronius, too, must die. Other men become influential in the Emperor's life. Vicious men. The people begin to turn against Nero. They sicken of being forced at sword point to clap and cheer his sub-par acting and his badly written poetry. They begin to resent the high taxes imposed for the rebuilding of the city. They hear the stories about Nero's viciousness, about how Nero kicks his wife and her unborn child to death because she offers criticism of a performance, how Nero castrates a freedman singer to turn him into a woman that the Emperor might marry him.

The Senate bribes the Praetorians to turn against the Emperor. The legions in Spain declare the governor, Galba, to be Emperor in Nero's place. They arrest Nero. As he falls on his sword, he cries: *What an artist I am, as I die.*

THE KINDRED AND NERO

In the years to come, Nero is, to the Propinqui, one of the most fondly remembered Emperors. He never, as far as anyone knows, has anything to do with the walking dead, but in their view, he is the great paragon of the true Roman monster.

This is why the pagan Kindred count Nero on the same roll as Julius, Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian and Titus: Nero is one of the deified to them, a God-Emperor, worthy of their prayers.

THREE DIGITS' DEPTH OF DUST

As the fire cleanses the world above, terror seizes the Kindred. Some face their Final Deaths, shrieking in the fires. But below, terror seizes the Kindred. The Propinqui fall upon each other, seized by the Blood-Terror. The dead

270:

Reign of Quintillus, brother of Claudius. Quintillus is Emperor for 17 days.

270-275:

Reign of Aurelian, who decrees the Unconquered Sun as Rome's new state religion and reunifies the Empire.

271:

Usurpations: Septimius is proclaimed Emperor in Dalmatia. His own troops kill him. Domitianus rules for less than a week in Britain. Felicissimus leads an uprising of workers in the Imperial Mint in Rome, and kills 7,000 soldiers in the city before losing his life.

274-275:

Reign of Ulpia Severina, wife of Aurelian, who lays down power on the appointment of Tacitus.

are too panicked to observe the ancient traditions that decree peace in the meeting-room of the Camarilla, and that stone-clad cave beneath the Capitoline becomes, in one night, the scene of a swift orgy of violence, as once-civilized monsters who have sat together for centuries lose all semblance of reason. Some escape into the depths of Necropolis's catacombs, falling into torpor in the dark as others did a century before. Some find themselves trapped above ground as Necropolis's hidden gates slam shut, falling to sunlight and flame as the fire consumes every possible means of escape. Others meet their ancestors in Tartarus at the claws and fangs of frenzied allies and enemies.

When those five nights are over, barely one-fifth of the Kindred are left. A covering of dust and ash three digits deep coats the floor of the Camarilla's chamber. Two neonates pick their way through the silent chamber; dust works its way between sandal straps and cold flesh. One neonate says to the other: *This was my sire. This was yours.*

The Senex are nearly all gone. The Propinqui return to the semblance of civility, but now a decade-long game of alliances begins, as the dead begin to maneuver back and forth, making and breaking political partnerships until the Camarilla's structures are reborn.

But by the time the Camarilla remakes itself, the Kindred discover that they are not alone. The Christians, facing their first great persecution, have retreated to the Catacombs that exist at the higher levels of Necropolis.

FRAGMENTS: ON THE FIRST CHRISTIANS IN NECROPOLIS

From Against the Christians, by Salvianus Severus, Propinquus:

Why, I have observed them at close hand. They have no propriety at all. They have no respect for the gods. They perform their banal rites in our confines. They claim to worship a dead man who became alive. This is clearly nonsense. The dead stay dead, and as we well know, if the dead walk, and are hungry and are denied the Blessed Fields of our ancestors, they are still nevertheless dead.

The living consider the Christians to be murderers, as misanthropes. But they are not even that. They are poor criminals. They face violence from the living, and they hide, and if they are caught and thrown to the beasts, they praise their God and allow themselves to die. It is no god of any account whose followers are so weak, and so pliant.

Faced with these vermin, I resolved to an experiment. I made a petition to Servilius Lanius that I should choose an individual suitable for induction among the ranks of the Kindred, and met with no objection, for in this time the Propinqui were still depleted in number thanks to the fire that these same Christians reputedly caused. I then sought a Christian in Necropolis that I might make my client.

Not long after my meeting with Servilius, I came across a family of Christians — a man, his wife, a daughter of marriageable age, two young sons not yet old enough to don the toga of manhood, all hiding in some Etruscan vault — and decided that I might watch them.

In truth, they sickened me. The man and his wife, rather than beat their breasts or seek revenge as would be right, seemed to suffer their exile under the ground with no small amount of equanimity. They seemed almost cheerful that they were there; they sang hymns in praise of this murdered god. They behaved as one would think a plebeian family should behave above ground. But I must confess that the daughter, who served as a second mother to the brats, excited my desire. I resolved to show her the futility of this religion of hers.

On the third day of watching, I showed myself to them. I played the role of a stranger, and they offered me hospitality, such as they had, which at least proved them not wholly without something of the Roman. When I felt that the time was right, I cut the man's throat, tore out the heart of the woman and dashed their sons' skulls against the tomb on which they had made their pathetic table. The girl showed some spirit; she tried to run, but could not match my speed.

She continued to struggle, even when others would have allowed themselves the pleasure of my Kiss. This surprised me somewhat, but did not change my resolve. When I gave her the Vitae, she drank it thirstily enough.

I introduced myself, and bade her tell me her name, which was Charite. I explained to her what she was, and she recoiled. I took her above and showed her a place where she could hunt; she would not take the prey I offered her, instead sating herself on a stray dog. I tried to explain to her the traditions and proprieties of the Propinqui and her role, and she spat at me and called me demon. She said that she would leave me or die, and that she would leave the city rather than stay with the dead. I told her how she could not, that the sun would destroy her as surely as I had slain her mewling brothers.

And this shocked me most of all: she laughed. I said to her, did not her kind consider suicide to be the worst kind

of sin? She said to me that if she were dead, then she would simply travel on to her rightful home at the right hand of her God, and that if she were not dead, then the sun would not harm her. She sat on the steps of the Forum and resolved to wait, and would speak to me no more. I could not make her see sense. I left her there as the sun rose, and as I returned to the nearby gate of Necropolis, I turned back and saw her meet the first rays, and burn. And she did not scream or flinch.

I returned to Servilius and reported all that I had seen and heard. Although I begged that we hunt down the Christians and kill them all, for the sake of our beloved Nero and for the sake of our living kin, and because they were all insane, Lanius commanded that these Christians should be left unmolested, for the way of their perverse creed is that the more of them who died, the more join them in their madness.

A YEAR OF FOUR EMPERORS

Galba is an old man, but a hard man for that. As a governor, he orders the crucifixion of a patricide. The man shrieks that he is a citizen, for no citizen can by law suffer this kind of death. Galba waves his hand and says: *Nail him higher.* That's the kind of man Galba is, the kind of man who says, when the Praetorians come to him looking for their bribe, that he doesn't buy his men — he chooses them. The men decide that they would rather be bought, and within six months, Galba's head adorns a stake.

Otho, the man from whom Nero stole his wife, takes on the role of Nero's avenger. Otho acquits himself bravely, but discovers Galba left the Empire at the brink of war. The legions in the north have declared for the general Vitellius. Otho tries to fight back, but it is not enough. All is lost. He takes his own life.

Vitellius marches on Rome, and the Senate accept him as one of their own. In the city, he feasts. He is grossly fat. He eats four banquets a day. He uses the Roman navy to acquire his precious flamingo tongues and pike livers. His laziness loses him the Empire within a few months. The east declares for another.

Vespasian has put down the rebellion in Judea. He was there when the rebels killed their own wives and children and then themselves at Masada, and he knows that to defeat a fanatic, one must learn to be unreasonable. His flabby enemy has no hope against such a man. And at the end of the year, the Empire has a new master.

A TALE OF DECLINE

The Emperors after Augustus live and die, in turn depraved, mad, paranoid, selfish, cruel, unlucky and lazy. They have their influence over the people. The people of the Empire slide into depravity. Tales of murder and adultery become commonplace; revenge of every kind is quite normal.

This is one of those stories. A man dies, an *equites* of some standing, and he leaves behind him a young widow. She is beautiful and virtuous, and she loved her husband very much, for he was always kind to her. When he is laid in the tomb, she will not leave. She remains there, weeping over her

275-276:

Reign of Tacitus.

276:

Reign of Florian, son of Tacitus. He rules for 88 days.

276-282:

Reign of Probus.

282-283:

Reign of Carus. Carus is one of the very few Emperors not to be murdered or killed in battle — he is struck by lightning.

283:

Reign of Carinus and Numerian, the sons of Carus.



THE DOMINATE

284:

Diocletian defeats Carinus and Numerian in battle, and becomes Augustus and Dominus.

286:

Diocletian appoints Maximian as his fellow Augustus, with responsibility over the Western half of the Empire; Diocletian concentrates on the East.

286:

Martyrdom of the Theban Legion; Miracle of Saint Daniel.

293:

First Tetrarchy: Diocletian and Maximian remain Augusti, but appoint Galerius and Constantius Chlorus as their respective Caesars.

husband's corpse. She stays there for five days, starving herself to death. All the others with her, repulsed by her obsession, leave, but for one slave girl.

A soldier stands outside the tomb; he is guarding the body of some crucified thieves to make sure that no one should take the bodies down and bury them. He hears the wailing. He leaves his post and enters the tomb. He sees her there, and he desires her. He tells her that she cannot serve love by dying, and he tries to give her food and drink. She will not take it.

So he gives the bread and wine to the slave girl, who begins to talk to her mistress. She says: *Shouldn't you enjoy the good things in life? Why not ask this corpse?*

The girl brings the woman to her senses, and speaks for the soldier. The soldier seduces the widow. For three days and three nights, they have sex, in the tomb, beside the corpse. But on the third day, the parents of one of the crucified men come and make away with the body. The soldier comes out of the tomb for food, and sees the empty cross. He knows what the penalty for deserting his post will be, and he raises his sword to take his own life. The widow stays his hand. *I'll not see a second funeral*, she says. *Better to hang the dead than kill the living.*

And they take the body of her husband and nail him to the cross.

FLAVIAN JUSTICE, FLAVIAN PARANOIA

Flavius Vespasian is a man of humor and talent. A little vain, perhaps, but he is hardly alone in that, and if the statues of perfect male nudes look incongruous with the round, piggish faces of Vespasian and his sons atop their necks, who will complain? Vespasian has brought peace to Rome. He is no Augustus, but he isn't a Tiberius or a Nero, either, and the Senate and people breathe a sigh of relief. The Emperor shows clemency where clemency is needed, strictness where strictness is necessary. He's renowned for his wit, but nobody gets killed if they don't laugh. He begins the construction of a vast amphitheater.

He dies of natural causes. His last words: *Damn it, I think I'm becoming a god.* And he does: the Senate vote that he join Julius, Augustus and Claudius on the roll of the divine.

Vespasian's older son Titus is loved by the people and the Senate. He seems a little bloodthirsty, a little duplicitous, but the memory of his father is too fresh

in the minds of the Romans and they take him to their hearts. He completes his father's Flavian Amphitheater, his Colosseum, and inaugurates it with games the like of which no one has seen since the days of the Divine Julius himself. Cranes and elephants fight in the arena; gladiatrixes join the men in the arena.

In the south, Vesuvius explodes and buries Pompeii and Herculaneum. All eyes turn to the omen it portends. Giants appear in Italy. Titus appears blameless in everything. He dies of a fever before anyone can grow to hate him.

Titus's brother Domitian is different, darker of temperament and colder of intellect. He fears the Senate and the people. He begins his terror almost immediately. He fomenting unrest among the senatorial orders, encouraging men to inform against each other. He keeps them divided. People are frightened to speak out, for fear that their so-called friends will inform on them to save their own skins. The fear is a tangible thing, a miasma that falls across the city. Conspiracies to kill Domitian grow more and more common, feeding his paranoia further. Domitian calls himself Lord and God. Men, following their Emperor's example, take to smearing needles with poison and stabbing random strangers in the streets.

SURVIVING DOMITIAN

FIFTEEN YEARS: A LARGE
PORTION OF A MAN'S LIFE.
SOME OF US DIED OF NATURAL
CAUSES, BUT THE BEST OF US
FELL VICTIM TO THE FIRST
CITIZEN'S SAVAGERY. I COULD
SAY THAT THOSE OF US WHO
OUTLIVED THEM OUTLIVED
OURSELVES. THOSE YEARS
WERE STOLEN FROM US, YEARS
IN WHICH YOUNG MEN GREW
OLD AND OLD MEN REACHED
THE VERY BRINK OF DEATH,
WITHOUT EVER SPEAKING OUT.

— TACITUS, *AGRICOLA*

Fifteen years into Domitian's reign, a raven perches on the Capitol, and croaks out, for all to hear, the words: *All will be well*. A week later, he is dead.

When the assassins come, Domitian fights harder than anyone expects. Already stabbed, he bears the first man to the ground, and nearly claws his eyes out. He keeps fighting, as blade after blade pierces him. The news breaks. The people shrug their shoulders and carry on with their lives. The Senate declares a day of rejoicing and tears down his portraits, smashes his statues.

THE GOOD EMPERORS

To the surprise of all, there is no war. The Senate nominates Nerva, an old man, as their Emperor, and he names himself Augustus once more. He is dead in a little over two years, but he names the general Trajan as his successor.

Trajan is one of the greatest Emperors the Romans will ever know. He brings the Empire to its greatest extent. Hadrian, who comes after Trajan, erects a vast wall across the width of Britain, for he has nothing left to conquer. He chooses heirs. The first he outlives. The second gains the approval of all. The names become titles: the Emperor is Augustus, and the heir apparent Caesar. Antoninus, called Pius, the Just Emperor, the Good Emperor will rule with fairness and wisdom. And Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, the philosopher and the statesman, become Augusti together, the first to share the throne, upholding equity and honor and maintaining the reputation of Rome in all things. Under these five, it is good to be a Roman.

At least, that's the tale told in future years. But the bandits still prey on the lonely roads of Italy, unmolested. The pirates still sail the Mediterranean. Barbarians harry the edges of the Empire. Greedy officials prey on the commoners the way the officials always have. These high-minded Emperors may not murder their courtiers; they may bring glory to Rome, but who pays the cost? Who dies in the endless victorious battles, who suffers that the Romans may prosper? The inhabitants of the provinces, deprived of the right to speak, see nothing better to their lives under these men.

Under Marcus and Lucius, things begin to fall apart. The incursions of the barbarians intensify.

ANTONINE MALADIES

Over the course of 15 years, plague sweeps the Empire, twice. The bodies stack up in the city streets, left there by plebeian families who cannot afford to bury them, who do not have the room to cremate them. Other infections follow, as the decaying corpses from the people infect the water supplies and create carriers among the vermin of the city.

Verus dies of the plague; and it takes Marcus, too, when it comes again.

Other plagues afflict the Empire. A plague of savages: barbarian tribes, driven from their own lands by fiercer tribes, themselves driven into the borders of Rome by yet fiercer tribes who will follow. A plague of corruption: governors and tax collectors squeeze the provinces for every penny they can get.

COMMODUS'S ROME

The plague is over; the barbarians withdraw from the edges of Empire. Commodus, the heir to the Empire, is not a good man. His father Marcus was a philosopher, a man of nobility and seriousness. Commodus is no follower

293–296:

Usurpations: Britain secedes under Carausius and Allectus, before being regained by Constantius.

303–311:

Great Persecution: Diocletian and Galerius begin an orchestrated attempt to expunge Christianity completely from the Roman Empire, with the tacit approval of Maximian.

305:

Second Tetrarchy: Diocletian and Maximian retire. Galerius and Constantius take on the title of Augustus, and choose Severus and Galerius's nephew Maximinus Daia as their Caesars.

306:

Constantius dies; his troops acclaim his son Constantine as Augustus in York. Galerius, in opposition, appoints Severus as the Western Augustus, ignoring Constantine's claim. Maxentius, the son of Maximian, declares himself Augustus in the West, and takes control of the city of Rome.

307:

Maximian leaves retirement to rule alongside his son. They defeat and kill Severus.

308:

Galerius appoints Licinius as a second Augustus in the East, and declares Maximinus Daia a third. Maximian tries to depose Maxentius, but the troops throw Maximian out of the city.

of his father. Commodus never grows up, and never sees any reason he shouldn't use his wealth and power to do whatever he wants.

Commodus kills men for being better looking than him, or badly dressed or reading books of which he does not approve. Commodus appoints magistrates according to the size of their genitals. He forces the Praetorian Prefect to dance naked in front of his court. He eats human feces and thinks it's funny. He renames the months of the year after himself. He has a fascination for the games. He fights in the arena 735 times; no one is allowed to beat him — he has his opponents crippled or drugged, or he fights old women, or children or amputees. He kills them all. Even the people of Rome, so fond of bloodshed, each given a bag of gold at the start of his reign, begin to sicken of his performance at the games.

Rome fights wars far away and wins, and the streets of Rome are clean and the people are prosperous. But there

are the hints of decay. Cracks appear in aqueducts and hypocausts. The sewers begin to smell. The water in the public baths doesn't get refreshed as often as it did. The bloodstains on the arena walls aren't scrubbed away.

Omens appear in the midst of the city. The footprints of the gods appear, impressed into the stone of the Forum, leaving their statues and going toward the walls of the city. The Gates of War open wide of their own accord. One night, Furies and birds made of flame appear in the Circus; in the morning, the sun does not rise over the arena. Something terrible will happen soon. Collapse is coming.

But the rich don't heed the signs. Commodus and his court feast and fuck and kill, like well-dressed animals.

A conspiracy succeeds. Commodus's favorite sparring-partner strangles the Emperor while he bathes on the eve of a new year. And as New Year's Day dawns, things fall apart.



LIB. V: PESTILENCE AND CHAOS

A year of five Emperors begins. The Senate name Pertinax as the likely candidate, a good man, an upright man. The Praetorian Guard have no time for an honest man, and in 90 days he is dead by their hand. The Guard hold an auction. They sell the future of Rome to the highest bidder. A man named Didius Julianus wins the prize, but the generals of Rome rebel. Three men try their hands: Clodius the White in Britain, Pescennius the Black in Syria, and Septimius Severus the African in Pannonia.

Severus brings his armies to Rome first. He executes Pertinax's assassins, disbands the Guard and finds a new one. Severus beheads Didius, the three-months' Emperor, who says, as the sword falls, *But what wrong did I do? Whom did I murder?*

Civil war engulfs Rome, from three sides. Severus wins, but in the end, he loses his grip on the dealings of the every day. Food shortages begin at Rome. He doesn't care: there's always another war to fight, two other Emperors to dispose of, barbarians to defeat. What if the civilians die?

In the end, he keeps control over an Empire that crumbles. Before he dies, he gives his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, only two pieces of advice: *Do not fight among yourselves. Keep the army happy.*

The first command they forget immediately. Within a year, they erect a brick wall down the middle of the palace, so they won't have to see each other. Caracalla has his brother murdered, and every portrait of Geta destroyed. But Caracalla, too, falls to treachery. He goes to inspect the troops. He gets off his horse and steps behind a bush, to piss. He doesn't come out from behind the bush. A treacherous Praetorian Prefect and his young son hold the throne for the shortest of times.

Elagabalus, Severus's teenage great-nephew, takes the throne under the watchful eye of his mother. He worships El-Gabal, the Syrian sun-god. He sees himself as a woman, offers half of his Empire to the man who can give him female genitals. He wears makeup and plays the part of a sacred prostitute. He fellates his courtiers in public. He holds a feast and smothers his guests in so many rose petals that they suffocate. He forces the Romans to perform the rituals of El-Gabal. His own grandmother grows tired of him and has him killed.

His cousin Alexander lasts a little longer. He tries to renovate our city. He gains his advice from philosophers and historians. Alexander wants to build a Christian temple in Rome, but the priests of the city won't have it. He prefers peace to war, and his desire for diplomacy sits poorly with the army, who mutiny and have him killed.

THE SOLDIER EMPERORS

And so it goes. Fifty years pass, and 30 or more men and women claim the throne of Rome. Some fail, some succeed. Nearly all die violently.

There is Maximinus the Thracian, who worked his way up through the ranks from a common legionary, who is eight feet tall, who can carry a horse

310:
Maximian commits suicide.

311:
Galerius dies; on his deathbed, he signs an Edict of Toleration, ending the Great Persecution. Maximinus and Licinius divide the Eastern Empire between themselves.

312:
Battle of the Milvian Bridge: Constantine faces Maxentius, just outside Rome. Prompted by a vision before the battle, Constantine orders his men to paint the Christian chi-rho (the "labarum") on their shields. Maxentius dies in the battle, caught under the collapsing bridge over the Tiber.

313:
Licinius defeats Maximinus Daia in battle. Maximinus dies of "despair, poison and divine justice." Constantine passes the Edict of Milan: he proclaims toleration for all religions, but Christianity becomes Constantine's religion of state.

314:
Constantine defeats Licinius in a civil war; the two Emperors make peace. Licinius marries Constantine's half-sister.

324:
Constantine defeats Licinius again. Constantine places Licinius under house arrest — and then has him murdered. Constantine's eldest son Crispus acquits himself so well that Constantine appoints him as his Caesar and heir apparent.

under his arm, who drowns the Empire in blood, who rules alongside a son who is as good as he is violent. When the men come to kill him, they show Maximinus the boy's head, and the brute's only words before he dies are these: *He never did you any harm.*

Dynasties rise and fall within the space of a handful of years. Three generations named Gordian are gone in seven years; the family of Decius rules for two years as do Carus and his sons. A Berber takes the throne, and an Arab, and for a brief time, a woman. Gaul and Britain leave the Empire altogether. Zenobia, the Queen of Palmyra, styles herself Empress of the East and protects Syria and Egypt from the Persians, because the Romans cannot.

For the first time, Roman Emperors die at the hands of Barbarian invaders: Decius and his elder son fall in battle against the Goths. Valerian loses to the Persians; they capture him, and King Shapur uses Valerian for a time as a footstool, or a step over which the king mounts his horse. After a time, the king tires of the Roman Emperor and has him killed and skinned. The stuffed body of Valerian stares glassy-eyed, across the Persian court from Shapur's side, a sign to those ambassadors of Rome who would fight against the might of Sassanid Persia.

The Emperors fall, one by one, two by two, to plague, or murder or war. It's no age for an honest man — this is the age of the opportunist. When Aurelian takes the throne, he cuts a swathe through the corrupt administrators he finds Empire. He decrees that all Romans worship the Sun, Unconquered in the sky as Rome herself. He is *God and Ruler by Birth*: one God, one Empire. Few fight like him, and in five short years, he wins back Gaul with diplomacy and wisdom and crushes the Palmyrenes, bringing Zenobia back to Rome in chains of gold. He wins back hearts and nations through mercy as much as martial power. But it's no time at all for an honest man, and comes a day when a corrupt official, terrified of being caught out, bribes the Praetorian Guard and has the Emperor killed.

PLAGUE AND PERSECUTION

Facing revolution from within and barbarian invasions from outside, the structure of the Empire collapses. Lines of communication that have held firm since the days of Marius and Sulla snap. Famine comes again. The plague returns, worse than ever. It seems that the wrath of God is turned against the Romans. But which god?

The Emperor Valerian is under no illusions: the Christians have done this. They live among the Romans in vast numbers. The Romans call them atheists — they take no part in the veneration of the Imperial genius. They don't sacrifice to the

memory of the deified Augusti. They walk publicly in the streets of Rome, and perform their strange rites with no thought for the traditions of their society. *They do not care for Rome.*

The gods must be placated, and if the people forget the gods, then disaster must come. It is the way of things. Something must be done before it is too late. The Romans begin to raid Christian churches. They seize the Christians' books and burn them. The Romans confiscate the Christians' property.

The prefect comes to the deacon Lawrence. The prefect demands that Lawrence hand over his scriptures, and all the wealth of the church. Lawrence tells the man to come back tomorrow. The man, knowing that whatever these Christians might be, they are not liars, returns the following day. Lawrence flings open the doors. The building is full of the poor Christians of Rome. *This is our wealth*, says the deacon. The prefect arrests them all and has them tortured to death. Lawrence himself the prefect puts on

THE PLAGUE

WHAT HAPPENS IS THIS: THE
BOWELS RELAX. THEY FLOW,
CONSTANTLY, AND SAP THE
BODY'S STRENGTH. THEN FIRE
COMES OUT OF THE MARROW
AND TAKES ROOT IN THE
BACK OF THE THROAT. THE
INTESTINES ARE SHAKEN FROM
THEIR MOORINGS BY THE
CONTINUAL VOMITING. THE
EYES BLEED IN BLAZING AGONY.
SOMETIMES, PUTREFACTION
TAKES THE FEET, OR SOME
OTHER PARTS OF THE ARMS
AND LEGS. THE MAIMING, THE
LOSS OF BODY PARTS, WEAKENS
A PERSON, SO THAT SOME
PEOPLE CANNOT WALK, OR
THEY GO DEAF, OR GO BLIND.
THIS SUFFERING HAS ITS USE.
IT IS PROOF OF YOUR FAITH.

— CYPRIAN,
ON THE PLAGUE

a metal grille over smoldering coals, and cooks the deacon slowly. In agony, the deacon prophesies that Rome will one day be under the rule of Christ, and that the persecutors will face the wrath of his God. And then he says, *My back is cooked. You can turn me over.* He doesn't even scream.

And so it goes. So end the lives of Stephen and Sixtus, the Popes of Rome. They drag Sixtus from his chair in front of his congregation. He offers himself to die first. So dies Cyprian, who cries out *Thanks be to God!* even as they put him to the sword. The willingness of these Christians to die for the sake of belief mystifies the Romans, but still the Romans keep on killing them. They throw the Christians to the beasts in the arena. They burn the Christians alive. They rush into Christian meetings and butcher them all. They dash out the brains of Christian children on temple steps.

And the Christians keep coming forward. And the more the Romans kill, the more convert to this strange, nonsensical faith.

Valerian dies a terrible, humiliating death — the wrath of the true God, the Christians say — and his son, the weak Emperor Gallienus, seems unwilling to pursue them further. Some say that he is too busy fighting against rivals and barbarians to deal with a threat from people who refuse to fight. Others — his enemies — say that his wife Salonina is secretly a Christian, and that it's her doing.

The persecution doesn't end the plague. Another Emperor succumbs. The civil strife and barbarian wars continue. And one day, the heavens themselves open, and consume one of the Emperors in lightning. Yes, God is angry, but the question of which god remains open.

FRAGMENTS: THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THASCIUS HOSTILINUS

From the Testimony of Thascius Hostilinus, Mekhet, Cenobite of the Chapel and Spear:

In the Consulship of Nummius Faustinianus and the fifth Consulship of Gallienus Augustus, I, Thascius Egnatianus Hostilinus, called Numida, called Pestilens, in life a freedman of Thebes, in death a tool of God's will, came to Rome from Thebes, hidden in a cargo of Egyptian grain. I slaked my thirst on the laborer who freed me, dispatching him to Heaven or Hell, I did not know, and sought the dead in this place.

The city disappointed me. The night streets did not shine in the moonlight. The sewers that I had heard so much about were blocked up; the effluvia of a million people ran free on streets with gutters inadequate to the task.

The glorious martyrs, whom I had come to test, were no longer in plain view, for since I had begun my journey, the Emperor had ended the proscription. Beneath the ground, the City of the Dead was unworthy of the greatest of the world's cities, and there was no welcome for me. The pagan dead told me that I was but a guest, and an unexpected one, and that my privileges were few. It having been impressed upon me that I was not one of them, that I was not their "Kindred," whatever that might mean, the body of elders told me that I must hunt in the plebeian regions of Rome, in the regions afflicted by the pestilence.

I could not but assent. I sought my prey in that region. They were pathetic. There were Christians among them, and as is my mission, I sought to torment them that they might be perfected for Heaven. But I could do little to make their lot worse. I saw a man lying in a room; he had lost his sight and both of his legs to the pes-

325:

First Great Ecumenical Council: Held at Nicaea, the council sees the formulation of the Nicene Creed, and the de facto foundation of the Roman Catholic church.

326:

Constantine has Crispus executed; someone strangles Constantine's wife (and Crispus's stepmother) Fausta shortly afterwards, with the Emperor's approval. No accounts say why. The Emperor has Crispus's name excised from all monuments and records.

335:

Consecration of the Black Abbey: Foundation of the Lancia et Sanctum.

337:

Death of Constantine. His three sons, Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans share the Empire: Constans and Constantine II hold the West, and Constantius the East. The three sons order the massacre of all their male relatives save their cousins Gallus and Julian, whom the Emperors consider too young to be a threat.

340:

Death of Constantine II in civil war against Constans.

341:

Constans bans pagan sacrifices.

350:

General Magnentius seizes power in West; Constans goes on the run, but Magnentius catches and kills Constans in Gaul.

tilence, and although the condition of his skin told me that he would survive, he shared his room with the dead bodies of his wife and three sons, who were barely two days dead. I said to him, "Where is God's hand in all these things?"

He said, "In the Kingdom, I have a body, and I shall be reunited with all of my children. In this world, I suffer, but it is God's will. I survived the Persecution for this, and I await my reward."

I sped him on his way.

The cries of the dying and the wailing of their few mourners were the song that awoke me each night, in my vault beneath this district, and soon I grew to love them, for was I not sent by God to be a plague upon the living? Was I not just a tool in the order of the pestilence?

I grew also to love the blood of the dying, to feel the taint as the blood entered my body and sat heavy in my stomach. After a time, God transfigured me, and I became as the disease all the more. I saw that those on whom I had fed and whom I had not killed grew sick, although they had been healthy, or had survived the plague, for a man cannot contract the plague, having been once afflicted. And I found that I could see within my mind's eye which of the living would soon grow sick, and I could make a man sick unto death with but a touch. Plague-tainted blood was my provender, and soon I saw that I could consume no other. In time, I took a childe, my Oedenatha, one swift to praise God's design and eager to test the faithful, and I knew as soon as she opened her eyes after death that she would one day become like unto the pestilence, as I.

And I praised God, for His will had brought me to this pass, and he had used the blind pagans of the Senex to work this in me.

A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER

The weather changes. Days grow shorter. It rains more. People begin to wear heavy, heavy cloaks in the streets by night, and Gallic breeches where once they might wear

only a tunic. The rivers swell and move faster, and carry in their waters new waves of the plague.

By the time the plague has passed, half of the streets of Rome are empty. By night, the Propinqui claim empty town-houses and *insulae* as their own, holding parties and mock feasts, around tables of decaying food, with the abandoned corpses of plague-ridden Romans as guests.

The Camarilla continues with some kind of continuity. The death that pervades the Empire only invigorates them, and their petty intrigues are as vibrant as ever. But times do change. The first few adherents of the Lance and the Spear come to Rome, and prove nearly as incomprehensible to the Propinqui as they do to the living. During the Persecution, the Senex outlaws the adherents, but each time the Senex consigns an adherent to Final Death, another seems to appear. In the end, the Senex allows the strange followers of Longinus to remain, but never allows them entry among the ranks of the Propinqui.

FRAGMENTS: THE WAR-CROW

From the Syriaca of Helvidius Bassianus, called Corvus Belli, Propinquus of the Legion of the Dead:

Oh, what prey was there to be had in those years! True, to ride in my covered wagon, attended by a single slave, presented risk, but the fields on which I feasted. I sated my thirst on the dying son of Decius at Abrittus; I wear his signet around my neck. I gorged on the groaning wounded lying at Edessa. I tasted Gothic blood, rich and thick, after the Battle of Naissus, and the blood of the Alamanni at Lake Benacus.

Brontes, faithful to me for those 30 years, drove me among the wagons of the camp wherever it might go. I have fed on the blood of heroes; I have fed on the blood of cowards. I have fed on the blood of the dying, and wherever I followed the Emperors, I have always fed well. Now that I am in Rome, I still feed well, for I have the respect of my fellows, but no meals were as plentiful or as sweet as the meals that came to me during those years of war.

LIB. VI: THE TRIUMPH OF THE GALILEAN

The wars end, finally, at the hands of Diocletian. He adopts the title of Aurelian: God and Ruler by Birth. And he abandons the title, Princeps. He is no citizen. He takes the name Dominus: Lord. The members of the

Senate are made to know whom they serve; the people are made to know whom they shall worship. Rome ceases to be capitol of the Empire. Now the capitol is wherever the Emperor is.

He splits the Empire into East and West, and in time he and his fellow Augustus, Maximian, take deputies, Caesars of their own, Galerius and Constantius. They create a First Tetrarchy, four men to control an Empire fragmented by war and depopulated by plague. In time, Diocletian will retire, taking an unwilling Maximian with him, but not before trying one last time to exterminate the Christians, once and for all.

THE LAST GREAT PERSECUTION

It begins in the year of Maximian's accession. The story goes that he calls a legion of soldiers from Egypt to defeat a Gaulish rebellion. They come, and they fight well, and to celebrate their victory. Maximian commands sacrifices in honor of the triumph. They refuse. While in Egypt, they all converted to Christianity. Maximian decimates them, killing one man in 10. He commands them to make the sacrifice. They do not. Maximian executes one man in 10 from the survivors. They will not sacrifice. He kills more of them. They stay resolved. Soon they are all dead.

Maximian and the other Emperors begin to consider the Christians a political problem. There are wars to pursue, barbarians to defeat, usurpers to crush. Some 20 years after Diocletian's accession, the Emperors decree a Great Persecution. Galerius is the instigator. He's a cruel one, this Galerius. Enormously fat, with a face flushed with blood and a voice like the roar of some wild beast, he spits bile to all who gainsay him. He exists in a permanent state of fury. Some suspect that he is insane. No one tells him that to his face. The Emperors allow him his conceit. And the persecution begins, worse than ever before.

They purge every Christian from the army. They burn scripture and target the clergy. And then they turn on the common believers of the Empire. If Constantius is less enthusiastic and Maximian has other things to do, it doesn't matter: for eight years, in every city of the Eastern Empire, the air is filled each night with the smell of burning flesh, the streets echo with the screams of men, women and children who would not burn an offering on an altar.

THE CHRISTIANS TO THE LION!

IF THE TIBER FLOODS, OR THE NILE DOESN'T, OR IF THE SKY DOESN'T MOVE, OR THE EARTH DOES, OR IF THERE IS A FAMINE OR THE PLAGUE, PEOPLE IMMEDIATELY CRY, "THE CHRISTIANS TO THE LION!"

WHAT, ALL OF THEM TO THE ONE LION?

— TERTULLIAN, *APOLOGY*

351:

Constantius appoints Gallus Caesar in the West to face Magnentius.

353:

Gallus defeats Magnentius.

354:

Gallus's reputation for cruelty concerns Constantius so much that the Emperor has the Caesar executed.

355:

Constantius appoints Julian Caesar in order to put down the rebellion of the general Silvanus.

357:

Battle of Strasbourg: Julian defeats the Alamanni, despite overwhelming odds.

357:

Constantius makes a state visit to Rome.

358:

An earthquake destroys the city of Nicomedia.

360:

Julian's troops, unwilling to fight under Constantius in Mesopotamia, declare Julian Augustus; civil war looms.

361:

Death of Constantius from a fever, before he can march against Julian. Julian becomes uncontested Emperor.

362:

Julian spends time in Antioch. He attempts to re-institute the rites of Apollo, with little success, and bans Christians from teaching law, philosophy or rhetoric.



Galerius himself ends the Persecution. He takes ill. He lies on his deathbed. His skin turns yellow and lies like a leathery sack across bones. His feet lose their shape. His bowels begin to rot inside him. And he signs an edict that makes the Christians able to live in peace again, and if his Imperial colleagues in the East ignore him, and continue to kill the Christians they can, Galerius is not to know, for he is dead, and can rage no more.

CONSTANTINE TRIUMPHANT

While the Persecution goes on, the Empire finds itself shaken by civil war. Too many Emperors appear at once, and a reckoning must be had. Enter Constantine, the son of Constantius Chlorus. Overlooked when it is time for Constantius to choose a successor, he gains the support of the army, and as time goes on, he defeats one enemy after another.

A year after the sickness and death of Galerius, Constantine goes now to face the last of the Western

pretenders, Maxentius, son of Maximian. The forces gather at the Milvian Bridge across the River Tiber. The day before the battle, Constantine sees a vision in the sky: the sign of the Christians, three times, and the words, *In this conquer*.

A scribe, a Christian, urges Constantine to use the vision, and the new Emperor orders the troops to paint the sign, the labarum, on their shields. They win the day. A year later, Constantine is a Christian, and in the West, the Christian God is the God of state, the God of Empire. Constantine makes the vision of Aurelian come to fruition in a way that the soldier-Emperor could not have foreseen: *One God, One Empire*. Constantine institutes a new kind of Church, an Imperial, Catholic Church, and with the help of bishops and scribes, he convenes the first Great Ecumenical Council, where the august men of God argue over the nature of God, define the Church and, when it is over, fall to physical violence.

He settles in Byzantium; rebuilding the city, he creates it anew in shining marble; the way Augustus once re-created Rome. Constantine calls the city Constantinople.

THE STRANGE DEATH OF CRISPUS

During the civil wars, Constantine's eldest son, Crispus the bastard, acquits himself magnificently and no one expresses surprise or complaint when Constantine makes the young man his Caesar.

But why, then, does Constantine one day have the young man executed along with his wife and son, without appeal or trial? Why does Constantine have Crispus's name removed from all monuments, all histories? Why, when a person unknown strangles Constantine's beloved wife Fausta the day after she has given birth to a daughter, does the Emperor do nothing?

What could the Emperor's favorites have done to deserve this?

The Propinqui, who watch the deeds of the Emperor with horror, have their own ideas. Some among the Cult of Augurs claim to know the truth, and one says that he has seen in the hands of one of the Lancea et Sanctum a small codex, written in Crispus's hand, which he says contains a terrible truth that must never be divulged.

THE OLD GODS ABANDONED

The Kindred are divided. The Empire has changed many times since Romulus murdered his brother, but in a millennium, the Romans have never abandoned their gods. El-Gabal and the Unconquered Sun were each one god among many, but the atheist Christians say that there is no other God but theirs. The Ala Senecta continue to observe the same rites, but the Cult of Augurs predict doom with increasing frequency. Christian Kindred, now here in greater numbers than ever before, claim that this is the end of the Camarilla; that if the rites of the gods are abandoned, there is no reason for the Camarilla to exist. The logic convinces and chills too many of the Camarilla's members.

The Sanctified have their own mythology now. They sing of Saint Daniel, who served as God's instrument in bringing down Divine wrath on the slayers of the Theban Legion. And the Sanctified have a place to look, a Black Abbey, consecrated by the childe of Longinus, wielder of the Lance, a place of dark pilgrimage, the site of a holy massacre, the institution of a Church of the Damned to match the Holy Mother Church that Constantine has created. This is the Lancea et Sanctum, and its members plan to take Rome as Constantine has done.

The pagan Kindred still hold up hope that a champion of the old gods shall arise; he shall restore Rome, for without a Rome in the hands of the old gods, there can be no Camarilla. The champion arises, but from an unexpected source.

THE RULE OF THE SONS OF CONSTANTINE

Constantine dies, baptized on his deathbed. He leaves the Empire to his three sons, Constans, Constantine and Constantius. Their first act as colleagues and Augusti is to have all of their male relatives killed, all but two, their young cousins Gallus and Julian. The boys are too young to be a threat, and besides, none of the brothers have sons, and they will need an heir or two eventually.

They take to fighting, these Christian murderers; the younger Constantine dies at the hands of Constans. Constans, in turn, attracts the ire of the army.

363:

Julian's campaign in Persia meets with variable success. At the Battle of Maranga, which the Romans win, Julian dies, pierced by a spear. No one knows where it came from.



AFTER JULIAN

363-364:

Reign of Jovian. He makes peace with the Persians, but dies of food poisoning on the way to his coronation.

364-375:

Reign of Valentinian I, alongside his brother Valens.

365:

An undersea earthquake rocks the Mediterranean on September 21st. The earthquake creates a tidal wave, which engulfs Alexandria, killing 50,000 people.

365-366:

Rebellion of Procopius.

367-368:

"Barbarian Conspiracy": Picts, Saxons, Scots and Attacotti invade Britain simultaneously; Count Theodosius, the father of the later Emperor, drives them back.

367-383:

Reign of Gratian, last of the line of Constantine, Emperor in West.

375:

On the death of his father, Valentinian II, aged four, becomes co-Emperor in West.

He flees; the army finds him and puts him to death. They put their own man on the throne, Magnentius, a Christian, but a man tolerant enough of other beliefs to keep the army on his side.

Constantius, the last of Constantine's sons, appoints Gallus, now a young man of 25, to the West to defeat the usurper. Gallus does exactly that and returns to the East, to Antioch, there to take his seat as ruler. But there's something wrong with Gallus. Maybe it was seeing his family killed; maybe it was the years of seclusion, of luxurious imprisonment at his murderous cousins' expense. Whatever the truth, Gallus enjoys the killing too much. His viciousness — made worse with the full encouragement of his wife, the Emperor's sister — becomes legendary.

But Constantius is no less vicious. Under his rule, the informers return with a vengeance, and the innocent suffer no less than the guilty at the hands of Constantius's agents. Constantius is paranoid, and the agents and informers feed on his fears, hoping to become rich. Some do. Constantius calls Gallus back to Constantinople, and the moment the young man arrives, Constantius has Gallus beheaded, and his face torn to shreds.

CONSTANTIUS AND JULIAN

But the people are fewer and the armies are smaller, and the Empire in these days suffers still from rebellions and invasions. There must be more than one man in command. It cannot be any other way.

Constantius's brothers are gone; Gallus is gone. There is only Julian. The young man has lived in seclusion, alone with his books and his teachers, for most of his life. He knows full well what happened to his father and his brother, and he knows who was responsible. He knows nothing about military life other than philosophies of military science gleaned from his books. And more: he has a secret. He's a pagan. He abandoned the Christian faith years ago, partly from disgust at the acts of his Christian relatives, and partly from a profound experience — a conversion to philosophy, a vision of a divine force utterly different from the Christian God.

He knows he must not say.

JULIAN CAESAR

In Gaul, Julian earns the respect of the men. He lives in a legionary tent. He survives on legionary rations. He endures the same regimen of training. He reads

the classic texts of the military geniuses of old: the *Stratagems* of Frontinus, the *Galic War* of Caesar. And Julian triumphs. He defeats the invading Alamanni at Strasbourg, despite overwhelming odds. He drives the Franks back over the northern borders of the Empire. Julian proves himself as wise a governor in peace as he was in war. He begins to thwart Constantius's agents in their murderous designs. Julian prevents them from raising taxes. Constantius shifts uncertainly on his throne in Constantinople. He can find no reason to remove Julian.

Then the Persians invade again. Constantius commands that Julian send the legions he leads in Gaul to the east, but that he stay behind. The men rebel; they proclaim that Constantius is no Emperor of theirs. No, Julian is their Augustus. The young Caesar recoils in horror: no, this is his doom. He will be Emperor, but this is not the time. He refuses. The men will not back down. Constantius hears the news, and readies himself to teach the upstart a lesson.

The fever takes Constantius before he can begin, and this strange, intense, driven young man finds himself Emperor before he is ready.

JULIAN THE APOSTATE

Julian gives up any pretense of being a Christian at a stroke. He grows a beard. He dresses like a pagan philosopher. The coronation in Constantinople is an affair befitting an Emperor, and the Senate, the philosophers and the bishops all come — but Julian shows whom he prefers.

He is a mystic; the Christians have driven out their own mystics, and it suits Julian to remove the Christians from the seats of power. He passes a law promoting freedom of religion for all, and allowing the pagans to sacrifice. He calls Christian bishops back from exile, but he makes no differentiation between orthodox and Arian, and is deaf to pleas from either side to crush the other. And he forbids Christians from teaching the texts of the great classical writers; without knowing them, no man can hope to gain a place in the Senate, or a place in the Emperor's court. He says, *They have Moses and the prophets; let them go to their churches and interpret those.*

He travels to Antioch, there to prepare for the overdue campaign against the Persians. He rejoices: he longs to visit the shrine of Apollo at Daphne. He wants to see the God of wisdom first hand.

He arrives at Daphne. The Oracle has nothing to say to him. He asks the priest to bring a sacrifice, imagining a joyous procession of sleek baying oxen, of goats and calves;

RIDICULE

THERE WAS NO ONE MORE IMPIOUS THAN JULIAN, AND WHEN HE CAME TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE AND GRASPED THE ROD OF TYRANNY, AT ONCE LIFTED UP HIS HANDS AGAINST THE GOD WHO CREATED HIM. HE IGNORED HIS BENEFACTOR. HE LOOKED FROM THE LOWLY EARTH TO THE HEAVENS, AND HOWLED LIKE THE MAD DOGS, WHO BARK EQUALLY AT THOSE WHO DO NOT FEED THEM AND AT THOSE WHO DO FEED THEM. IN POINT OF FACT, HE WAS CRAZIER STILL. FOR THE DOGS HATE AND TURN AWAY FROM FRIENDS AND STRANGERS ALIKE. THIS MAN USED TO WORSHIP DEVILS.

— CHRYSOSTOM, *ON SAINT BABYLAS*

THEY MOCKED HIM. THEY CALLED HIM A MONKEY. THEY SAID HE WAS A PATHETIC LITTLE MAN WHO STRETCHED OUT HIS TINY SHOULDERS AND WORE A BEARD LIKE A GOAT, AND WHO TOOK THESE ENORMOUS STRIDES AS IF HE WERE THE BROTHER OF OTUS AND EPHIALTES, WHOM HOMER SAYS WERE ENORMOUS. ANOTHER TIME, SOMEONE CALLED HIM "SLAUGHTERER" RATHER THAN "DEVOTEE," BECAUSE OF THE HUGE NUMBER OF ANIMALS HE HAD SACRIFICED. REALLY, HE ASKED FOR THAT INSULT, BECAUSE HE MADE A BIG SHOW OF CARRYING THE SACRIFICIAL VESSELS HIMSELF, WITH A TRAIN OF GIRLS IN TOW. HE TOOK GREAT OFFENSE AT ALL THESE JOKES AND OTHERS THAT CAME HIS WAY. BUT HE KEPT QUIET, AND HID HIS FEELINGS, AND CARRIED ON CELEBRATING THE RITES.

— AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS,
RES GESTAE XXII. 14

378:

Goths invade the Eastern Empire. Valens dies at the battle of Adrianople.

379-395:

Theodosius the Great becomes Emperor in the East; he rules alongside Valentinian II.

383-388:

Magnus Maximus declares himself Emperor in Britain; he kills Gratian and seizes control of the Western Empire. Theodosius appoints his elder son Arcadius Caesar in the East.

391:

Theodosius outlaws pagan blood sacrifice and pagan rites.

392:

Valentinian II found hanged. He was possibly murdered by his pagan chamberlain Arbogast.

392-394:

Pagan general Eugenius declared Emperor; defeated at Battle of the Frigidus, September 5th.

393:

Theodosius appoints his younger son Honorius as Caesar in the West. Honorius is only nine years old, and is placed under the care of Stilicho the Vandal, who later becomes Regent.

394-395:

Theodosius unifies the Empire under a single Emperor for the last time. However, before he dies, Theodosius divides the Empire into two halves, East and West, the West under Honorius, the East under Arcadius.

the man brings a single, slightly mangy goose. The Oracle tells Julian that there will be no message from the gods, and points at the nearby shrine of Saint Babylas, intruding on Apollo's precinct, built some 10 years ago.

Julian sacrifices as much as he feels fit, worthy sacrifices to the gods. The Christians mock him; the pagans shake their heads — this kind of zeal is the attitude of a Christian, they say.

Julian, smarting, commands the Christian shrine be taken down and the bones of Saint Babylas moved back to where he lived before. But the people come and celebrate, taking the relics away in procession, enraging the Emperor even more. When, a few days later, the Temple of Apollo burns down, Julian has had enough of Antioch.

A less decent man with the power of an Emperor would have them all killed. But Julian, hurt, does the only thing he can: he writes an open letter, insulting the Antiochenes for their boorishness and their stupidity, and posts it up on the pillars of the marketplace.

THE DEATH OF PAGAN HOPE

At last, Julian gathers his forces and marches on Persia.

He passes through Judea, and he orders the governor to rebuild the Jews' Second Temple, long since destroyed by Vespasian, knowing full well that the Christians believe its destruction to have been a sign that Jesus's prophecies were true. To rebuild the temple goes against the words of Christ. But the Jewish people don't care to have their temple rebuilt by a pagan Roman, and when the project begins, balls of fire erupt from the earth, and scorch all who come near. He has to abandon the project.

He takes his 90,000 men into Persia. He wins engagement after engagement, despite superior numbers, despite the failure of his reinforcements to arrive. He comes at last to Ctesiphon, the capitol of Persia. The Persian army comes out to meet him, a vast host that dwarfs the Roman army.

He defeats them. But the walls of Ctesiphon hold, and Julian cannot lay them siege. He turns back. They fight against Persian hosts again and again; and it is during a battle against the Persians, during the last stages, when the Persians have turned to flee and the Romans are behind them, slaughtering them with glee, it's then, as the Romans cut down Persians and Saracens like bloody wheat, that a spear comes from the air, comes from nowhere and pierces Julian in the gut.

When the battle is over, they carry Julian back to his tent. The doctors do all they can, but fever takes him, and infection. In three days, the last hope of pagan Rome is dead. The last thing he says is this: *You have won, Galilean.*

THE MIRACLE OF SAINT MERCURIUS

Far away, the Christian bishop Basil, once Julian's childhood friend, languishes in prison on the Emperor's orders. On the day of Julian's last battle, Basil prays for deliverance from the pagans, for himself and for Rome. And he receives a vision. Saint Mercurius, the martyred soldier from the time of Decius, comes to Basil. Mercurius shows him the field of battle at Maranga; he shows Basil how he descends from Christ's Right Hand and casts the lance himself. Basil will tell this story, and the Christians who hated Julian will remember it.

THE FINAL DAYS OF EMPIRE

The fall begins now. The men panic. They elect a Christian named Jovian to get them home. He surrenders to the Persians rather than fight his way out, and the Persians release him, a humiliated coward. He does not live long, and other Emperors come and go. Procopius, the wayward general who should have joined Julian in Persia, makes his play for the throne and loses his gamble. Three hordes of barbarians invade, all at once, and panicked Romans call it a conspiracy.

The Goths come to the east in force; they want food, but they meet only exploitation. They choose to suffer no more, and they decide to take what they want. The brute Valens, a talent-less, slow-witted man, sets out to punish them, and leads a Roman war-host to their doom, and his.

The last distant cousin of Julian takes the throne. A general from Britain murders the Emperor and steals his Empire. A boy Emperor thrives for a time, only to be found hanged when he starts to make his own decisions.

The pagans decline. One more pagan tries to become Emperor, and fails. The pagan rites are outlawed once and for all. Rome is and will be Christian: that is all.

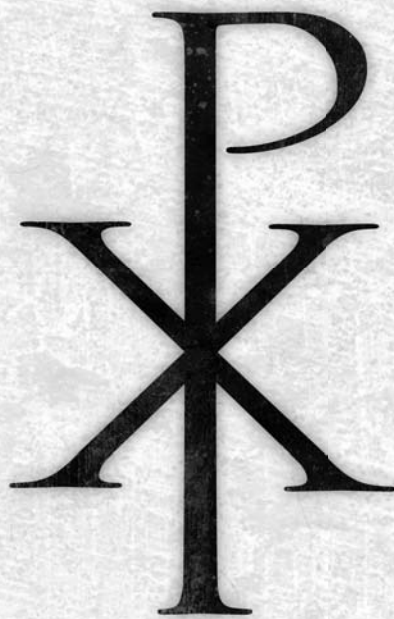
The last great Emperor makes the decision to split the Empire. One Empire becomes two. Rome shall become less than Milan and Trier in political importance, but nevertheless remain the soul of the Empire, and so when the Goths sack the city, and then the Huns, the Romans despair. The last Emperor is called, fittingly, both Romulus and Augustus. A boy, he loses his throne to the Goths, who make the Empire theirs.

And in the dark, beneath the earth, the society of the Camarilla shatters, never to reassemble. The gods abandon Rome, and the pagan monsters fall unaided, unheard.

THE LABARUM

At about this time, Christians were only really starting to use the cross as their symbol. The official symbol of the Catholic Church and the Christian Empire, however, was the Labarum, or *chi-rho*, a symbol made from the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek: *chi*, which looks like the English "X," and *rho*, which looks like English "P."

Constantine ordered his men to paint the labarum on their shields before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and the sign is now is all-present. Christian bishops wear it on their vestments. Imperial standards include it. It's everywhere.



395-408:

Reign of Arcadius in the East.

395-423:

Reign of Honorius in the West.

400-402:

A Gothic army led by Rome's former ally Alaric invades Italy. Stilicho defeats them on Easter Day 402.

402-407:

A series of attempted usurpations, rebellions and invasions weaken the Western Empire.

407:

The threat of civil war between East and West is averted only by Arcadius's death in 408.

c.409:

The Romans abandon Britain. Honorius writes to the Britons: Look to your own defense.

410:

Alaric sacks Rome.

410-476:

A series of weak or puppet Emperors hold the throne in the West.

434-451:

Attila the Hun stages a series of invasions in the Eastern and Western Empires.

476:

Odoacer, king of the Goths, deposes Romulus Augustulus, last Emperor of Rome; the Byzantine Empire continues in the East.



VERITAS OBIT MORAS

We planned it out in a private chapel — a sanctum hidden in the catacombs that ring Necropolis. This was the place of the Augurs, to whom Lucretia belonged. The walls of this chapel were carved with faces that shift and change as I look back upon them, and even in my writings I seemed then unsure. The head of Orpheus. The pagan magus, Tyana. Mithras. Baal. The haunting eyes of Elagabalus, the haunted eyes of Christ. Even now I have a memory that persists but cannot be true: I see my own face, howling in pain, carved into the wall of this underground temple. Sometimes my face is coupled with my sire's screaming visage; other times my face lingers alone, a relief all its own.

Here, Lucretia said, her own people sought to divine the future through the blood and bones of man and animal. In the guttering torchlight, you could see the dark stains and bits of dried meat and hair stuck to the walls. The texture of the floor, etched in places, had caught a great deal of blood as well — and I could smell it, the faintest tang that lingered in my nostrils (strange that I could not and cannot smell a flower or a heady coil of incense burning, not properly, not to the truth of the scent . . . but blood I can always smell, even in a single drop spilled a year before on the tile beneath my feet).

Why was it, I asked, that Lucretia wanted to destroy my sire so badly? Certainly I had my own reasons (as does every child, yes?) — but what of hers?

She tried to convince me of Decimus's ways, of how he betrayed the Augurs and how he claimed to venerate Bacchus but, in truth, had given himself over to a winged daemon that had possessed his flesh. A part of me knows now that this was probably a true thing, because I can see this happening, I can recall him feeding my blood to some mad spirit. Bowing to it, forehead against cold marble, the blood-hungry specter entering him through his ears like smoke. (A part of me, though — a far smaller part that I dare not scrutinize — remembers this happening not to Decimus, but to me. Impossible, I assume, just my own recollections broken like a mirror and cast to the floor.)

Lucretia was lying to me. I saw it then. I see it now. I always had a sense for liars, even as a common soldier. I knew when they lied to us about our odds of surviving. I knew when someone was withholding a wager. Becoming one of the ceaseless dead only heightened this sense — the way a broken tooth is sensitive to every inhalation, to every touch of the tongue.

No, my love had other reasons, and I dared to ask her what they were.

DE MORTUIS NIL NISI BONUM

I disgust myself.

I try to look back and remember what it was that drove Lucretia to hate Decimus, my sire, as much as I did. Did I write it then? I dared not, because what if someone found it? Would that not indicate evidence of a greater conspiracy? For which the punishment from my sire would be eternally damning — he would cut out my bones and lodge me with them, he would hang me by my own desiccated bowels, he would let beetle grubs hungry for blood bore into me to get at my heart. Even now, I look out over the city, and I expect him to come up behind me like a ghost, a demon, a devil. Although he's nothing more than ash on the wind, the fear still lurks.

Why was it that she wanted him destroyed? The mind reels with invention. Did her mortal haruspices see something in pigeon bones, or did the astrologers see his face in the stars? Would he help to end the life of our Caesar? Or was it something more intimate? Perhaps he killed her sire. Perhaps he was her sire (though that seems impossible, we were not of the same blood, were we?). The memory is gone, and I hate myself for that. I see the face of a young man before me staring back in my reflection trapped in the window, but my eyes are old. Hollow. Black. As empty as my heart of blood and my mind of memory.

What I do recall is her hatred. She tried to conceal it. Hide it behind a reserved mask. But it came off her in waves, hot and needling (stinging nettles, thus came the sensation of stinging nettles itching the skin).

And then she taught me the way to destroy him. It was something only I could do, and in that moment I knew that I was just a tool. Like a speculum or bone lever in the hands of a surgeon. Gone was the kindness. Lucretia didn't need to summon me with such honey, not any longer. I had tasted her blood too many times. I had taken her love and made it a part of me, so much so that I could not escape it. Yes, I was just a tool. Yes, I realized it at the time. Gods protect me, I would've seen her *strophium* — just a humble leather strap holding her breasts to her chest — or a simple circlet dangling around her ankle. And I would've loved it. I still would, maybe. Even with her gone so long from me I cannot help but think of her red lips, stained bright with ochre. I wait for my heart to beat, just once, just once.

FIDES PUNICA

Irony lived on Esquiline Hill. Or perhaps, beneath it.

One of Rome's seven hills, the Esquiline was once a wretched place, land of refuse and death. Before the Empire, the Esquiline was strewn with garbage. The poorest dead of the city were thrown in *puticuli*, the burial pits, while criminals were beheaded or crucified by the Esquiline gates, their carcasses left for birds (or worse, for us). Ah, but time changes things — or at least gives the appearance of change, we both know differently, don't we? Nero built his Golden House upon the hill. Trajan used some of the Golden House for his imperial baths. Augustus filled in and covered over the pits of death and filth, putting his Garden of . . . well. I cannot recall its name, and I dare not reach for one of my books. Who can say how much time I have left? Not enough to be frittering away with books, I think.

The Esquiline went from a hill for the wretched to a hill for suburbanites with a little bit of gold to go around. From streets filled with bones and rubbish to streets lined with ever-green oaks.

The wretchedness, however, did not disappear. It simply . . . sank beneath the ground. Dead blood and rancid run-off dripping into our open mouths, worms of the earth, helpless baby birds.

Beneath the hill was the Fons Ater, the Black Spring. Have I mentioned that, yet? How Decimus would take me there? Perform his grim sorceries upon me? I must have, yet I can't think of it.

The Black Spring was holy and unholy. A series of natural caves — in some parts straight and narrow, other parts wide and labyrinthine — turning all around an old underground spring. The caves stank of rich minerals, heady and earthy like the blood of the world. It was dark, too — darker than any place I've ever seen, the darkest of anywhere in old Necropolis. The massive doors that opened into the cave system showed a dozen atrocities, lusty, torturous, staggering even to our kind who are so used to such aberration. Many said those doors were a warning. Decimus said they were a promise.

Walking deep into the dark — or dragged into it by Decimus — I could hear the bubbling of the spring, trickling greasy down the walls. Urging my eyes to see past the darkness, sometimes I'd see the old bones and bodies from the poor pits jutting from the roof of the cave, a skeletal hand dangling like a vine in the gloom.

The Fons Ater held a curse — and, even in what passes for faith, I've come to see how the laws and old ways of the gods so often gave hints of scientific truth. No Kindred, the curse proclaimed, shall bring light into the darkness of the Black Spring. Why this was at the time, I didn't know. I suspected, of course, that to do so earned the ire of one or many gods, perhaps gods that weren't even known to us yet — the gods of maggots, the lords of blood. But now we know why it was that light — which then was fire, always fire — shouldn't be taken into the dark, don't we?

O SANCTA SIMPLICITAS!

What Lucretia taught me was a tiny thing, the incendia, the firefly. Just an ember of Sol Invictus, captured out of the air and pinched between thumb and long finger. So simple, meaningless in most instances . . . but in the right circumstances? Profound.

Decimus took me into the Black Spring, as he did sometimes. I do not know what plans he held for me, I don't know what ceremony he had in store for my skin, my blood or my soul. Would he offer me again to Bacchus? Would he take vitality from my pain? I had no interest in experiencing that again. Lucretia had changed me. Given me hope that came coupled with hate, a pair so powerful it drives me still to this night.

Again my memories blur into sensations.

Decimus's hand was cold on the back of my neck. It was the chill of a marble statue or smooth tomb. I shudder still when thinking of this final touch.

The texture of my fingers moving together. The whisper — coming from my own mouth — intoning some heresy against my own kind, some promise to the Unconquered Sun.

The leap of bright ember, an arc in the black. The smell of burning. The world aflame.

See, what some knew then and what all know now is that the rich odor permeating the tunnels of the Fons Ater? Oil. Floating atop the water. Breathing up into the cave, the fumes trapped against the ceiling.

The curse of the Black Spring that none of our kind shall bring light into the darkness? It's because the air was combustible. Even the most meager flame sets the very atmosphere afire.

I don't remember doing as Lucretia told me, but I'm still here, am I not? Her instructions were to dive below the surface of the Black Spring's waters — in some places, so deep and dark that it would be easy to disappear forever into its profundity. As the fire burned swift, eating all of the air, it created a great sucking breath . . . as if the whole of the Fons Ater was inhaling deep. And the fire was fast.

I like to think I saw the ash of my sire. I like to visit the thought even though I know it's imagined. I picture a pile of bone dust and greasy black skin shaped in the outline of a man. Crumpled perhaps on the ground. Or blasted against the wall, a shadow of flesh. Maybe if you look hard enough you can even see his fox's face, mouth outstretched, charred fangs lying in roughly in their original configuration.

Even though I remember seeing him, I know that I did not, because I also remember the fear.

The fear consumed me, and I've not felt it like that before or after that moment. I think back on how the world turned to heat and light, how the air rippled with a harrumphing lungful of fire. My hands clench. I want to run. I want to leap at the door and claw at it until it splinters, spears of wood stuck in my fingertips. I want to flee forever.

Oh, but it was worth it.

Because while I did not see Decimus meet his final end, I heard it.

I still hear it now.

One last scream. Shrii.

Such agony.

So sweet.

RERUM CONCORDIA DISCORDS

The fear is red and hot. It strips us bare.

The fear had me. An all-encompassing panic, ballooning bigger and bigger. I was only barely singed, but it felt as if my body had burned to the marrow. I could smell my own singed hair, could feel stolen blood rushing to mend the parts of my skin that had bubbled up, burning black. But even healed, my mind was lost. I



was a dog on fire, running in circles to escape the flame. A stag harried by wolves. A child trapped in a nightmare.

Who knows where I went? Did I leave the Fom Ater, fleeing into the tangled streets of the neighborhoods atop the Esquiline? Did I clamber up over the ridge and disappear into the forests?

Perhaps I cooled my wounds in the baths, though I suspect I wasn't nearly of the proper mind to take such a wise and quiet path. I know that I awoke with blood in my mouth and skin under my nails. I know that I had killed. One, maybe many. My belly was full. The fear still playing at the edges.

I also know that I awoke chained to a wall.

Torchlight guttered across from me (at a safe distance to be sure, but I still waited for the air to come alive with fire and scour me down to nothing).

This is where they thought to punish me.

Where they thought to enslave me.

I do not remember his face, only the flash of his silver ring.

He was an Equestrian, a man of the Legio Mortuum, the Legion of the Dead.

Why did they take me, shackle me to the wall? He wouldn't say. Was destroying my vile sire such a crime? Did I break decorum, running too wildly through the streets?

Didn't matter. I was vanquished, the man told me.

A conquered person, a criminal and miscreant. I had damaged the order of our society. I was a deviant element. Lest I become prey to the Nemesis, they had taken me out of the darkness and bound me to service.

Here, more irony.

They claimed I was dishonorable, deserving of humiliation.

My rights were gone. Cast to the stars.

I was now a resource to be used. A mule. A fist.

What is the irony? The irony is that they thought this was a punishment. That they were closing the door, shutting out my freedom and fettering me to serve as a soldier of the Legion of the Dead.

But a soldier is what I was. A soldier is who I wanted to be. Decimus had been my keeper, a cruel and capricious master. But now as a soldier, I'd again be offered the chance to die with some honor, to attack the enemies of a stable society with sword, fist and fang. The Equestrian was right to think me a deviant element. I had fallen far from who I was. While never a strong man, I had been made as lowly as one could become.

Oh, but he was wrong to think me imprisoned. This was no chastisement. No castigation. This was freedom. This was honor. By endeavoring to take it all away from me, the Legio Mortuum instead put it all back into my hands.



CHAPTER II: THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO ROME

WATCH CLOSELY,
CHILD, AND
TONIGHT YOU'LL
SEE HOW LIVES ARE
MADE. LOVE IS
LOST, AND GLORY
IS LAID LIKE A
NECKLACE ON
NAKED SKIN.

— JOCASTA,
DOMINA OF THE
AVENTINE SUCCUBI

The Kindred of ancient Rome stalk a world very different from our own. Theirs is a Requiem of pitch-dark nights and ever-present foreign threat, of superstitious mortals and angry gods. Theirs is a Requiem of tenuous order in a sea of chaos, gathered together under the largest city in human history for shelter and survival.

This chapter outlines the features of Kindred society that would be instrumental in the makeup of vampire characters in ancient Rome: the government they make for themselves, the tales and details of their clans, the prevailing wisdom about their Disciplines and notes on the Skills and Merits unique to the setting.

THE CAMARILLA

While it's far from perfect, the governing assembly of Roman Kindred known as the Camarilla is the first functioning multi-clan undead organization in the history of the Western world. The Camarilla brings together a startling assembly of vampires in an atmosphere of order, peace and stability, allowing those within to benefit from its concerted efforts while offering those on the outside two simple choices: integrate or be destroyed. The Camarilla also enforces the cooperation of gathered Kindred, allowing them to more easily defend themselves against the terrifying Striges (also known as the Nemeses), the relentless, ancient enemies of the Roman undead.

Idealized notions of the Camarilla still drives many vampires in modern nights. The Invictus romanticize the structure of law, the division of labor and the intense loyalty of the covenant's members, while the Carthian Movement



styles itself the inheritor of the Camarilla's imagined democracy and inclusive policy. Both of these visions are assembled from fragments of the true Camarilla, and both are equally fueled by truth and legend.

Regardless, many Kindred today still echo the statements of the vampires who walked during the reign of the Camarilla: that the governing structure of Rome's Necropolis represented the pinnacle of vampire achievement—a complicated, but fully operational system of government that left no vampire unrepresented, no vampire unfed and maintained internal peace throughout a vast Empire for hundreds of years.

This section outlines the functions of the Camarilla and the Wings that comprise it as they stood at the peak of Western Kindred history, and as they teetered on the brink of collapse that was so thorough and so fundamental that the glory once achieved was never seen again.

THE TRADITIONS OF THE CAMARILLA

The laws of the Camarilla formed an intricate web of strictures and obligations only barely recalled by the oaths of the Invictus in modern nights. However, there were, in those nights, three basic Traditions from which all of those laws originated. Those traditions are outlined here:

THE FIRST TRADITION: DOMINION

All of the territory of the civilized world is also the territory of the Camarilla. The Camarilla determines the divisions of domain. A vampire who denies tribute to the Camarilla forfeits claim to the Blood.

THE SECOND TRADITION: DESTRUCTION

No vampire shall be put to Final Death without the express legal sentence of the Senex. All citizens of the Camarilla are entitled to defense of dispute in the Necropolis Forum.

THE THIRD TRADITION: AMARANTH

All Kindred of the Camarilla are forbidden from devouring the heartsblood of another vampire. Cannibalism is the tool of the Nemeses. Those who violate this commandment risk empowering our great enemy.

THE WINGS OF THE CAMARILLA

The Camarilla is a large and complicated structure, built to encompass every element of civilized vampire society. Officially speaking, the Camarilla is composed of four Wings – each devoted to a distinct function of government and representation. Every vampire of the Camarilla is ostensibly a member of at least one Wing, and many serve two or more.

These four Wings are as follows: the legislative Wing of Ancients (known colloquially as the Senex), the militaristic Legio Mortuum or Legion of the Dead, the religious Wing of Prophets (known colloquially as the Cult of

Augurs) and the catch-all Wing of Strangers, known to its members as the Peregrine Collegia.

There is, of late, some dispute as to whether a fifth Wing of the Camarilla should be recognized. Composed entirely of religious outsiders and mystic rejects, the so-called Lancea et Sanctum is essentially a self-governing body within the Camarilla, alternately outlawed and accepted (depending on the status of an ongoing debate within the Senex).

This section details the four Wings and this fifth, unofficial body.

THE SENEX (ALA SENECTA: THE WING OF ANCIENTS)

Every recognized member of the Camarilla bows to the Senex, the formidable and influential ruling body of Kindred elites. It is a proxy body representing the will of the eldest of all vampires, composed of philosopher aristocrats and celebrity-seeking politicians. The noble legislators of the Kindred raise their many-timbered voices in the Necropolis Fora, determining the course of Roman vampire law for all. None rise against these legislators, because they represent everyone. If a vampire cannot find support in the Senex, he is not of the Camarilla.

OVERVIEW

In the founding nights of the Camarilla, the vampires of Rome were obliged, by dint of superior might, to bend the knee to the eldest among them: Aulus Julius, self-proclaimed childe of Remus. This elder was referred to, respectfully, as “Senex,” or “the Old Man.” As Kindred society grew, several handpicked representatives would speak for the ruler at the gatherings of Necropolis, and were considered, for legal purposes, to be extensions of his body. To defy them was to defy him. To injure them was to commit the unthinkable: rebellion against the most



potent of the Roman undead. Their synonymy with the eldest himself was expressed by inclusion: they, also, were popularly referred to as the Senex.

In time, the rule of Rome passed from the single elder to this collected body of representatives, but the name stuck. Although they are officially known as the Ala Senecta, most of the Kindred still use the respectful “Senex” when referring to them, either collectively or individually, male or female.

Now, the Senex is a fully populated legislative body, similar in form, if not function, to the mortal Senate of Rome.

The Senex devises and disseminates the laws of the Camarilla, representing the interests of every Status-holding vampire in the domain.

Every feature of the Senex's operation, from the system of debate that initiates legal change to the formalized posture and gesture of their public speakers, is an evolved descendant of the founding rule of the Camarilla. Tradition and familiarity are the operating guidelines of the Senex, allowing for change only if it is slow, carefully reasoned and formally accepted.

True believers within the Senex consider themselves rulers and servants: furthering the needs of the Camarilla



by giving the Kindred what they want while ensuring that their appetites don't spiral out of control. They may have the power to impose their will upon the citizens of the Camarilla, but they do so only in pursuit of a peaceful, equitable society. Cynicism and corruption are not allowed to take root in the Senex — at least, not according to its vaunted membership — and the collective voice of the Senex's assembly speaks with flawless logic and complete compassion.

Or so they say. In truth, the Senex is a body carefully constructed to skew its position in favor of the elder elite. Representation of the Camarilla citizenry is, according to critics, little more than a sop to keep the vampire population in line while the agenda of the Inner Circle of the Senex is enacted. Those privileged, powerful Kindred at the very center of the assembly, the so-called Invictus, are rarely opposed, enjoying near-complete authority to dictate and enforce the rule of law as they will.

Whether or not the vampires of the Camarilla trust the Senex, the Kindred cannot deny that the smooth function of Necropolis hinges on the Senex's continued operation. Lesser members of the Wing of Ancients take responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of vampire society, from the cataloging and legal division of territory to the translation and distribution of news and law to all corners of the domain. The nights before the rule of the Senex were a chaotic, bloody time of darkness and despair, brought to an end with the reason and the might of the elder assembly. Many of the Kindred still remember those nights, and warn potential rebels of the potential for their return. Better to obey a self-serving body of aristocrats and dwell in peace, they say, than to be no better than the barbarian beasts of the outer lands.

MEMBERS

The Senex is largely composed of the most prestigious vampires of the Camarilla and their honorable descendants. Age and demonstrated wisdom are highly valued qualities in the membership, as are the credentials of a politically prominent lineage and respectable records of achievement. Numerous younger Kindred fill the outer seats of the Ancient Wing, serving as public speakers, messengers and scholars, politicking in fierce competition to distinguish themselves and move closer to the enviable positions in the center of the organization.

Most vampires who join the Senex do so by right of Embrace. Before they are named legitimate and earn their first dot of Status (Senex), though, they must prove that they were moral, honorable Romans in life,

free and without criminal stain. The vast majority of these Kindred hail from the Julii or Daeva clan. Those accepted embody the ideal image of the Camarilla: physically flawless, intellectually superior and clad in the very finest of cloth and precious metals. Their barest gestures sum up and convey the astonishing achievements of the civilized Propinqui, bringing tears to the eyes of inferior vampires.

The rest of the Wing of Ancients is made up of Magistrates from the other Wings — those who have been elected by their peers to speak in the Necropolis Fora. They may be of any clan or background (much to the distaste of more traditional members).

The Senex is not eager to recruit new members. While other Wings may seek to expand their ranks as often and as quickly as possible, the Wing of Ancients cannot allow itself to bloat and become inefficient. It is an open secret that ineffective or slothful members are quietly pushed aside by the organization, losing their Status and falling prey to outside enemies just so that new blood can make its way onto the Forum floor and keep the Senex strong. As a consequence, all members of the Wing strive, whenever possible, to demonstrate their continuing worth and increase their fame — through means foul and fair.

PHILOSOPHY

Ostensibly, the Senex is still a proxy organization, representing the will and wisdom of a hypothetical single elder. Even if that elder no longer exists in real terms, this inherited function continues to guide the philosophy of the whole Necropolis assembly. Individuals within the Senex are considered parts of the greater body, and any harm that comes to one is considered an attack on the whole of the ruling structure of the Camarilla. Every word they speak in public is considered an expression of that ruling structure as well, and every personal action they take is an expression of the will of that structure. Every member of the Senex accepts this burden the moment she takes her seat in the assembly, knowing that this burden will stay with her for the whole of her Requiem.

THE SENEX SPEAKS FOR ALL

No Status-holding member of the Camarilla is ignored by the Senex. No matter how low, no matter how disreputable or disgusting, every vampire is allowed (and encouraged) to approach the Senex with her concerns and be heard. While a specific member of the Wing of Ancients may not be willing to listen to, and speak on behalf of, a particular vampire, *someone* must — so

long as that vampire is a legal citizen of Necropolis. Every member of the Senex takes on the responsibility of representation, and should be willing to speak on behalf of the lower Kindred of the Roman undead. Those who never seem to bring the concerns of others to the Forum floor run the risk of earning a reputation for self-absorption or sloth.

The attendant effect is, also, that the debates and declarations of the Senex are assumed to incorporate the needs of all Roman vampires, and that they are applicable to all. It would be incorrect for legislation to pass without full consideration of its effects on all the inhabitants of Necropolis, and it would be equally incorrect for a law to be meted out unevenly.

THE WORD OF THE SENEX IS LAW

The decisions of the Senex, arrived at by the confluence of the expressed needs of all Roman Propinqui, are considered final and most just. Unless a preceding declaration is questioned and reopened on the Forum floor, the declaration is considered writ and unassailable. As a result, all members of the Senex — from accountants and newsreaders to Magistrates and Consuls — are expected to treat their duties with appropriate care and solemnity. Frivolity and impulsiveness are frowned upon, for the whole of vampire society looks to the Senex for stability and preservation.

Reopening a settled issue is acceptable, but only if the introduction of new circumstances warrants a reconsideration of law. Wounded pride at a failed debate isn't reason enough to occupy the legislative assembly of the Senex.

ADVANTAGES

Members of the Senex may purchase the Haven, Mentor, Resources, and Retainer Merits at half the normal experience cost (rounding up). This cost break does not apply to purchases of these Merits during character creation.

RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

As the official dictators of religious and political law, the Senex is responsible for holding and maintaining the most important public rituals of the Camarilla. A plethora of official positions and subordinate bands have been created within the Wing for the express purpose of organizing Necropolis gatherings. Others take it upon themselves to dictate and assemble the decoration of Necropolis, including the commissioning of artworks

and the presentation of officially designated gathering spaces. While the Legio Mortuum may be relied upon to keep the peace at these events, it is the respect and honor owed to the Senex that drive the majority of Kindred to proper behavior.

Assembly: The most important recurring ritual of the Senex is the gathering of the assembly at Forum, held under sacred invocation to bring the favor of the gods and ensure the integrity those present. The monthly gathering, convened to discuss the operation of Necropolis, the needs of the Propinqui and the presentation of amendments of law, is open to all members of the Senex, and may be witnessed by any vampire of the Camarilla. The Forum is invariably filled to capacity, with members of the Wing seated in radii of descending Status (so those with the highest are closest to the center – hence, the “Inner Circle”), often spilling out into the attached corridors, straining to listen as speakers make their cases.

Officially, convention of the assembly is only allowed in chambers consecrated for this solemn purpose. A permanent ban on Kindred violence is applied in these halls, and frequent sacrificial offerings are made by high-ranking officials of the Senex to maintain the blessings of the gods. Many believe that the divine favor invoked by these sacrifices ensures that the operation of the Senex is pleasing to the deities above, forging a direct link between the law of the Camarilla and the gods.

Before each monthly meeting of the assembly, auspices are read to ensure that the time and place are most correct for a favorable outcome. While these readings were once the province of the officials of the Senex, they now fall to the Cult of Augurs, a subordinate Wing of the Camarilla. It is not uncommon for a meeting to be delayed or moved at the last moment because of an unfavorable reading – an occurrence that might be irritating, but is always considered beneficial. Better to speak in an atmosphere of divine approval than to push forward and offend the powers that be.

The formal debates of the Senex occupy the bulk of these meetings, and are held with a similarly religious adherence to protocol and tradition. The two (or more) speakers conducting a debate are invited to step to the center of the Forum circle, from which they address the whole of the assembly. The debate is conducted under the direction of a Consul, who has the power to call for closing arguments, continuances or recesses. The body of the Senex assembly votes on the outcome by an expression of the Division of the House – by seating themselves (or standing) behind the speaker they support, and responding to statements they approve of with applause.

Celebration of Bruma: Every year, on December 25th, the whole of the Camarilla mirrors the mortal world in its celebration of Sol Invictus, the “Unconquered Sun.” On this night, all are forbidden to feed on mortals and expected to participate in the lightless festivals of Necropolis, reminding them of the dark place that vampires are consigned to away from the living world and the warmth of the Unconquered (and unconquerable) Sun. No light is lit throughout the tunnels of Necropolis, and no warmth is brought to the Kindred for the whole of the night.

But it’s not the darkness that the vampires celebrate. It’s the endurance of the living world, and the understanding that this, the longest night of the year, carries with it the knowledge that the sun and its progeny will never be completely dimmed by the vampire nation, as dictated by the natural order of the world. All Kindred are reminded: their place is outside of the cycle of life and death, and below the cities of the living. Kindred are subordinate to the mortal world, no matter how powerful they become.

The acknowledgement of this subordination isn’t as solemn as it may seem. Many vampires see it as a release from worry and obligation. If they are not superior to mortals, then vampires will not aspire to place themselves among the gods – and will not invite the wrath of those gods. If vampires accept their place and make a point of rejoicing in it, they will please the forces of divinity and remain undisturbed.

Criminals condemned to Final Death by the Senex are often imprisoned to await Bruma. On the night of the celebration, they are crucified in east-facing formation and left to burn in the dawn, as a final reminder for all civilized Kindred: the sun is, and ever will be, the death of all vampires. The sun cannot be conquered.

TITLES AND DUTIES

The primary duty of every member of the Senex is to provide a voice in the ongoing legislative discourse of the Wing, speaking from a position of authority and education and ensuring that the whole of the Camarilla finds representation. Some members, though, further define their roles, standing apart from the rest of the Wing to perform specific tasks as required.

Quaestor

Just as their mortal counterparts, Quaestors are elected designates, responsible for the organization and distribution of resources within the Camarilla. Technically, since blood is the currency of Kindred, the designation of feeding grounds falls within the purview of the Quaestors.

Kindred seeking access to the treasury of the Senex or petitioning to redraw the borders of their territories must seek the approval of a Quaestor. Quaestors are shrewd negotiators and careful diplomats, forever brokering the tenuous arrangements that form the foundation of the Camarilla's ongoing internal accord.

Aedile

Aediles are officials responsible for the maintenance of Necropolis and the conducting of public festivals and assemblies. These Kindred oversee the arrangement of security with the cooperation of the Legio Mortuum, and organize the blessings and auguries that precede every official gathering of the Camarilla, with the assistance of the Cult of Augurs. Most Aediles are highly educated and expert in a wide range of affairs, from religious requirement to the details of security and law. Newsreaders and public speakers are officially under the purview of the Aediles.

Consul

The Consuls of Necropolis are executive witnesses to the legislative procedure of the Senex. Any time a policy decision is enacted, no matter how trivial, at least one Consul must be present to oversee any debate and acknowledge the voted passage of law. Without the nod from a Consul, no law may be entered into the Camarilla's roster. Consuls are not technically empowered to veto a decision: once they stand as witness, a legal vote

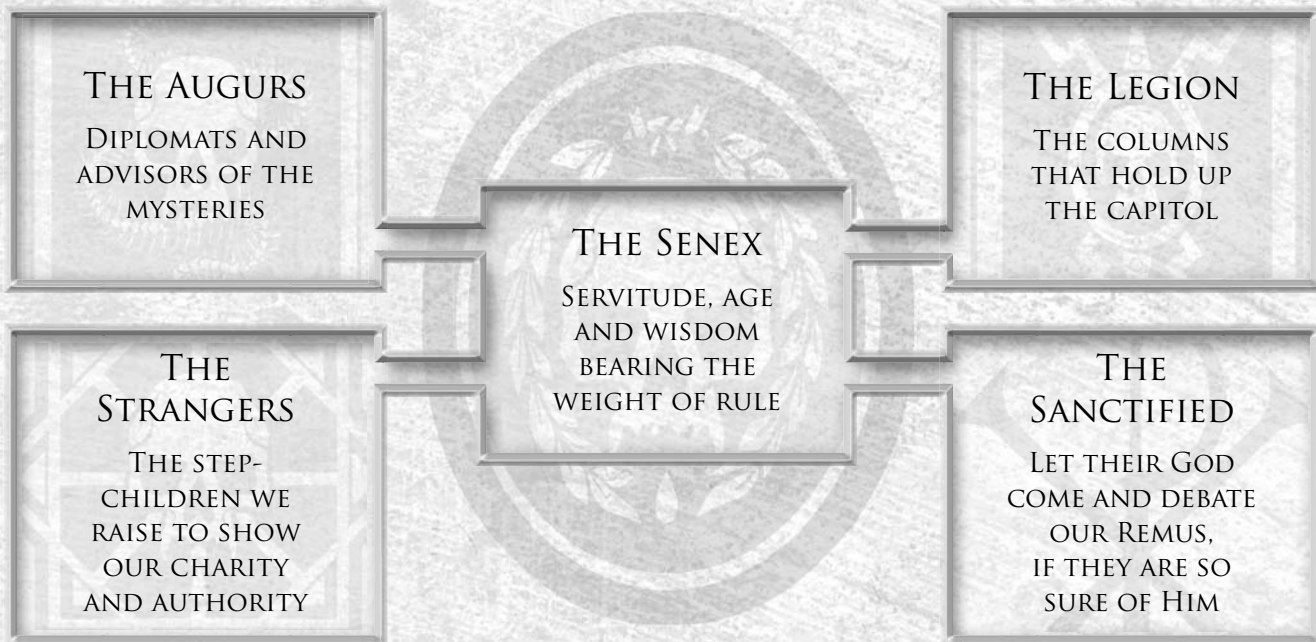
must be allowed to pass. It's the choice to stand that empowers them; they can refuse, begging off because of more important duties. Traditionally, Consuls are patrician Kindred of high Status. They are almost always chosen from the ranks of those Embraced into the Senex (as opposed to elected Magistrates), and once named, they typically hold their positions for the remainder of their Requiems.

Magistrate

Magistrates of the Camarilla are high-Status members of the lower Wings, elected to represent them on the Senex. Each Wing is allowed a number of Magisterial representatives in proportion to the total number in the Wing of Ancients, and is allowed to conduct their elections internally. Magistrates must have at least two dots of Wing Status in their original organization to gain the first dot of Wing Status (Senex) and thereby earn the right to speak before the Forum assembly.

The Invictus

The powerful Inner Circle of the Senex is referred to, officially as the Invictus. Although not strictly a legal body in its own right, the Invictus is, in practical terms, the rudder that steers the Senex. The Invictus's membership is composed exclusively of revered, elder patrician Kindred with unassailably high Status, and most vampires are loath to oppose the Invictus in assembly.



LEGIO MORTUUM

(THE LEGION OF THE DEAD)

Striding the line of civilization and barbarism, the Legio Mortuum is the Camarilla's military arm, peopled by the fierce, dedicated warriors of Kindred Society. The Legio Mortuum enforce the law of the Senex, patrol Necropolis and stand against the incursions of the nightmarish Nemeses. Exhaustively trained and powerfully armed, the vampires of this Wing's solemn ranks rate among the most efficient killers in history. Unity, loyalty and grim resolve are their great strengths, and the whole of the Camarilla stands or falls with them.

OVERVIEW

The Legio Mortuum was founded by the vampires who gathered around the original members of the Senex, pledging their arms to the vision of the Camarilla. They were the conquering Kindred of old, pushing outwards and subjugating the disorganized, lawless vampires of the time. It was the bloody sacrifice of the Legion that led to the Camarilla's conquest of the Roman Necropolis, and arguably, every success that followed. Their formation patrols define the borders of Rome to this very night.

Countless vampires have fallen before the blades, spears and fists of the Legion, but the tribulations of the Wing never diminish. As the territory of Necropolis grows and more vampires are brought under its rule, the mighty Legion must grow, too, conscripting conquered enemies, Embracing from mortal soldier stock, and reaching ever outwards. At the front lines on the borders of Necropolis, the Legion faces the ever-present threat of attack from barbarian outsiders. Frequent skirmishes keep the Legion from growing complacent; the enemy is ever restless and entirely without mercy or scruple.

And peril from without is only half of the problem. Charged with policing Necropolis and enforcing the



law of the Senex, the Legio Mortuum must split its attentions between the enemy without and the Status-holding citizens of the Camarilla, ensuring that nothing threatens the order of Kindred society. In times of trouble, the Legion is granted ultimate authority to investigate, detain and destroy rebellious elements within Necropolis, just as the members are expected to destroy invading vampires from without. High-Status vampires in custody can request a hearing before the Senex, but they are the exception to the rule. For most, all avenues to recourse are brutally cut off the moment the Legion kicks in the door of a vampire's haven.

Contrary to expectation, most of the vampires of the Legion don't make a constant practice of abusing the power they have. The vast majority of the Wing is peopled by Kindred who truly believe

in the superiority of civilized Necropolis, and regularly risk their existence to preserve it. They see the alternative with alarming frequency: clawed, vicious, wild creatures with gnashing teeth and rolling eyes, mad with the frenzies of the Beast and recklessly caught in permanent cycles of violence and destruction. Most soldiers believe that they are all that keep the Camarilla from collapsing into that chaos, and thus have great respect for the sanctity of law.

That said, it can be difficult for members of the Legion to maintain proper respect for Kindred who aren't soldiers. Grizzled soldiers often begin to believe that they are the only ones worthy of full citizenship, since they are the only ones who learn the value of strong accord and order in firsthand, potentially deadly conflict. The vampires in the "lower half" of Camarilla citizenry — that is to say, those who identify themselves as members of the Peregrine Collegia or the Lancea et Sanctum — tend to see the harder side of the Legion a bit more often than these vampires deserve.

For their part, Kindred on the outside tend to be just as unforgiving with the Legion. The undead soldiers are feared and respected, but they are also reviled as the dogs of the Senex and the oppressors of good, lawful vampires in the lower orders. The Legion's sense of duty is portrayed as simple bloodlust and bullying, and the Legion's call for a unified accord is interpreted as nothing more than mindless obedience. It isn't easy being a soldier of the Legion, but, they say, better the burden that is borne than the alternative.

MEMBERS

The Legion will take any vampire who demonstrates a strong sense of discipline, a talent for physical engagement and a willingness to enforce the law. Those with a good mind for tactics and demonstrated cool-headedness in combat rise quickly within the ranks, often gaining command of a unit within a few short years. Young Kindred flock to the Legion, knowing that it provides a powerful support structure while allowing for the natural expression of violent vampire urges.

There is room for elders and ancillae in the upper ranks of the Legion, but with the numerous threats inside and out of the Camarilla bearing down on this Wing at all times, few career soldiers survive long enough to claim the positions set aside for them. Those who do manage to endure become grizzled Generals and battle-hardened Equestrians — fierce, hardy Kindred indeed — and not to be trifled with.

Although the Legion makes it easy for Kindred to join, regardless of clan or mortal background, close attention is paid to the record of one's Requiem. Those who have questionable ties (most especially to certain elements within the Peregrine Collegia) and those who have demonstrated a dangerous disregard for authority are often turned away. The ones who remain must swear an oath of service and loyalty that is binding unto Final Death, detailing their willingness to subsume themselves to the ranks of the Legion and the needs of the Camarilla. All new recruits are expected to follow orders without question or hesitation, under threat of severe corporal punishment. Imprisonment and destruction await habitual disobedience — and the Legion makes no effort to hide those possibilities from applicants.

PHILOSOPHY

The constant threat of battle and the hard-core, militaristic training of the Legion make for simple, straightforward philosophy: the enemies of the Camarilla are an ever-present menace. They must be found, ferreted out, confronted and destroyed. Anything that doesn't help



you get the job done is potentially dangerous, because it distracts from the job.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The members of the Legio Mortuum understand the value of concerted action. Whenever possible, they present a unified front, relying on formation tactics and the overlapping strengths of its Kindred to fortify and make up for one another's weak spots. The ideal vision of the Legion is a wall of Kindred, standing shoulder to shoulder, hard as iron and moving with one fearsome, deadly will.

This ideal does not just apply to military endeavor. In general, individualism and departure from the accepted norm are met with ill favor in the Legion. Likewise, unpredictable behavior is frowned upon. Glory hounds and troublemakers are not the sort of Kindred you can trust to hold their end in battle, so they aren't the kind that Legion soldiers trust anywhere else. The perfect soldier is one who is humble, strong, reliable and merciless.

WOE TO THE VANQUISHED

The soldiers of the Legio Mortuum believe that a vampire (or a coterie or a nation) who falls in combat is stripped of all rights. If he is honorable, he dies on a blade in glorious battle. Thus, if he fails to do so, he is without honor — and deserving of any suffering that follows. Enslavement, humiliation and destruction of a fallen foe are perfectly acceptable to the Legion, no matter what the circumstances. An enemy who loses out to the soldiers of the Legion becomes a resource to be exploited — or discarded — as the Legion sees fit.

Likewise, a soldier who falls in battle and allows himself to survive as a slave to the enemy is not to be afforded any mercy. Cowards and incompetents are an embarrassment to their former compatriots, best forgotten as soon as possible.

ADVANTAGES

Members of the Legio Mortuus may purchase Resources, Fighting Style, Mentor and Retainer Merits at half the normal experience cost (rounding up). This cost break does not apply to the purchases of these Merits during character creation.

RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

Almost all of the rituals of the Legio Mortuum underscore the spirit of unity and cooperation that defines the Wing. Many of the coordinated displays of the Wing

involve choreographed gestures and marches demonstrating the single-minded operation of the Legion and the physical harmony of its soldiers.

Initiation and Promotion

Initiation into the Legio is a grueling, painful affair. Every member practices the formations and tactics of the Wing incessantly, and must demonstrate a working knowledge of its systems before he can expect to be promoted into active service and serve in battle.

Those who graduate initiation are adopted into one of the standing units of the Legion and allowed to append it to his official designation. A ceremony is arranged to accept new members; they stand at attention before the assembled Kindred of their new unit, and a list of their accomplishments is read to the soldiers gathered there. At the end of the reading, the new soldier is branded with the mark of his Legion. It is, of course, expected that he will take the pain of the brand with valor, displaying his strength and fortitude to all. A vampire who quails or flees before the heated steel is not likely to enjoy a prosperous career with the Legion. Regardless, there is no applause or open celebration — not at the ceremony. Later, when the official reading is complete and the ranks have left the field of honor, they are free to rejoice in raucous fashion — and they often do.

Promotion within the ranks is handled similarly. Any soldier who distinguishes himself is singled out and stands before his compatriots while a superior makes an official declaration of his success, and appends an honorary descriptor (such as “valorous” or “merciless”) to his official title. It is possible for an entire unit to gain honor in this fashion.

Camarilla Victa

Every year, on the anniversary of the founding of the Camarilla, the whole of the Legion commemorates the victory of their predecessors and remembers the fallen among them. Solemn ceremonies and sacrifices are conducted, and each unit salutes those who have met their Final Deaths in service to civilized Rome.

The ideal of the Legion dictates that the fallen predecessors are honored with combat, so most units push outwards on this night, hunting down uncivilized Kindred to destroy. Duty demands that most refrain, though, to ensure the continued protection of the citizenry and prevent a night of complete lawlessness on the part of the other Wings.

TITLES AND DUTIES

The ranks of the Legio Mortuum are simple and orderly, ascending in military fashion. All members of the

Wing wear clear insignia that mark their position, and all defer to superiors, as expected.

Virgatore

The great majority of Kindred Legionnaires are known as the Virgatores or "Rod-bearers." They are the rank and file, the soldiers who man the bulwarks of Necropolis. Menacing and battle-scarred, they are formation fighters par excellence. There is a tradition among the Virgatores: if you do battle with one, you do battle with them all. Even when off-duty, all of the lower ranks of the Legio are expected to respond when one is drawn into a scuffle, if only to enforce the unified brotherhood of the Wing. Virgatores wear the distinctive black crested helmet of the Roman vampire infantry.

Centurion

The Centurions are the officers of the Legio, commanding the units of Virgatores in battle. Centurions call the orders on the field of war, and they are responsible for assessment and promotion within the ranks of their units. Mirroring their mortal counterparts, Centurions

wear a crested helmet turned to the side, perpendicular to those worn by the Virgatores.

Equestrian

Equestrian Kindred are higher-Status soldiers and enforcers, taking on specialized roles within the Wing. They are the investigators and tacticians of the Legio Mortuum, the instructors and the interrogators. Vampires of the Equestrian rank wear a unique silver ring to indicate their position.

Praetor

A Kindred Praetor is the domain-wide commander of the Legio Mortuum, to whom all officers and infantry defer. She is responsible for the planning and execution of citywide strategy, in defense of the domain and policing of the law. The Praetor is the ultimate judge in the affairs of the Legio Mortuum, as well as the dispenser of summary justice in cases that do not merit the attention of the Senex. Technically, the Praetor of the Legio Mortuum is expected to liaise with the commanding Kindred of the Senex, ensuring that the policy of the two Wings is in perfect alignment.

THE AUGURS

THE SEERS STARE
INTO THE SUN

THE STRANGERS

COUSINS AND
STEP-SONS EATING
OUR FOOD

THE LEGION

THE PHALANX OF
CIVILIZATION

THE SENEX

THE AXLES,
AND THE OIL, OF
THE UNDEAD

THE SANCTIFIED

SHEEP WHO
WOULD DARE
TO DEFY THE
SHEPHERD

THE CULT OF AUGURS

(ALA VATICINIUM: WING OF PROPHETS)

Mad-eyed oracles and somber spiritual guides once founded this, the only Wing of the Camarilla that claims the right to speak directly with the gods. Those with designs on legitimate practice are lost now, among a ranging mass of charlatans, professional toadies and power-hungry opportunists. Tenuously balanced between maintaining the necessary appearance of honesty and flexing the Wing's own considerable influence, the Wing of Prophets may be straining to the breaking point but provides one of the speediest routes to power and authority in the whole of the Camarilla.

OVERVIEW

The Wing of Prophets is a parasite body, drawing off the state religion imposed by the Senex and surviving on the payment and dedication of faithful followers eager to communicate with the gods. While there are many true believers in the Cult of Augurs, the ever-present threat of disapproval from above and punishment at the hands of the Legio Mortuum have created an atmosphere of necessary corruption that silences all but the most ardent and fearless oracles. In effect, the Cult is allowed to survive so long as its readings are in accord with the wishes of the Senex.

Or so it seems. In fact, the relationship between the Cult of Augurs and the "superior" Wings of the Senex and the Legion is not quite so cut-and-dried. Centuries earlier, when the Cult was small and relatively disorganized, it may have been powerless to resist coercion. Now it may be true that the Wing of Prophets is corrupt, but figuring out who benefits from that corruption and separating consciously false proclamations from honest errors and perfectly well-intentioned readings are extremely difficult tasks. High-ranking Vaticinators know that a carefully timed and cleverly planned augury can force the hand of the Senex effectively, and that the high-ranking Kindred of the Senex themselves can

often be depended on to cover and rationalize the manipulation, if only to maintain their image of supremacy.

In truth, nobody really understands where the Cult of Augurs figures into the structure of the Camarilla. The Cult is clearly a body with significant influence, but also one with little official power. The Cult is ostensibly subordinate to the Senex, but is also the most likely to question and resist the official policies the Ancient Wing dictate. The Cult is technically held in higher regard than the Peregrine Collegia, but scandal after scandal has exposed Vaticinators taking payment from the Collegia in exchange for political cooperation. Most of the members of the Cult pursue their own agenda — empowering themselves and the Wing with opportunistic abandon, and that leaves a lot of Kindred (including many of the Cultists themselves) confused.

A crisis of the Cult, precipitated by this confusion, is rapidly coming to a head. A significant portion of the membership has begun practicing magic that strays beyond the bounds of legal divination, hoping to reinvigorate the Wing with genuine divine purpose. Others are struggling to use what influence they have to build a material fortune in hopes that it will defend them when the inevitable happens: rumors are already running wild about dark auguries, predicting the splintering and collapse of the Wing and, some say, all of Rome. Panic is working its way through the ranks with startling rapidity.

Those outside the Cult have yet to discover just how bad the Wing is getting. Most believe that the Vaticinators maintain the necessary appeasements and continue to see the favor of the gods in their readings. Since many of the Cultists are all too willing to keep the good news coming — especially in exchange for money, blood and power — Kindred without access to the Cult's inner work-





ings believe that the officials of the Cult of Augurs can be depended on to provide genuine information (or, at least, to cooperate nicely with state policy). As the official go-betweens to the gods, the members of the Cult usually enjoy a proxy respect and fear that are really meant for their divine overseers.

MEMBERS

There are two types of vampires who find their way into the Cult of Augurs, and they are as different from one another as night from day.

The first group is genuinely faithful and fearful of the gods, seeking to make a practice of maintaining favor for the Camarilla and guiding the Kindred in accordance with the will of divinity. Unfortunately, because these vampires often bring warnings to the Camarilla — more so in recent nights than those long gone — these vampires are less likely to be perceived as sage advisors and more often treated as simple or self-aggrandizing troublemakers. The designation couldn't be further from the truth, but it tends to stick.

The second group is composed of the real opportunists in the Wing: liars and smooth-talkers, they make a practice of telling the Senex and the Kindred of the Camarilla exactly what they want to hear. These vampires are the profiteers of the spiritual trade, and their frequent attacks on the incorruptible adherents of real faith are usually assisted by the dupes the vampires work so hard to please. Where once these frauds were few and far between, they have multiplied without restraint, and now threaten to dominate the whole of the Wing.

PHILOSOPHY

The Cult of Augurs is ostensibly a purely religious society, but many of its members are motivated by worldly concerns. Well aware that they are only grudgingly tolerated by the Senex, many of the oracles and priests of the Cult are more than willing to make sure that the interpretation of their auguries remain in keeping with official declarations of the Camarilla — in a way, they are as much public relations experts as they are ceremonial advisors. Therefore, many have no illusions about their less-than-divine purpose within the structure of Kindred society.

RITUAL IS FAITH

To most members of the Cult of Augurs, it doesn't really matter *what* you believe, so long as you make a point of performing the proper rituals. Those who memorize dozens of complicated (and crowd-pleasing) rituals and

observances tend to go far in the Cult, while faithful but subdued Kindred are less likely to attract attention and aid in empowering the Wing.

Even those with true belief admit that elaborately staged rituals and expensive sacrifices are more likely to appease and honor the gods. These vampires point to the structures and detailed practices of the Veneficia, the blood magic of the Cult, demonstrating that more demanding and sophisticated rituals tend to produce more powerful results.

BLOOD IS POWER

Those with true belief know that sacrifice is the fuel that feeds the flame of power. For Kindred, there can be no greater sacrifice than blood — whether one's own Vitae, or that of the nourishing mortal stock. All of the rituals of the Cult are centered around the willful surrender of blood to the gods, invoking a divine exchange for power or knowledge.

Those who care little for faith still understand that blood is the ultimate currency of Necropolis, and they structure all of their operations to provoke sacrifice from the masses. Many of the rituals of the faithless Vaticinators are constructed so that they can skim a proportion of blood (or a fair representation of it in influence or other resources) from the obeisance of the Camarilla.

ADVANTAGES

Members of the Cult of Augurs may learn the rituals of Veneficia.

RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

Structured pomp and ritual are the bread and butter of the Wing of Prophets. Whether it's a simple augury performed before an assembly of the Senex or a long, complicated rite of prayer, sacrifice and dance designed to win the favor of a god, the Cult of Augurs makes a business of astonishing and frightening the masses of the Camarilla with the Cult's works. Nothing is subdued; every act is drenched in occult trappings and mysterious gesture designed to highlight the specialized education required to perform it.

Public Rites

The public rites of the Cult are performed with great gravity and an air of exacting detail. While they may or may not be sincere (and may or may not incorporate the true magic of the Veneficia), they are always spectacular. Those among the Cult who cynically provide a service to the highest bidder believe that they are bound

to give the client something worth paying for — and something that nobody else is qualified to give him. Those who truly believe in the power of the gods take the arcane, multi-tiered rituals very seriously, knowing that the harder they work, the more likely the gods are to take notice.

The most common public rite of the Cult is the augury: a reading of omens designed to provide recommendation on a course of action. Of the many auguries performed by the Cult, the most popular is the haruspices — the examination of the entrails of a sacrifice. Specialized rituals dictate the exact details: which organs must be examined, which type of animal is to be sacrificed and the circumstances of the sacrifice. Other types of professional augury performed by the Cult include the interpretation of dreams, the movement of undirected animals (birds or rats) or inebriated mortals, the movement of fire, blood or water and, most dangerously, the colors of the approaching dawn.

Many of the other rites involve ritual cleansing, blessing by bathing in sacrificial blood and prayers designed to invoke or appease vengeful gods.

The Calendar

The Cult of Augurs presides over a regular ritual sacrifice meant to maintain the blessings of the gods on the whole of Necropolis and guarantee the continued good grace of the Camarilla. Three times a month (on the nights of the full moon, half moon and new moon), the ritual is performed in great assembly, before a mass of the Cult and the Senex, with attending Kindred from all Wings of the Camarilla. On these nights, the high-Status members of the Cult call for the appeasement of the gods and the reversal of ill omen, spilling a great quantity of blood.

The Veneficia

Veneficia are the legal ritual sorceries of the Cult of Augurs, powered by Vitae and known to invoke potent real-world effects. Drawn from the secret teachings of the Cult, Veneficia represent the dedicated practice for the true believers and the ultimate tool of intimidation for the cynics. No less arcane than the general public rites, these rituals have been proven to work *only* when the complicated steps and full sacrifice are performed properly. The magic of Veneficia may be invoked without belief in the gods, but not without belief in the Veneficia and their rigid requirements.

TITLES AND DUTIES

The Cult of Augurs is no less stratified and static than the Senex. In gatherings and ritual, members of the Cult

stand in ranks of descending Status, just as members of the Senex do in assembly, with the most revered Kindred closest to the altar of sacrifice or augury and the lowest supplicants at the outer edge.

Vaticinator

The most general title of the Cult of Augurs is the Vaticinator. Every member of the Cult bears this title, from the lowest student to the great leaders of the Wing. More an honorific than an actual title of function, the word is commonly used by outsiders as well as those within the Cult. All Vaticinators of the Camarilla carry a small iron knife for sacrificial augury, and wear a distinctive black or gray robe with part of the mantle raised, as a cloak, over the head.

Scholar

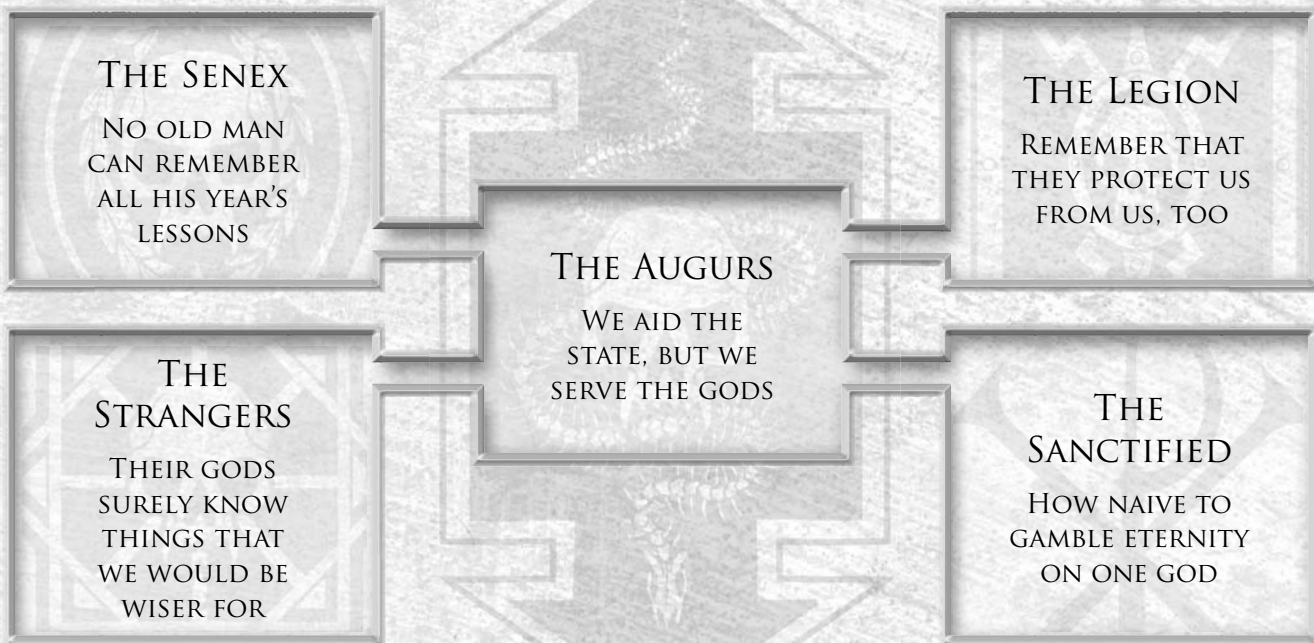
A Scholar is a specialized Vaticinator of the Cult dedicated to the preservation and study of ritual. All Scholars are expected to serve as instructors and students, and many work to maintain libraries of esoteric texts. The Scholars have a developed cant of their own, designed to obscure the knowledge they exchange and exclude outsiders from the secrets of the cult. Scholars are marked with a single white stripe on their robes of office.

Epulones

Specializing in securing the blessings of the gods over the official chambers and gatherings of Necropolis, the Epulones are the most sought-after and highly paid members of the Cult. They oversee the sacrifices performed in cleansing rituals and verify the approval of the gods before any major undertaking by the Senex or the Legio Mortuum. Members of the Kindred Epulones are marked by a red stripe on their robes of office, and they carry specialized, shallow bowls designed to catch the blood of sacrifices.

Rex Sacrorum

The nominal leader of the Cult of Augurs in any domain is referred to as the Rex Sacrorum — the king of ritual. If a female vampire fills the position, she is referred to as “Regina Sacrorum,” or the queen of ritual. The Rex Sacrorum oversees all operations of the Cult in the domain, and leads the great gatherings and rituals of the Wing of Prophets. The position technically implies the greatest knowledge and the closest relationship with the gods, and thus carries indisputable weight in matters of Wing policy. This vampire presides over the monthly sacrifices of the Roman calendar, and his recommendation is highly sought after by those outside the Wing.

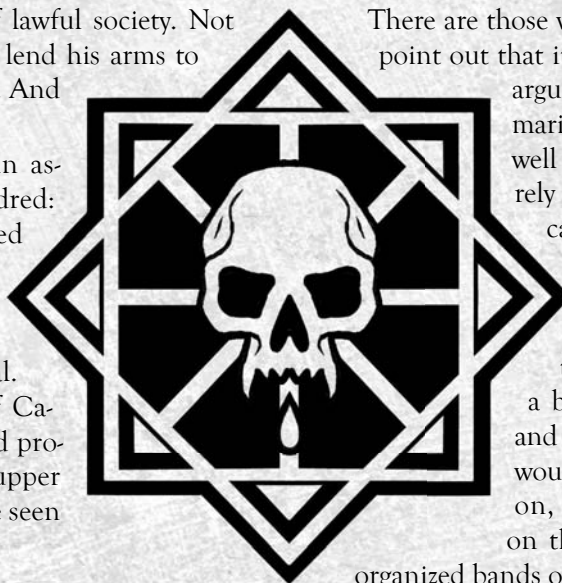


THE PEREGRINE COLLEGIA

(ALA HOSPITIA: THE WING OF STRANGERS)

Not everyone can be part of lawful society. Not everyone can speak eloquently, lend his arms to the Legion or speak to the gods. And not everyone wants to.

The Peregrine Collegia is an assembly of low-caste Roman Kindred: foreigners, criminals, Embraced slaves, cripples and prostitutes representing the bottom strata of the Camarilla, banded together in the interest of survival. They operate at the fringes of Camarilla Society, engaging in and providing illegal services that the upper classes rely upon, but cannot be seen to tolerate.



OVERVIEW

The Peregrine Collegia understands that good Roman citizens aren't the only mortals who end up Embraced. This Wing is the catch-all for those unqualified to lead, unmotivated to fight and uneducated in the ways of the gods, as well as those who abandon their posts in the other Wings, sinking to the shadowy depths of Necropolis in their dishonor. There's always a use for a vampire in the Collegia, provided he's willing to do the work necessary to survive.

Contrary to assumption, the Peregrine Collegia is not a rebellious body. In fact, members of this Wing are the real-world manifestation of an ambitious policy of inclusion created by the Senex, designed specifically to organize and integrate disparate Kindred elements into the whole of the Camarilla. The Peregrine Collegia is a legal entity with prescribed rights and privileges, formed only a few decades after the establishment of Necropolis, and the Wing's members have the same recourse to representation in the Senex and policing by the Legio Mortuum as any other recognized Roman vampire. They may not like to take advantage of this recourse (and, indeed, often judge those who do harshly), but it exists nonetheless.

There are those within the Peregrine Collegia who point out that it could hardly be otherwise. They argue that the upper strata of the Camarilla are ideal entities, functioning as well as they do only because they can rely on the Kindred of the Collegia to carry out criminal and distasteful tasks on the upper strata's behalf. Without assassins and thieves to cull the ranks as needed, they say, the Senex would grind to a bloated halt. Without prostitutes and gladiators, the soldiers of the Legio would have nobody to vent their lusts on, and would unleash themselves on the leadership. What's more, the

organized bands of the Wing work their own system of enforcement, rooting out unaligned vampires who manage to elude the rigidly predictable Legio Mortuum and pressing them into service (or destruction). The Collegia isn't a distasteful blemish, enjoying kind tolerance from above — these vampires are absolutely essential. Their establishment as a legal entity was inevitable, and the connection between the Senex and the Collegia represents a necessary line of communication between the strata of Camarilla society.

Of course, the relative worth of the Collegia is a matter of opinion. The members of the Wing of Strangers tend to rate themselves more highly than the conservative elements of the superior Wings are wont to allow, and clashes often result. The enforcers of the Legio Mortuum represent the physical front line of these clashes, patrolling the halls of the Collegia and stepping down hard whenever the low vampires try to assert their freedoms a little too strenuously. A natural animosity between the Legion and the Kindred of the Collegia has developed, and it's not unusual for limited violence to erupt between the two. Technically, the Collegia is subject to the legal powers of the Legion, but in reality, many members will do what they can to hinder or hamper the Legion's investigations even when they don't stand in outright defiance.

The many bands of the Collegia may not agree on all points, but they do know that they can rely upon one another for protection and connection in business. Since they've been joined by law, all of the Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia understand that they will be viewed as a single body by the Senex and the Legion, so they might as well join together in matters of mutual interest. Kindred with nothing in common come together in the Collegia to ensure their survival, and to strengthen the whole of the Camarilla with their unique talents. When they are oppressed, there is no Wing that can draw on resources more diverse and terrifying than the Collegia. When they are pleased, there is none that can rival its celebrations.

MEMBERS

Every vampire who dwells in the rule of the Camarilla but doesn't serve as an official member of one of the upper Wings is, by law, relegated to the Peregrine Collegia. A motley assortment of Embraced foreigners and conquered barbarian Kindred, criminals, artists, prostitutes, slaves, cripples and crazies make up the majority of the "catch-all" Wing of Strangers, brought together to form the lowest stratum of the Camarilla. Those who don't find a band of like-minded individuals to join with inside the Wing are lumped together by professional or physical similarities.

Disgraced members of the upper Wings are sometimes cast down into the Peregrine Collegia, but few who find their way to the Wing in this manner manage to avoid Final Death for long. It's not easy falling from the Senex to the Collegia, and woe betide a dishonored member of the Legion who finds himself stripped of insignia and sent reeling to the waiting claws and fists of the Strangers.

But the discards and outcasts aren't the only vampires who make their way to the Collegia. Some vampires, disillusioned by membership in one of the upper Wings, make their way down the ladder of Kindred society, throwing in with the Wing of Strangers. Some are happy with the choice, while others languish in shame, knowing that they are forever associated with the lowest rabble of Necropolis, but unwilling to leave Camarilla society completely behind. Either way, those who can hide their disdain for the low Kindred can still carve a pleasant existence out for themselves in the Collegia, provided they're willing to do what's necessary to establish it.

PHILOSOPHY

If the varied bands of the Peregrine Collegia can agree on an overriding philosophy, it is this: that those with the will have the means to power. A meritocracy of sorts, the Wing of Strangers allows for open competition among



the Wing's ranks, allowing those with strength, cleverness, charisma or good fortune to rise on the merit of their virtues. The predatory violence of the Kindred is given a measure of free rein, creating a dangerous crucible that burns away the waste, leaving only the toughest and most capable vampires standing.

That's not to say that all weakness is destroyed. Those who are willing to forgo ambition often manage quite well, usually latching onto a powerful group and providing small services in exchange for protection. Only the ones who try to rise to the top can expect to be tested, and only those who are tested can hope to rise to the top.

The Peregrine Collegia is not concerned with legal power, and is quite happy to let the other Wings claim it for their own. The law, in the opinion of most vampires in the Collegia, is only as effective as the vampires who enforce it, and is often only relevant in so far as it is enforced. While those in the Wing of Strangers don't exactly think of themselves as outside the law, many in the Wing of Strangers pay little more than lip service to official decrees, working to circumvent any that impede their business as quietly and efficiently as possible.

POWER WEARS MANY FACES

You don't have to be a popular speaker on the Forum floor to get things done, and you don't have to be a commander of the Legion to strike down your enemies. The Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia believe that anyone can achieve respect and influence, provided that she's willing to do what's necessary to get there — and to hold on to it once she has it. The trappings of wealth and the aesthetic concerns of the upper classes are nothing to the Collegia, which understands that a filthy cripple can be just as likely to command an army of loyal killers as a toga-wearing aristocrat.

KNEEL IN LIGHT, RISE IN SHADOW

The vampires of the Collegia have a keen understanding of distasteful necessity, not just the one they represent to the Senex, but also the one that the Senex represents to them. As long as there is a legitimate ruling body willing to tolerate them, the Kindred of the Peregrine Collegia will make the effort to appear subservient, even if they are anything but. No declaration of the Senex is openly defied by the Collegia, nor are the Senex's members openly mishandled. Every liberty taken with the law must be taken in secrecy, so as to preserve deniability and ensure the survival of the Wing.

ADVANTAGES

Members of the Peregrine Collegia may purchase the Allies, Contacts, Haven and Herd Merits at half the normal experience cost (rounding up). This cost break does not apply to purchases of these Merits during character creation.

RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

Of all the Wings of the Camarilla, the Peregrine Collegia is least concerned with the details of ritual. Most of the membership does not feel obliged to participate in the lofty rites of the Roman Necropolis, and few are as concerned with maintaining the image of "good citizens" as they are avoiding notice. Nevertheless, the Wing of Strangers has some practices of its own, organically developing as the population of the Wing grows and diversifies.

Paying Dues

Every member of the Collegia falls into an officially designated "band," whether she wishes it or not. These bands are overseen by the Tribunes of the Wing, who communicate the needs of their Kindred to the Magistrates of the Senex. Some of the bands are intentionally organized, while others are simply loose conglomerates of vampires who can be classified as compatriots, assigned to one another for legal purposes. There might be a band of slaves-turned-thieves, for instance, or one of Gallic Nosferatu.

Every member of a band is expected to contribute in some fashion to the protection and empowerment of her associates, whether or not she feels a genuine kinship. This contribution can be a matter of resources, the provision of a haven space or assistance in securing blood. Many Tribunes organize a monthly round of appointments with the members of their bands, encouraging an ongoing program of these contributions.

The status of the Kindred of the Collegia depends, to a significant degree, on the nature and frequency of their contributions to fellow members. Those who give nothing are not likely to gain the esteem of their contemporaries. Those who sacrifice much of what they have to help their fellow Kindred, on the other hand, are likely to be honored.

Competitions of Merit

Every so often, a band of the Wing will gather together in celebration, and the membership will engage in unofficial demonstrations of talent and merit for the entertainment of their compatriots. These gatherings provide an opportunity to connect with fellow

members of the band, initiate (or finalize) business transactions and earn acclaim. The skills demonstrated at these gatherings are not always literal demonstrations, especially when criminal activity is involved. An assembly of assassins is much more likely to feature a display of acrobatic finesse and harmless sleight of hand than actual violence, whereas a collection of forgers is likely to feature a demonstration of artistic talent and competition of comparison designed to reward an exacting eye for detail. It is possible to earn Status by making impressive display at these competitions.

TITLES AND DUTIES

Each band of the Collegia is organized according to the preference of the membership. Some feature a stratified structure (even, in some cases, mirroring the ranks of the military Legion), while others are loose bands of equals, trading duties back and forth between associates without predetermined order.

There are two offices of government imposed on the Peregrine Collegia by the Senex, though, and the legal operation of the Wing requires that these offices are maintained and honored in some sense.

Tribune

Every band of the Collegia must elect a legal representative, called a Tribune, who is responsible for liaising with the Magistrates of the Senex and accountable for the activities of his band. If a member of the band commits a crime against the Camarilla, the Tribune must answer to the Senex and aid the Legio in pursuit and punishment of the vampire in question. Every Tribune is

expected to know the names of all members in his band, and should be able to locate or communicate with each member if necessary.

Although Tribunes are technically empowered to exclude vampires from their bands, most leave the exercise of this right to the membership, commonly allowing the right to fall to a vote.

A new vampire in the Collegia earns his first dot of Status by being accepted into a band. After earning that Status dot, it is possible to leave a band (although doing so might provoke recrimination from the membership who provided sponsorship) and seek membership in another, or even to create a new band, becoming its *de facto* Tribune. Vampires who remain the sole representative of an empty band and fail to attract members for more than a couple of months, though, are usually disgraced.

Tribunes are rarely visibly distinguished from the rest of their bands. In general, one needs to know the band to know who the Tribune is — otherwise, an uncomfortable (and potentially humiliating) approach to a member for inquiry is necessary.

Governor

The Governor of a domain is a single vampire, chosen by the assembly of Tribunes, who speaks for the whole of the Collegia in matters that affect the Wing. Most of the members of the Wing of Strangers consider the position of Governor to be a sucker's game — making its holder into a target for the accusations of the Legio Mortuum and providing little in the way of actual material power. The Governor of the Peregrine Collegia is usually also a Magistrate of the Senex.

THE AUGURS

THEIR VISIONS
MATTER ONLY IF
THE POLITICIANS
SEE THEM, TOO

THE LEGION

THE SWORDS
AND PHALLUSES
WAVED ABOUT BY
OLD MEN

THE STRANGERS

WE SEE THE
STREETS AND
STONES OF THIS
CITY AS CLEARLY
AS ANY

THE SENEX

THE OLD MAN
SEDUCES WOMEN
HE IS TOO OLD
TO BED

THE SANCTIFIED

EXILING
THEMSELVES BY
RELIGION, TO
MATCH THEIR
POOR STATIONS

LANCEA ET SANCTUM

(THE CHAPEL AND THE SPEAR)

Only barely recognized as an independent body within the Camarilla, the organization known as the Chapel and the Spear is a religious offshoot of the Peregrine Collegia, gathering together the faithful vampires of diverse creeds and cults. The mysterious and mystic Kindred of the Chapel and the Spear are dark harbingers of a new age, they claim, crude predators in service to divinity. The cruel pain of systematic oppression and deprivation are the operating norm for these vampires of faith, and yet, they endure — even thrive.

OVERVIEW

Originally founded by a small band of Embraced Judaic slaves, the movement that would eventually become the Lancea et Sanctum began at the very bottom of Roman vampire society, espousing an approach to faith and servitude that was ill-received by the majority of the Camarilla. Reviled and dismissed by the upper strata of the Propinqui, the slaves bore a hardscrabble existence in Rome's filthy fringe in the Peregrine Collegia, slowly bringing faithful new converts into their ranks. By the middle of the first century CE, an agreement forged by the original membership allowed for the inclusion of a number of small Gnostic and pre-Christian cults, some made up of no more than one or two vampires. Assembling religious tracts and philosophic arguments into a mishmash doctrine based on their various mortal faiths, they came together out of a sense of shared misfortune and forged a common creed of startling resilience. They met regularly in the Sanctum, a small, out-of-the-way chamber in Necropolis, and swore there to survive the persecution of the Camarilla and keep true to their various faiths.

But it was the advent of Longinian doctrine, the first real religious tract unique to vampires, that electrified the assembly. Brought to the Roman vampires by the disciples of the Monachus, childe of the dark prophet himself, the *Testament of Longinus* gave the Kindred their own martyrs, their own saints and their own place in

God's divine plan. The story of Longinus's conversion to vampirism on the blood of the Lord, and his subsequent sufferings and revelations overtook the assembly, and many existing texts were quickly amended to better dovetail with it. Some faiths were quietly eliminated from the gathering (most by simply ejecting them from the group, for the Lancea, as the followers of Longinus styled themselves, were loathe to slay vampires), while others maintained a presence, either by merging with the rapidly dominating faith or demonstrating their compatibility with it.

With the rapid success of early mortal Christianity, the Lancea et Sanctum grew at a startling rate. Embraced Christians and converted pagan vampires flocked to the assembly throughout the third century CE, despite (or, in some cases, because of) the persecutions of the Camarilla. While the Legio Mortuum hunted down those the Senex declared offensive, the Lancea et Sanctum opened its arms to all who sought shelter. All vampires were "Kindred," to the new vampire church, and all merited sanctuary. The brutal visitations of the Legio were endured, and strangely, no matter how thoroughly destroyed a cell of Sanctified Kindred might be, it always seemed to inspire the rise of another.

The constant defiance of tradition, including the importation of sorcerous arts from Egypt, the dissemination of a message that placed orthodoxy ahead of service to the Camarilla and the tendency to publicly deny the dictates of Roman vampire society made it impossible to reconcile with the philosophies of the Senex and existing vampire law.

Near the end of the third century CE, after a series of particularly violent attacks on the membership, the Lancea et Sanctum broke the last of its ties with the Peregrine Collegia, declaring itself a distinct legal body. The Collegia was only too happy to let the Sanctified go; for decades, the Sanctified had brought the Collegia nothing but trouble. Predicting the rapid destruction of the assembly, the Collegia made no effort to stop



FROM THE TEACHINGS OF LONGINUS

One: We are creatures born of sin. It is the will of God that we yet walk, even after death, for we are his messengers to Kindred and men. We are the wolves of Heaven, and in our presence, only the faithful do not tremble. We are holy lightning, and when we strike, only the faithful do not burn. Where we walk, evil is destroyed. Where we walk, God takes those worthy of his love to his own side.

Two: What we once were is not what we are now. As a mortal is a sheep, so are the Kindred wolves among them. God defines that role — wolves feed on their prey, but are not cruel. Accept your role, but seek not to taint it with your desires.

Three: That our bodies are the irreconcilable enemies of our souls. The hungers and rages of the body must not be allowed to overwhelm the holy purpose of the soul. We endeavor to maintain control of our impious urges.

Four: That with the power of undeath comes limitation. We hide among those who yet live, making ourselves known only to exemplify fear and cull the unrepentant. We make our own only to do God's work. We must not slay a fellow, except to preserve the word of God. Woe unto the Kindred who takes the soul of a fallen enemy.

Five: Our purpose is to serve the word. When we stray from our purpose, we are to be chastened. The light of the sun and the heat of the flame are the scourges of God, purifying and punishing us when we stand as we should not.

the Lancea's withdrawal, and didn't intervene on their behalf. The violence of the Legio Mortuum redoubled, raging throughout Rome. Horrifying battles were waged in the ash-strewn halls of Necropolis, coming to a close with the destruction of more than half of the newly independent assembly.

But tonight, the Lancea et Sanctum is as strong and as populous as it ever was. The fallen founders are martyrs, remembered for their great sacrifice and inspiring, unwavering faith. The outlaw priests of the self-styled "covenant" — for their arrangement is with God himself, as a body politic all on their own, not a Wing of any greater body — move through the shadows of Necropolis, bringing the word of the dark prophet to the Kindred and driving the mortals into the arms of God. The Sanctified consider themselves the moral guides and guardians of the living and undead worlds. They speak openly and fearlessly to the vampires around them, holding true to

the instruction of the Monachus. When the torchlight of disapproval shines upon the Sanctified, they hold fast to their faith, sacrificing themselves, if necessary, to preserve their doctrine and provide inspiration to their brethren. When it turns away, they move quickly, making inroads into any and all of the Wings of the Camarilla with astonishing alacrity. The Sanctified are hated and hunted, but they do not fear. They believe, wholeheartedly, that the will of the Lord works its way through them, and that their survival and proliferation is ordained. To them, the decadence and rot of Rome is all too clear, and the black night of final judgment is approaching with thunderous speed.

MEMBERS

Any vampire willing to accept the doctrine of the Lancea et Sanctum is made welcome into the ranks of the covenant. Because of this open policy, the church is populated by a wide array of Kindred, drawn from all races, clans and places of origin. Those with Judaic or Christian mortal foundation most easily understand the language of the church, but its inclusive assemblies and the limited protection the Lancea affords also attract those of many splinter sects and Gnostic cults.

The membership of the vampire church is, admittedly, weighted toward those considered too wretched, feeble or otherwise undesirable to the Wings of the Camarilla. Seeking refuge in the arms of the Sanctified, the dregs of Roman vampire society always seem to find their way to the church, much to the amusement and derision of their betters. Whether they are ennobled by their newfound faith or debased by their pathetic eagerness to please is, of course, a matter of perspective.

PHILOSOPHY

Members of the Lancea et Sanctum believe that they are the undead agents of the one true God on Earth. In accordance with the teachings of Longinus and the assembled gospels of the Lancea's early founders, the Sanctified work to interpret, preserve and preach the message of divinity in its application to all vampires, everywhere.

The legend of Longinus and the veneration of the Spear of Destiny are central to the doctrine of the vampire church, taking precedence in the teachings of the burgeoning covenant. However, the teachings of Judaism and pre-Christian Gnosticism often overlap with Longinian doctrine, and many of the instructions of the church are fanciful, confused and even contradictory. The message of the Lancea et Sanctum has not solidified into dogma

yet, and is constantly undergoing shifts in word and tone. What one priest says tonight may be completely different from what another says tomorrow.

Because of this mutable instruction, Sanctified Kindred are tolerant of a lot of strange views. So long as another vampire identifies as a member of the church and an opponent of the pagan practices of the Senex, most will accept her, even if they expend significant effort, thereafter, in debating her beliefs and attempting to win her over to their version of Sanctified doctrine.

Throughout the Lancea et Sanctum, though, certain commandments are already locked in place. No matter how the doctrine of the church is interpreted, these central statements remain unchanged and are expected to be obeyed.

Beyond these commandments, two philosophical threads seem to run through every variant of the church:

WE WILL SURVIVE

For the Sanctified, there is one unwritten commandment that is understood by all: every individual must be prepared to sacrifice himself in order to preserve the church and its doctrine. The persecutions endured by individual members are considered insignificant, so long as they do not threaten the integrity of the gospels and the capacity of the church to seek new recruits. Likewise, any violation of tradition or law, especially those committed by the upper ranks of the Sanctified, is considered acceptable in so far as it promotes the survival of the church and the preservation of its teachings. There is, of course, a limit to this justification; those who truly go too far are likely to be reined in by their brethren — but that limit is fuzzy and difficult to define.

JUDGMENT IS INEVITABLE

Much of the doctrine of the Lancea et Sanctum is contingent on the belief that the night of judgment is imminent, and that all vampires will soon realize their final damnation at the hands of the Lord. The pleasures and the torments of the Earthly plane are considered transient states, little better than one another and hardly worth the effort of pursuit. Those who seek to accumulate wealth and sensual gratification are considered venal and misguided, and those who become occupied with crafting tortures for their enemies are reminded to keep to the path of the righteous and leave the meting of punishment to the Lord above.

ADVANTAGES

Members of the Chapel and the Spear may learn the Discipline of Theban Sorcery.

RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES

The rituals of the Lancea et Sanctum are so many and so varied that it is almost impossible to catalog them. Ranging from private systems of prayer to the sacrament of great masses, Sanctified rituals are practiced throughout Necropolis in defiance of tradition and law. Anything goes, as far as the Sanctified are concerned, as long as it is infused with faith in the one true God and the religion of its followers.

Theban Sorcery

A recent addition to the Lancea et Sanctum and, arguably, one of the forces most directly responsible for the advancement of its power, Theban Sorcery is a form of spiritual magic taught by the Egyptian Mekhet. Popular legend suggests that it was provided to the faithful Kindred by angels of the Lord, but more cynical vampires note its frightening utility and suggest that the Sanctified are scrambling, understandably, to find an excuse to use it.

Theban Sorcery is outlawed by the Senex, and dozens of Roman Kindred have met Final Death after facing accusation of practice of Theban Sorcery. Despite pressure from the leadership of the Camarilla, the magic of the devout is taught throughout the covenant.

TITLES AND DUTIES

The Lancea et Sanctum is still struggling to find official recognition, and, therefore, is generally less concerned with assigning rigid titles and duties. Most of the members are too busy concentrating on their continued survival (and the survival of their doctrine) to worry about who's doing what job.

That said, there are some terms of respect that have arisen naturally within the Sanctified membership.

Missionary

A local instructor or recognized authority on the doctrine (or doctrines) of the nascent church of Kindred is referred to as the Missionary. While ostensibly only a spiritual advisor, the Missionary is often turned to for tactical decisions and direction, becoming a de facto leader for his loyal students.

Martyr

A martyr is a vampire who has made a holy pledge to sacrifice himself in the name of the doctrine of Longinus, placing himself on the front line of battle with the oppressive Camarilla. While not necessarily suicidal, many of those who adopt this role understand their limited chance for survival and accept it without hesitation.

Martyrs are not necessarily soldiers. Many are Kindred willing to address the Senex on the behalf of the Lancea et Sanctum, or public performers of Theban Sorcery hoping to convert followers with the demonstration of miracle.

THE STRANGERS

THEY WILL COME.
WE HAVE TIME

THE LEGION

CAESAR'S
LEGIONS MAY NOT
KNOW HOW LOST
THEY ARE

THE SANCTIFIED

WE ARE BLESSED
WITH A TRUTH
THAT DAMNS
THROUGH DENIAL

THE AUGURS

THEY CAN BE
FORGIVEN OF
THEIR MISTAKES IF
THEY WILL DRINK
THE BLOOD OF
THE LORD

THE SENEX

OLD MEN,
OLD WAYS,
OLD SINS

THE CLANS OF ROME

To the vampires of the Camarilla, clan is more than just a matter of sanguine association and an assembly of shared traits. It is a heredity of collective reputation and draws the line between Roman-born nobility, foreign-blooded outsider, and lowly undead beast. In Roman Kindred society, a vampire's supposed disposition is forever associated with his lineage; a clean, cultured Nosferatu is considered bizarre or presumptuous and forced to work against his heritage to get ahead. A Mekhet who chooses to dwell among low-minded vampires and abandon

the pretense of foreign mystery is likewise a target for confused headshaking and doubtful scowls.

Many of the Kindred of Rome have limited dealings with vampires outside of their clan and are often willing to accept wildly inaccurate statements about their contemporaries. Only those who work in close quarters with outsiders begin to learn the reality behind the façade of ignorant assumption and malicious falsehood. The truth of each clan, both good and ill, is presented in this section.

THE JULII

"You will serve me, as your mongrel people serve my kinsmen. As it was in life, so shall it be now and forever. This is the truth."

His face could be kind, if there were any trace of human kindness in it. He is generous and gregarious, but these traits do not balance his gluttony or his wrath. This is not a man, but a monument to man's excess. And when he smiles, he is terrible to behold.

Masters of the Camarilla, lords over the dead, witnesses to a stumbling Empire's final fall, the Julii are synonymous with Rome's lofty nobility and enduring strength. So long as Rome stands above, the Julii rule below.

The Masquerade, an invention of the Julii, is common practice in the Camarilla. Even when the clan was at its most numerous and the city was the Julii's alone, they engaged in it, and when others came, they taught them to participate. The Julii Masquerade, however, is not that of the Egyptian Mekhet, who keep their very existence hidden from human minds. The Kindred of Rome simply disguise their nature, moving among the living in an approximation of life. Many follow the tradition of Julius Senex himself, first among them, shepherding mortal families and being venerated as family gods or appeased as malign ghosts.

The Julii practice their Masquerade among the dead as well. The Julii well know that the city of Rome belongs to the living, that the underworld is a thin shadow of the glory above. Each night, the Julii work to prove otherwise.



They throw feasts and grant favors, jockeying amongst each other for the tiniest threads of influence within the mortal skein. Once a year, the Julii rise into the Flavian Amphitheater, to celebrate the games as if they still lived. Monsters of the wilds are unchained to battle the monsters of the underworld, and mortal slaves recreate the most brutal myths of a hundred lands. Blood and Vitae stain the sand that night, and by torchlight they both run black.

In the final nights of Rome, the dead rise at night to fill the abandoned blocks and temples of the city. They claim the townhouses and villas of great men gone for their own, and march in grand processions down streets that once felt the feet of Emperors. The Julii seek to show themselves the peers of the people the Julii once were, the masters of the city and the bloody, righteous lords of all that outlasts the living. This is the Masquerade, and it is the first strain of the Requiem.

THE TALE OF THE JULII

The history of the Camarilla's ruling clan is entwined with that of their mortal family, the ancestors of Caesar. If, in these nights, few Julii can claim close blood ties to the greatest of the Romans, then they are no worse than

the living, for whom “Caesar” has become just another word for “prince.” Julius Caesar once wept at the foot of Alexander’s statue, despairing his impotence compared to the conqueror; the Julii look upon the living Caesar with the same awe and envy.

This envy has driven the Propinqui throughout their history. They were spawned by Remus, who could neither take the city from his brother Romulus nor wrest the wilderness from his foster kin. Instead, Remus made a pact with spirits of hunger and frenzy, becoming their servant in exchange for the title of Lord over the Night. As all titles worth having, it had to be earned, and so Remus took an heir, Julius, who would later be called Senex. Julius opened the veins of Rome and created the dynasty of monsters who walk the city to this day. As Rome rose to greatness, so did the clan that was fueled by its blood, drawn from the greatest of its noble lines.

His descendants have done well for themselves, walking as the Founders of Necropolis. Even as Rome’s fortunes dwindle, they sleep comfortably in the underworld and drink more than their share of Roman blood. Yet, some can feel that their glory, too, is fading. The eldest fall to long torpor or plot to devour their childer, and many whisper that the Julii grow more deranged by the night. Once-great Kindred give themselves to sloth and lust, spending their nights as torpid as their days or heaped among Daeva consorts. The Julii remain, fed only because of the fading loyalty of their ancillae, who rise into the city not only to hunt but to hear the words of mad Vaticinators and gaze in fascinated horror upon the new rituals of the Sanctified. Long-serving ghouls taste something thick and wrong in the blood they sup, even if they are content to take it a little more often in their masters’ senility.

The tale of the Julii is the tale of Rome. The Founders have known triumphs and glories unprecedented in their part of the world, and they have grown fat on

them. The Republic of the living gave way to Empire, and now teeters on the brink of collapse. The confederacy of the dead gave way to the undisputed rule of the Senex under the guidance of the Julii, and now the clan is poised on the edge of degradation and shame.

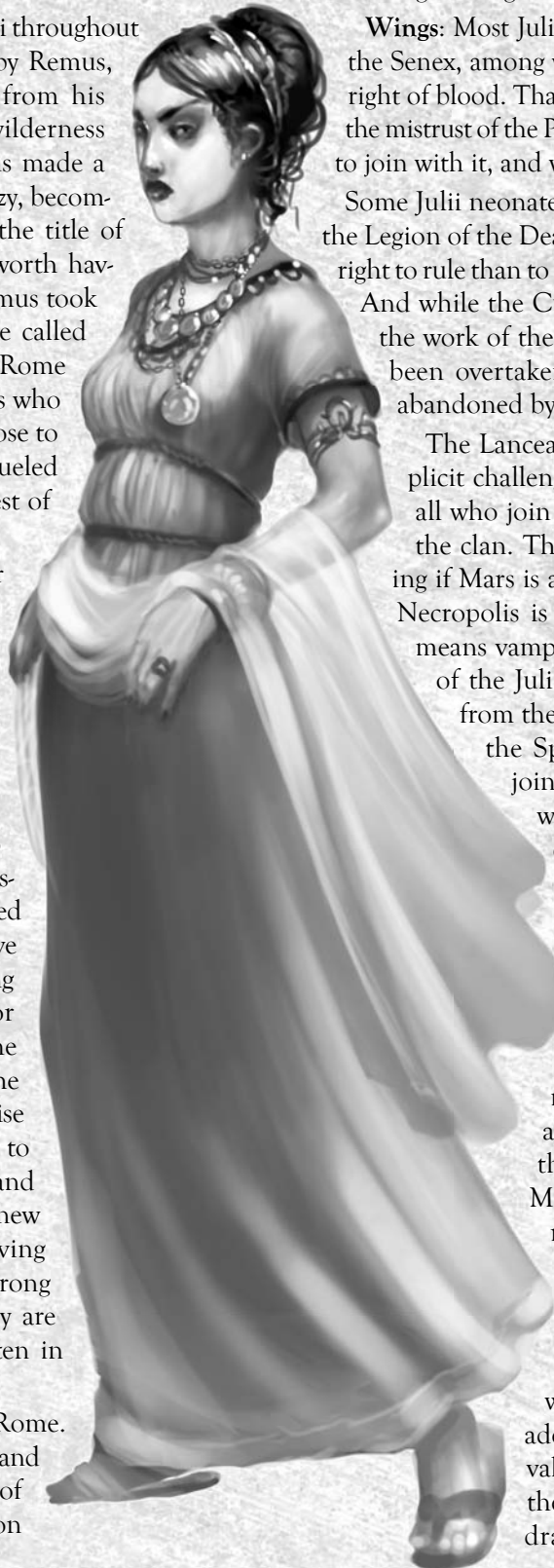
Wings: Most Julii participate to some extent in the Senex, among whose members the Julii sit by right of blood. That same inheritance earns them the mistrust of the Peregrine Collegia, so few bother to join with it, and work to employ it instead.

Some Julii neonates serve at least one lifetime in the Legion of the Dead, for how better to assert the right to rule than to be the instrument of rulership? And while the Cult of Augurs was founded by the work of the Founders, the Cult has since been overtaken by other clans and all but abandoned by the Julii.

The Lancea et Sanctum embodies an implicit challenge to Julii privilege, and thus, all who join the Sanctified are enemies of the clan. The blood of Mars means nothing if Mars is a false God, and lordship over Necropolis is meaningless if the true God means vampires to afflict the living. Most of the Julii take an oath, handed down from their sires, to see the Chapel and the Spear destroyed forever. None join it unless they intend to break with their noble promise and earn the eternal hatred of their own kind.

Nickname: The Founders

Appearance: The Julii are the Roman dead, and they dress the part. More than any other clan, the Founders make an effort to clothe and arrange themselves exactly like the mortal nobility of Rome. Members of the Senex wear the robes of power, and even those who seek prominence in the other Wings take care to maintain the semblance of mortal nobility. It is the Julii who conceived of the Masquerade as a mockery of life — they value the ability to move through the ranks of the living without drawing undue attention, and



they revel in human festival, joining their descendants in open celebration whenever possible.

Havens: The Julii almost exclusively keep their apartments in Necropolis. They favor the middle levels, where the Nosferatu Worms are relatively few but the sun is still far above. They usually sleep near but not alongside their sires and childer; avenues and aisles of the midlevels are often named for the brood who nest there, forming something halfway between a city block and a family tomb. Battles for physical space are rare; the Julii are often enough involved in the Senex that their problems are handled as problems of state, and their property is designated by law. The Founders often collect the remains of their mortal families and keep them in their own crypts.

Background: There was a time when the Julii Embraced purely from their mortal family, birthing a pantheon of ghosts to serve the Senex. That time is long gone, and only a few elders share the blood that flows through Caesar's veins. They are still proud, though, and share the Blood exclusively with Roman citizens. All of the Julii, without exception, are Roman by birth.

A childe of the Julii is not merely a tool or an heir; she is a prize and an adornment, an illustration in flesh of her

master's greatness and good judgment. Good breeding, though, is more important than mere surface; it doesn't matter if the statue is ugly or fragile, so long as it embodies the tradition and honor of Rome.

Character Creation: No class of Attribute goes neglected by the Julii, but Mental and Social Attributes are most prized. Few have many dots in Combat or Survival-related Skills, preferring those that command the spear-wielders over the ability to stand in battle themselves. A vast majority of the Julii are filthy rich, and maintain a house of slaves, servants and hired allies.

Favored Attributes: Presence or Resolve

Clan Disciplines: Dominate, Animalism, Resilience

Weakness: The souls of the Julii are weakened by the inheritance of Remus's bargain, and they are more vulnerable to the ravages of the Beast. Few manage to hold on to their Humanity for long, slipping more quickly and more violently into degeneration than other vampires. Kindred of the Julii suffer a -2 penalty on degeneration rolls to avoid losing Humanity after committing an inhumane act. This penalty cannot reduce the dice pool on the roll to zero; for those heinous crimes that normally call for a two-dice roll, one die is allowed.

THE JULII IN YOUR CHRONICLE

Each of the clans represents some aspect of Rome, something that reaches to us across the centuries and entices us to tell its stories again and again. The Mekhet are its hidden knowledge, the Gangrel its enduring strength, the Daeva its dangerous temptations and the Nosferatu its ancient fears.

The Julii are the heart of Kindred Rome itself. They are brutes who preach civility. They are decadents who decry perversion. They hold court in glory, yet crumble into madness with time. And though they speak of freedom, they cannot find it for themselves.

When you make use of the Julii in a chronicle, you are displaying the power and the grandeur that fascinate us about Rome to this day. When you play them, you are playing the aspiration to that power, and the blindness that comes with it.

Daeva

"I almost envy you your shame; it must make this delicious."

You shouldn't. What she's offering... with her scent, with the brush of her fingers, with that one very long and very dirty whisper... it's wrong. Yet she makes it holy. You fall to your knees, and you begin to pray.

Sophisticated, beautiful and powerfully alluring, the Daeva are everything that Rome lusts for in its conquests. They seem to embody everything it hoped to take from the rape of Greece. In truth, they bring more than they promise: decadence, disease and death come with the honeyed gifts of the clan. The Roman Courtesans are a foreign pox in Rome, a corruption brought home from the wild that poisons and perverts the blood of the city. They play with equal passion the roles of seducer and seduced, allowing their prey to run to ground before the Daeva show their fangs. They retell and reenact the myths of their bloodline and their sires' homelands, at once preserving and mourning a thousand dead cities.

As predators, the Courtesans follow the example of the hooded serpent: a creature of magnificence that reveals its splendor just before striking. The mouse need not understand, but it bears witness to the unearthly perfection of its killer. The Daeva are the cobra Kindred of Rome, hypnotizing their prey and reveling in the unveiling of their horrifying glory.

Some vampires say all the Courtesans do is revel in vice, but what others call sin, the Daeva call celebration of life and undeath. More practically, they know that if they throw the best parties, they'll gain access to the best people, to wealth and influence in the longer term. Their traditions say that excess has a higher purpose, but some Daeva really *are* just planning for tomorrow's parties.

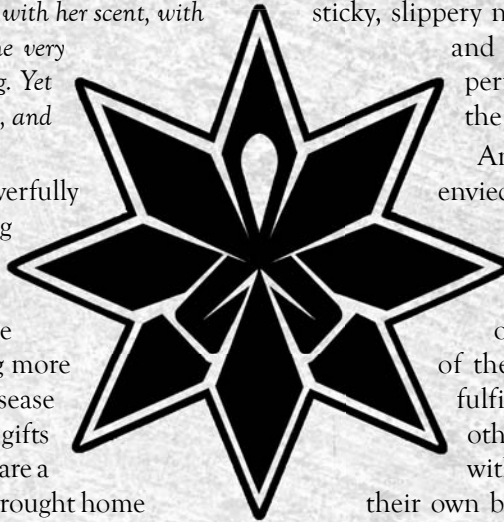
Most Daeva zealously pursue the pleasures of life: the searing love affairs, the generous feasting, the poetic revenge. To mortals, the Daeva offer themselves up in violation of Rome's few taboos, and they always deliver. A pious citizen shivers to think of the misdeeds of Caligula, even as they quicken his heart; a Daeva offers such a citizen his brother on a platter. A Courtesan brings the

sticky, slippery nights that the living fantasize about and fear... and when she slips away, her perfumes lingering in their beds even as the blood dries on their hands.

Among the dead, the Daeva are often envied for their power to win admirers and sycophants among the living. The Daeva charm vampires as well as anyone else... at first. Charm wears off, though, and the fleshly promises of the Courtesans pale even as they are fulfilled. The dead are not the living, say others, and if the Daeva slowed down with the sex or stopped chattering about

their own beauty, they might realize it. Indeed, many Daeva do... but they have centuries to try new vices and perfect new childer, and new cities to watch vanish beneath the hills.

Daeva see the inevitable decline of Rome more clearly than the Julii, but it does not pain the Daeva. They first



WHO WAS LILITH?

There are as many stories about Lilith's identity as there are cities the Daeva mourn. Local divinities are often substituted for either Lilith or Inanna, and some versions soften the love-hate relationship between Goddess and priestess or seek to eliminate it entirely, telling the tale more cynically. Another version of the tale, told among Daeva Embraced from slavery in Galilee, claims Lilith as the first woman, and says that she demanded that the first man bear children and submit during sex. The man cast her out, and she sought comfort with owl-demons of the desert, producing their half-living progeny.

Individual Daeva have their own speculations and fantasies about Lilith, and each embellishes, alters and expands upon the story in a manner that suits him and his preferences. So the story changes and grows, shifting again and again. All that remains is this: the Daeva are brought across the threshold of death by the divine power of a great and bloody Goddess, and their inheritance is theirs alone.

rose in the most ancient of cities of *saggiga*, where they were sacred prostitutes and scourges of the night. They performed their duties there and spread as its civilization spread, then stood watch as it crumbled into history. The Daeva have slid through the nights of every great metropolis, or so they allege. The Daeva watch cities in their rise, revel in them at their peak and then descend to suck the life from them at their fall. Now the Daeva have come to Rome, to bleed the Mother of the World for their pleasure.

THE TALE OF THE ROMAN DAEVA

Inanna (or Isis, or Astarte or Venus, in a commingling of mythologies typical of the clan), say the Roman Daeva, was and remains the greatest of all gods. Peerless mistress of war, lover alluring and insatiable, muse who gives the very arts of civilization to her people, Inanna once escaped the grim house of death, from which no one had previously returned. The story of the Courtesans begins with the Goddess's return from death, with her march in triumph to her city. The Goddess commanded a feast to celebrate her return, even as the rituals of mourning were still observed for her. Yet, there was one house that had not mourned, and that did not rejoice at Inanna's return. That was the house of Lilith.

Lilith was Inanna's priestess, whom the Goddess had taken in when Lilith was expelled from her husband's house. When Inanna wandered abroad seeking bloodshed and victory, Lilith led the people of the city in praise of Inanna. The priestess, however, followed her idol too closely, taking Inanna's lover Tammuz to Lilith's own bed after Inanna's passing. When Inanna rose again and discovered this, she fell upon her servant and her lover both. Tammuz, Inanna rent limb from limb and scattered over the desert in the day; Lilith, Inanna strangled and buried in a garden at night.

In time, however, Inanna grew to miss Tammuz's sweet caresses and Lilith's eloquent praises. Inanna ransomed Tammuz from the crows and Lilith from the owls. Tammuz, Inanna bound to the day, so that she could enjoy him in the sun. Lilith, Inanna bound to the night, where Lilith could never again steal joys meant for the Goddess. Inanna installed Lilith once again as priestess and judge of the city, and left with Tammuz upon a golden boat.

Without the Goddess, the city declined. Lilith continued to lead the people in veneration of her mistress, even if the priestess quietly exalted in her own growing power. She mimicked her Goddess, spilling the blood of lovers and then raising them from the underworld. Lilith gorged

herself on her remaining followers and departed, singing the city's old hymns even as it withered behind her. Each of the Daeva is told he will one day have to do the same.

Since that time, the Courtesans have spread throughout the world, carrying memories of one city's glory to the next. The first who came to Rome in numbers were *hetaira* among the Greeks, and thus are called the Courtesans. They move among the Parthians and the Jews, the peoples of the Far East and the wanderers of North Africa, and they have made many more of their kind. (The name Daeva flowed into their mouths along with the blood of Zoroastrian Persians.)

The Daeva of Rome form their strongest bonds and enmities along family lines. They have no allegiance to their own in the way that the Nosferatu or the Gangrel do, but the Daeva implicitly believe that they are the greatest among the dead, begat by a Goddess, and so favor each other above the other clans.

Wings: The Daeva elders number among the most influential members of the Peregrine Collegia. Their progeny who were Roman in life



have risen quickly among the Senex, but just as many have been destroyed by older, cannier monsters.

Only a small number enter the Legion of the Dead; Daeva neonates are rarely chosen for their discipline or dedication. The spiritual aspect of Daeva culture draws them to the Cult of Augurs in large numbers, and many carry on the rites of Inanna and Lilith, blending the cults of Rome with those of their ancient lands.

While Christianity itself has attracted few Daeva not born to it, the Lancea et Sanctum is beginning to swell with Daeva members. The new testaments of Longinus, passed from mouth to ear or written on the skin of slaves, say that vampires should tempt and strengthen humanity, in the way the Daeva have always done.

Nickname: The Courtesans

Appearance: Though most Roman Daeva neonates are Embraced in Rome, many are not of Roman blood, and those who are often affect foreign styles reflecting their sires' or grandsires' origins. Daeva are not uniformly beautiful, but they are beautifully attired, and there is Majesty in all of their blood.

Havens: Most Daeva dwell in the upper levels of Neopolis so that they may be near to the mortals, spicing the air with perfume and decorating their chambers with silk and cushions. Perhaps Daeva victims even appreciate

this comfort. Other Daeva haunt the secret chambers of the abandoned pagan temples, beckoning ghostlike to prey and inviting them to participate in the dying rites of Rome one final time.

Background: The Daeva ideal is beautiful, brilliant and quick, the model of a prostitute and a serpent. However, long centuries have taught them that great monuments are cut and refined, not quarried whole. A great Courtesan can be sculpted from a mortal possessing only one or two exemplary qualities. Some Daeva are Embraced from wealthy families, but as many more are slaves seduced for their beauty or for their skills. The Daeva often Embrace to fill an immediate need, whether to soothe a spiritual ache or because they need a particular ability at their disposal.

Character Creation: Physical and Social Attributes serve the Daeva best, making them too quick to catch and too magnetic to betray. Sires often educate their childer, teaching them Academics or Occult; these are particularly important to Courtesans who practice the Veneficia of the Cult of Augurs. Daeva usually have to gather Resources on their own, but they easily attract Retainers and Allies soon after being Embraced.

Favored Attributes: Dexterity or Manipulation

Clan Disciplines: Celerity, Majesty, Vigor

THE DAEVA IN YOUR CHRONICLE

Forget the smoky nightclubs, the faded jeans and all those well-rehearsed, bored looks. In the dying nights of Rome, the Daeva exalt in what they are and in what the darkness can offer them. Every color, every scent, every moment is to be remembered and consecrated because it will not come again. Everything they take is a gift of veneration to be indulged and kept in sacred memory.

The Courtesans are celebrating the death of Rome. They don't try to hasten it, but they are here to suck as much beauty from the city as they are able and while it lasts. They're the monsters that you really *want* to meet, even if you'll change your mind afterwards. Show how the Daeva lure their prey with a thousand subtle and perfect touches, but also show how they miss the mark and become disgusting, brazen and ridiculous even among the dressed-up dead.

The Daeva are Roman vice, indulged to violent extreme, yet never fully satisfied. When you play one, remember that Lust wasn't the Romans' only Vice. How might your character tempt Romans to Gluttony or Wrath? How might her Envy encourage delicious perversion and wickedness?

GANGREL

"I am already dead. I have nothing left to fear."

He looks like a soldier, but he doesn't move like one, leaping across the alley and pouncing on you from above. He bares yellowed fangs as he tackles you to the ground, and your ribs crack under his weight. "Welcome to the Legion," he growls, and he lowers his mouth to your throat.

The Gangrel are dead, but they move with the fury of the living. They are creatures from the edges of the Empire, but those who find their way into Rome often become the most ardent servants of the Camarilla. The Gangrel are beasts with a strength that would test the greatest of heroes, and there are few who can truly resist the Gangrel.

Rome is very different from the trackless wilderness that spawned the Gangrel. In their homelands, the Wanderers fought battles along with the same mortals the Gangrel took for food. Domain meant vast stretches of land teeming with prey, not tiny tombs and vague "feeding privileges." Alliances were made and broken for peace and war, not a hazy sense of political expediency.

It is with some surprise, then, that the dead have watched the Wanderers adapt. When they first entered Rome, many of the Gangrel simply wanted to tear it down, as Rome had torn down the tribes that spawned and fed them. Swiftly, however, the Gangrel realized the potential of the great city as a hunting ground, and they became drawn into its cults and its intrigues. Just as so many one-time enemies of the Eternal City, they were absorbed and integrated.

The Julii quickly invited the "conquered" Gangrel to dwell in their Roman underworld and serve in the Legion of the Dead. Writ large, the Gangrel have not regretted the decision, though those Julii who plot against the Senex have learned to fear barbarian claws. Meanwhile, the Daeva laugh softly about taming wolves, and the Nosferatu and Mekhet watch silently as ever, seeing the Gangrel grow stronger than their would-be masters ever intended and waiting for the inevitable rebellion of the barbarian Wanderers.

Tonight, the Gangrel are cunning urban hunters and terrifying street soldiers. Their power grows by leaps and bounds, and their influence is threatening to reshape the whole of the Camarilla.



THE TALE OF THE ROMAN GANGREL

Gaul, 52 BCE. Julius Caesar stood in thick, bloody mud, the ground stained red as far as the eye could see. His men had done gory work, and he was pleased. Caesar's army had laid siege to the city of Avaricum for months, camping in the midst of a wasteland. Food was scant, and harassment by the Gauls was a daily occurrence. When the Romans finally breached the city's walls, they were merciless, slaughtering every man, woman and child within reach. Of a city of 40,000, there were fewer than 1,000 survivors.

When the vampires of Gaul rose from the mud that night, their food supply was gone, and the ruins of the city were still smoldering. When Caesar's men decamped and marched away from the hill, those Beasts who survived followed. When Caesar's armies divided, the vampires divided with them, tracking them through the wilderness. The vampires had no home now. They were wanderers: Gangrel.

These Gangrel followed Caesar's armies like crows. When the Romans conquered, the monsters feasted. Between battles, when the men shared wine and stories around the fires, the Gangrel waited in loose earth nearby, for the moment when a soldier would step too far away from his fellows. Then, too, they feasted.

When Caesar marched his army back to Rome, many of the Gangrel camp followers settled in the Roman interior. Yet, many of the Wanderers also wanted to taste Rome for themselves. Some plotted revenge upon Caesar's line and people, while others simply wanted to fill their bellies. Neither were welcomed at first by the Propinqui of the Julii, and the vampires brawled with each other in the alleys of Rome for several years before peace was made and they were allowed entrance to Necropolis.

Everywhere the Roman armies marched, the Gangrel seemed to be waiting and willing to follow the armies back. Gaulish and Pictish, Germanic and African — the Wanderers are everywhere.

The burning of Rome devastated the Wanderers as it did the Kindred, but it also created a demand for new bodies in the Legion of the Dead and room for Roman-born vampires to advance quickly in the Senex. While the other clans wept blood into the dust of their dead, the Gangrel began a program of rapid Embrace, quickly becoming the most numerous of the foreign clans. When the Camarilla righted itself, it leaned upon their strong backs to survive.

To this night, the Gangrel Embrace as a clan. When the clan needs new blood, several Wanderers take new childer, who are brought into undeath as a group and fostered by each of their sires in turn. This custom creates rivalries and bonds of fraternity that don't follow blood or political loyalty, and makes all-Gangrel coterie more common than coterie composed solely of any other clan.

Wings: The Gangrel are most numerous in the Legion of the Dead, where their combination of numbers and physical prowess serve the law well. They seek the protection of the Peregrine Collegia less often than other foreigners, but the Peregrine Gangrel are a uniting force, and can sometimes win them the support of Wanderers in other Wings. There are almost no Gangrel sitting with the Senex; the Julii have seen to that.

The Wanderers' clan weakness makes them poor students for the Cult of Augurs, but those who survive to learn that Wing's strange rites are often able to contribute Veneficia of their own, drawing on the traditions and gods of their native lands. The Lancea et Sanctum steadily

recruits more Gangrel, even as more and more new Embraces come into the fold ready to accept monotheism.

Nickname: The Wanderers

Appearance: The Gangrel come from all the races of Rome and beyond. Most favor simple, functional clothing, but as great hunters, they know how to camouflage themselves amongst their prey. Many Gangrel are proud, however, and will dress to demonstrate or exaggerate their strength.

Havens: In these nights, most Gangrel sleep directly in the clay of Necropolis. Some few have learned to sink into the marble or concrete of the living city above. Very few sleep in stone vaults or ceramic vessels, but they often claim the small territories given to the Legion all the same.

Background: Most Gangrel are Embraced from foreign stock. They were rugged survivors in life, warriors and hunters of the Germanic forests, Arabian sands and Caledonian fields. Almost all of them are imposing physical presences, and they often seem, according to Roman observers, as if born for the Embrace — destined for nights of war and bloodshed.

Character Creation: Physical Attributes seem like an obvious choice for emphasis, but many find Mental Attributes more important to outwit their enemies. Younger Gangrel may emphasize Social Attributes in order to advance themselves in the Camarilla. Older Wanderers use these Attributes to recall their mastery over the animals of the forest or to bend the rats and dogs of the city to their will.

Favored Attributes: Composure or Stamina

Clan Disciplines: *Protean*, *Animalism*, *Resilience*



THE GANGREL IN YOUR CHRONICLE

The Gangrel are enduring strength. They are the simple, brute force we admire in the Roman Legions, the warriors whose blades and teeth gleam in the moonlight. The Gangrel show the ambitious inclusiveness of the Romans, who welcomed outsiders into the Empire as long as they were ready to serve. The Beasts are that same strength used to destroy, to crush the skulls of dissenters. They are the ambition that leads one barbarian to slay his brother with the sword of a legionnaire. Use them to show how Rome became great, why it once seemed invincible.

But the Gangrel aren't stupid, even if their curse dulls them. They approach conflict more directly because that's their best chance of winning. If a Gangrel has the opportunity to stab an enemy in the back, he may well do it, but he knows when he should meet that enemy face to face, as well. When a Gangrel's cloak of Humanity is pushed aside, it doesn't reveal the mockery of a man but an example of his awful potential, unleashed in full. Remember that Rome doesn't believe in a "Noble Savage" but does believe in savagery toward its enemies.

MEKHET

"DO NOT ACCUSE ME, FOR I CAN SEE YOUR SINS."

In the horde of clamoring monsters, you notice him because he is still. As they shove and jockey for position, they flow around him, like water around a rock. His robe is simple, his features fine but creased. With a shiver, you realize he's watching you, too.

Bearers of secrets, the Mekhet whisper hints of ancient wisdom in the shadows of Necropolis. They are a clan whose traditions exalt the knowing and keeping of knowledge. They are the wisdom and the inheritance of Rome, and the fervor with which the city will rush toward its end in a desperate search for truth and understanding.

The Seers are masters of remaining hidden, immediately and over the course of history. Their Masquerade has been so successful that they dwelt in Africa for thousands of years without giving rise to any native vampire myths. Mekhet elders have exiled or exterminated any line whose members threatened to reveal their existence. The Daeva have followed many peoples into Egyptian cities throughout history, yet few lines have survived very long. The Mekhet consider the Daeva Masquerade of humanity to be a threat, rather than a form of secrecy.

The younger Seers are also feared and envied for their possession of Theban Sorcery. Less than a hundred years ago, vampires of the Spear were expelled from Jerusalem. Angels of the Lord led Seers first to the city of Thebes, where they found sustenance and new childer among the Christians. The angels then led the dead into Thebes's own underworld, catacombs begun to entomb the Pharaohs but extended by hands unknown. In the deepest of the crypts, the dead found secrets of magic written for them in the very hand of God (or, say some, the hands of the older gods of Egypt). When the servants of the Spear spread returned from Africa, they wielded miracles of a decidedly biblical cast. A wave of Mekhet flooded into Rome with the power to raise plagues or to keep blood fresh even when parted from the body.

THE TALE OF THE ROMAN MEKHET

The Mekhet rose along the Nile before the pyramids, before the Sphinx, coming up from deep within the



jungles of the south. They are the most numerous of the dead in North Africa, and their influence is said to extend throughout the whole of the continent. Similar to other vampires, Mekhet culture is a mirror and a memory of living society. Unlike other vampires, Mekhet can definitely say that their reflection has been going on for a very, very long time.

Seers have come to Rome many times over the centuries, but two migrations are remembered most clearly. When Caesar brought his lover Cleopatra back to the Eternal City, she and her entourage became celebrities. Suddenly, living Romans were fascinated by everything Egyptian: dress, art and especially religion. The Kindred developed the same hungers; Egyptian ghouls and childer became fashionable, as did bastardizations of Egyptian cults amended to include vampires. In Egypt, the land of opulent tombs and magnificent kings, the Kindred imagined that great, lost secrets of the Blood might still be known.

The Mekhet found this an excellent opportunity to introduce themselves, claiming that they were the wisest and most ancient of the dead. They became known as Seers for their power to divine secrets with a glance and their intricate rituals of prophecy. Their words were humble and wise, and their presence often did not arouse the blood-hatred the Propinqui feel for foreign vampires and for each other. In short, the Mekhet presented themselves as clients and advisors rather than rivals — and for this, the Mekhet were readily accepted by the ruling Kindred of Rome.

Only a few vampires were suspicious. They wondered at how easily the Seers ingratiated themselves, how they avoided the usual mistakes of foreigners and the traps laid for them by xenophobic dead. Perhaps, these Kindred thought, the Mekhet had been in Rome much longer than they claimed.

The second wave of Mekhet, however, are indisputably modern. They stream from Egypt and from the far provinces, promoting a variety of foreign sects and whispering of the impending death of the Roman gods. When these Mekhet prophesy, they tell of a divine judge who will preside over the living and the dead. They tell of a Rome destroyed for its wickedness... and though the

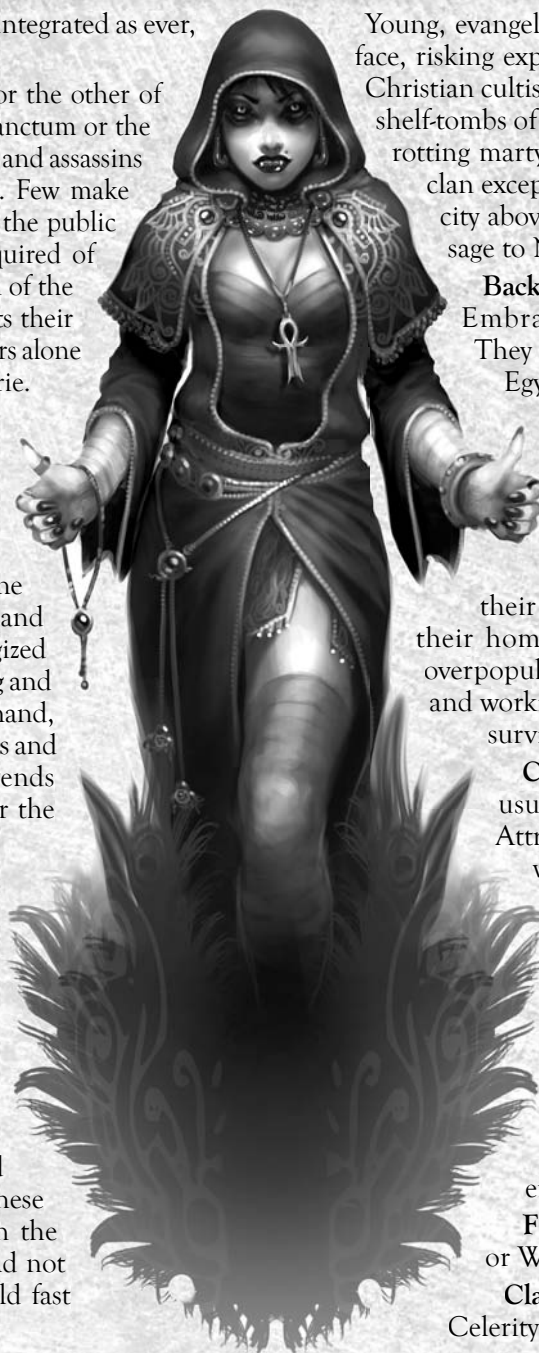
elder Mekhet are as gracious and integrated as ever, they say nothing in response.

Wings: Most Mekhet join one or the other of the mystic Wings: the Lancea et Sanctum or the Cult of Augurs. Some serve as spies and assassins among for the Peregrine Collegia. Few make their way to the Senex, eschewing the public appearances and open debate required of the membership there. The Legion of the Dead recruits few Mekhet, but puts their unique abilities to good use: the Seers alone can tell who has performed diablerie.

Nickname: The Seers

Appearance: Many Mekhet adopt the appearance of their ideal dead. The older, pagan Seers dress as the priests of ancient faiths, attiring themselves richly to suggest the greatness of the dead in general and those from the Mekhet's mythologized homeland in particular. The young and fractious Christians, on the other hand, cultivate the appearance of travelers and prophets, admiring the wild legends of the mortal John the Baptist or the vampire Saint Daniel.

Havens: Pagan Mekhet have built their reputation on rumors of the splendor with which Egyptians once treated their dead, and such Mekhet keep havens accordingly. Large tombs in the depths of Necropolis are decorated with pastiches of Egypt's myths, and the Seers keep a strange custom of sleeping in coffins, surrounded by attendants living and dead. (These habits served the Mekhet well in the fires of Nero, when the heat could not reach them, and their coffins held fast against opportunistic outsiders.)



Young, evangelical Mekhet sleep close to the surface, risking exposure to the sun to be among the Christian cultists. These Mekhet often sleep in the shelf-tombs of the atheists, tangled in the arms of rotting martyrs. Young Mekhet, more than any clan except the Daeva, choose to sleep in the city above, or in cellars with no known passage to Necropolis.

Background: The older Seers of Rome Embrace the educated and the wise. They have some preference for those of Egyptian appearance, for the ease with which that once let the Mekhet join the dead of Necropolis. Young Mekhet seem to Embrace as often as they can to bolster their ranks, adding followers to their hundred cults even at the cost of thinning their blood, emulating the practice of their homelands, understanding fully that overpopulation must lead to a winnowing, and working to ensure that their childer will survive the inevitable result.

Character Creation: The Mekhet usually mix high Social and Mental Attributes. Younger Seers, even those who would rather avoid the religious conflicts tearing through their clan often rely on their Wits for survival, leaving the ways of battle to others. Only a few lines, adopting the practice of the assassins of the East, develop martial skill. Occult and Investigation are popular abilities among the Mekhet, since they support the clan's unique powers of perception and telepathy.

Favored Attributes: Intelligence or Wits

Clan Disciplines: *Auspex*, *Obfuscate*, *Celerity*

THE MEKHET IN YOUR CHRONICLE

The Seers are the accumulation of knowledge and lost wisdom we attribute to Rome. They represent truth preserved from antiquity, and insight the world will never have again. The Seers also show the power of the living to change the dead. From the Seers' sires' and grandsires' work to embalm the past, the young Mekhet are very much creatures of the present and the apocalyptic future.

Use the Mekhet to create quiet awe, to show the potential of an age in which the histories and philosophies of the ancient world are still remembered. Use the Mekhet to show how that knowledge does as little to curb the savagery of vampires as of mortals.

Playing a Seer is an opportunity to get on the front lines of the religious struggle in Rome while keeping a few terrible secrets close to your character's chest. Unlike the Nosferatu, your character takes the time to allow secret observations to blossom into understanding, making use of what he learns as opposed to sitting in silent judgment.

NOSFERATU

"WHEN THEY BURY YOU, WE WILL BE WAITING."

You stumble over it when you turn to leave. You didn't know it was there, much less that there was another one behind you. You flail, and your fingers sink into spongy flesh, rotting yet still moving — a sensation identical to the one in your most common nightmare, where you discover that your own body is liquefying. At this moment, there is only one thing you fear more than what they are about to do to you, and that's how much they already know about you.

In a city of chaos and indulgence, the dead keep their fears hidden away in the dark. Embodying those fears are the Nosferatu, the monsters of Necropolis, who cultivate fear and wield it as a weapon. The Worms arise from the graves of every country, barbarian and Roman alike. Many Roman Kindred do not believe that the Nosferatu are even vampires: their twisted minds and bodies are nothing like those of the Propinqui, who easily wear the mask of life, and the Nosferatu's power over nightmares better suits the Striges than the civilized Kindred of Necropolis.

It is because Julius Senex feared the Nosferatu that he took them to his bosom and welcomed them to his Necropolis, keeping them close. There, he promised them, they would be fed, without the danger of being recognized or having their lairs exposed to the sun. In his arrogance, Senex thought to keep watch over the Worms. His progeny have found that the Nosferatu watch the Julii, instead.

Worms always favored the low places, but it was Senex who set them to dig his pit to Dis. The dead widely know that the Nosferatu still dig in the deeps, but whether they dig for their final reward or something else is a matter for conjecture.

The Nosferatu are ever-present below the first few levels of Necropolis. Silent and often invisible, they hear every conspiratorial whisper, every drop of blood spilt, every grunt of fruitless sex. The Worms know the comings and doings of the dead, but the Worms speak not of what they know, and haunt the passages of Necropolis, glaring at their fellow Kindred in silent judgment.



Officially, the nightly work of the Nosferatu is the building of Necropolis. The continuing extension of the underworld requires greater and greater architectural sophistication with every level. Each wave of foreign vampires brings those boasting secrets of foreign technology and certain that they can show the Worms how the city should be built. However, those vampires often find their knowledge of underground construction is exceeded by that of the city's resident builders. Usually, foreign vampires discover that the deep work is too dangerous, that an accidental surface breach or, worse, an eternity entombed by a cave-in is simply too frightening to contemplate.

Other Worms find their calling in military service. The harsh customs of the Worms following Embrace prepare them well for a life serving as enforcers or spies. Those who routinely steal to the surface find that whatever trinkets or victims they can smuggle back bring a fortune in trade.

Despite the Nosferatu's panoply of unsettling attitudes, habits and disfigurements, most vampires don't think of the Nosferatu as individuals. That so many serve in the Legion of the Dead only reinforces that treatment. "Maintain your Masquerade," one Kindred tells his childe, "or you will be fed to the Worms." The children of the living are given such warnings, and they laugh, but the children of the living do not have to brush past and step over their monsters down every corridor. The Worms are synonymous with the paranoia that infects Necropolis.

THE TALE OF THE ROMAN NOSFERATU

When Julius Senex invited the Nosferatu of Rome to the underworld, there were only five. Five who were already there before him, five who did not protest when he called himself first of the Kindred, or when he laid claim to the tribes of Rome. Despite the power of terror

they held over others, the five always acquiesced to the Old Man's mighty will. When he set them to dig his tunnels, or to watch his progeny, the five obeyed. Their motives were their own. Sometimes, a Propinquus would see a Nosferatu whom the Propinquus did not recognize. When he asked the creature's name, one of its brethren would answer. "This is my brother worm," it would say. If the vampire persisted, the creature would continue. "He crawled from the earth," it would answer, "to serve the Senex."

The Nosferatu eschew identity in the traditional sense. In other clans, fledglings are taught that their mortal selves were extended in undeath and taught to adapt to existence in the night and the deep. Nosferatu treat each Embrace as a new birth. Sires do not discuss the past with their childer, and by the time the creature is allowed to talk to his peers, the daylight world seems distant and unreal.

Nero's fire gave the Nosferatu their greatest opportunity. The numbers of the Nosferatu had steadily grown in the deep, dark depths of Necropolis. When the Red Fear took the city's vampires, the Nosferatu were the least affected, and when the dead ran mad and sought sanctuary in the cavernous earth, the Nosferatu were waiting, their arms open wide and their grins full of teeth.

Tonight, Worms sit in the Camarilla with the Senex. Those who serve the Legions take names for themselves. But whenever two or more Nosferatu walk together and they are asked their names, they answer: "We are brother worms."

Wings: Most Nosferatu are members of the Peregrine Collegia, where they serve as excavators and builders, spies and thieves. The Legion of the Dead attracts many Worms of its own: the rule of law offers them a path to legitimacy and their dark powers qualify them uniquely as enforcers and inquisitors.

The Nosferatu are underrepresented in the Senex, but the fires of Nero allowed several elders to become highly placed, if only because they promised to support the surviving elders of the Julii.

Finally, a surprising number of Nosferatu are surfacing with the Lancea et Sanctum, proving that the clan has always been much more populous than anyone ever suspected. The same teachings that appeal to the poor of Rome appeal to the piteous monsters of the Damned, and the word of the Sanctified is carried by many of these anonymous creatures.

Nickname: The Worms

Appearance: Many among the Nosferatu are overtly deformed: a man with peeling, shredded skin or a woman whose features droop like running wax. Others bear subtler shifts... a woman whose neck turns just a little too far, as if snapped, or a man whose eyes are glazed with a dead stare. Some speak with voices like pits of snakes, or are accompanied by grave-smells, which fill the noses of Kindred even in Necropolis, even without the drawing of breath.

And there are those even worse: those who seem utterly normal, or even beautiful. The Kindred shudder at the sight of these creatures no less than the deformed, knowing that such Nosferatu must be broken in another way — a way much deeper, much more difficult to see.

Nearly all of the Worms are filthy, bringing the muck of their havens with them where they walk and bearing the soil of their diggings in the creases of their flesh.

Havens: The Worms nest in the very deepest tunnels of Necropolis, where the tunnels are fresh and the gases that foul the air are often quickly and mercifully fatal to human prey dragged into the abyss.

Background: The Nosferatu Embrace those who will not be missed. The poor, the outcasts, the criminals. The Worms pick the



trampled fruit as much to avoid detection by other vampires as by the mob. There is strength in numbers. There is greater strength in being an uncountable horde.

Character Creation: High Mental Attributes allow the Nosferatu to stay hidden. Skills such as Stealth and Survival are learned quickly in the abyss, and interactions outside the brotherhood of Worms quickly teach the

Nosferatu how to Intimidate others and enact complex Subterfuges. Nosferatu rarely have high Blood Potency unless they have a reliable way of acquiring human or vampire prey; those who subsist on rats and the rations from the Senex need thin blood to survive.

Favored Attributes: Composure or Strength

Clan Disciplines: *Nightmare*, *Obfuscate*, *Vigor*

THE NOSFERATU IN YOUR CHRONICLE

The Nosferatu represent everything the dead want to keep buried and hidden. The Nosferatu cannot hide their rot under fine robes as the Julii do or perfume it away as the Daeva do. When the Nosferatu ape the ways of mortals, the Worms do so as jerking, horrifying caricatures. Other clans watch and shudder as they recognize the worst in themselves, brought out for all to see. Nosferatu are openly hated by many of the dead and living Romans. Worse yet, the Nosferatu seem to be everywhere, and they seem to know the worst of everyone around them.

Show the Nosferatu underfoot and lurking at every turn in Necropolis, storing everything they hear, filing it away for later use. Show them banqueting upon a fine table, eating moldering food until their bellies bulge and then turning to vomit as good Romans do, mocking the Masquerade of the Julii and the indulgences of the Daeva. Show the Nosferatu merging with the shadows and whispering crafted lies, criticizing the Mekhet and later denying their work. Show the gleam of cunning as well as the gleam of fangs. If the Kindred hold a dark mirror up to the living world, the Nosferatu do the same for the Kindred.

ROMAN NAMES

A lot of rules govern how the Romans take their names, and describing them all would fill up this whole chapter. This is the easy version: traditionally, every male Roman has a nomen, the name of his family line, and a praenomen, which is a personal name that precedes his nomen. Most of the praenomens are so common and so few that the Romans write them praenomens as simple initials (so, for example, Quintus Horatius would write his name “Q. Horatius” and Sextus Pompeius would write his “Sex. Pompeius”). Sometimes, especially in the later Empire, Romans, particularly those who lived in the provinces, had unusual praenomens that didn’t have abbreviations, such as Thascius or Spurius.

Noble, rich, distinguished or famous Romans often have at least one cognomen, which described some memorable achievement or characteristic. After a while, these can become hereditary names in their own right, and sons adopted as heirs to famous families would often take the nomens and cognomens of their own families and their adoptive families as cognomens in their own right. P. Cornelius, for example, had the family cognomen “Scipio.” When he defeated Hannibal, he gained the name “Africanus” in honor of his campaign. At some point in the past, Marcus Aurelius Claudius’s family married into the Claudii, which is why he had the nomen Claudius as his cognomen. When he defeated

the Goths at the Battle of Naissus, he also earned the cognomen Gothicus, which he simply attached to the end of his name.

Plebeian cognomens tended to be more prosaic, and sometimes obscene. A butcher might gain a name such as Lucanicus (“sausage”); a criminal or a male prostitute might just as easily have a name such as Encolpius (“arse-crack”).

Cognomens and nomens came in different versions. Often, they vary by changing the -us or -ius suffix for -inus, -ianus or even -inianus, so, for example, the cognomen Maximus can and does become Maximus, Maximinus, Maximianus and Maximinianus. A name that ended in -ns — such as Florens or Constans — could change in the same way, only changing the “s” for a “t,” so Florens becomes Florentius, Florentinus, Florentianus and Florentinianus.

Women usually had only their father’s or husband’s nomen, although some had a cognomen as well. Women’s names could have the same variations, but always ended in -a rather than -us.

Slaves usually only have one name. This can be their own given name, which could be anything from Athalamer to Joseph to Xystus, depending on where the slave originally came from. On the other hand, if the slave was born in slavery, the name might be more descriptive, such as Myrmex (“ant”) or Onesimus (“useful one”).

Christian converts had the names they were born with, although some adopted new names on their baptism. People born into Christian families often take Greek or Syrian names or have the names of Apostles, early martyrs or Biblical characters, again Latinized.

English-speaking writers sometimes leave the -us from the end of Roman names, so, for example, we often write Pompeius as "Pompey," Valentinianus as "Valentinian" and "Augustinus" as "Augustin" or "Augustine."

In the end, most Romans knew each other by only one or two of their names, whether praenomen, nomen or cognomen, no matter how many names they actually had. M. Aurelius Claudius Gothicus Augustus might be a mouthful, but since everyone simply knew him as Claudius Gothicus, it wasn't a problem. Thascius Egnatianus Hostilinus Numida Pestilens is, to his contemporaries, Thascius Hostilinus, or sometimes just Pestilens. It depends on who's talking.

Here are just a few Roman names from across the spectrum of history and literature.

Praenomens:

Traditionally: Appius (Ap), Aulus (A), Caius or Gaius (C), Cnaeus (Cn), Decimus (D), Lucius (L), Marcus (M), Publius (P), Quintus (Q), Servius (S), Sextus (Sex), Tiberius (Ti), Titus (T).

Later Roman praenomens: Flavonius, Gereon, Pagonius, Reburus, Thascius. In the Late Empire, some nomens (such as Julius, Claudius and Flavius) also appear as praenomens, particularly among people from senatorial or Imperial families.

Nomens:

Aemilius, Anicius, Antonius, Apronius, Asinius, Aurelius, Calpurnius, Caecilius, Caelius, Cassius, Claudius (or Clodius), Cornelius, Dalius, Domitius, Faltonius, Ferasius, Firmicus, Flavius, Horatius, Julius, Junius, Licinius, Livius, Lollius, Marius, Mucius, Octavius, Opius, Ostorius, Ovidius, Petronius, Plautus (or Plautius, or Plotius), Pompeius, Porcius (or Portius), Salvius, Seius (or Sejus), Sempronius, Septimius, Sertorius, Servilius, Taracius, Tullius, Valerius, Virgilius, Vitrasius.

Cognomens:

Africanus, Agrippa, Ahenobarbus, Alypius, Anatolius, Aquila, Arbiter, Arbitio, Avircius, Balbus, Barbatio, Brutus, Camillus, Calvus, Catullus (or Catulus), Celsius, Cicero, Cinna, Constans, Crassus, Crispus, Cyprius, Drusus, Equitius, Eutherius, Fabullus, Felix, Fimbria, Florens, Galba, Gaudentius, Germanicus, Gothicus, Gracchus, Heliodorus, Jovius, Magnus, Mamertius, Marcellus, Maternus, Mavortius, Maximus, Metellus,

Milo, Musonius, Nasica, Naso, Nero, Olybrius, Ortho, Paulus (or Paullus), Pelagius, Piso, Pius, Pollio, Postumus, Probus, Prosper, Pulcher, Sabinus, Sallustius, Saturninus, Scapula, Scipio, Serenus, Severus, Silvanus, Sulla, Sulpicius, Tacitus, Tertullius, Traianus (Trajan), Urgulanus, Ursicus, Valens, Veranius, Verus, Victor, Volusius.

Plebeian Names and Slave Names:

Apis, Ascyllus, Barbarus, Cicymbricus, Encolpius, Eumolpus, Felix, Ganymede, Giton, Gluturinus, Grumio, Lamponius, Lichas, Lucanicus, Messor, Myrmex, Onesimus, Palaestra, Pamphilus, Philebus, Porclaca, Posca, Salsula, Semicupa, Serapinus, Statarius, Telesinus, Trimalchio, Trulla, Vibennius.

Christians' Names:

Male: Adeodatus, Andreias (Andrew), Barnabas, Clemens (Clement), Daniel, Esaias (Isaiah), Eusebius, Hermas, Hieronymus (Jerome), Jacobus (James), Jeremias (Jeremiah), Ioannas (John), Josephus (Joseph), Judas (Jude), Justus, Justinus (Justin), Loukos (Luke), Marcus (Mark), Matthias (Matthew), Michael, Petros (Peter), Paulus (Paul), Philemon, Polycarpus (Polycarp), Stephanas (Stephen), Theodorus (Theodore), Theodoret, Theophilus, Tobias, Tobit, Yeshua/Joshua.

Female: Dorcas, Elisabeta (Elisabeth), Maria (Mary), Priscilla, Rebecca/Rebekah, Sara/Sarai (Sarah), Thecla (or Thekla), Thaïs.

Goth Names:

Name beginnings: Ahta-, Airmana-, Alha- (or Ala-), Amala-, Anda-, Ansa-, Arya-, Auda-, Auha-, Badua-, Balta-, Daga-, Filu-, Friti-, Ilda-, Gaesu-, Gau-, Goda- (or Guda-), Gunth-, Hildi-, Huna-, Liuda-, Mata-, Nanta-, Odo-, Ragina-, Rica-, Reda-, Sigis-, Sunya-, Swintha-, Tauris-, Thrasa-, Ulf- (or Wulf-), Vandila-, Vili-, Vinita-, Viti-.

Male name endings: -abad, -aberit, -abalt, -frith, -funs, -gern, -gar (or -agar), -gis, -laf (or -alaf), -mer (or -imer), -mund, -noth, -red (or -ared), -ric (or -aric), -swith, -vacer (or -acer), -ulf (or -wulf).

Female name endings: -gyth, -hild, -swith.

SKILLS

Some of the Skills of the modern world do not apply in the Roman setting. Computers did not exist at the time, and there was no real equivalent that is not covered by Academics. Science, as we now know it, was barely practiced. There were no cars to Drive, and no Firearms to shoot.

Four new Skills have been created to replace those removed. They are detailed in this section.

MENTAL SKILLS

RELIGION

Magnus touched two fingers to the altar, noting the blood-caked notches in the stone. "This was no ordinary augury," he muttered. "Something was struck here with force enough to make these marks. Something was chopped up. Beheaded, perhaps."

"Ah," said Mdjai, watching from the shadows. "A sacrifice. I know the type. And I know the God who wills it. He is not a Roman god."

Characters possessing this Skill are educated in the proper rituals and demonstrations of the multitude of gods that oversee the Roman world. This is not occult knowledge, but rather a familiarity with the widely available (and greatly complicated) tales of religion and understanding of its proper practice in the setting, domestic and foreign.

Religion is used to perform mundane religious rituals and the Veneficia of the Cult of Augurs.

Possessed by: Artists, augurs, devoted pagans, philosophers, scholars

Specialties: Omens, Pantheon (Roman, Egyptian, Parthian), Rituals

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Your character mistakenly identifies a religious sign or name, or remembers incorrect information that affects his decisions for the worse. Depending on the situation, this flawed information could be deadly.

Failure: Your character is unable to identify or remember any useful facts about the situation at hand or perform the proper ritual.

Success: Your character properly identifies or remembers facts about a particular religious practice.

Exceptional Success: Your character is able to identify a particular religious ritual with great clarity, possibly recalling extra details that enhance his understanding of the broader context of the situation. Not only does he successfully recognize the prayer to Mars, but the character knows that the prayer in question is one unique to an absorbed Gaulish barbarian culture, some of whom have taken up residence in a certain district of Rome.

WARFARE

Severus pulled up on the reins, slowing his mount. He eyed the boughs of the black trees along the edges of the path, noting the growing density of the forest. He raised one gloved hand, and his men halted their march. "We take another route," he declared, pointing to the clearing ahead. "This one is too convenient. I smell an ambush."



This Skill represents a character's understanding, gained by education, experience or just innate sense, of large-scale tactical maneuvers. Warfare is useful when planning for a battle (to assign troops well, to read the lay of the land for potential advantages and trouble spots and to predict enemy movements) and when attempting to read the flow of events during open conflict. A character with a high rating in Warfare is unlikely to walk into a trap in battle, and is more likely to adopt the right response to a change in circumstances amidst the din and chaos of war.

Warfare does not just represent the ability to gain objectives in war — it is the ability to gain those objectives while incurring a minimum of losses on one's side and inflicting a maximum of casualties on the enemy. Any good soldier can take an objective with overwhelming force. It takes a great one to achieve the same goal with an underpowered force and avoid losing any subordinates in the process.

Possessed by: Military officers, mercenaries, experienced criminals, nomadic tribesmen

Specialties: Ambushes, Fields of Fire, Troop Movements, Supply Lines, Terrain

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Your character seriously misreads the details of the battleground. At best, he might fail to take advantage of a weakness in enemy forces. At worst, he might walk himself and his allies into a trap or stage an attack from a position of disadvantage. Any attempt to gain the objective based on his faulty assessment will likely fail, and will certainly lead to unnecessary losses on his side.

Failure: Your character's insight fails to improve the circumstances for him and his allies. Maybe he just can't get a proper read of fast-developing events, or maybe he just doesn't have enough experience to outfox his opponents. The objective may still be achieved, but it will carry a heavy cost.

Success: Your character achieves his objective.

Exceptional Success: Your character not only gains his objective quickly and efficiently, but his accomplishment carries a minimum of losses and throws the enemy off-balance, possibly paving the way for further successes.

PHYSICAL SKILLS

ARCHERY

Eithne watched in silence as the legionnaire crossed the field, his shield at the ready. She narrowed her eyes, keeping tension on the string, waiting, waiting. Suddenly, he stopped and turned,

hearing the sound of a snapping twig somewhere off to his left. At that moment, she let fly. The arrow lodged itself in his armor, and he collapsed immediately, insensate.

"I don't care if they are the sons of a god," Eithne whispered to herself. "A simple length of wood in the heart silences them just as it does any of us."

Archery allows your character to identify, maintain and operate most types of bows and crossbows. This Skill can represent formal military training or the familiarity born of experience in the field.

Note that dots in Archery do not apply to manually fixing or building bows or fletching arrows, only to wielding them. Construction and repair are the province of the Crafts Skill.

Possessed by: Criminals, mercenaries, hunters, soldiers

Specialties: Bow, Crossbow, Long Shot, Trick Shot

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The weapon malfunctions in some way, or your character accidentally hits a different target (possibly himself). The most common type of dramatic failure is an arrow drop — the arrow simply falls from the bow without firing, and the character is free to nock and fire another one in the next turn. Another common failure is the string break, which must be repaired before the bow can be fired again.

Failure: Your character misses his intended target. The Storyteller determines what, if anything, the arrow or bolt hits.

Success: Your character hits his intended target and inflicts damage as normal.

Exceptional Success: Not only does your character hit the target, but he strikes a particularly vital area, magnifying the damage as reflected by the roll.

RIDE

The thundering of hooves echoed throughout Necropolis as Matthias spurred his mount, guiding it through the tunnels, his teeth gritted in fear. Flames danced in their path, but he knew that his only hope for escape lay beyond them. Behind him, he heard the Gangrel of the Legio Mortuum assembling in formation and preparing their spears. It was now or never.

The Ride Skill allows your character to control and guide a mount under dangerous or difficult conditions. Characters don't need this Skill simply to ride a horse, camel or other mount. Rather, this trait represents the training or experience necessary to maintain control at high speeds, to ride through dangerous environments without injuring the mount and to push the mount to the limits of its performance.

Note that dots in Ride do not apply to training a mount, only to riding one. Taming and instruction of a mount are the province of the Animal Ken Skill.

Possessed by: Noblemen, soldiers, nomads, mercenaries, farmers

Specialties: Dangerous Conditions, Pursuit, Maintaining Speed, Stunts

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Your character loses control of the mount while attempting a maneuver. If traveling at high speed, the mount stumbles and may injure itself and throw the rider. If the mount is traveling at low speed, your character slips and tumbles from the mount, likely injuring himself.

Failure: The mount doesn't complete the intended maneuver. The mount likely balks or turns from the intended direction. The direction the mount travels is determined by the Storyteller, not your character.

Success: Your character completes his intended maneuver.

Exceptional Success: Not only does your character complete his intended maneuver, but he gains more ground than expected.

MERITS

This section outlines a number of Merits unique to the ancient Rome setting. None of the Merits that require modern technology or information foreign to Roman civilization can be purchased in this setting, so the following are not considered "in play": Fighting Style: Kung Fu, Gunslinger and Stunt Driver.

MENTAL MERITS

DEBATE STYLE:

REASON (• TO •••••)

Prerequisites: Intelligence •••, Academics •

Effect: Your character has extensive practice and training in formal logical thought, either in life or undeath. She may be a philosopher, military tactician or scholar.

Dots purchased in this Merit allow access to special debate maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can't have Dilemma until she has Reference. The maneuvers and their effects are described below. Only one maneuver can be performed in a given turn.

Reference (•): Your character is so skilled at carefully tying his statements to known or assumed truths that everything he says is just that much more difficult to

attack. His wording is precisely chosen to remind the audience of accepted truths, even if the statement itself is not necessarily accurate. At the beginning of any turn, you may declare that the character is using Reference, and add a +1 to his Integrity for the turn. Your character can only use Reference if his argument that turn is based on Intelligence or Wits.

Dilemma (••): Your character knows how to word an argument so that the opponent is forced to make a choice between two statements, both of which actually damage her side of the debate. You must declare that the attack is a Dilemma, and make an Intelligence- or Wits-based roll as normal. If the roll is a success, the roll does not contribute progress toward the target number for victory, but the opponent is momentarily occupied in attempting to unravel the dilemma and may not apply her Integrity to the next argument leveled against her (which may be from your character in the following turn or from some other source beforehand).

Kairos (•••): Your character has an advanced sense of "Kairos," or the "opportune moment." He knows exactly how debate flows, and is well experienced in taking advantage of that flow to keep the audience on side, even when making use of unconventional tactics. Any time he makes a successful Intelligence- or Wits-based argument, he may declare it is a "Kairos" statement and follow it up by switching tactics without suffering the normal +5 penalty to his target numbers.

Once Kairos is used, the debater's tactics are considered switched from then on. If he wants to change tactic again without penalty, the debater will have to use Kairos again.

Hyperbaton (••••): Your character is capable of laying carefully constructed verbal traps designed to make an opponent look foolish, and even to open herself to an unexpected, weakening reply. When the opponent makes an attacking argument, your character may make a Defensive Argument in response (doubling his Integrity), and then suddenly answering with a quick, Wits-based reply that comprises a surprise attack. This reply is made at a -1 penalty. However, it does not subtract the opponent's Integrity as normal. **Drawback:** If your character is the target of any further arguments this turn, he cannot apply his Integrity against them. In addition, if the character was not already making use of the Deft Argument tactic, then Hyperbaton is a change of tactic and will invoke the +5 modifier on his target numbers.

Elocutio (•••••): The character is so well trained and so familiar with the rules of reason and logic that he is able to make arguments that attack multiple opponents' positions with a single statement. Make a normal Intelligence- or Wits-based attack roll for the character.

This roll receives a dice penalty equal to the number of opponents attacked with this argument (to a maximum of -5 dice). Successes achieved on this roll are applied to the cumulative totals for defeating all of the targeted opponents. **Drawback:** To perform an Elocutio attack, you must expend a point of your character's Willpower *before* you make the initial attack roll. The Willpower does not grant an additional +3 bonus to the roll. If the attack fails, the Willpower is wasted.

PHYSICAL MERITS

FIGHTING STYLE: FORMATION TACTICS (• TO •••••)

Prerequisites: Strength ••, Stamina •••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character has completed extensive drill training, either in life or undeath, learning to work in efficient, deadly harmony with compatriot soldiers. He may be a career soldier, a member of the Legio Mortuum or a mercenary veteran.

The Legio Mortuum makes frequent use of Formation Tactics, applying its benefits to devastating effect. There is little in Necropolis more intimidating than the sight of four or five Kindred legionnaires moving quickly into a coordinated and powerful display of arms.

Dots purchased in this Merit allow access to special combat maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can't have Ciringite Frontem until she has Testudinem Formate. The maneuvers and their effects are described below. Only one maneuver can be performed in a given turn. All of the maneuvers are effective only with a shield and melee weapon.

Testudinem Formate (•): Your character is trained in assuming the legendary "tortoise" formation. All soldiers in the formation raise and overlap their shields, creating a nearly impenetrable wall. She gains +1 Defense against ranged weapons above and beyond her armor bonus, *for each soldier in the formation*, to a maximum of +5. **Drawback:** Characters taking part in the Testudinem Formate cannot attack while they benefit from (or contribute to) this Defense bonus, and they can only move at half their Speed rating.

Ciringite Frontem (••): Your character knows how to work together with other soldiers to hold a position and better withstand an oncoming attack. If you succeed on a Strength + Weaponry roll, your character holds her ground and forces a knockback check (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) on any opponent who attacks her that turn. You may add +1 *for each soldier in the formation*, to a maximum of

+5, to this Strength + Weaponry roll. **Drawback:** You may not add the character's Defense to any incoming attack this turn. If she applies her Defense, she breaks formation and cannot benefit from its bonus or contribute to the bonus of any other soldier in the formation.

Cuneum Formate (•••): Your character can participate in a fast-moving wedge formation designed to break and scatter enemy lines. The quick assault knocks enemies off balance and forces aggressive attackers to go on the defensive. This attack is made at a -2 penalty. If successful, the attack does full damage to one opponent and that opponent's melee attacks against the soldiers in this formation are made at a -1 penalty *for each soldier in the formation*, to a maximum of -5 for the remainder of the turn.

Orbem Formate (••••): Your character is trained in assuming a circular, defensive formation that protects any object or individual in the center. Whoever (or whatever) is in the center of this formation gains a +1 Defense bonus *for each soldier in the formation*, to a maximum of +5, applied against ranged and melee attacks. For every three soldiers in this formation, one adult (or adult-sized object) may benefit from the bonus applied. **Drawback:** The individual protected may not participate in combat. If he attempts to attack the opponent, the benefit of the Orbem Formate is lost.

Contendite Vestra Sponte (•••••): Your character can take part in a shockingly powerful assault, unleashing a wave of attacks in concert with her well-trained compatriots. If a character in this formation scores a successful hit with her melee weapon on an adversary, she may benefit from the position of her fellow soldiers, pushing them directly into another's blade (or otherwise maximizing the benefit of her attack). This capitalization requires no additional roll; the adversary takes one additional level of lethal damage *for each soldier in the formation*, to a maximum of 5. **Drawback:** To participate in this formation, each soldier involved must spend a Willpower point *before* she makes her initial attack roll. The Willpower does not grant her the additional +3 to the attack. If the attack roll fails, the Willpower is wasted, and the Contendite Vestra Sponte bonus does not apply to her attack (although her participation may still be counted toward the bonus of another soldier's attack in the formation).

FIGHTING STYLE: GLADIATORIAL (• TO •••••)

Prerequisites: Strength •••, Presence ••, Weaponry •••

Effect: Your character is a hardened warrior, seasoned by years of experience in street-level combat or battle in the gladiatorial arena. She knows how to use crude

weaponry, cruel tricks and flashy, crowd-pleasing tactics to maximum effect.

Dots purchased in this Merit allow access to special combat maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can't have Weapon Slap until she has Stunning Attack. The maneuvers and their effects are described below. Only one maneuver can be performed in a given turn. All of the maneuvers are based on the Weaponry Skill.

Stunning Attack (•): Your character can make a sudden, howling attack of such viciousness that her opponent is knocked off balance. You must declare a Stunning Attack as your action before the attack roll is made. If the number of successes inflicted in the single Weaponry attack roll exceed the victim's Composure rating, the victim loses his next action. Note that your character must scream or howl while making this attack – it cannot be performed silently.

Weapon Slap (••): Your character unleashes a powerful blow designed not to injure the opponent but to push his weapon or shield out of the way and create an opening that can be exploited. If the attack roll is successful, no damage is inflicted on the victim, but he does not apply his Defense (including the benefit added by a shield) to the next incoming attack (which may be from your character in the following turn, or from some other source beforehand).

Lethal Accuracy (•••): Your character has an innate understanding of the various types of armor and their weak spots. Attacks made with any lethal weapon have Armor Piercing 1 and penalties to hit specific targets or body parts (see "Specified Targets," p. 165 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) are reduced by two.

Brutal Sacrifice (••••): Your character can intensify a lethal attack by staging it so that her weapon is embedded in the victim's body and ensuring that the weapon's removal will inflict more damage. You must declare a Brutal Sacrifice as your action before the attack roll is made. If the roll is a success, your character leaves her weapon in the victim's body. If the weapon is not removed, the victim suffers a -2 penalty on all actions due to pain and physical interference. If the weapon is removed, it inflicts additional lethal damage equal to the weapon's damage rating. This additional damage requires no roll. If the victim does not remove the weapon himself, your character may attempt a Dexterity + Brawl attack to do so on a subsequent turn. **Drawbacks:** To perform this maneuver, your character must expend a point of Willpower *before* the attack roll is made. The Willpower does not grant an additional +3 on the roll. If the initial attack

roll fails, the Willpower point is wasted and the Brutal Sacrifice may not be added. In addition, your character loses the use of the weapon until it is removed from the victim and returned to her.

STUNT RIDER (••••)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••

Effects: Your character can ride a horse and perform an unrelated action (e.g., fire a bow, grab a running victim) in the same turn. Ride rolls may still be necessary for dangerous maneuvers or situations.

SOCIAL MERITS

DEBATE STYLE:

RHETORIC (• TO •••••)

Prerequisites: Presence •••, Expression •

Effect: Your character has extensive practice and training in formal techniques of public speaking and debate, either in life or undeath. He may be a politician, philosopher, diplomat or someone who just takes pleasure in arguing politics at the local tavern.

Dots purchased in this Merit allow access to special debate maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next. So, your character can't have Ambiguous Statement until he has Ad Captandum. The maneuvers and their effects are described below. Only one maneuver can be performed in a given turn.

Ad Captandum (•): Your character is skilled at creating simple, short statements with surprisingly effective emotional impact. This "sound bite" delivery makes it that much easier to influence any audience. When your character makes use of Ad Captandum training, she gains a +1 bonus to any Presence- or Manipulation-based argument.

Ambiguous Statement (••): Your character knows how to craft loaded statements that make it difficult for an opponent to deny while maintaining an appealing stance. The opponent is essentially tricked into associating his position with something indefensible: arguing against the audience's virtues, for instance, or attacking an unassailable subject (such as the gods). When making an Ambiguous Statement, your character may substitute her Manipulation for her Integrity until her next turn.

Synonymia (•••): Your character knows how to strengthen a statement with a formal trick that involves stringing a series of synonyms together in rhythmic speech, underscoring the point and making sure that everyone in the audience understands it clearly. Some of the terms inserted into the Synonymia may not actually be exactly identical in meaning to the original statement,

broadening its meaning and making it more difficult to attack. The argument (which must be based on Presence or Manipulation) is made at a -2 penalty. If the argument is successful, the next argument leveled against the speaker is made at a -3 penalty.

Apologue (•••••): Your character is a skilled and clever raconteur. She can enthrall an audience with her entertaining delivery (so long as the argument is based on Presence or Manipulation), getting the point across and impressing them all at the same time. No matter how many opponents level arguments against her, you may apply her full Integrity to all arguments in a single turn.

Innuendo (•••••): Your character has achieved unparalleled skill in rhetoric, placing her among legendary speakers and politicians. Her subtlety is such that she can conceal a direct personal attack in an apparently innocent statement, swaying the opinion of the audience without damaging her own position. She may perform a Humiliating Attack (gaining the +3 bonus) on a Presence or Manipulation argument roll without sacrificing her Integrity for the turn or losing Integrity for the rest of the debate. **Drawback:** To perform an Innuendo attack, you must expend a point of your character's Willpower *before* you make the initial attack roll. The Willpower does not grant an additional +3 bonus to the roll. If the attack fails, the Willpower is wasted.

NOBLE HERITAGE (•• OR •••••)

Effect: Your character is a legal descendant of an influential Roman family. Citizens of the Roman Empire and the Camarilla will be star-struck by the association with his lineage, and may be more easily influenced or cowed because of it.

For two dots, your character is part of a well-known and respected line. He gets a +1 modifier to all Presence or Manipulation rolls when dealing with a legal citizen of the Roman Empire or a member of the Camarilla in good standing — so long as that individual knows the vampire's heritage.

For four dots, your character is part of one of the most revered or powerful lines in Roman history. He gets a +2 modifier on the relevant rolls.

Drawback: Your character is expected to behave with nobility and grace, embodying the qualities of his line. If he is caught participating in criminal or otherwise disgraceful activity, he is likely to be judged more harshly than others; in those cases, the bonus he would normally enjoy becomes a penalty until he is cleared of suspicion.

PATRON (• TO •••••)

Prerequisites: Status: Camarilla or Status: Wing •••

Your character is engaged in the practice of Kindred *clientela*, and one or more less powerful vampires are beholden to him. Because of the favors he has done for them in the past (generous material gifts, official endorsement allowing entry to a Wing of the Camarilla or other direct, beneficial expressions of political support), the lesser Kindred are considered the character's dependent, and are forced to do your character's bidding in an attempt to work off the debt. So long as your character provides the dependent with much-needed gifts, that dependent will never be able to escape the obligation.

Each acquisition of this Merit grants your character one dependent, who can be called upon to perform duties or provide information at any time. This dependent must be younger and less powerful than your character — she should almost always be a single-Status neonate. You or the Storyteller should detail your dependent with an identity, background and character sheet of her own. The Storyteller usually plays your dependent.

Dots spent in this Merit indicate the severity of the debt owed by the dependent to your character. One dot suggests a series of small favors that must be repaid in kind. Two dots indicates a foundation of assistance and gifts that have accumulated into a serious debt. Three dots represents a history of favors that would justify time-consuming or difficult requests. Four dots represents favors that change the course of a vampire's Requiem for the better, necessitating great effort to repay, and five dots represents gifts or favors that arguably saved the dependent from Final Death, allowing your character to demand massive repayment.

Since the dependent is working to pay off a debt of favor, the Storyteller determines how much your character can expect of her dependent. If there's any doubt, the Storyteller could call for a Manipulation + Persuasion roll, with a bonus equal to your character's rating in the Patron Merit. Penalties might be applied based on the importance or danger of the request. Asking a vampire to do something already within the bounds of her role imposes no modifier, while asking her to do something that could cause her to lose Status imposes a -3 penalty, and asking for something that could result in exile or Final Death is -5. Frequent favors asked of the same dependent also imposes a penalty as the dependent grows tired of being called upon.

Drawback: Dependents are not automatons, waiting for your character to call for help. Dependents have their own Requiems and desires. A patronage is a two-way

relationship. Calling for aid without dispensing more favors allows a dependent to pay off her debt, and she may abandon your character if the Storyteller feels that the dependent's duty is done. To prevent this eventuality, your character will have to continue to do the occasional favor for the dependent as well.

STATUS:

CAMARILLA (• TO •••••)

In the society of Roman Kindred, the single governing organization of the Camarilla reigns over all affiliations and sects: to be a vampire citizen of Rome, one must pay tribute and service to its leadership.

Mechanically, Camarilla Status works as a border-less version of City Status in **Vampire: The Requiem**. Camarilla Status represents a character's reputation throughout the Camarilla as a whole, without distinction for the particulars of political affiliation, and may be added to dice pools for social interactions between Kindred of the Camarilla.

- citizen, new Embrace
- accomplished citizen or minor noble
- feared/greatly respected citizen or accomplished noble
- cornerstone of Camarilla society
- true embodiment of the ideals and accomplishments of Kindred Rome

STATUS: WING (• TO •••••)

The whole of the Camarilla is gathered together in four "Wings," each of which plays an important role in the operation of Roman Kindred society, as well as providing a system of classification for its citizens. Mechanically, Wing Status works exactly as Covenant Status in **Vampire: The Requiem**. Wing Status represents a character's reputation with respect to accomplishments on behalf of the members of a Wing of the Camarilla, or embodiment of that Wing's ideals. Wing Status may be added to dice pools for social interactions between members of the Wing in question.

Every Camarilla vampire is assigned a Primary Wing: usually, the one she is inducted into after Embrace — although, in some cases a second or third choice can surpass the first. In general, whichever Wing a vampire holds highest Status in determines which special abilities she can benefit from. A vampire with Wing Status: Cult of Augurs 3 and Wing Status: Senex 1 may learn and perform the rituals of the Veneficia, for example, but not gain the experience cost break for Merits that the Senex provides.

- The character is officially considered a member of the Wing in question, but is known to only a few members.
- The majority of the Wing in the city recognizes the character's face and can recall his exploits.
- The character's deeds are known to all in the local Wing. Some members elsewhere in the Roman lands may recognize his name or face and may have heard of him.
- Word of the character's exploits has traveled far, and his name is known to Kindred throughout the Roman territories.
- The character's name and face are synonymous with his Wing of the Camarilla; his exploits are taught to new members of the Wing.

DISCIPLINES AND DEVOTIONS

The Kindred of Rome treat Disciplines with a strange sense of diffidence and willful ignorance. Many believe that unstructured sorcery is an evil act, so they are not ready to admit that Discipline use is "magical." It's true, those of a philosophical bent might examine the powers of the Kindred more closely, but those who wish to justify the use of Disciplines without sacrificing the appearance of virtue are forced to rationalize, claiming that the Disciplines are not *technically* sorcery for a variety of relatively spurious reasons, or just conceding that they are magic, but that, as dead things, the Kindred are not bound by the laws of morality that the living keep.

The majority of the Propinqui simply avoid the subject and pretend that their Disciplines are nothing but natural ability, requiring no more effort than the flexing of a muscle or the formation of a thought. They avoid ceremony, and they make an effort to conceal any physical manifestations of power (except in the cases of the Veneficia and Theban Sorcery). It is, quite simply, perfectly acceptable to make use of the blood Disciplines, but making it obvious is considered bad form.

Those Kindred Embraced elsewhere and imported to Rome are often confused by Roman hypocrisy. The powers of the Blood are used no less frequently within the Camarilla than anywhere else, but the effort involved in masking their application and pretending that no

“magic” is involved seems unnecessary and strange (not to mention dishonest).

THE COMMON DISCIPLINES

ANIMALISM

The power over beasts is presented by Roman Kindred as nothing more than a talent for handling animals and an ability to command their respect. Speaking in the tongues of beasts is frowned upon in Necropolis, and is considered a sign of childishness or lunacy.

To many of the Julii, Animalism is an indulgence rather than a tactical power. The ability to summon and command animals may impress low Kindred, but the Discipline doesn't really reach full flower until Animalism's upper levels are reached, whereby the Julii may ride in the bodies of animals (allowing them a secret outlet for the vampires' bestial urges) or learn to control their own frenzies.

To the Gangrel, on the other hand, and to many of the other vampires who learn the power, the ability to call upon the creatures of the field and sky is nothing to be ignored. Many young Gangrel are fed upon the blood of the rats and birds that come to these Kindred, and many have a real appreciation for the knowledge and cooperation of the beasts. To these Gangrel, the higher expressions of the power are equally valuable, not more so.

CELERITY, RESILIENCE AND VIGOR

The purely physical Disciplines are so common among the Kindred of the Camarilla that nobody even bothers to attempt their rationalization any more. Witnessing another vampire's unnatural strength or speed, the Kindred of Rome are likely to shrug, claiming that there's nothing unusual in it. Romans are tougher, they say, and stronger than everyone else in the world. Romans are faster and more quick-witted. Is it not natural that Roman vampires should be likewise?

Of course, when barbarian vampires display similar abilities, the Roman Kindred point to their dark sorcery and pacts with corrupt spirits (the Striges not least among them). A Roman with Vigor is righteously powerful. A barbarian with Vigor is empowered by despicable forces so that he may do battle with the worthy vampires of the Camarilla.

OBFUSCATE

It's easy to ignore the power to remain unseen — in fact, that's exactly the effect the Kindred who use it are look-

ing for. Considered by many a gift of the lower class, the power to conceal one's possessions, merge with shadows and pass unknown are crude extensions of mundane stealth and larceny, not magic.

For the Nosferatu, Obfuscate is practically a reflexive power, allowing them to fade away whenever a superior being (living or otherwise) passes nearby — and all the better, for the witness is just as happy not knowing the Nosferatu are there as the Worms are to remain unseen. Most do not believe they are doing anything extraordinary when they vanish, and they point to the tendency among the patricians of Rome (and the higher clans) to ignore that which disgusts them, claiming that the effort involved is wholly attributed to the witness, not the Nosferatu.

The Mekhet, on the other hand, understand very well that their ability to hide from sight is a skill worth cultivating. They slip through the corridors of Rome and Necropolis, gathering the secrets of the Empire as skillfully and hungrily as they do the blood of the living. Many Mekhet work the levels of Obfuscate into their other ritualized magics, whether expressed in the complex Veneficia of the Cult of Augurs or the faith-driven displays of Theban Sorcery.

THE HEREDITARY DISCIPLINES

AUSPEX (SEDJEM-IB)

To the Mekhet seers, Auspex (or Sedjem-ib: “hearing the heart”) is a normal feature of the undead state. Some believe that Auspex comes of the unnatural silence of a vampire's body, theorizing that the beating of one's living heart drowns out the sound of others, whereas the dead heart makes no sound. Once a vampire's own body is stilled, they say, she gains the ability to hear the beating of mortal hearts, learning to read the rhythms and gain insight into their thoughts and emotions. These Mekhet claim that they are the only ones capable of real stillness, noting that they still catch pale hints of telltale sound from the bodies of other Kindred.

Others avoid the problems inherent in this explanation, choosing to point out that the Mekhet are creatures of shadow, tied to the jackal-headed god and judge of the underworld, Anpu (known to the Greeks as Anubis), and that he sees through their eyes, allowing them a glimmer of his sight. The Mekhet of the Lancea et Sanctum, meanwhile, are in the process of translating these beliefs, choosing to see their insight as a divine gift from a different god entirely.

None of this is spoken in the company of Roman Kindred, for all of it is foreign and fearsome. To the Propinqui, Mekhet shrug and smile. As far as anyone else is concerned, the Discipline of Auspex does not exist as a power independent of Mekhet blood.

DOMINATE

The Julii truly believe that they, as noble Roman-born mortals and as the inheritors of Remus's bargain, are the greatest of Rome's undead. To the Julii, the notion that other vampires are compelled to obey the Julii — and that mortals, remembering the Julii in life, are bound to do the same — is so logical that it barely registers when it happens. Few of the Julii believe that they are seizing control of their victims unnaturally when they exercise their Discipline. Instead, as wills crumble and defiance turns to obedience under the Julii's steely gaze, they assume that their noble gifts are asserting themselves normally. When the Julii Dominate one another, they consider the outcome an expression of innate hierarchy. Those who obey are inferior. Those who command are meant to rule.

Because the Julii deny that Dominate is a Discipline (at least until they are actually able to possess a mortal target), most of the Julii believe that everyone has the potential to do what they do, so long as that Kindred is of noble birth. It is a surprise to the Julii — and proof of the hereditary flaws of other clans — when they learn otherwise.

MAJESTY

Unlike the other clans, most of the Daeva are more than willing to admit that Majesty is a sorcerous Discipline. In fact, they revel in it, and in the apoplectic rages that “good Romans” express when the Daeva refer to it as such. The honeyed influence of the Daeva is all the more insidious when it charms those who would normally hate or fear them, and there are many among the Courtesans who take their pleasure in insidiousness.

Many of the Daeva claim that their power arises from the divinity in their blood, stating that they are no more able to control or mitigate it than they are their own beauty, or the gracefulness of their limbs.

Those Daeva who join the Lancea et Sanctum are taught that their Majesty is a sinful indulgence, and that it paves the way to sinful Pride. Many attempt to discard the Discipline, arguing that it is not an innate feature of the clan, but a wicked and all-too-conscious learning.

NIGHTMARE

The Nosferatu of Rome do not consider themselves creatures worthy of power. They do not consider any

vampire a creature worthy of power, and they will not admit that they have a Discipline of their own. Instead, they claim that the effects of Nightmare are nothing more than the natural response of witnesses to observation of the wicked, accursed Worms. The courageous and virtuous flee unbidden. The cowardly and the depraved are struck down in shuddering horror, not at the ugliness of the Nosferatu, but at the hypocrisy of the world that creates them and shuns them.

Those who hail from foreign lands echo these sentiments, repeating them in their native tongues throughout the known world. Only those who find inspiration within the Lancea et Sanctum see themselves and their power differently: they say that they are gifted with a divine grace, no less potent or beautiful than any other. They say that they are the walking warning to the sinner: repent and change your ways, or face fear and anguish unparalleled.

PROTEAN

Unlike those of most other Disciplines, the manifestations of Protean are obviously visible and undeniably unnatural. Thus, most Roman Gangrel make an effort not to display the power in public, choosing to unsheath their claws in the shadows, away from prying eyes. Because so many of the Gangrel serve in the Legio Mortuum, the other Kindred of the Camarilla also turn a blind eye to the Discipline's use, making an effort not to mention it even when they see it in use. They do, however, think less of the vampires who make open use of Protean's transformative powers, imagining that they are closer to the beasts they emulate, and not entirely able to control themselves as “civilized” vampires.

Gangrel from foreign lands feel no shame whatsoever about Protean, and are not likely to attempt to hide their proficiency. One of the most difficult habits for conquered Gangrel to overcome is the tendency to change shape in plain view, and many clashes between Roman Gangrel and their peregrine clan-mates result from these displays.

THE VENEFICIA

The complex and variegated rituals of the pagan Cult of Augurs are collectively referred to as the Veneficia, a subject of serious study within the Wing of Prophets. Jealously guarded, the Veneficia are mired in esoterica and codified rules of conduct, making them extremely difficult for a vampire without the proper training to perform. Rituals are classified and conducted based on the intended effect, the nature of the god or gods addressed in performance, and the sacrificial cost necessary to conduct the rituals. Many of the Veneficia are centuries old,

CRÚAC IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Certain rites of the Veneficia would eventually be absorbed into the practices of the modern Circle of the Crone, becoming part of Crúac. Most of the rituals that have survived have lost almost all of the trappings of the Cult of Augurs, though, reverting to a more primal, direct system of magic.

Vampires of the Outer Lands, however, still practice the Discipline of Crúac in this setting. Their magics should be mysterious and frightening to the Roman Kindred — even to Roman Vatinators, practicing rituals with exactly the same effect. Where Crúac is drawn from the bloody pit of the vampire's heart, Veneficia are carefully prepared offerings to civilized Roman gods. Where Crúac is dark and mystifying, Veneficia are exacting and logical. Storytellers running a clash between the two magical systems should make sure to highlight the cosmetic differences between the two Disciplines and the inability for practitioners of each to understand (or sympathize with) the other.

and many have become more complicated over time, accreting secret gestures and cryptic prayer like mystic coral until their original shape was completely obscured.

Learning the Veneficia is a distinctly academic intellectual exercise. Vatinators take lengthy instruction from superior practitioners, apprenticing at the ceremonies of the Wing and studying the details of divine communication.

Cost: Uses of the Veneficia always cost at least one Vitae. The Blood of the caster is the spark that “ignites” any ritual of the Veneficia — until the sacrifice is made, the gods will not provide the power to complete the ritual successfully. Use of the Veneficia requires that this sacrifice is made in a visible or otherwise significant manner, as an unabashed appeal to the gods for assistance.

Veneficia do not follow the same linear progression that other Disciplines do. A character's mastery dictates the highest level of rituals he may learn. Rituals are bought with experience points. For example, a character with two dots of Veneficia can learn an unlimited number of level one and level two rituals (provided he spends the experience necessary to attain them), but may not learn any level three rituals until he buys his third dot of Veneficia. Each time a character gains a dot of Veneficia, he gains a ritual of that level at no additional cost.

The Veneficia represent a pact between the caster and the gods of Rome. The caster appeases or satisfies the

god invoked, giving him or her something she wants and making the proper demonstration of good faith, and the god provides the caster with temporary power in return. It is commonly believed that the Veneficia cannot be performed without faith.

The connection with these powers and the willful subservience to them that Veneficia demands draws a character further away from his Humanity. A character's dots in this Discipline, subtracted from 10, is the maximum to which his Humanity can rise. A character with four dots in Veneficia, for example, cannot have higher than Humanity 6. If a character has a higher Humanity score than his level of Veneficia allows, his Humanity immediately drops to the maximum dictated by the Discipline, and the player makes a degeneration roll to determine whether or not the character gains a derangement during the process of gaining power.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Religion + Veneficia. The complicated, highly structured rituals of Veneficia require extensive memorization and careful education. Because of the sanguinary component, the Veneficia double any bonuses that a vampire's blood ties might apply, such as a ritual performed on a sire, grandsire, childe or grandchilde. Also, the Gangrel clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's roll.

Action: Extended. The number of successes needed to activate a ritual is equal to the level of the ritual itself (so a level three ritual requires three successes to enact). Each roll represents one turn of ritual casting. Note also that each point of damage suffered in a turn is a penalty to the next casting roll made for the character, in addition to any wound penalties that a caster must suffer.

Costs to activate the rituals of Veneficia must be paid before the roll can be made. If a ritual costs more Vitae than a vampire can spend in a turn, the roll is made reflexively on the turn he spends the last Vitae necessary for the ritual.

If a character fails to complete the ritual for any reason, the Vitae spent is lost, and the effect does not manifest.

ROLL RESULTS

Dramatic Failure: The ritual fails spectacularly, invoking the ire of the gods instead of attracting their favor. The caster suffers a detrimental effect of the ritual himself, enduring a mystic backlash that injures or confuses him. In general, harmful rituals are simply turned upon the caster himself, while those intended to provide information call down an overwhelming storm of images and sensations, confounding his attempts and stunning him for a turn.

Failure: The ritual fails entirely, but not dangerously. Vitae spent in activation is sacrificed as normal, but no effect manifests.

Success: The ritual takes place as described.

Exceptional Success: The ritual takes place as described. In many cases, extra successes translate to greater damage, duration or similar benefits, as mentioned in the text for each ritual.

Unless otherwise specified, rituals last for the duration of a scene or until the next sunrise; whichever comes first.

SUGGESTED MODIFIERS

Modifier	Situation
+4	Ritual is turned upon or applies to a vampire with whom the user has a blood tie.
-1 to -3	The character is rushed or distracted, such as by invoking a ritual in combat or while being harried by pursuers. The penalty is cumulative for multiple distractions. Successes gained on a meditation roll for the night offset interruption penalties on a one-for-one basis.

The Veneficia are almost always named for a god, goddess or mythical creature that is invoked in order to produce the effect. This naming practice has survived in some Crúac rituals (Pangs of Prosperina, The Hydra's Vitae), but not all. Presented here is a list of names for rituals of the Veneficia, and their modern Crúac equivalent.

Modern Crúac	Veneficia
Rigor Mortis	The Gorgon's Touch
Cheval	The Eyes of Minerva
Deflection of	Fortuna's Blessing
Wooden Doom	
Touch of the Morrigan	Jupiter's Wrath
Blood Price	Saturn's Tithe
Willful Vitae	Blinding Cupid
Blood Blight	The Curse of Echidna
Feeding the Crone	Typhon's Maw

OLD RITUALS

The following is a small sampling of the Veneficia that, to the knowledge of modern Kindred, were not assimilated into Crúac and are not available in the present. In the nights of Rome, though, these Veneficia are as common as any other.

APOLLONIAN SIGHT

(Level One Veneficia)

The vampire enacts this ritual by entreating Apollo for a blessing of insight, bleeding her own Vitae into a specially prepared bowl and then spilling the entrails of a sacrifice (usually a small animal) into that same bowl. The shape and character of the entrails, and the way the shed Vitae coats them, impart information about the current situation of the subject of the ritual — the vampire may perform it on behalf of another. The number of successes on the activation roll determines the clarity and usefulness of the vision imparted. On an exceptional success, the entrails seem to come alive in the bowl, speaking directly to the vampire or forming a complicated shape symbolizing important facts that affect the subject.

This prophetic image grants a +2 bonus on any dice pool to investigate or research information related to the subject of the ritual.

THE BLESSING OF ANTAEUS

(Level Three Veneficia)

The performer calls on the mystic protection of Neptune and Gaia, the gods of water and the earth. If the ritual succeeds, the successes gained on the roll are added to the vampire's Defense for the duration of the spell, exactly as if he were wearing armor. Attackers will notice that the vampire's flesh has hardened, and has a stone-like feel, even though the vampire in question is not limited in his motion.

This ritual is effective only so long as the vampire who casts it is in flesh contact with the bare earth. If he is lifted bodily off the ground, the spell ends immediately. The power cannot be invoked to protect others; it works only on the Vaticinator himself. The ritual fades at sundown of the subsequent night, though it may be invoked again immediately thereafter.

THE ARROW OF TARTARUS

(Level Five Veneficia)

This vicious ritual is used to punish vampires by bringing about the painful and ignominious deaths of their mortal friends and descendants. The performer ritually prepares a weapon (usually a dagger, arrow or javelin) with his Vitae, calling upon the might and aid of the Furies. Each roll made in the attempt to activate the ritual takes a full night of activity, not a turn. When the weapon is ready, it turns black and cold, the blood upon it transforming into a virulent, viscous fluid. The vampire must then embed the weapon in the body of a living mortal (with a success-

ful Strength + Weaponry or Dexterity + Archery attack causing three or more lethal wounds). The moment the blow is struck, the mortal is inflicted with an infectious degenerative disease: leprosy, black flux (cholera) or scarlet fever. Any mortal who comes in contact with the victim stands a chance of catching and spreading the disease as normal, and any vampire who feeds upon him may become a carrier (see **Vampire: The Requiem**, pp. 174–175).

THEBAN SORCERY

The magic of the Lancea et Sanctum, brought to the covenant by the Mekhet of Thebes, is a potent force in the hands of the believers. The magic of Thebes is rapidly going through a metamorphosis, thanks to the magic's general release within the covenant of faith and subsequent variety of interpretation. The magic of the Sanctified is strange and unreliable, drawing from the will of the user and manifesting in response to fervent entreaty instead of the practiced art of the Roman Veneficia. Most abhorrent to the educated mystics of Rome, Theban Sorcery seems to be much less discriminating: all you need to call upon its "miracles" is believe strongly enough to exhaust yourself.

Mechanically speaking, the Discipline operates exactly as detailed in **Vampire: The Requiem**. The rituals described there all exist, in some form, in the nights of ancient Rome, although most have several names, changing to match the belief system of the wielder. The "Transubstantiation" ritual, for example, might be called "Sticks to Snakes" by Judaic practitioners, or "Corruption" by Gnostic believers.

OLD RITUALS

The following are a small sampling of Theban Sorcery rituals that have all but disappeared in modern nights. In the nights of Rome, though, these rituals are as common as any other, and any member of the Lancea et Sanctum is free to learn them.

THE ANGEL'S TOUCH

(Level One Theban Sorcery Ritual)

One of the first rituals discovered by a Roman practitioner of the Lancea et Sanctum, The Angel's Touch allows the vampire to render a part of a mortal subject's body immune to the vampire's ability to seal the wound he makes, making it very likely that the mortal will bleed copiously after the bite and die. Most often used to discourage Kindred who feed too often from the same mortal and developing an emotional attachment, this ritual is credited with opening the eyes of many vampires to the realities of their sin.

To activate the ritual, the practitioner makes the necessary sacrifice and prayer over a slumbering mortal, completing the ritual by gently touching the spot on her body he wishes to purify. A single success on the activation roll protects about a square inch of flesh; each success scored adds a square inch to the area covered. Any attempt to bite the mortal within the designated area will penetrate as normal, but the wound that results cannot be subsequently healed with a lick. This effect lasts until the next sunrise. Attempts to treat a wound with the Medicine Skill are not affected by this ritual.

A mortal may be affected by only one instance of The Angel's Touch at a time. The roll to activate this power is penalized by the subject's Resolve.

Offering: The sorcerer must obtain a lock of the subject's hair to be consumed when the ritual is enacted.

MICAH'S HOPE

(Level Three Theban Sorcery Ritual)

This ritual empowers a vampire who faces earthly judgment for his divine faith, allowing him to face his accusers with strength and dignity, no matter how cruelly he is treated. The subject of the ritual, when brought face to face with an accuser empowered to order corporeal punishment or Final Death, is suddenly released from any wound penalties he suffers, regains a point of Willpower, and gains a temporary one-dot bonus to his Presence. This bonus may exceed the limit imposed by Blood Potency. The effects last until the subject is removed from the accuser's sight.

If this ritual is to be activated on a willing subject other than the sorcerer, the subject may spend the Willpower point to activate the ritual instead of the caster. If the subject is unwilling to accept the ritual, the roll to activate the power is penalized by the subject's Resolve.

The ritual activates only if the accuser is observing or engaging the subject with the intent of issuing imminent judgment. Until that moment, the ritual's effects do not manifest. This ritual affects only vampires, and a vampire may be subject to only one instance of Micah's Hope at a time.

Offering: A single lethal wound must be inflicted on the subject, and two points of Vitae must bleed out, turning to long smears of ash on his body as the ritual is performed.

THE MARTYR'S MIRACLE

(Level Five Theban Sorcery Ritual)

This awe-inspiring ritual is truly shocking to all unbelieving Kindred. It allows one member of the Sanctified



to defend her allies in faith from the searing of sun and flame, martyring herself in the process. Some credit The Martyr's Miracle with preserving the survival of the Lancea et Sanctum itself, telling tales of the ritual's use during the early nights of the covenant.

The vampire must perform the ritual even as she herself is consumed by flame. If enough successes are accumulated on the activation roll to initiate the ritual before she suffers Final Death, all Sanctified Kindred within line of sight are shielded; they suffer only lethal damage from fire or sunlight for the next five minutes per success rolled. In the case of an exceptional success, the vampires affected suffer just two points of bashing damage per minute.

If the accumulated successes do not total at five or more before the performing vampire suffers Final Death, the ritual fails.

Offering: The vampire performing the ritual makes an offering of herself. She is consumed even as she gathers the divine energies of The Miracle. The first roll can only be made after she has suffered at least one point of aggravated damage from fire or sunlight. The sorcerer gains a +2 benefit to resist the Röttschreck during this time, and she ceases to feel any pain whatsoever as soon as the first success is made on the activation roll.

ROMAN DEVOTIONS

SEARING WIND

(Celerity •••, Nightmare •••)

Some fleet-footed Kindred find that no matter how swift they are, they can never guarantee that they will be able to outrun every creature they meet. Those who have reason to elude capture may develop a means to discourage even the quickest pursuers, punishing those who attempt a chase. This devotion combines supernatural speed with the fearsome power of Nightmare, inflicting pain on those who try to keep pace with the vampire.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Strength + Athletics + Celerity vs. subject's Stamina + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

In order to activate this Devotion, the vampire must be running at full speed, and must be pursued by an opponent. After the first round of the chase, the vampire may unleash this power. If the contested roll is won, the opponent feels a searing pain in his limbs and suffers a -3 penalty to his rolls until one or both runners comes to a halt. The pain is purely psychological, and does no

actual damage to the opponent. When the chase ends, the pain lasts for a number of turns equal to the number of successes scored in excess of the victim's Stamina roll and then fades completely, leaving no mark and imposing no further penalty.

This power cannot be used if the vampire invoking it is the pursuer; it works only to escape capture, not effect it. This power does, however, benefit from a +2 bonus if the pursuer has a blood tie to the vampire invoking it.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

REPULSIVE VAPOR

(Protean •••••, Nightmare •)

The Gangrel of the Peregrine Collegia have developed this noxious deterrent as a means to keep investigators from discovering the Gangrel's unsavory activities. They transform themselves into a foul, rot-damp mist, disgusting and repelling all but the most determined observers.

Cost: 1 Vitae (in addition to other costs required by the transformation)

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Protean vs. subject's Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

A vampire making use of the Body of Mist (Protean •••••) may choose to invoke this power and make the activation roll upon effecting her transformation. Afterwards, any individual who wishes to pass through the mist (or who encounters it as it moves toward him) must successfully resist the activation or be repelled. Vampires are simply disgusted by the clinging, foul mist, while mortals may actually be nauseated by the effect.

Note that the Repulsive Vapor does not involve an unusual display: for all intents and purposes, the mist is no more or less remarkable than any normal fog (unless the mist moves in a suspicious manner).

For a group of individuals encountering the mist, the Storyteller may roll the highest Composure of the crowd as an indicator of the group's reaction.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vampire is incapable of manifesting the Repulsive Vapor or using Monstrous Countenance for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The subject's successes exceed or tie those rolled for the vampire. The subject finds the mist unpleasant, but is otherwise unaffected.

Success: Successes rolled for the vampire exceed those rolled for the subject. The victim turns away from the mist, and will attempt to flee from it. He continues fleeing for one turn per success rolled and will not come within sight of the mist for the remainder of the scene.

Exceptional Success: An exceptional success causes a strong physical reaction in the subject. Even vampires flail and stumble in their attempt to flee the mist. Mortals are overcome by intense nausea, losing the ability to take any action except stagger away at half speed. If attacked, the victim of this power can defend himself (he is allowed Defense but not a dodge action), and may attack anyone who attacks him. He cannot attack the disembodied vampire or seek to disrupt her. The victim remains sickened as long as he is in contact with the mist.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

TRACKLESS STEP

Developed by the Kindred of Outer Arabia and imported with the conquests of Rome, the Trackless Step is a powerful expression of unity with the environment. The invoker gains the ability to walk across his chosen element without leaving a trace of the invoker's passage.

(Protean ••, Celerity ••)

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Survival + Protean

Action: Instant

If the roll is successful, the vampire leaves no footprints where he walks. A penalty equal to the number of successes gained on the roll is imposed on any attempt to track him.

The vampire must possess a variation of Haven of Soil that matches the terrain he is crossing for this power to work. Passage over sand, dirt or mud is possible with the basic level of the power, while the ability to meld with water is required to use Trackless Step in snow or across ice, the ability to meld with wood is required to cross a path of tall grass or dried leaves and the ability to meld with stone is required to cross a path of gravel or rock dust.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

PAX VOBISCUM

This pain, I understood. That which Decimus put upon me was senseless. Pain for his pleasure. Unfocused and given to callous whimsy. The man was a sadist, throwing scraps of me to his own Beast night in, night out, glad to have someone's neck beneath his sandaled foot.

But the agony the Legion of the Dead levied against me was proper and just. Just because I was a criminal, a froth-mouthed mongrel running the streets with singed eyebrows and a mouth full of somebody's blood. Proper because this pain had purpose. Think of the way one prepares an animal skin, turning it to leather. Fresh from slaughter, the skin is bloody, covered in fur. It's soaked in water, cured with salt. Bathed in harsh, burning lime to loosen the skin and hair. Then the leather is fleshed, the last layer of meat cut away with a sharp knife and a steady hand. One last bath in acid.

What results is something durable, stripped of frivolity and made into something useful.

That was what the Legio Mortuum did to me. Cut all the fat away from me. Turned me from a winnowed man into a hardened soldier. A tough piece of leather, indeed.

FORSAN MISEROS MELIORA SEQUENTOR

Initiation was not kind. It may have been months. It may have been years. It was far worse — and therefore, far better — than anything I had experienced as a mortal soldier. The ranks of the dead had even greater discipline than the living. Some might say that the mortal legions had grown soft at the core, and that such faintness of resolve had begun to creep out to the edges. Not here. Not among the dead.

We were taught to fight in formation without the fear seeping into us. Show a sign of fear, and be beaten to the ground with a thick rod. Resist the beating, and be pinned with a short blade to the ground.

We practiced battle not on wooden posts as the humans did, but upon each other — we exercised precise strikes against a trussed-up soldier bound to a tree (chosen by lottery, one never knew when the time would come to act as practice dummy). Cut. Thrust. Sever the hand at the wrist. Slice at the ear. The neck. The tendons of the leg and foot.

We pushed blood into our limbs, stiffening them, lifting up shields piled with rocks, hoisting gladii bound with weights. We were taught to move swiftly. In darkness. Near braziers and torches. Repress the fear, push forward. When we fought with the other recruits, we did not cover our sword tips as we did in the mortal legion. We stalked. Felt the blade. Healed the wounds. Kept fighting.

And even then, even after doing well, we'd be beaten. Kicked. Cut. Do you know how one produces muscle? We know now that muscle is torn. Ripped. And in the places of pain, new muscle grows. Strength comes with it. This was like that, you see, abuse turned to use, agony made to tear away our weaknesses and fill us only with resolve.

I don't mean to be proud when I say that I was very good at all of it. Better than I perhaps should've been — I was no great soldier as a living man. Passable, of course, or they would've culled me from the herd on the first day. But as a soldier fighting for the stability and civility of the Camarilla, upholding the Senex and the very fundamentals of society . . . it felt as if this were my purpose. I knew the drills. I knew the formations. As if they were written into my bones. I was fast initiated. Given the branding sword blade burned across the back of my neck. Some flinch, showing fear. A year before, I would have, recalling only the gouts of flame deep in the Black Spring.

Now, though, I did no such thing. I showed no fear. I took the burning like a soldier.

Sometimes I wonder if I owe more to Decimus than I care to admit. By dragging me down so far, on my belly in the mud, the only way I could go was up. At my lowest, I was granted some measure of perspective. Perspective I've since lost, though I regain it for a time when reading my old letters and writings, when transcribing this all yet again. Fear not, childer. I'm sure, given enough time, I'll lose perspective once more. I'll become that thing you hate. You'll feel no guilt at destroying me, as I felt none at destroying my own sire. Though there come times when I wonder how alike he and I were. I wish to say not at all. That I have not become the man he was. But then I look at the floor of my haven and I see the bits of blood and meat wound into the carpet fibers. I see the splashes of red on the marble columns. And I wonder.

Enough of that.

NIL DESPERANDUM!

Even as a committed soldier for the Legion having sworn a sacramentum to my general and to the Senex, the nights could be brutal. A number of offenses earned a soldier a sound beating, perhaps torpor, even Final Death. Dereliction of a guard post? A show of fear or hunger equating to a loss of control? Desertion? Perjury? Any color of cowardice? Expect suffering. Tribunals were quick. The guilty were touched by a staff by the Tribune Equestrian, and this touch was a sign — the offending party was besieged by us, beaten and cut until the Tribune Equestrian held up his hand. Sometimes the offender was left to tend to his wounds. Sometimes he was beaten into the sleep of the dead, roused from torpor weeks or months later. If the crime merited it, the Equestrian would never hold up his hand, and the coward or fool would be clubbed and hacked until his body turned to oily ash.

We suffered punishment, too, whenever we failed as an army. It was disgrace to lose a battle. When we lost, every 10th man was cast to the woods outside the city, made to survive for a time until they either came to retrieve us or until we were able to return. It was key to survive one's own disgrace. A lesson I've learned and forgotten a thousand times over.

This existence was not without rewards — aside from the reward of knowing one has a place, a role, we received other benefits. Those we destroyed, we plundered. Split the goods among us. Worthy soldiers received a number of rewards all their own: phalerae, medallions of bronze. Crowns, too, the coronae handed out to signify achievements within our ranks — coronae cruoris, the crown of the first kill, or the coronae propinqui, the crown given to one who saves a fellow soldier in battle. We were allowed on rare occasions, too, to consume the heart's blood of our enemies. If they were honorable, it was sometimes acceptable for an exceptional soldier to drink the spirit of an exceptional adversary. Hideous today, yes? You balk at the thought, perhaps. Or maybe there's that quiet voice in your head (as there is in mine right now) that wishes it were still like this. . . .

Do not think we weren't paid, either. Rations of blood. Coin. A largesse from the Senex that some called bribery. We were given free run over bathhouses, taverns, markets. At night, the humans fled from these places, and we swept in, loud, blood-caked, laughing, posturing. (And should a human remain? Too slow or too stupid to make it out of there before we entered? We tore into the fool like a pride of lions.)

After success in battle, we reveled. Triumphant generals thrusting up a scepter topped with an ivory eagle or an obsidian crow. Oxen slit at the neck, blood poured into golden saucers for the gods (and although our hungers stirred, we knew not to drink this blood, for one never eats food given over to the gods — you think we're damned now? Try stealing from the mouth of Jupiter). Etruscan dancers, slaves, who would move for our entertainment and then lay still while we tasted them.



Funny that I remember all these little details. But the larger picture is a blur. I don't remember much about the individual battles. Just . . . images frozen in time. Shadows stalking through mist, short swords thrust up through the fog. Barbarians laying in wait, burying themselves in ditches or covering themselves in moss. I can picture the Tigris, the moon captured on the black water — impossible, as I've never been there, have I? Spears sticking Cappadocians to the earth. Arianist beasts pinned to trees with the trees own branches. The howls of wolves and their mad shepherds in the distant hills. I can even remember putting those of the Lance and Spear to death per the demands of the Senex. That would change, of course. And aren't you glad, my childer? My young priests?

ETIAM CAPILLUS VNUS HABET UMBRUM

And where was Lucretia in all of this? My love? My savior? My mistress? I did not see her. Not directly, no. But she saw me. Lucretia left me . . . gifts.

Once in awhile, I would awaken to find a draught of her blood, freshly pulled into a phial.

Sometimes I'd find a small leather satchel with her blood. In the satchel, gold rings or jewels chipped from various adornments.

Dross compared to her blood. I could've thrown those trinkets and baubles into the sea. All I cared about was that sweet claret, the wine of Lucretia.

Sometimes, I think I drank it slowly. The one might sip an aperitif.

Other times, I guzzled it. A man without water in a blistering desert.

I'll never forget how it made me feel. Loved. Whole.

But more than anything —

Alive.

Damnation, sweet and unseen.

DEUS VULT!

You'll enjoy this. You'll find it fitting. I can hear your laughs now, childer, hollow and triumphant.

Our kind, as you well know, is not particularly good at change. It occurs outside of us, but we always seem a step behind it. Unwilling to let go of the moorings. Death is stagnant, like brackish water, and it's hard for us to stir movement, to work the waters. What we do, we like to keep doing. Even if all evidence suggests that it doesn't work, we'll keep trying it. It's our nature.

At least, it's that way for most of us.

Always comes some within the younger set with an eye toward change. Bloody-minded fools who seek to tumble the obelisks and build anew. Tradition is cast to the wind like a handful of dust.

Irony is alive and well in our kind, for it was the Lancea et Sanctum who were the upstarts, the tumultuous purveyors of change so gleefully spitting on the old ways. I heard rumors you know, that they — you — came out of Masada. Within the Sicarii lurked monsters, dwelling down in the deep cisterns and closed-off storerooms of that old fort. Did the monsters survive, hateful of grand Rome? Did they stir Jewish revolt in Egypt? Cyprus? (And do not think we detested the Jews. Even the Jewish Kindred were exempt from emperor worship like their mortal counterparts — they were allowed their ways, accommodated as any other.)

Perhaps the rumors aren't true. Perhaps it doesn't matter.

What does matter is that this was the beginning of the end, you see? The coming of the Chapel and Spear was the trumpet heralding the slow, tectonic collapse of beautiful Rome. What happened among the humans was a division among us, as well (for we are humanity's shadow, are we not?).

The Senex hated the Lancea et Sanctum. At the time, they were an offshoot of the Peregrine Collegia, a wing of the Camarilla as lost as that ruling body. (Gone in these modern nights, and how sad that is.) The Collegia didn't want the Lancea, of course — these pious Gnostics were lightning rods drawing Jupiter's fire upon them at every turn.

Why did the Senex hate the Sanctum so? I do not have the hours left to enumerate the reasons. Just a few: the Sanctum upheld one God, not many. They put this God before all of the Camarilla, before Rome itself. They looked beyond the earthly and saw nothing but the great thereafter, even ahead of the orthodoxy that kept us as a unified society. Blind zealots. Rats in the walls. A disgusting plague, you Sanctified. Morals? Is that what you claim to uphold? A lie. You uphold blind advocacy.

Let me tell you a story. I remember this well, though some of the precise elements remain . . . hazy. But it's real enough.

Necropolis was a snake's maze of tunnels and passageways, and it was key to find a place within this maze to call your own. A surprising irony given that we were all connected via this convoluted knot of hallways and staircases beneath the city, with immortal enemies potentially separated by only a few inches of rock wall — but miles of double-backed tunnels being the true obstacle.

It wasn't long after the Collegia had distanced itself enough from the Chapel and Spear that the Senex put us on the hunt. We smelled the trails of blood and went hunting for the rats in the walls. By this time I was a Centurion, commanding a battalion of Virgatores (the low soldiers to which I had myself belonged, the so-called Rod-bearers). Strange how the black crest of the helmet upon my head (a helmet I still possess, but do not think I'll bequeath it unto you treacherous children) gave me a sense of power. Entitlement.

We stalked the halls of Necropolis. Wise Kindred fled to their bolt holes. Less wise creatures trailed us outside the torchlight, hoping to catch sight of a slaughter, maybe growing lucky enough to find some fallen bannocks or taste of some treasured blood.

Took us many nights before we found them. Clustered like a ball of beetles in a makeshift chapel. Martyrs reveling in their chosen doom. Mouthing the words of the Monachus. Screaming the trite parables of their Dark Father, that sick fool who offered the great lie about the blood of the Lord. Dozens of them, ranting, raving. Brandishing torches without a hint of fear.

And there is the strange thing. We had the fear beaten out of us as pagan soldiers. But here? These fanatics? They had cast their own fear into the darkness, sent it away. I'll never forget that. I'll always respect it. I think it's something your kind has lost, don't you think? (I know you've lost it because I've seen the fear in your eyes. A legacy gone.)

I was not amazed at how they fought. They fought like clumsy dogs, rabid and mangy. But it was the rabidity that impressed me. The sheer verve that launched them forward, cackling, shrieking. Waving their torches about. One mouthed off about my damnation (had he truly known?), and I split his head like a red apple.

The Legion took the Spear apart at the seams, besting them handily. We poured their blood on the ground (libations to our gods) and drizzled it over the torches to extinguish the flames.

Oh, but this was the Lernaean Hydra we were fighting. One head lopped off gave way to two more heads. Murder one clutch of fools, and three more would rise from the ashes only months later. Some theorized that they were given over to the Nemeses, an odd possibility given the gulf between the monsters and the fools, but one never knows. Perhaps the Nemeses changed their tactics. Found a new way to hurt us. A way to destroy Rome.

Regardless, have you yet detected the grand irony? The parallel? I should hope so. I should hope that you see how then we were the status quo. The pagan kings and soldiers, burning sacrifices to our many gods. The Chapel and Spear grew in power and ousted us, cast us to the darkness and the periphery for thousands of years.

Oh, but what's that? What's happening now?

You have become the status quo, my childer. Your zealousness has faded — what once was a mad conflagration is now a reserved flame held only to the wick of a pale candle. Contained. Stale. Small.

And who is it that rises up out of the darkness? It's us. Those pagan kings and soldiers, we're not all vanquished. Some of us — like me — have been around since those early nights when we remember the authority granted to us by the very gods. (Authority stolen from us by you and your false prophets.)

Change is on the wind, is it not? You'll come to destroy me, but now I'm the Hydra. Faith spawning faith.

It was all coming down around us. Didn't know it at the time. And I didn't know what part I'd play in this Grand Guignol. Though . . . my small part in this cruel tragedy was also the same thing that would allow me to survive beyond the play's end, would it not? Fickle and cruel, fate. Aloof like a woman. Like Lucretia.

She came to me, one night not long after that massacre deep in the bowels of Necropolis.

Once again she was whispers of kindness, gentle caresses, small kisses. She let me nip at her neck to take what I so badly wanted, and taken from the skin was infinitely more pleasing than drinking it from a small casket.

Of course, all this consideration?

It meant she wanted something.

She whispered it to me, so sweetly in my ear as if it were a beautiful promise.

It was a promise, most certainly. But a terrible one.





CHAPTER III: ROME AND NECROPOLIS

RESPECT AND LOVE
THE LIVING IN
THEIR WORLD,
PRAISE AND FEAR
US IN OURS, AND
BEWARE WHEN
THEY TOUCH.

— SHY LUCAN,
A SHADOW OF
NECROPOLIS

ROME IS ACCEPTED IN EVERY REGION OF THE WORLD AS MISTRESS AND QUEEN; EVERYWHERE THE AUTHORITY OF ITS SENATORS IS PAID THE RESPECT DUE TO THEIR GRAY HAIRS, AND THE NAME OF THE ROMAN PEOPLE IS AN OBJECT OF REVERENCE AND AWE. NEVERTHELESS... SOME DO NOT BEAR IN MIND WHERE THEY WERE BORN, AND BEHAVE AS IF THEY WERE LIKENSED TO INDULGE IN VICE AND DEBAUCHERY.

— AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, RES GESTAE XIV. VI

This is the city of Rome in the last year of the reign of Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, during the 10th Consulship of Emperor Caesar Flavius Julius Constantius Augustus, and the third Consulship of Flavius Claudius Julianus Caesar, the year 1113 since the Founding, and the year 360 since the year in which the Christians believe that their Savior was born.

In the last century, Rome has fallen far. The once-shining streets are full of horse manure. The sewers are choked up. Houses that once contained the great families of the age lie vacant.

The people of Rome live in a city of past glories. The Empire might take *Roman* as its name, but the people of Rome have little say in the day-to-day running of the Empire. The tribes of Rome, the electoral colleges and the assemblies of the people are all becoming things of the past. The daily business of living — and not living, but walking still — is for most of the people here, all that there is.

The rich, in the absence of significance, spend their money on monumental statues, cast in bronze, covered in gold. They ride in ornate carriages, arranging their heavy cloaks of brocade, so that that the lavish embroidered patterns and decorative fringes are visible, fastening the cloaks close around the neck with massive golden brooches. They try to outdo each other in conversation, describing the vastness of their holdings outside of the city and the monetary yield of their land to anyone who'll listen.

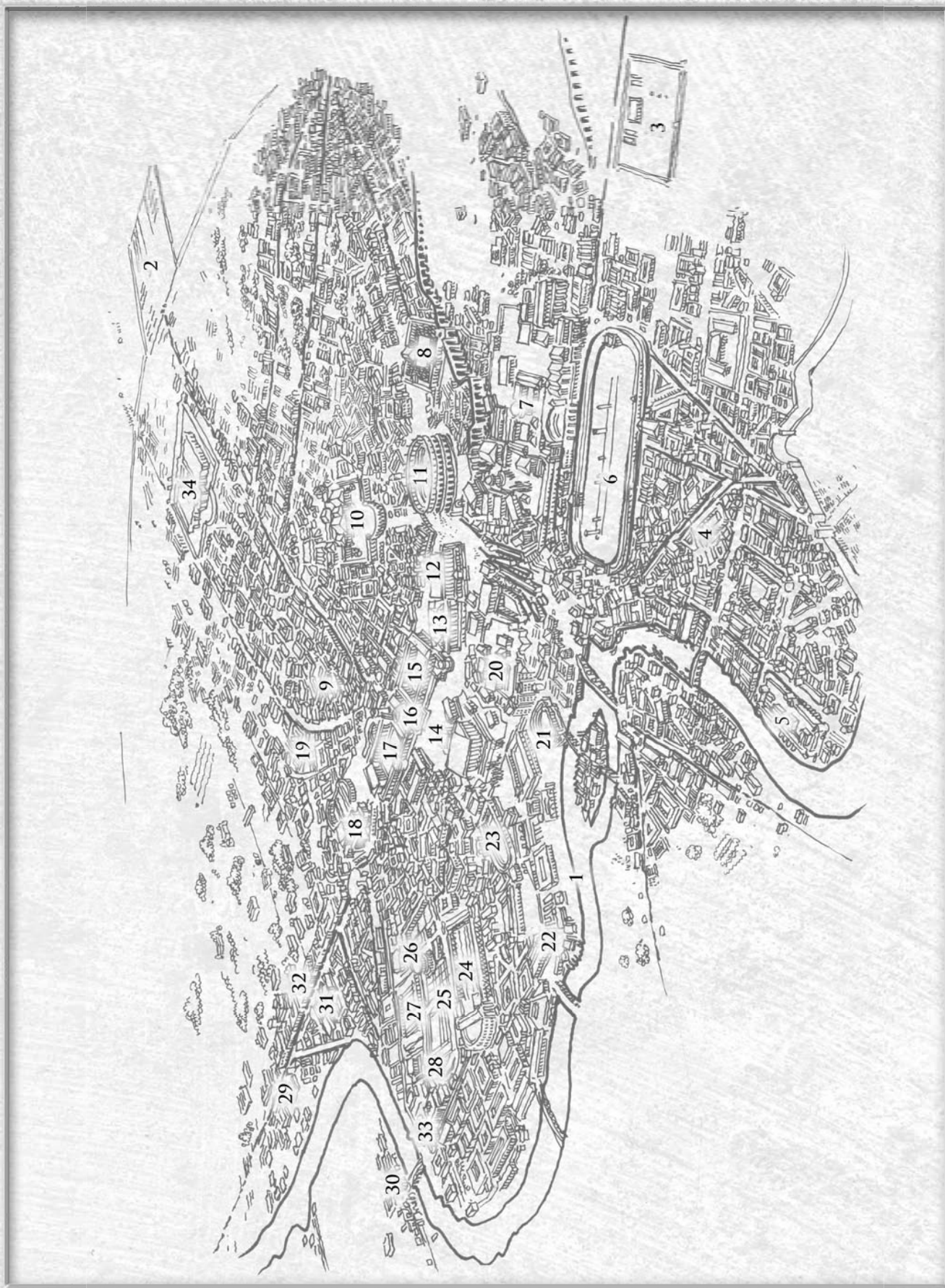
At night, young nobles ride like furies through the streets, regardless of whom they might run down, followed by hosts of their slaves, hangers-on and eunuch employees, as if they are charging into battle at the head of a column of cavalry.

Senatorial houses host endless dinner parties, attended by exotic dancers, musicians wielding enormous, bizarre musical instruments and singers and poets. They eat baroque, complex dishes made from ingredients so rare they'd cost a legionary's annual salary to import, just for the one meal.

Some of the poor spend their whole nights in the taverns, or take shelter under the awnings of the theaters, watching endless showings of old, obscene stories. In foul-smelling gambling dens, men kill each other over games of dice, or over allegiance to a chariot faction.

The temples of the pagan gods are empty these days. They once held the political power of the age, and every great enterprise undertaken by the Emperor would occasion new rituals, new sacrifices, new auguries. The Vestal Virgins still keep the sacred flame burning, but most of them are old, and each decade fewer and fewer candidates want to join. A new god has the upper hand now, a new priesthood rules the Romans. Where once on festal days the temple precincts of Rome would echo with the cries of sacrificial animals, comes now the chanting of the monks, the sound of hymns from the basilicas and chapels of the Christians.

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|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. River Tiber | 13. Constantine's Basilica | 24. Theatre of Pompeius |
| 2. Praetorian Fort (Garrison) | 14. Forum Romanum | 25. Baths of Agrippa |
| 3. Baths of Caracalla | 15. Temple of Peace | 26. Serapeum |
| 4. Baths of Decius | 16. Forum of Augustus | 27. Baths of Nero |
| 5. Granary of Galba | 17. Forum of Trajan | 28. Stadium |
| 6. Circus Maximus | 18. Temple of the Divine Trajan | 29. Tomb of Augustus |
| 7. Palace of Augustus | 19. Baths of Constantine | 30. Tomb of Hadrian |
| 8. Portico of the Divine Claudius | 20. Temple to Capitoline Jupiter | 31. Ara Pacis |
| 9. Suburra (district) | 21. Theatre of Marcellus | 32. Aurelian's Temple to the Unconquered Sun |
| 10. Baths of Trajan | 22. Theatre of Balbus, neighbouring Temple of Neptune | 33. Campus Martius (district) |
| 11. Flavian Amphitheatre (Colosseum) | 23. Flaminian Circus | 34. Baths of Diocletian |
| 12. Temple to Venus | | |



ICONIC LOCATIONS OF ROME

Iconic locations are specific places that capture the essence of Rome, that can be found nowhere else. Using them in stories helps to create a strong sense of place: a brawl that takes place in front of the rostra in the Forum Romanum sets the story firmly in ancient Rome. Each location also comes with information about the uses the Kindred typically make of that location, and suggestions for how it could figure in your stories as more than a mere backdrop.

AQUEDUCTS

The enormous mortal population of Rome requires an equally enormous water supply, for drinking, washing and the many bathhouses. This water is brought into the city by the aqueducts, collectively the most impressive feat of engineering in the city. The first, the Aqua Appia, was constructed in 312 BCE, and further major aqueducts were added until the second century. Since then, most of the work has gone into maintenance of the vital system. This maintenance is not completely effective; one arch, of the Aqua Marcia where it crosses the Appian Way, is known as the “dripping arch (*arcus stillans*).”

Some of the aqueducts, such as the Aqua Appia and the Anio Vetus, run almost entirely underground, but most, including the Aqua Marcia, the Aqua Iulia, the Aqua Virgo, the Aqua Claudia and the Aqua Traiani, carry the water in covered channels carried across the city on high arches. The aqueducts end in tall tanks, called *castella*, from which the water is distributed in lead pipes.

The water channels in all of the aqueducts are fully enclosed, to stop things falling into the supply, and many of the aqueducts are tens of miles long, bringing water from springs far beyond the walls of the city. The aqueducts are not, however, generally regarded as a security risk, because they are full of water, which, in most cases, is flowing quite quickly.

The aqueducts are monitored, however, because historically there have been many problems with people tapping into the aqueducts and stealing the water. If someone were to break one of the main aqueducts, such as the Aqua Marcia, it would be a disaster, not only due to the flooding but due to the loss of water. People climbing on the aqueducts, especially at night, stand a fair chance of being spotted and challenged by patrols.

This does not, of course, apply to anyone hidden inside the water channel, and Kindred do sometimes make use of these hidden routes into and out of the city.

Rules: Traveling with the flow of water requires a Strength + Athletics roll to keep control; a failure inflicts one to three points of bashing damage, depending on the flow in the aqueduct. Traveling against the flow of water requires at least two successes on a Strength + Athletics roll to make any progress at all, and up to four if the current is particularly fast. If the character does not get enough successes, he makes no progress. If he does not get any, he is swept away, and takes one to three points of bashing damage, recovering himself about a thousand feet downstream. As a rule of thumb, one roll is required for every mile of travel with the flow, and every thousand feet against.

When the process of travel is unimportant, assume that the character reaches his destination, taking 15 points of bashing damage (seven if the character is Kindred, which converts to lethal in the normal way once it fills all available Health boxes). For every success on a Strength + Athletics roll, subtract two points of damage.

THE BATHS OF CARACALLA

While Rome has hundreds of bathhouses, none can match the baths of Caracalla, constructed between 211 and 216 at the command of that Emperor. The whole complex covers an area of about 33 acres, and stands on an artificial platform raised 20 feet above the ground. The top of the platform is reached by flights of steps, and there are shops built into the outside of the platform at street level along the front and part of the way back along the sides.

The top of the platform is surrounded by a colonnade, which follows a rectangular line for the most part. This colonnade encloses a garden, which completely surrounds the main baths. On each side, just behind the main building, the colonnade curves outward to form symmetrical alcoves, each containing an octagonal, domed temple of the nymphs, a large, open hall, used in bad weather, and a heated meeting room, which can be hired for private use. In each rear corner of the complex there is a library, accessed from the garden, and the center of the rear wall includes a stadium, with seating on the external side, and the garden side open.

The main building is about 750 feet long by 380 feet wide, and arranged symmetrically. The actual paths run along the central access, with the *frigidarium* (cold pool)



closest to the entrance, an open hall behind it, a small *tepidarium* (warm pool) beyond that and, finally a large, domed *caldarium* (hot pool). To either side there is an open courtyard for athletic practice, surrounded by a colonnade with individual rooms, which can be hired. The building can hold about 1,600 bathers, and both sexes bathe, naked, together.

The baths open at midday, and close at midnight. They are at their busiest from mid-afternoon to sunset, and as it darkens, so does the character of the baths. After dark, it is considered acceptable to proposition fellow bathers, and while consummation is supposed to be private, there is a convention of ignoring things that are none of your business. Respectable women never attend the baths after dark, or men with a traditional sense of virtue, but rumors about who has been seen there are very common.

Tertia Julia Comitor, who sits with the Senex, has a great deal of influence over the staff of the baths, and with the urban Prefect. It is due to her string-pulling that the baths remain open at night, and that the urban Prefect does not take steps to stop the gross immorality that happens there. From time to time, Comitor arranges great entertainments for the Kindred, inviting all the Kindred

of Rome, closing the baths to most mortals, and ensuring that there are many slaves on hand to drink from. Kindred often say that the baths are full of blood at these events, but that is an exaggeration; blood certainly gets in the water, but most of the liquid is still water.

The platform on which the baths stand is riddled with passages on two levels. The upper level is mostly service tunnels, while the lower level is mostly drains. The great furnaces that heat the water and supply the hypocausts are on the upper level, and few Kindred can bear to be near them. The tunnels connect to Necropolis, and there is a formal passage that leads straight up through both levels, opening in the main entrance of the baths. This passage is normally sealed by a massive stone slab that is indistinguishable from the rest of the floor; Comitor opens the passage only for the grand entertainments. On other days, Kindred either enter with the mortals or make their way through the service passages.

Story Use: The Baths of Caracalla are an excellent place to hunt, and also to meet with mortal agents; people may notice that a meeting took place, but will not pay attention to the details. Comitor's parties are major events, when Kindred of all levels can mix and meet with one another. The passages under the baths are in a gray zone

between Necropolis and Rome, and the furnaces are a good place to dispose of bodies.

Equipment Bonuses: +2 to hunting rolls if the vampire has a seduction style. +1 to social actions at Comitor's parties, as even the Kindred relax slightly. A vampire must accumulate five successes on a Resolve + Composure extended action to enter the furnace rooms, even at night.

THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS

The Circus Maximus is the greatest center of entertainment in Rome, the site of the chariot races between the Greens and Blues that hold the whole population in thrall. The circus is about 2,000 feet long, and about 700 feet wide; the three banks of seats around the arena can accommodate about 200,000 spectators, and for important races, they do.

A raised area called the *spina* runs down the center of the arena, making the arena into a circuit. At each end stands a *meta*, a set of three gilded cones, which mark the turning points. The *spina* also supports seven eggs and seven dolphins, which are used to count the seven laps of a race. The chariots start at the western end, in the *carceri*, which are set on a curve to ensure that the distance to the formal starting line is the same for all competitors. The *spina* also supports an Egyptian obelisk, and Constantius erects a second, larger one in 357.

The outer walls of the Circus are clad in marble, with three levels of arches. Many soothsayers, *tabernae* and brothels ply their trade in shops built into these walls, and several times fires have broken out here to destroy parts of Rome; indeed, Nero's fire broke out here, and devastated the whole city.

While most chariot races are held in daylight, some meetings extend into the evenings. Great braziers are placed along the *spina* and around the edge of the track, so that the arena is illuminated by the dancing flames. These events are as popular as day races, and the stands are typically full. Because the stands are largely dark, and everyone is concentrating on the races, it is rare for fewer than five corpses to be left behind when the crowds disperse; riots are not an uncommon event.

The Kindred of Rome sometimes hold their own races, from which mortals are strictly excluded. Undead charioteers, managing ghouléd horses, race by the light of the full moon. Even if all the Kindred of Rome gathered in the Circus, it would still seem empty, and the sounds of the horses echo. Kindred races follow the same factions as mortals, except that the greatest Kindred charioteer, Carcarus, maintains his loyalty to the Purples, which

were founded by Domitian, and perished with him. The people of Rome say that, on nights of the full moon, dead charioteers return to continue the rivalries they had in life. They are exactly right.

On other nights, the Circus is deserted, and eerily quiet; it is large enough that the sounds of the city are faint when one stands in the center.

Story Use: A night race is a perfect opportunity to meet, hunt or assassinate. Some Kindred still go just to watch the racing, their loyalty to one team undimmed in death. Vampires who attend a normal race should sit away from the flames, and risk being caught up in a riot.

Kindred races are held only on clear nights of the full moon, and, while much quieter than mortal races, Kindred races are the subject of equal passions. Rage frenzies are sometimes provoked when favored charioteers lose, and lives are often staked on the outcomes. While most attempts to fix a race happen at the stables of the factions, Kindred may attend to use their Disciplines to take control of charioteers or horses at critical moments.

On nights with no race, the building is deserted, which makes it a favored location for meetings, such as the Flavian Amphitheater. Parleys between Kindred groups are held in the arena several times a year, as the large open space makes ambushes all but impossible.

Equipment Bonuses: +3 to hunting rolls during a night race, thanks to the noise and distraction. +3 to all Stealth rolls in the crowds during a night race; in the press and noise, no one stands out. The great obelisk erected by Constantius is covered in hieroglyphics, and came from Thebes in Egypt. If the markings could be deciphered, they might reveal great secrets.

THE FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATER

The Flavian Amphitheater (better known to modern readers as the Colosseum, although that name is not used in the fourth century) is the largest amphitheater in Rome, and in the world. The Flavian Amphitheater stands in a valley near the Forum, next to the temple of Venus and Rome. The amphitheater is oval, about 615 feet long and 510 feet wide, with tiers of seats reaching almost 160 feet into the sky. The seats are divided into four levels, with the senators seated nearest the arena, and women, slaves and foreigners standing in the upper reaches. There are 80 entrances, of which 76 are for the general public, one for the Emperor and three for other dignitaries. These entrances lead to the seats along passages called *vomitoria*. The amphitheater can seat 80,000, and can be emptied in minutes. The arena is used to

host beast fights, gladiatorial combats and pageants of various kinds. Artificial landscapes may be built to serve as backdrops to events.

At night, the Flavian Amphitheater is normally empty of spectators. However, the structure is riddled with tunnels, which are used by the Propinqui of Rome for meeting, feeding and, occasionally, fighting. There are three sets of passages, although they link. The first are the *vomitoria*, and other corridors leading from the entrances to the seats. The second run under the seats, but are used by the staff and slaves of the amphitheater to maintain it. Most significant is a passage that runs around the edge of the arena, with narrow slits giving a view of the action.

The final set, the hypogeum, are on two levels and run under the whole amphitheater, including the arena itself. These contain holding pens for wild beasts, where they are kept when not fighting, quarters for slave gladiators and chambers where costumes and the like can be prepared for spectacles. There are approximately 80 vertical shafts leading up from the hypogeum, with mechanical lifts to take beasts or gladiators to the arena. Running through this area is a large central tunnel, along the long axis of the amphitheater, which allows staff to reach different areas quickly.

There are also tunnels giving access to the Flavian Amphitheater from outside. Four are well-known: one for the Emperor, one for the Vestal Virgins and two for other dignitaries. There are more tunnels, though, some connecting to Necropolis.

The tunnels are dark, illuminated by an inadequate number of torches and lamps. In the hypogeum, the air is filled with the noises of caged animals, particularly if something disturbs them, and the gladiators on the lower level may join in. The air stinks of beasts and men kept overlong in close quarters. The tunnels under the seating are quieter, and all but deserted.

Story Use: The tunnels leading to the seats are a popular place for clandestine meetings between vampires, or between vampires and mortals, as there are many ways to get in and out. While the chances of anyone witnessing a meeting are slim, a small army would find it hard to corner someone. The hypogeum is popular with masters of Animalism, who sometimes liberate creatures to serve the vampires' purposes.

In a chase, the quarry should avoid being driven into the hypogeum, where the tunnels are narrow and have dead ends. This is the only area where someone can really be brought to bay, so most unplanned fights happen here, among the howling beasts, mechanical contrivances

and shafts between the levels. Many of the animal cages are simply bolted, and can be opened by anyone with hands; the animals within have been raised and trained to attack humans, or things that look human.

Very occasionally, formal battles between vampires who cannot settle their differences any other way are held in the arena itself. Many of the city's Kindred come to watch, senators from the tunnel around the arena, other vampires from the tiered seating. The managers, under Kindred control, clear all human staff, and the gladiators know not to look. Still, curious individuals come. Some are killed; others become servants of the Kindred.

Equipment Bonuses: +2 to all combat totals; this is the Flavian Amphitheater. Weapons of all kinds are stored in the hypogeum. Someone fleeing outside the hypogeum gets a +3 bonus, thanks to the wide choice of routes. Within the hypogeum, pursuers get a +3 bonus, thanks to the narrow passages and blind tunnels.

THE FORUM ROMANUM

The Roman Forum, often simply called the Forum, was once the administrative center of Rome, and thus of the world. Indeed, a structure called the Umbilicus, a round tower faced in marble, stands in its northern corner to mark the center of the Rome, and thus of the world. The Forum is an open space, surrounded by monumental buildings, around which runs the Sacred Way. The open area is roughly rectangular, running from northwest to southeast.

In the northern corner stands the Curia Julii, the Senate House, which is a restoration by Diocletian of a structure originally built by Julius Caesar. The long sides of the Forum are closed by two basilicae; in the northeast, the Basilica of Aemilius, and, in the southwest, the Basilica of Julius. These are rectangular, columned buildings, with shops set into the outer walls and law courts within.

In the southeast, the temple of Julius Caesar stands in front of the Regia, the residence of the pagan pontiff, and the temple of Vesta and house of the Vestal Virgins. In the northwest stands the rostra, a high stone platform from which orators address the Roman people. It is adorned with statues of gods and Emperors. At its northern end stands the Umbilicus, mentioned above, while at the southern end stands a gilded column, the Miliarium Aureum, which was erected by Augustus as the symbolic point from which the roads of the Empire began. The column is carved with the names of the principal cities, and their distances from the gates in the city wall.

Two other sites are particularly important to the Kindred of Rome. The first is the Lapis Niger, a slab of black marble, fenced off with white marble, which lies in the surface of the Forum in front of the Senate House. The mortals believe that this is the tomb of one of the early kings, possibly Romulus himself, but the Kindred know differently. Originally, it was a column of black rock, at which Remus solemnized his pact with the Striges. When Senex overthrew the Traditores and voided the pact, he also overturned the column, leaving only its base intact. It stood guarded by stone lions during the Republic, but was hidden underground during the early days of the Empire. The location remains cursed; anyone, mortal or Kindred, touching the column itself, or standing on the marble slab, attracts the hostile attention of the Striges.

The second is the Lacus Curtius, an area near the center of the Forum marked off with a marble railing and surrounded by altars. The mortal inhabitants of Rome have several legends concerning the origins of this location, one claiming that a chasm opened up spontaneously, and a youth called Curtius rode his horse into it, sacrificing himself for the city. The story the Kindred tell is much more mundane. When Necropolis was first being constructed, not all the Kindred had the necessary skills as miners. A certain Curtius, generally thought to be a Nosferatu, tunneled under the Forum, but left the ceiling too weak. During a great gathering of the people of Rome, the roof collapsed, and Necropolis swallowed many lives.

Senex ordered all the passages leading to the opening from Necropolis to be sealed, and these walls can still be seen. However, there were some passages that could only be accessed through that tunnel, passages private to Curtius. Persistent legends tell of great treasures hidden there, or great threats: the wealth of Troy, brought by Aeneas, or the resting place of Remus, for example. Experienced Kindred tend to mock such rumors, but younger vampires occasionally try to get into the old tunnels.

Story Use: The Lapis Niger has close links to the Striges, and might provide hints or valuable information about them. A few utterly unscrupulous Kindred use Disciplines to force their enemies to walk across it, and then leave them to the wrath of the Nemeses.

The tunnels under the Lacus Curtius are real. Since experienced Kindred assume that there is nothing there, they might make an excellent base, particularly for Nosferatu with a sense of history. Young Kindred might believe the legends; one of the legends might even be true, although not necessarily the one that lured the characters there.

THE ISEUM CAMPENSE

The Iseum Campense is the greatest temple of Isis and Serapis in Rome. The worship of Isis was imported from Egypt centuries ago, and since the second century has been very popular in Rome itself and in the rest of the Empire. Despite the rise of Christianity, the worship of Isis still claims many adherents.

Isis is revered as a goddess of sailors and the seas, and she has been publicly called upon to ensure the safe arrival of the grain barges in Rome. The cult of Isis is a mystery religion, however, which means that most of its rituals are directed toward devotees.

The architecture of the temple reflects this. Unlike Roman temples, it does not present a spectacular porch to the street, open to anyone. Instead, the whole complex is surrounded by a wall, with two arched entrances on either side. These entrances lead into a narrow courtyard, which runs between the temples of Isis and Serapis. Facing gateways in the center of this courtyard finally lead into the temples proper.

The temple of Serapis takes the form of a semi-circular colonnade, with the statue of the God at the center of the curved side. The temple of Isis is a more conventional *cella*, which enshrines statues of the goddess, Horus and Serapis. The most important daily rituals take place shortly after dawn and shortly before sunset; in the morning, the doors of the temple are opened, from the inside, and in the evening they are closed once more. Although the main doors are closed during the hours of darkness, there is a second small entrance that allows the priests to enter and leave before and those ceremonies, and Kindred who wish can gain entry to the temple at night. Both temples are decorated in Egyptian style.

The temple complex also contains accommodation for those who have dedicated themselves to the goddess, initiated priests and those still preparing for that honor. They shave their heads and wear white linen robes, and devote their waking hours to the liturgy of Isis. Many have reputations as powerful magicians, able to speak with the dead (as Isis searched among the dead for her husband), and granted prophetic dreams by their patron. The dates of initiation are determined by dreams sent by Isis, but she also enlightens her followers on other matters.

Story Use: Isis is popular with the Mekhet, so there are persistent rumors linking senior members of that clan with the temple. It is certainly true that many Mekhet worship there, but that is true of other vampires as well.

The devotees of Isis have always had a somewhat ambivalent reputation. Their worship, while not as violent as

that of the followers of Cybele, is still more ecstatic than that of the Roman deities, and Isis devotees' reputation for magic has caused them many problems. Indeed, the temple of Isis in Rome has been destroyed at least three times, and the cult suppressed and persecuted several times. With the rise of Christianity, suspicion against the cult is increasing again, which could lead to violence directed at the temple, or directed from it. It is likely that at least some of the priests really do have access to magical power.

There are also rumors linking the cult of Isis with blood magic practiced by the Kindred. The evidence is no stronger than the fact that some convicted sorcerers were worshippers of Isis, but the rumors are persistent, and Kindred seeking such training might find this a good place to make discreet enquiries.

Equipment Bonuses: The *cella* of Isis gives a +2 bonus to magical rituals invoking her that are performed therein. The priests believe that it is the statue of Isis, which was brought from Egypt, rather than the place, that has this effect, but no one has (yet) removed the statue to test the theory.

THE MAUSOLEUM OF AUGUSTUS

The Mausoleum of Augustus stands on the Campus Martius. The mausoleum was planned and built by Augustus for his dynasty, and he is interred there along with members of his family and a number of later Emperors of the first century.

The mausoleum is circular, about 300 feet in diameter, and clad in marble. The mausoleum has several tiers, with evergreen trees planted on the lowest tier and a mound of earth, recalling the archaic burial mounds of Latium, surmounted by a statue of Augustus at the top. On pillars outside hang gilded plates inscribed with the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*: the Deeds of Divine Augustus. As far as the mortal inhabitants of Rome know, the mausoleum has been sealed and inviolate for more than 200 years.

However, an entrance to Necropolis was included in the original plans, and the Senex controls access to the structure. In its center is a large, circular chamber, domed, with niches in the walls. Each niche contains a funerary urn, containing the ashes of a member of the Imperial family, and a statue of the deceased. Trials of noble Kindred who are accused of treason are held here.

These trials are highly formal affairs, with careful rules of procedure. The accused is always present, and must not be in torpor, but he is normally staked. The rules of the court, however, allow him to make one final statement,

after the case has been put on both sides and before the Senex passes sentence. Traditionally, the accused is allowed to stand free one last time, but if the Senex feels that he might try to abuse that privilege by running away or seeking revenge, he is bound in chains of gold and silver. This is by far the most common.

Although a guilty verdict is by far the most common, the Senex prides itself on republican fairness, and Kindred are, from time to time, acquitted.

The entrance from Necropolis is carefully guarded, and it is all but impossible for vampires to enter when there is no trial in progress. The central chamber is, however, large, and can accommodate many more vampires than the Camarilla, something that helps to maintain the dignity of trials and that may be part of the reason that they were moved here.

Story Use: Characters can be either prosecution or defense in a treason trial, arguing their cases under the watchful eyes of dead Caesars. Characters may also be called as witnesses, or seek to rescue an ally.

Equipment Bonuses: +2 dice to rolls seeking to convict someone of treason and disloyalty.

THE PANTHEON

The Pantheon is a temple to all the gods, originally built by Agrippa in the days of Augustus, and rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian after a fire. The current structure faces north, and is entered from a large portico that has three rows of columns: eight in the front row and four in each of those behind.

The main temple is round and domed. It has an internal diameter of 142 feet, and the apex of the dome is 142 feet from the floor, so that a sphere would fit exactly within the main room. During the day, the only light comes from a circular hole, the oculus, 30 feet in diameter, in the top of the dome. The wall is adorned with seven large niches (the entrance stands in place of an eighth), each of which contains the statue of a god. Three are male, four female and none can be unambiguously identified. This was, it is thought, deliberate; the three opposite the entrance are reminiscent of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva (the Capitoline triad), but the male statue also has elements reminiscent of Augustus and Hercules.

The Pantheon is a popular temple with the Kindred, and it is kept open at night to serve the devotions of the pagans among them. One reason for this is that it seems that the Striges cannot enter the Pantheon; more than one Kindred fleeing the monsters has found a degree of refuge here, while the monsters howled at the door or around the oculus. As there is no escape from the temple,



and nowhere to hide from the sun, this feature is more significant for the sacred air it gives the place than as a practical measure when facing the Nemeses.

The Pantheon is also used for official executions of traitors to the Kindred. Only noble vampires condemned by the Senex in a formal trial face this punishment. During the day, a circle of light from the oculus crosses the walls and floor of the *cella*, and the condemned are staked, or sometimes merely chained, and left in its path. On such days, the temple is closed to mortals, and guarded by the urban cohorts. There are also supernatural guards. Kindred must leave in time to get to their havens before dawn, but ghouls can stand guard throughout the day.

Story Use: The Pantheon is a good place for chance encounters with pagan vampires. Kindred pursued by the Striges do sometimes seek refuge here, to buy time to think, and on occasion more than one vampire might do so at the same time.

Characters might also want to rescue someone condemned to death. The sun leaves little in the way of remains, so if the characters can act just before dawn, the authorities might not even realize what happened.

THE PORTICUS MINUCIA

The poor of Rome are supported by a dole of bread, and should it fail, they first riot, and then starve. This

dole is brought from Egypt and Sicily in great grain barges, and the urban Prefects offer sacrifices to Castor and Pollux, or to Isis, for their safe arrival, even under Christian Emperors.

The dole is distributed in the Porticus Minucia, a long colonnade divided into 45 sections. The columns are more than 30 feet tall, with fine Corinthian capitals, but the bases and lower sections are decorated only by the graffiti left by people waiting for the dole.

Everyone entitled to a dole has a metal ticket, which indicates the day of the month, and the section of the Minucia, to which they should go. These tickets can be passed down through families or sold to others, and although inheritance is common, sale is much less so. Most people who hold these tickets rely on them for food.

In theory, the Minucia (also called the *frumentarium*) starts distributing at dawn, and finishes at dusk. In practice, since the Minucia must distribute all of a day's grain on that day, the place rarely closes until well after nightfall. Once one day's distribution is completed, city officials begin transporting the grain for the next day's dole from the warehouses to the storage rooms at the Minucia, so the place is never quiet.

There are always a large number of guards present, more to guard against fire than theft. Everyone is very sensitive to anything that might disrupt the dole, and

starting trouble here is a good way to draw the immediate wrath of several hundred Romans, and the delayed wrath of the Senex.

The Kindred of Rome mainly use the Minucia as a place to recruit unskilled servants. Most of those who rely on the bread dole have no money and no jobs, and while some are happy with their bread and circuses, others want luxuries, and thus are willing to accept offers of rather dubious work.

The dole has existed for centuries, and Kindred have recruited from it for as long. As a result, the poor of Rome know that, if you collect your dole after dark, you might be offered well-paying work by a monster from the underworld. A few think that is pure legend, most think that it refers to criminal gangs, and some know that it is literally true. There are more than a few free ghouls who attend the dole at night, and bargain for Vitae rather than money. The older ones, such as Marcus Colonnus Tornatus, are older than many of the Kindred, and powerful and reliable. They know about the Vinculum, and thus are always seeking new patrons, which means that they have to have, and keep, a reputation for doing the job they were hired for, and being discreet about the details.

Story Use: The Minucia is a good place for characters to recruit mortal agents; the more experienced ones are quite good at spotting Kindred, and may even introduce themselves. Mortal agents also like to meet the Kindred here, because there is always support within earshot, and unlike in most places, the guards will act to stop even a random mugging.

SAINT PETER'S BASILICA

Saint Peter's Basilica is the largest church in Rome, built by Constantine over the site of the tomb of Peter, the Apostle and first bishop of Rome. The basilica stands at the foot of the Vatican Hill, outside the walls of Rome proper.

The main building is a great rectangular hall, about 300 feet long and 100 feet wide. It runs east to west, with the entrance in the east and the tomb of Saint Peter in the east, in a semi-circular apse. Although the body of the saint is not visible, his tomb is; the current structure was built around 200, at a time when the Christians were not being actively persecuted, and is of brick. Constantine surrounded it with a great bronze superstructure, so that

now the original mausoleum can be seen only by peering through the gaps.

The basilica has more than 100 columns, which were gathered from all over Rome and are, accordingly, very diverse. No two capitals or bases are alike, and some of the pillars are very elaborate, carved in a spiral shape with leaves and flowers as decoration. There are five doors in the eastern end of the church, which lead into a square courtyard, surrounded by a colonnade.

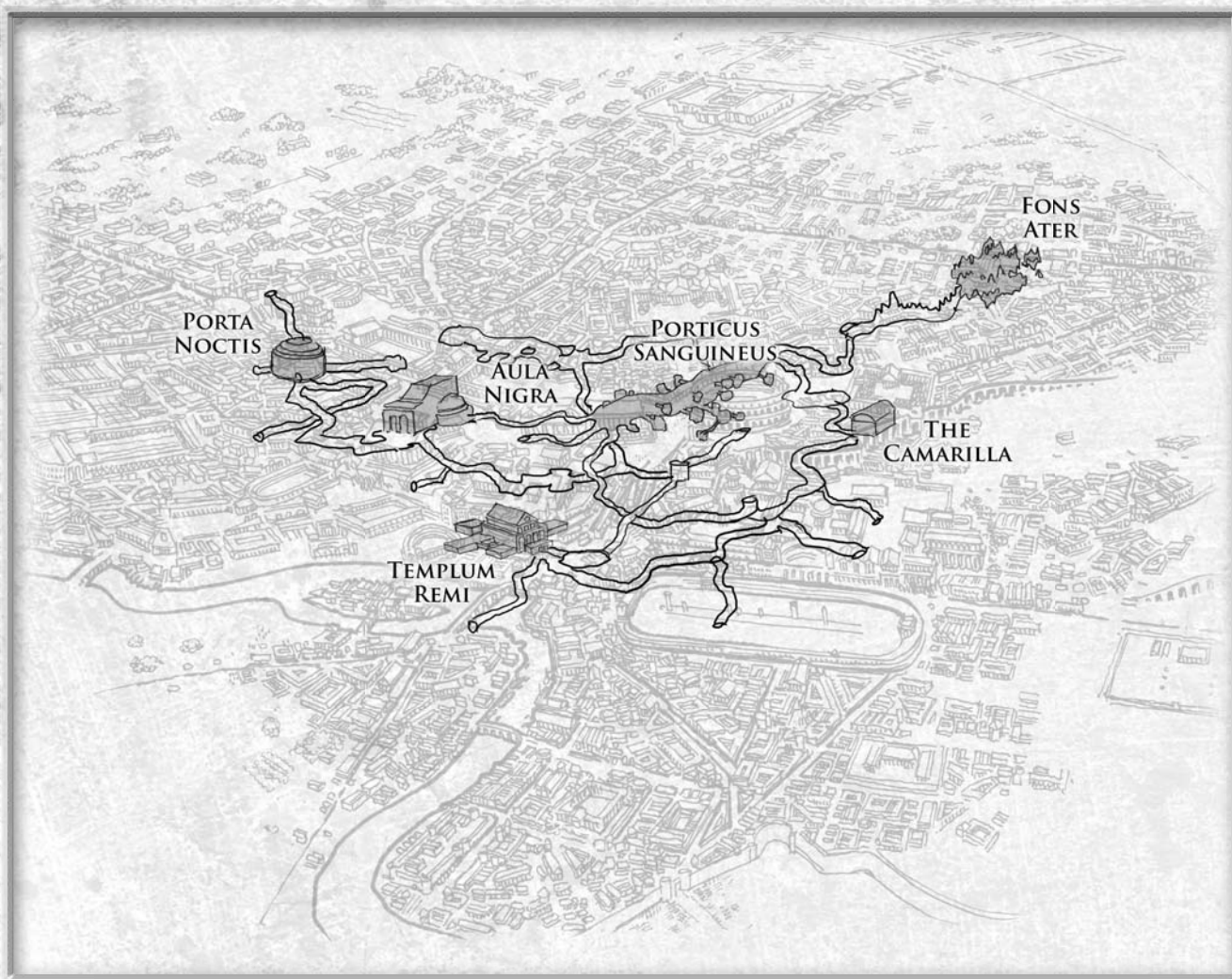
Although the Basilica of Saint Peter is the largest church in Rome, the basilica is not Rome's cathedral; that honor is held by the Lateran Church. This makes the basilica a little isolated from the administration of Christianity, and this, in turn, has endeared it to the Christian Kindred, and many of the Lancea et Sanctum. Unlike most churches, the basilica is kept open all night, thanks to the influence of vampires who wanted to be able to worship in peace.

Saint Peter's tomb was located just outside a circus, which was the site of his martyrdom, and at the base of the Vatican Hill. In order to build the basilica, Constantine demolished the circus, and cut away part of the hill. The hill still overshadows the basilica to the north, and water seeping down makes the whole church rather damp.

As with many churches, the construction of Saint Peter's Basilica risked cutting into Necropolis. One ancient entrance was through a tomb near that of Saint Peter, which was in the area to be cleared for the basilica's platform. Thanks to the intervention of members of the Lancea et Sanctum, the entrance was preserved; it now opens into the north wall of the atrium.

Story Use: Christian vampires who need an awe-inspiring backdrop for oaths of loyalty tend to use this basilica, emphasizing their distance from the pagan authorities of the Camarilla. The entrance to Necropolis is also one of the most public entrances, in that almost all Kindred of Rome know of it, and it can be accessed with relative ease almost every night. Shortly before dawn on most days, a miscellaneous group of Kindred who found themselves too far from their home ground use it to seek shelter. The Sanctified who control the area allow this, treating the basilica and the parts of Necropolis closest to it as a sanctuary in all senses.

ICONIC LOCATIONS OF NECROPOLIS



Necropolis also has its famous locations, burrowed out of the ground under the Eternal City. These are the home ground of the Kindred, and few mortals so much as suspect their existence. They are also the places that, in later nights, will be the sites of legend.

The Aula Nigra (“Black Chamber”) is decorated as described by Cassius Dio, above. Some Kindred believe that it is the actual chamber used by Domitian, and others that the Emperor was once entertained there, but the truth of the matter is that the Kindred heard of the Emperor’s dinner party, and decided to imitate it. Several such chambers were constructed, but within a few decades, the current Aula Nigra was almost universally used.

The room is managed by Marcus Iulius Niger, an elder Kindred who was Embraced in his early teens. He claims to have been one of the slave boys at the original dinner party, and that may actually be true. In any case, he maintains the fittings of the room, a group of boys to serve and a supply of the necessary grave goods, and makes them available to any Kindred willing to meet his price. For respectable Kindred, this is quite reasonable, and generally a minor favor; for the most influential, he may offer the room for nothing more than goodwill. Outcasts can use it, but they must pay more.

The Aula Nigra is used almost exclusively for meetings with mortals, when the vampire wants to control the loca-

THE AULA NIGRA

"ON ONE OCCASION THE EMPEROR DOMITIAN ENTERTAINED THE FOREMOST MEN AMONG THE SENATORS AND KNIGHTS IN THE FOLLOWING FASHION: HE PREPARED A ROOM THAT WAS PITCH BLACK ON EVERY SIDE, CEILING, WALLS AND FLOOR, AND HAD MADE READY BARE COUCHES OF THE SAME COLOR RESTING ON THE UNCOVERED FLOOR; THEN HE INVITED IN HIS GUESTS ALONE AT NIGHT WITHOUT THEIR ATTENDANTS. AND FIRST HE SET BESIDE EACH OF THEM A SLAB SHAPED LIKE A GRAVESTONE, BEARING THE GUEST'S NAME AND ALSO A SMALL LAMP, SUCH AS HANG IN TOMBS. NEXT COMELY NAKED BOYS, LIKEWISE PAINTED BLACK, ENTERED LIKE PHANTOMS, AND AFTER ENCIRCLING THE GUESTS IN AN AWE-INSPIRING DANCE TOOK UP THEIR STATIONS AT THEIR FEET. AFTER THIS ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE COMMONLY OFFERED AT THE SACRIFICES TO DEPARTED SPIRITS WERE LIKEWISE SET BEFORE THE GUESTS, ALL OF THEM BLACK AND IN DISHES OF A SIMILAR COLOUR. CONSEQUENTLY, EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE GUESTS FEARED AND TREMBLED AND WAS KEPT IN CONSTANT EXPECTATION OF HAVING HIS THROAT CUT THE NEXT MOMENT, THE MORE SO AS ON THE PART OF EVERYBODY BUT DOMITIAN THERE WAS DEAD SILENCE, AS IF THEY WERE ALREADY IN THE REALMS OF THE DEAD, AND THE EMPEROR HIMSELF CONVERSED ONLY UPON TOPICS RELATING TO DEATH AND SLAUGHTER."

— CASSIUS DIO

tion and the atmosphere. The Aula Niger is easily accessible from Rome, and Niger guards the tunnels connecting the Black Chamber to the rest of Necropolis with concealed doors, traps and his servants. The tunnels around the room include what may be the only toilet in Necropolis.

Over the last two centuries, the Aula Niger has become the traditional place for creating ghouls. Some are, of course, created more casually, but when a vampire wishes to impress the importance of the change upon a mortal, the vampire works it here.

Niger serves, painted black (the origin of his cognomen), with the other boys, some of whom are ghouls, others Kindred. A few are even merely mortal blood addicts, although these are being groomed for ghoul status. Kindred may introduce boys of their own into the staff, if they wish to give them as gifts (as Domitian did; Niger claims to have been given to one of the Kindred).

Niger and his servants have a solid reputation for absolute discretion, and typically withdraw before the main part of a meeting, so that they do not know any of the details. This is for their protection as much as for that of the attendees at the meeting; what Niger and his servants do not know cannot be tortured out of them, or pulled out of them by magic. Still, Kindred do not use the Aula Niger when they must keep the very fact that they are meeting a particular mortal absolutely secret. Indeed, the room is often used when Kindred want to be able to produce witnesses to their dealings with a mortal if necessary, but not to have the fact spread around too early.

There is much speculation as to why Niger is happy with his very peripheral role in the Camarilla; he does not seem to be using his influence to garner political power. There are rumors that he is a powerful necromancer, and

that he is seeking a way to return to mortality so that he can finally become a adult.

Story Use: The player characters could host a meeting here, or try to spy on one in progress. Niger takes the security of the meetings very seriously, so this is not an easy task.

Equipment Bonuses: +5 to intimidate mortals.

FONS ATER

Fons Ater, the "Black Spring," is in a natural cave under the Esquiline Hill. No light may be taken in there, and it is a favored site for black magic.

Although the cave and spring are natural, the entrance has been reworked, and sealed with two large bronze doors. The outer door opens outwards, the inner, inwards, and they are linked by three heavy chains, which mean that opening one closes the other. Normally, one is fully closed before the other is opened. The doors are decorated with bas reliefs of terrible acts, violating every standard of civilized society, Kindred and mortal. Some Kindred have elaborate theories as to what all the scenes mean, but most think that the scenes are just there to shock and warn.

It is said that anyone who takes a light into the Fons Ater will be struck down by the gods. A few scientifically-minded Kindred have visited the shrine, and determined that this is partially true. The spring is not water, but a black mineral oil, and taking an open flame into the cave would ignite the atmosphere, an event that would certainly be fatal to any Kindred within. The outer door would be pulled shut as the flames tried to draw air in, and that would starve the fire.

However, most Kindred believe that there are also dark curses on the spring, because it is the most infamous site for the performance of black magic anywhere in Necropolis. The spring's existence is a matter of common knowledge, but its precise location is said to be passed down lineages of witches and sorcerers, who use it for their darkest rituals. This is completely true.

It is difficult to use the spring without at least one level of Auspex, to enable the vampire to see in the pitch darkness. Those who can see, however, find a fairly large natural cave, with the spring bubbling up from under one wall. The oil pools, and then flows across the floor and out through three sink holes, each large enough to swallow an adult human, and with no known bottom. The floor is uneven, and the walls of the cave have many natural niches. Almost every one of these niches contains several lead curse tablets, along with other ritual objects from the working of dark magic. Still more have been

cast into the pool or sink holes, with imprecations to the darkest powers.

Story Use: The Fons Ater is a great place to carry out unapproved sorcery, and the first visit there is an important part of the career of any budding witch.

Some curses can only be undone if the tablet describing them is removed, which would require a trip to the Fons Ater. Since sorcerers keep its location secret, simply finding it is the first step.

The authorities of the Camarilla want to keep sorcery under control if they cannot completely eliminate it. Some who sit with the Senex would like to see the Fons Ater destroyed, or at least desecrated and robbed of its power.

Equipment Bonuses: +3 to any Kindred sorcery, including the magic of the Augurs, Theban Sorcery and Crúac. If an open flame is brought into the cave, the resulting explosion does 20 points of aggravated damage to any Kindred present, and melts the lead curse tablets.

THE CAMARILLA

The Camarilla is a small room, carved out of the Tarpeian Rock, that serves as the center of Kindred society. This is where the Senex sits, and where the most important decisions affecting all vampires are made. It is from this room that the organization of vampires takes its name.

There are several legends about the origin of the Camarilla. Some say that Remus found the room already carved from the rock, and simply took advantage of it. Others say that he burrowed it out with his own hands. Still others say that Senex excavated it under Remus's direction. A few Kindred even believe that it was first used after the defeat of the Nemeses, and that the room was chosen because it was the site of a final battle. While the older Kindred should know, they disagree among themselves, and some casually affirm whichever legend best suits their current purposes.

The room is carved directly from the rock of the hill, so that the room's surfaces are all living rock. It is rectangular, roughly 25 feet long by 10 feet wide. The walls are carved with niches, flanked by narrow columns with Doric capitals and surmounted by triangular pediments. There are eight niches in each of the longer walls, and three in each of the shorter. The Camarilla has eight entrances, two in each wall, and each entrance opens through a niche.

The third niche on the northern wall (one of the shorter ones) stands between the doors and holds a large stone chair, also carved from the living rock. This chair is reserved for Senex, and any other vampire who dares to

sit in it is cursed. No one is sure whether the chair itself has supernatural power, but sorcerers among the Kindred take it upon themselves to punish such presumption, so the curses are certainly real, and varied, enough.

The six remaining niches on the longer walls are also carved with stone chairs, and with a long, narrow slot just below the pediment. These slots are just long enough for a vampire to stretch out in, and history reports that they were originally the havens of the most important Kindred who sat with Senex. If that was ever true, it has not been for centuries, and the cavities are now merely dusty curiosities.

The niche in the center of the southern wall contains an altar. There are traces of an inscription on the front, but almost all of the inscription has been hacked away, leaving it completely unreadable. Several versions of the inscription circulate among Kindred, particularly the Mekhet, with an interest in such things, but there is no evidence to suggest that any one is correct. The older Kindred simply do not talk about the altar. It is not used for anything, and older Kindred carefully avoid touching it. Most Kindred imitate them, but quite a few younger vampires can testify that nothing actually happens to you if you do touch it.

In the distant past, the Senex sat in the niches to deliberate over the fate of all vampires. In more recent nights, however, as many Kindred as can fit squeeze into the room, with others spilling out and down the corridors, trying to catch what is being said within. Only vampires who are actually within the Camarilla are allowed to speak to the Senex and be heard, but any vampire there may speak, and may not be attacked physically as long as the Senex is in session. There is no longer term immunity from retribution, however, and a number of impudent neonates have been torn to pieces in the corridors after being dragged from the Camarilla itself.

The Camarilla is open at all times, and all Kindred are allowed to enter it. Some like to go there, to think about their Requiems in the presence of the past, but most of the time, the Camarilla is empty.

Story Use: The debates in the Camarilla are central to Kindred society, and play an important part in many Chronicles. This is also the ideal place to reveal plots that threaten the Kindred, so that player characters can take the role of Cicero denouncing Catiline. There are also several mysteries about the room itself, which could serve as the initial impetus for investigations into Kindred history.

Equipment Bonuses: +1 to two dice for drawing on the history of the room while debating within it.

PORTA NOCTIS

The vampires of the Camarilla are not barbarians who Embrace on a whim. That, at least, is what the Kindred would like to think, and the Porta Noctis is a physical location that supports that belief. It is the place where people die, and rise again as Kindred.

The chamber is in one of the more public parts of Necropolis, and watched over at all times by volunteers who call themselves lictors. The walls are clad in marble, the ceiling is plastered and decorated with a fresco showing an evening sky, and the floor covered with a black-and-white geometric mosaic, probably dating from the first century.

In the center of the room is a black marble sarcophagus, with no lid. Carvings on the side depict important incidents from the early history of the Camarilla: the transformation of Remus, the Embrace of Senex and the overthrow of the Traditores. The final short side depicts a male vampire emerging from a cave tomb that was sealed by a large rock, as Roman soldiers run away. The sarcophagus is more than 500 years old, at least, and no one admits to knowing what the final image was originally supposed to represent. The relief showing the overthrow of the Traditores is carved in very shallow relief, and set very deeply into the side of the sarcophagus. Although the carving is as skilled as that of the other panels, and in the same style, many Kindred believe that this carving is a replacement.

A large gilded canopy stands over the sarcophagus, supported on four columns that rest on the floor. Four manacles are fastened to bars along the sides, two for wrists and two for feet. New vampires are typically starving when they awaken, and a human is normally fastened into these manacles, face down, to provide a first meal. Sires make their own decisions about whom to put here: some sires sacrifice random slaves or people picked up off the streets; other sires sacrifice people who were close to the neonate in life. Some sires have two mortal Retainers compete for the right to be Embraced; the winner goes below, the loser above.

Although this is one of the few areas of Necropolis that mortals may enter, it is an absolute rule, enforced by the lictors, that no one may leave alive.

Not all Kindred are Embraced in this room, of course. There is a custom, although in recent nights it has not been strictly enforced, that those who were not should spend one night in the sarcophagus, and feed from a vessel restrained above them, immediately before being officially welcomed into the Camarilla. The Lancea et Sanctum, after some debate, has utterly rejected this custom, and very rarely use the chamber for genuine Embraces.

Story Use: As a climax to a prelude, an Embrace set here indicates a rather traditional, pagan sire. Undergoing the purely ceremonial version could be used to formally mark a break with the *Lancea et Sanctum*, as well.

The lictors are pure volunteers, and often there is only one present. There is nothing valuable in the chamber most of the time, so the guard is mainly ceremonial. It is, however, a good way to curry favor with certain elder vampires, and might get interesting if someone comes to believe that the frame is actually gold.

A character who wishes to Embrace may choose to use the *Porta Noctis*. This makes formal permission easier to get, as it shows a respect for the customs of the *Camarilla*, but also requires the would-be sire to choose a human victim.

PORTICUS SANGUINEUS

Just as the poor of Rome are sustained by a bread dole, so are the poor of *Necropolis* sustained by a blood dole. The *Porticus Sanguineus* is the place where this dole is distributed.

The name, which means “the bloody portico,” was applied by analogy to the *Porticus Minucia* of the mortal city; the room is not, in fact, a portico. It is a wide tunnel, with numerous small rooms opening off the side. The rooms contain manacles, in which mortals are restrained. The Kindred who are entitled to a portion of the dole are then led to a room and allowed to feed. It is polite to leave the mortal alive, but many of the poorer Kindred set little store by etiquette.

The blood dole is not as important a feature of *Necropolis* as the bread dole is of Rome. This is partly because there are far fewer Kindred, and far fewer poor Kindred, than there are mortals, but mainly because there are very few Kindred who find it difficult to hunt in the largest city in the world. As a result, the blood dole is not offered often enough for any vampire to survive on it alone, even if he were to murder the human offered as his vessel.

Nevertheless, the blood dole is a traditional way for powerful vampires to assert their influence, which makes it a popular gesture with the established elite and with those who want to break into it. It is very rare for a whole month to go by without the dole being offered, and a normal month would see the blood dole happen twice. There are some months when it happens more than once a week, in which case a vampire could survive on what was offered.

The *Senex* does not hand out tickets indicating eligibility; rather, attending the dole is an acknowledgment of

lowly social status. This needs to be handled carefully; if the dole is offered by a particularly powerful Kindred, refusing to attend could be seen as arrogantly placing yourself on a similar level. Kindred attending merely out of courtesy may drink less than a single *Vitae*, to emphasize that they do not need the blood. On the other hand, attending a dole offered by a parvenu offers a certain level of support for his aspirations. Of course, to some vampires, free blood is free blood.

Story Use: A blood dole is a convenient way to supply blood to wounded vampires who dare not enter Rome.

Originally, the blood was first drained from the mortals, and offered in cups, in an attempt to distance the dole from the innate savagery of the Kindred. However, after a scandal, over three centuries ago, in which a vampire tried to mix his blood with the dole and thus gain *Vinculum* over much of the city, the practice was changed. This does not mean that elder vampires do not still try to contaminate the blood supply, and player characters might become involved in carrying out, or uncovering, such plots.

The vampires sponsoring the dole often simply buy a lot of slaves, but not always. The vampires may be reluctant to waste money, or want particular kinds of victims. Of course, powerful vampires do not kidnap mortals themselves; such vampires hire player characters to do it. Alternatively, a deranged vampire might decide to feast the vampires on the eldest sons of senatorial families, and the player characters have to stop him before he can draw down the wrath of the mortal city.

Riots over the blood dole are rarer than those over the bread dole, but if a blood dole is promised, and not produced, they have been known to happen.

Finally, the question of what to do with mortals who survive being part of the blood dole is a good moral dilemma. They know rather too much about the existence of the Kindred.

Equipment Bonuses: Hunting is automatically successful if there is a blood dole.

TEMPLUM REMI

The *Templum Remi* (“Temple of Remus”) is the holiest place in *Necropolis*, and of central importance to the Kindred College of Augurs. For most Kindred, the name indicates that Remus founded and constructed the temple, but some believe that the temple also pays reverence to the departed shade of the first Kindred.

The temple is carved from solid rock, deep beneath the Capitoline Hill of Rome. Some Kindred claim that its position and orientation correspond precisely

to that of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the hill; that may be true, but the Templum Remi is undoubtedly smaller.

It consists of at least three chambers, and although the space in the rock is ancient, the fittings, including the facing stones, of the temple have been changed several times, most recently a little over a century ago. The first chamber recreates an atrium, in front of the temple proper. White columns, in the Corinthian style, run around all four sides of a square chamber. The space between the columns and the walls is faced with white stone, and statues of notable Kindred stand in niches in the walls. The whole area is paved in white stone, and the ceiling in the center of the atrium is decorated with a mosaic of the night sky. The sky depicted is that of three in the morning on May 15th, 761 BCE; this has been faithfully copied in every restoration, and some believe that it records the time of Remus's Embrace.

The main altar stands in the atrium, directly in front of the door to the next chamber. The room is illuminated by two lamps in gold stands, one to either side of the altar. An augur is in attendance here at all times, and any Kindred who wishes may make a sacrifice to the gods of the Propinqui.

The second chamber, the *cella*, contains the images of the gods. The walls are all clad in white marble, and a double line of columns splits the space into three lengthwise. The floor is paved in porphyry, and the ceiling gilded. At the far end, illuminated by five lamps, each on a different, ancient stand, are the statues of the gods.

The oldest, and holiest, is of sandstone, and time has made it hard to discern details. It depicted a man, apparently naked apart from a cap or helmet, and carrying what was probably a spear. It is conventionally described as a statue of night. Those who believe that the temple enshrines Remus say that it is a portrait of that vampire. A few even believe that it is Remus, transformed to stone to wait out a long torpor.

The others are much more easy to understand. There are fine bronze statues of Mercury and Dis, and marble statues of Proserpina, Pluto, Roma and Diana. These are arranged in niches around the statue of night, and, thanks to the most recent rebuilding, the effect is elegant and impressive, rather than crowded.

Another altar stands immediately in front of the statues. This is used by the Augurs for certain ceremonies, and when it is in use, admission to the main temple is by invitation only.

There is at least one further chamber, accessed through two doors in the rear wall, behind the statues of Proserpina and Mercury. Only ranking members of the College of Augurs are permitted to enter this room, and even they may only enter to perform the most important rituals. None have ever so much as hinted as to what might be in there; predictably, one popular rumor is that Remus is there, another that Senex is.

Story Use: This is the obvious place to consult the Augurs, and if any player characters join the Augurs, the characters will spend considerable time here.

The whole complex is filled with some sort of supernatural power, beyond that of the Kindred who gather there, and sometimes Kindred see visions when sacrificing at the altar. These visions lead them to great actions. Some Kindred also petition to be allowed to spend the day in the main temple, believing that the gods will grant the vampires prophetic dreams. The Augurs are reluctant to give such permission; sometimes the Kindred in question simply vanish, often they seem to be driven mad by their visions and those who seem normal go on to do great things, not always to the benefit of the status quo. The Augurs claim that the Lancea et Sanctum was founded by a Kindred who had spent the day in the temple. The Sanctified, naturally, deny this vigorously.

Equipment Bonus: The atrium gives +1 to all Augur rituals, while the main *cella* gives +3. However, this only applies if the ritual is properly authorized; if not, the bonus becomes a penalty.

GENERIC LOCATIONS IN ROME

Most of Rome is, of course, not famous. It is generally better if most stories happen in places that are not famous, as doing otherwise can strain suspension of disbelief beyond the breaking point. This section, then, describes the general features of the sorts of ordinary places that exist in Rome. Add a few personalizing details from the suggestions given, and you're ready to go.

BATHS

The Romans love their baths. Rome contains more than 500 bathhouses, from tiny places squashed between *insulae* to the Baths of Caracalla. Most Romans spend at least part of their afternoons in the baths, as they are a place to socialize as well as to get clean. Of course, the Kindred do not generally care much what goes on in the afternoons, but many baths are open into the night, and some never close.

The baths themselves are the central feature of any bathhouse. Roman baths have three rooms. The *tepidarium* contains a bath of warm water, at a pleasant temperature. The *caldarium* contains very hot water, to make bathers sweat, and the *frigidarium* contains cold water, into which bathers plunge for refreshment at the end. Romans bathe naked, and in most cases, the sexes bathe together. That does not mean that respectable ladies will go to just any bathhouse; some establishments have a more virtue-friendly reputation. At any rate, few respectable ladies bathe after dark.

Another essential room is the changing room, where the bathers leave their clothes in a cubbyhole. Thefts from these places are common, so it is normal to pay a slave, or a member of staff, to keep an eye on your property. Most bathhouses keep a supply of cheap tunics on hand to sell to people whose clothes are stolen. Some arrange the thefts, as well.

Unlike some areas of the world, Rome is not blessed with natural hot springs, so the hot and warm water have to be heated. That means that every bathhouse has a furnace, which is burning whenever the bathhouse is open, and which must be lit some time before that to get the water ready. More than a few bathhouses never let the furnace go out. This makes bathhouses a common source of fires. Fortunately for Kindred, the furnace is kept out of sight, often buried in a basement so that the hot air from it can be ducted under the floors to keep them warm.

Any baths larger than the most basic also include an open area for exercise, known as a *palaestra*. Boxing and similar martial sports are popular. Many bathhouses also have staff (often slaves) who coat patrons with oil and then scrape it off with a metal implement. This removes most of the dirt on the average client, but is not necessarily the most comfortable experience. Some bathhouses also have an attached tavern, but these are normally at least formally separate establishments.

The most obvious difference between bathhouses is their size. The Baths of Caracalla are the largest in Rome, and the smallest can barely hold six patrons at a time. All sizes are represented. The target clientele also varies: some bathhouses are aimed at the senatorial class, while others cater to laborers. There are some that admit only men, or only women, while some admit patrons of only one sex, but have staff of the other to provide personal services. Such baths are quite rare, however; most really are for washing and exercise.

As a social location, most baths are decorated. High-class baths, or baths that were high class once, typically have mosaics on the floors of the baths and *palaestra*, and frescoes on the walls. Athletic scenes and mythological scenes connected to bathing are popular: Actaeon spying on Diana, for example, or scenes of water nymphs. Some baths choose an individual theme related to the kinds of patrons the baths want, though.

Story Use: Baths are a good place to hunt, as the patrons are typically relaxed. Small baths, where there may be only one or two patrons at once, are particularly convenient. They are also a good place to track down someone you need to talk to, and start the conversation while sitting in the water. Even naturally violent types are more inclined to talk when naked and dripping wet, especially if outnumbered.

Of course, violence does break out in bathhouses, which provides many opportunities for people to fall into the water, be held under the surface (less effective against a vampire than the attacker might hope) or even be attacked with the weights from the *palaestra*. One advantage of bathhouses for Kindred is that, even if the lamps are knocked over, there is plenty of water on hand to deal with fires before they get out of hand.

Not a few of the bathhouses in Rome are controlled by Kindred. These are almost always open at night, and can provide income, blood and a place to entertain

important allies. Keeping control of such a place, or taking control away from another vampire, is an excellent source of stories.

Equipment Bonuses: Most bathhouses give +1 or +2 to hunting, no matter what style the vampire uses. Training equipment can serve as an improvised club, although some bathhouses have gladiatorial weapons, which have the normal statistics. The furnace at most bathhouses does five points of aggravated damage per turn to vampires thrown into it.

BROTHELS

Rome is decadent, and any pleasures can be bought for the right price. The brothels serve one of the stronger demands, and while they are officially frowned upon by nearly everyone, they still do a thriving business.

A typical brothel has several rooms. The first is where the clients meet the prostitutes, and make their choice. The prostitutes are naked, or nearly so, and wear price tags to make the process more efficient. Male and female prostitutes are available, although some establishments specialize in one or the other. The other rooms provide some privacy for the clients while they receive the services they have paid for.

Not all prostitutes are slaves, but many are. As careers for a slave go, it's not the worst of all possible jobs... but it certainly isn't the best. Free prostitutes tend to be more sullen, having been forced into it, and tending to compare prostitution with running a shop or being a respectable wife, rather than with being worked to death on a farm or down a mine. There are, of course, exceptions in both cases.

Indeed, the best prostitutes, particularly female ones, can become famous, sought-after and almost, but not quite, respectable. Good looks are essential for this, as is a way with people, but a certain level of artistic accomplishment is just as essential. Male patrons need to be able to pretend that they are buying cultured entertainment, not casual sex. The very best prostitutes can even be paid well for an evening in which they have no sexual contact with the client at all, although they would not get away with that every night.

Brothels, however, do not house the best whores. The highest class courtesans are invited to private dinner parties at senators' palaces, and live in discreet wealth. Brothels are where you can find the also-rans, and, occasionally, young courtesans with a great future in front of them, if they can impress the right people.



Brothels vary in the quality of the whores, and in the racial and gender mix. Some brothels specialize in particular tastes, while others pretend to be bathhouses. The very best brothels are truly elegant, and do not put price tags on the merchandise. (This may be to avoid potential clients dying from heart failure on entering, however.)

Story Use: Prostitutes, particularly the better ones, tend to hear a lot of secrets; men can be very talkative when trying to impress women (or other men), even ones they have paid for. More than a few Kindred control brothels as a source of information about the city, and there are plenty of good stories to be had out of taking and keeping such control, or in feeding false information to an enemy, or even taking his brothel away from him.

Brothels are, obviously, good places to hunt. The basic choice is between paying for blood, and being paid to take it. Kindred do take both options, but being paid is looked down on by Kindred society.

CAUPONAE

Cauponae are the taverns of ancient Rome, drinking dens popular with the lower classes and the criminal fraternity, and with scions of wealthy senatorial families who are looking for a good time. There are no *cauponae* catering to the upper classes; the wealthy drink at home, or at elegant bathhouses.

Most *cauponae*, accordingly, are found on the ground floors of *insulae*, although some are built into other structures, such as bathhouses, or even the arches supporting aqueducts. As most stay open all night, and are prone to erupting into singing, arguing, brawling or all three, they are not the most popular neighbors. Indeed, brawls are not infrequently caused by the person living above a *caupona* coming down to complain about the noise.

The typical *caupona* is small, with space for about half a dozen patrons, and most cater almost exclusively to a regular clientele. That is not to say that the owners drive new customers away; even the most reliable patrons die eventually, and need to be replaced. However, many are not welcoming to new arrivals, who should expect to have to buy a lot of drinks for themselves and others, and visit the place many times, before they are truly accepted. Friends and contacts of a regular are tolerated on occasional visits, and can become regulars far more quickly than people who just walk in off the streets.

Wine is the drink of choice for Romans, mixed with varying amounts of water to avoid instant, incapacitating intoxication. A successful owner of a *caupona*, called a *caupo*, learns quickly how to adjust the quality of the wine to the client's inebriation. Most *cauponae* also serve

snacks, which means that they have a small kitchen; these are not an uncommon cause of serious fires.

The character of a *caupona* is determined almost entirely by the character of its patrons; physically, most consist of a counter, with the patrons sitting on one side and the *caupo* standing on the other. The patrons normally, but not absolutely always, have something in common apart from drinking at the same *caupo*. This might be as simple as all living in the *insula* in which the *caupo* is found, or they might all be sailors, or all free gladiators (that would be a bad place to pick a fight) or all members of a secretive religious cult. Because most *cauponae* rely on regulars and their friends, the *cauponae* may not be obvious from the outside, and the affiliation of the patrons rarely is.

There are, of course, exceptions. Rome is still a busy city, drawing people from all over the world, and visitors want to drink as well. Some larger *cauponae* do advertise their presence, and welcome foreigners to drink there. These places are much more likely to cheat and rob their clients, of course, but that's the price of being from out of town.

Story Use: A *caupona* with the right sort of patrons can be an excellent source of information, muscle or even cheap labor, if the Kindred are on good terms with the clients. Some vampires prefer to intimidate people into working for them, which is unstable in the long run. The patrons of some *cauponae* are even drawn together by the fact that they work for the same vampire, or have sworn revenge against the same vampire.

Kindred trying to gather information in Rome are almost certain to have to visit several *cauponae*, and convince the patrons to talk to the Kindred. Attempting to ingratiate oneself with the patrons creates one sort of story, intimidating them creates another.

A *caupona* can even be a good place for Kindred to meet, if they do not trust the others with any information about the locations of their havens. Wine is not the only red liquid that can be drunk, after all.

Equipment Bonuses: Most *caupos* keep a weapon, usually a heavy club, under the counter to deal with rowdy patrons. Eating knives are always easily available, as are wine amphoras, which can also serve as clubs.

CHURCHES

With the public acceptance of Christianity under Constantine, churches have become a common feature of the city. They are all new constructions, none more than 50 years old, although they are almost all based around significantly older tombs, the tombs of martyrs.

Thanks to the laws of Rome, these tombs were all outside the city itself, and many were underground. The most fundamental rule followed in building the churches is that the tombs themselves cannot be moved at all; they must stay exactly where they were. Since the tomb is normally made to be visible in the floor of the church, this means that many churches are sunken below the level of the surrounding ground. Even those that are roughly on ground level are often next to hills, and thus built into a space cut away from the hillside, like Saint Peter's Basilica. Others have a floor that is several feet underground, and a few are completely subterranean.

Whatever the location, the basic plan is consistent. Churches in Rome take the form of basilicae: long, rectangular halls, with a double row of columns. The tomb of the martyr is typically at the western end of the church, which is entered from the eastern end. This can cause problems, when there were obstacles that could not be moved. The Basilica of Saint Paul, for example, is a small church, far smaller than the importance of the saint would suggest, because the church could not be extended very far east of the saint's tomb.

Many churches were well financed by Constantine and his successors, although Julian's moves to return wealth to the pagan temples led to a temporary downturn. As a result, most churches are decorated with mosaics and frescoes, and use columns and stone taken from other buildings, in particular pagan temples that were demolished to make room for the churches. This can lead to some odd juxtapositions, with pagan reliefs decorating the area behind a saint's tomb.

The tomb itself is the central feature of the church, and is normally referred to as the "trophy"; the Christians believe that death as a martyr is a great prize. Although the tomb itself is almost always extremely simple, having been constructed by people in fear of persecution, the tomb is normally surrounded by a rich framework to emphasize the worth of the martyr within.

The most significant feature of a church is the martyr who is honored there. Almost all churches are named after their martyr, and the decoration of the building normally includes scenes from the saint's life, and most critically, the scene of his or her death. Some saints were simply beheaded, but others were burned alive, mauled to death by wild beasts, or crucified upside-down. These death scenes are not painted realistically; the saints are always immensely calm, while the evil on the faces of their persecutors is emphasized. Since the martyrs of Rome were, in most respects, normal Romans, their names reflect this. Male and female martyrs are known, but male martyrs are more common.

Story Use: The churches of Rome were built around tombs, which means that they are often well connected to Necropolis. Even pagan Kindred often use churches as ways to pass between the two cities, as people come and go from churches at all hours of the day and night.

Churches are a center of tension between pagans and Christians. The Christians see churches as affirmation of the status of their faith, and as a celebration of the sufferings they have overcome, while many pagans see churches as embodying the threat to the traditions and virtues that made Rome great. Plots to destroy churches are not uncommon, and Kindred can be involved or simply caught in the middle.

As churches were built in the middle of tombs, the construction sometimes involved the rearrangement of bodies, or the isolation of tombs that were once tended by families. Occasionally, those tombs might be occupied by vampires in torpor. Some Kindred may want to get the vampires in torpor out.

Equipment Bonuses: Churches are typically well lit at night, with lamps burning in front of the trophy of the martyr. Churches are also rarely floored in wood, which makes overturned flames somewhat less of a threat. Christian Kindred have a -2 dice penalty to violent actions in a church, unless the building or the saint is threatened, in which case it becomes a +2 bonus.

INSULAE

Insulae are apartment blocks, where most of the population of Rome live. They are typically four or five stories high, and house a few dozen families. The ground floor is given over to shops, while the higher levels are for living.

The lower floors are the most desirable, because in the event of fire you have a better chance of getting out alive. In addition, the stairs to the upper levels are narrow and steep, meaning that even daily living is inconvenient. The *insulae* are owned by wealthy individuals, who rent them out to, primarily, the poor. The construction is simple, and often inadequate, as the owners are more interested in making a quick profit than in providing high-quality housing. There are occasional exceptions, but they are rare, particularly now that the effective capital of the Empire has left Rome.

The ground-floor shops define much of the character of an *insula*, because they are the part most obvious to passersby. Indeed, most *insulae* are referred to by the sign of one of the shops, or, in some cases, by the sign of a shop that has long since disappeared. Shops that use open flames, such as bakeries, are the worst neighbors, as they can easily give rise to fires. Trades that smell,

such as laundries or anything to do with leather, are also unpopular, and thus make the apartments cheaper. Noise is a constant, as the shopkeepers call out to advertise their wares all day.

Most shops close soon after sunset, as it becomes too dark to work without artificial light, which costs more than the likely profit; staying open is literally not worth the candle. Entertainment establishments are the main exception; many close at dawn, when they kick the patrons out.

Insulae typically do not have a back; the name comes from the fact that they are like islands surrounded by streets. Thus, there are shops all the way round, and the stairs to the apartments go up from the street, between two shops. Upmarket *insulae* have a porter who watches the stairs and discourages suspicious characters who are smaller than he is, but far more have a porter's lodge that is used as an impromptu toilet by passersby.

Apartments open off the stairs, and generally have nothing but a flimsy wooden door; breaking such a door down is easy (Strength + Athletics extended action, five successes needed) but noisy, guaranteeing attention from everyone in the building. If the person breaking the door down looks dangerous (large, armed and intimidating), then most people will decide it is not their business. Small, slight-looking female vampires are likely to be confronted no matter how dangerous they really are.

A typical apartment has two rooms, one for living and a much smaller one for sleeping. Toilets are communal, and on the ground floor, and the residents bathe at a local bathhouse. Windows are closed with simple wooden shutters, and furniture is likewise crudely made. Pottery utensils are common, and if there is artificial light, it comes from burning wicks floating in dishes of oil. If these are knocked over, during a fight, for example, a fire is a near-certainty.

Story Uses: Investigations of events in Rome are very likely to take characters to *insulae* to talk to witnesses, victims or perpetrators. A fight in an *insula* runs a serious risk of damaging the structure of the building; a blow backed by Vigor might drive an opponent through a wall. Fights could also happen on the roof of an *insula*, and in many areas, the streets between the *insulae* are so narrow that even mortals can leap from one to another.

Although Roman Kindred are not likely to use an *insula* as a haven, they may use one as a source of income and blood, particularly if there is an entrance to Necropolis hidden in the foundations. This can lead to stories as characters try to protect their own resources and destroy those of others.

Equipment Bonuses: Improvised weapons are easily available throughout *insulae*. Most are equivalent to a sap, club or knife, but break after one or two blows. The sheer number of people, and thin walls, imposes a -1 die penalty on Stealth attempts.

FORUMS

Forums are the social and mercantile centers of Rome. The Forum Romanum is the oldest, largest and most significant, but it is far from being the only one. Emperors, including Trajan, built forums as monuments to their achievements, and other developed naturally over time.

A forum is an open area surrounded by buildings, and the buildings open onto the forum. The open area is normally roughly rectangular, and paved. Statues are often erected, in center if there is only one, or spaced regularly if there are more. Many of the buildings have colonnades facing onto the plaza, and all can be entered from the open area.

The buildings on a forum normally include at least one temple, typically on one of the shorter sides of the rectangle. These temples can be dedicated to any of the Roman gods. Other buildings contain shops, as commerce is a major function of the place. Bathhouses are also common.

Two types of building that are not often found are private houses and churches. Forums are public spaces, so private buildings are out of place. Churches, as noted above, are built over the tombs of martyrs, which means that churches are built outside the formal boundaries of the city. Forums, as the commercial centers, were built in the heart of the city, well away from graveyards.

Forums are busiest in the daytime, but few close completely when the sun sets. They are the public places most likely to be lit by their own braziers, rather than relying on torches brought by those using the forums, and are unlikely to be deserted at any time. Even if the shops around the forum close, night is when new supplies of goods can be brought through the streets.

Deliberately planned forums are spectacular sights, with fine columns decorating the surrounding buildings. Trajan's Forum is one of the wonders of Rome, with an equestrian statue of the Emperor in the center, and a column carved with scenes from his military exploits off to one side. Forums that have naturally grown tend to be more modest, and one or more sides may be completely without a columned portico.

Over time, most forums have adapted to the people who use them, so while the basic food shops can be found anywhere, the other stores express the character of the

neighborhood. The temple is often appropriate, with the forum being partly shaped by the people who come to worship, but in other cases, the forum has developed in a very different way, leaving the god quite neglected.

Story Use: The forums of Rome are meeting places par excellence. The meetings could be planned or fortuitous, and could easily break out into violence.

Few forums are controlled by a single individual, mortal or Kindred, but it is not uncommon for someone to have a great deal of influence. Player characters can seek to gain such influence, or to take it away from a more hostile individual. If someone does have that much influence, his personality has a strong influence on the personality of the forum.

Equipment Bonuses: Almost anything could be around in a forum or the shops alongside it. Characters may have to break into one of the shops to seize the tool they want, however.

PALACES

Rome has its share of wealthy residents, who live in palaces within the city. While none of the palaces of private citizens can match that of the Emperor, the private palaces have the advantage that their owners actually live in them; the Imperial palace hardly ever hosts the Emperor in these days of Imperial decline.

Urban palaces look inward, rather than out. The walls on the street side are blank, serving to keep disturbances on the streets where they belong. All palaces have at least two entrances, but few have more than three: one for the family and guests, one for servants and one for supplying the private bathhouse. All entrances are supposed to be guarded, but the competence of the guard can range from an old slave who is up to chasing away urchins but little more to half a dozen hardened gladiators who would pose a threat to most lone Kindred.

If you enter through the main door, the first room is a small vestibule, typically decorated with mosaics. The next room is the atrium, the entrance to the house proper. This is typically laid out around a pool, which collects rain water through a hole in the roof; this hole also provides lighting. In most cases, the edges of the skylight are supported on pillars that surround the pool. Rooms off the atrium serve as storage and accommodation for slaves; these rooms have no natural light.

Beyond the atrium is an enclosed garden, which, during the day, provides natural light to the surrounding rooms. These include the dining room, where the owner can entertain guests. Romans recline, rather than sit, to eat, and a traditional dining room has nine couches, grouped

in threes around three sides of a square table. Variations are starting to appear, but the more traditional Romans adhere to the old forms. Bedchambers are very small and plain, with no windows; they are purely for sleeping. All members of the family normally have their own rooms, and even married couples do not normally sleep together.

Larger palaces may include further gardens, private bathhouses, studies, libraries and rooms devoted to the display of works of art. The only limits are the owner's wealth and imagination. One limit, however, is that palaces very rarely have more than one story; high-rise accommodation is for the poor.

Palaces vary in their size, the quality of the decorations, the theme of the decorations and the quality of maintenance. A palace does not necessarily reflect its owner's taste; the palace may have been furnished by his grandfather, or even great-grandfather. This is particularly likely in the homes of old senatorial families, where the judgment of esteemed ancestors is not to be questioned. In some cases, the esteemed ancestors pay occasional visits to make sure that things have not been disturbed, and to pass on instructions to their descendants.

The palaces of old Roman families tend to be decorated with themes from Roman mythology, while the palaces of young upstarts are more likely to draw on the mystery religions of the east, such as the cults of Isis, Mithras and Christ. The old families are not immune to the allure of such cults, however, and may have subterranean rooms devoted to these cults. These rooms are sometimes genuine temples, but equally often they are merely there to give the owners the thrill of playing with the almost-forbidden. A handful of families, old and new, serve genuinely dark powers; when those powers are Kindred, the subterranean chamber connects to Necropolis.

Story Use: The fact that everyone sleeps alone is very convenient when Kindred wish to have a quiet word with a senator in the middle of the night; the open roofs of the garden and atrium generally provide an easy means of access if there is no secret passage from Necropolis to the basement.

More than a few Roman Kindred maintain links with the mortal families, dispensing advice and instructions to keep their blood on the straight and narrow. These families generally become wealthy, if they can survive being enmeshed in the politics of two worlds, and thus live in palaces. Player characters may have to protect their own families, or those of a patron, or may want to sneak into a palace to do harm to the families of a rival.

A few Kindred maintain palaces for their own use, holding dinner parties with influential mortals and other



Kindred. Sometimes, the mortals do not even know that their host is dead.

Equipment Bonuses: Portable artworks can be used as weapons, and a wide range of kitchen and gardening tools is typically available. Many palaces have a hypocaust, which means that there is a furnace under the house, and that there are tunnels under every room, connecting the whole structure.

SLAVE MARKETS

Ancient Rome is a slave-owning society, and slaves are embedded in the social structure to the point that some slaves own slaves themselves. Slave markets are, therefore, a standard part of the commercial structure of the city, and very, very few residents of Rome are uncomfortable with the idea of finding human beings for sale, even those Romans who are human beings themselves.

Human beings are quite large, and intelligent and strong enough to escape pens that would hold most animals. People held to be sold as slaves are also motivated to escape, although the penalties meted out to those who do, and are caught, serve as some deterrent. This means that a slave market has to be quite large, with significant levels of security, and this tends to push slave markets to the outskirts of the city.

Slaves are normally sold at auction, exhibited naked to potential buyers, and, if appropriate, made to demonstrate their skills. As might be expected, young and attractive slaves fetch good prices, but slaves with valuable skills also bring in the money; the highest recorded price paid for a slave was for a teacher of Greek, back in the days of the Republic. Skilled slaves can find themselves running significant portions of the Empire, if they happen to be bought by the Emperor's representatives, so skilled slaves have an interest in demonstrating their abilities to the full. Unskilled slaves tend to end up on farms or in mines, both of which are not far from a death sentence.

A slave market, thus, should make modern players uncomfortable. If people are buying tutors or managers, the slaves try just as hard to impress as job applicants today, while when overseers are looking for galley crews or miners, slaves do their best to appear enfeebled, and good only for clerical work.

In addition, the accommodations are not as bad as might be imagined; sick or dead slaves cannot be sold, at least not for much money. Although the slaves are generally chained to stop them running away, they are normally housed and fed somewhat better than people awaiting trial for crimes. Slave markets do, however, tend to be

eerily quiet, as the traders do not want the slaves talking among themselves, and possibly plotting escape.

Story Use: Slave markets are, with brothels, a way to buy blood. Slaves have the advantage that no one objects if a master kills his own slaves, even if he does it by draining the blood from their bodies. Feeding vampires can buy the cheapest slaves, although some Kindred prefer more elegant sustenance.

Rescuing someone from a slave market is distressingly easy: buy him. This is only likely to be difficult if he is particularly valuable for some reason, and the player characters are short of money. Even then, it is better to work out a way to buy him rather than to try to break him out, as Romans have a deep fear of slave rebellions. In fact, making the characters work to buy slaves is more likely to make players uncomfortable than letting them struggle to free slaves, and that may be entirely appropriate for a horror game.

Characters could also be sold into slavery, in which case they really have to get out of the market before dawn, and once they have escaped, they will be hunted with all the resources that the traders can muster, lest the other slaves get ideas.

Finally, characters might want to get information from a particular slave, but not want to bother rescuing him from slavery to get it. This is not particularly noble behavior, but many vampires are not particularly noble. Sneaking into the slave barracks and talking to a slave without the guards raising the alarm is far from easy.

Equipment Notes: Slave markets have whips and heavy shackles on hand. They also tend to have quite a lot of guards.

STREETS

The streets of Rome are distinguished from many other streets in the ancient world in two ways. First, most Roman streets are paved, even though the paving is crude in many areas. Second, many Roman streets have subterranean sewers, feeding into the many drains that prevent Rome from reverting to its natural state as a swamp.

This means that the streets of the Rome are generally easy to traverse, even in bad weather, and people can get around Rome without falling into pits in the roads. However, there are a lot of people in Rome, which means that most streets are very crowded during the day. At night, when the Kindred are around, things are different.

Some areas of the city are almost completely deserted, for one of two reasons. The first is that there is nothing to do there at night; markets are an example of this. The second is that the area is too dangerous for most people

to enter, and the few people stalking the shadows are looking to find victims before becoming one.

Other areas are still relatively bustling, whether because there are popular *cauponae* nearby, or because senators are throwing a party and people are going to and fro. These areas are normally lit, because accidents happen in the dark. If the streets are wide, and someone wealthy takes an interest, they may be lit by braziers set up along the street, either in the middle or down the sides. More often, however, streets are lit by torches carried by travelers or their slaves. If a street becomes busy, it can be very difficult to pass down without being at least singled.

This, of course, makes things difficult for the Kindred. Flames in the street are not under control, so normal rolls for fear frenzy are required (see the Storytelling chapter for more details). As a result, Kindred tend to keep to the quieter streets when moving about above ground, at least as long as they have the choice. The ideal is for every location of interest to be connected to Necropolis by tunnels, but that is far from being the case. Still, if a particular location is important to a Kindred for long enough, he is likely to see to a tunnel at some point, and this is one of the driving forces behind the expansion of Necropolis.

The character of a street is defined by the buildings that line it; a street running between palaces is very different from one running between *insulae* that might fall down at any moment. Rome is also, famously, a city built on seven hills, so streets go up and down. This may not normally have much effect, but it is worth mentioning.

Story Use: Streets are used for getting from one scene to another, but travel can be interrupted with distressing ease, and Kindred can be forced to pass through an area thronged with people coming out of a late-night bath or gladiatorial contest.

TEMPLES

The pagan temples of Rome still far outnumber the churches, and typically outshine them in splendor. While churches seem to skulk within the ground, as if ashamed of themselves, the temples stand out proud, faced in white marble and raised on platforms. Christians say that this well expresses the contrast between pagan arrogance and Christian humility.

In contrast to a church, the interior of a temple is not used for most rites. Instead, the altar to the god stands in front of the temple, in the porch or in a colonnade, and sacrifices are performed there. Almost all temples are rectangular buildings with a peaked roof. Entrance is through a columned portico, and sometimes the columns run all the way around the main body of the temple.

The main room, called the *cella*, serves primarily to house the statue of the deity. In most cases, this statue fills one end of the *cella*, touching the walls and ceiling. In a larger temple, the statue may not match, but some of the divine statues of Rome impress by their sheer size as much as by their artistry. It is not uncommon for the faithful to enter the *cella* to make their requests directly of the god, standing in front of his statue, and small offerings and candles may be left there.

Temples are distinguished primarily by the deity they honor. The important gods of Rome include the following: Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome; Castor and Pollux, twin gods of horsemanship and seafaring; Ceres, goddess of grain and farming; Janus, god of gateways and beginnings; Jupiter, king of the gods; Juno, Jupiter's wife; Mars, god of war; Minerva, goddess of crafts and battle; Mercury, god of messengers, traders and thieves, and also the guide of the soul to the afterlife; Roma, a personification of the city itself; Saturn, father of Jupiter and god of time; Terminus, the god of boundaries; Venus, goddess of love and the ancestress of Aeneas, founder of Rome, and Vesta, goddess of the fire of the hearth, served by the Vestal Virgins. Many temples give a god particular

characteristics, to distinguish this temple from others. The main temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, for example, is the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, "Best and Greatest." Similarly, several gods might be worshiped in a single temple; Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva are often worshiped together as the Capitoline Triad, so called because they are all enshrined in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.

Story Use: Temples are targeted by Christians just as churches are targeted by pagans, and Kindred can be caught up in offense and defense just as easily.

The dead are not supposed to enter temples, as they bring pollution. Kindred typically ignore this, but there may be temples where the gods are real, and take offense at any dead in their grounds, even those who walk in under their own power.

Temples often have a much longer history than most people realize, and while temples may now be dedicated to Jupiter the Thunderer, they may originally have been dedicated to a quite different spirit of storms. Those founding spirits may have been quite real.

Equipment Bonuses: +1 bonus to Augur rituals appropriate to the god in question.

GENERIC LOCATIONS IN NECROPOLIS

Just as Rome is the greatest city of mortals, Necropolis is the greatest city of the Kindred. It is the center of the Camarilla, just as Rome was the center of Empire, and Kindred throughout the world dream of visiting Necropolis as they sleep away the daylight hours. Necropolis is a subterranean city, hollowed out over centuries through the efforts of the Kindred and their slaves. A vampire could pass his entire existence here, and some do, focusing entirely on the complexity of Kindred politics. Thus, just like the living city, it is important to make use of locations that are not famous. This section serves the same function for Necropolis as the preceding section did for Rome.

CATACOMBS

The catacombs are ambiguously positioned between Rome and Necropolis. On the one hand, they are underground and the domain of the dead. On the other hand, most of the dead in the catacombs are completely dead, and rotting away to mere bones. What is more,

the living come here with some frequency to pay their respects to their ancestors.

Most catacombs are relatively small, carved out of the rock near the surface. They have an entrance, large enough for people to walk through carrying a body, and then a varying number of chambers. Christian burials are of the whole body, and thus require large niches, while pagan burials are almost all of ashes, stored in jars, which require a lot less space. Each niche has the name of the original occupant marked.

Catacombs are very variable. Some were created by noble families, and have entrances flanked by columns and closed by elaborate iron gates. Others were created by fearful Christians, and are entered through natural caves. Internal decoration also varies, with frescoes common among noble catacombs. The artwork typically depicts the afterlife. In recent years, Christians have returned to some of their old burial places to add decoration, showing scenes such as the good shepherd looking for his sheep.

LIGHTING IN NECROPOLIS

Necropolis is not completely dark, as most Kindred cannot see in pitch darkness. However, as the only source of light is naked flames, lighting is kept to a minimum; even to Kindred without Auspex 1, Necropolis is a shadowy place.

In most areas, a single lamp lights a large room, and corridors are lit by widely-spaced lamps set in niches carved from the wall. Even then, Kindred tend to give the lamps a wide berth.

Some areas are not illuminated, because Auspex 1 allows a vampire to see even in absolute darkness. This is particularly likely in areas dominated by the Mekhet. For Kindred who can see in the dark, these areas look much like those of the rest of Necropolis.

More than a few catacombs have entrances to Necropolis proper at the end of their deepest tunnels. These entrances are sometimes disguised to appear as part of the rock, but sometimes they are simply kept dark so as to discourage people from wandering. This is remarkably effective; few Romans are keen to go wandering among the dead, especially as those who do often fail to come back. Quite a few Kindred lair near the catacombs of their mortal family, and use these catacombs as a way in and out of Necropolis.

Some catacombs have been partly obliterated by new churches, which often means that the tunnels end abruptly at a wall. Other catacombs have been converted into churches, particularly if the catacombs were sites of worship while Christianity was still persecuted. These catacombs often house unorthodox groups, because the orthodox ones were able to get the support necessary to build a proper church.

Story Use: Catacombs are one of the very few areas of Necropolis where a vampire might encounter a mortal. Such encounters can play out in many ways, depending on the attitudes of all involved. Some vampires make a practice of offering advice to their mortal descendants, while other vampires simply kill anyone trespassing on their domains. On other occasions, vampires might pretend to be simply paying their respects to the dead.

Most encounters between vampires and mortals in the catacombs are unplanned, but some Kindred do arrange meetings with their descendants in the family catacombs.

Equipment Bonuses: There is generally little in the catacombs beyond dead bodies and frescoes. Corpses are useful for some kinds of sorcery, but beyond that, characters must rely on what they bring with them.

CELLAE

In normal usage, a *cella* is the main room of a pagan temple, the space that houses the statue of the god. In Necropolis, *cella* has a similar meaning, but with a twist. The *cellae* of Necropolis enshrine Kindred as gods.

This does not mean that the Kindred declare themselves to be worthy of worship, at least not all the time. Rather, they pick a god who embodies qualities they find admirable, and believe that they themselves embody, and create a temple to that deity. The statue of the deity is then modeled after the Kindred patron, and the deity given a qualifying title that refers to the Kindred. This is often an adjective derived from the vampire's name.

These *cellae* are used as temples by pagan Kindred, and most are well-known; building a *cella* is an important part of establishing yourself as an important player in Kindred society. It is also a way for established Kindred to take the measure of a newcomer, as anyone who starts by portraying himself as Jupiter is clearly a stuck-up parvenu with no taste. It is customary to start with lesser gods, and work your way up. Kindred are not limited to gods of their own sex, which can create rather strange-looking statues if the artist selected is insufficiently skilled. The best artists, however, can create images that embody the other sex and instantly bring the vampire to mind.

Choosing the *cella* at which you worship is an important move in Kindred politics, and something made public. This is normally done by leaving a small votive offering, traditionally of silver, that identifies the offering Kindred. A small image of the deity with the worshipper's name on the back is standard, but some kudos are available if you can come up with a more original option. Obviously, worshiping at a temple associated with a Kindred shows support for that Kindred, but for older vampires, the choice of which temple to patronize also sends a message. Worshiping only at the *cella* a vampire established early during his Requiem is subtly insulting, suggesting that he has achieved little or nothing since then.

The decor of the *cella* reflects on the Kindred sponsoring it, so little expense is spared. Kindred with excellent taste, good advisers or good contacts produce fine and elegant temples, while those with more money than sense produce gilded caves. The value of the decorations in a *cella* mean that they are normally attended by one of the vampires associated with the sponsor. Attending your own *cella* is regarded as a sign of weakness, and that you over-reached by constructing it in the first place, so vampires who find themselves at risk of such a humiliation can be willing to offer quite a lot to other Kindred willing to take on the job.

There are “lost” *cellae*, sponsored by Kindred who are either destroyed or in torpor. In most cases, the statue at least remains, and as most *cellae* also contain monumental stone carvings, those can be found in place. The precious metals may, however, have been stolen. This depends in large part on how likely the return of the sponsor is thought to be; vampires tend to exact revenge on those who desecrate their temples.

Story Use: Arrogant Kindred (which is most of them) may meet potential client Kindred in their own *cellae*. The state of the *cella*, the number of votive offerings and the demeanor of the vampire formally attending can reveal a lot about the sponsor’s current power.

Because *cellae* are surprisingly revealing, vampires who need to gather information about a powerful rival might visit his *cella*, study the statues and try to read the names on the votive offerings. This last activity is discouraged by most attendants.

Lost *cellae* may contain wealth, but they may also contain important information of use in dealing with Kindred recently returned from torpor, or the former servants of a destroyed vampire.

Equipment Bonuses: +1 to +3 to Intimidation rolls in your own *cella*, depending on how well made and patronized it is. Almost anything could be a votive offering, although the convention that the offering should be made of silver means that weapons give one fewer bonus die than normal.

COLUMBARIA

Columbaria are a common feature of Necropolis. The name is derived from the word for a dovecote, because the rooms contain many niches in the walls, much like nesting spaces for doves. These rooms are modeled on the tombs of the mortals, and closely resemble the catacombs. The main difference is that *columbaria* are normally placed to be hard for mortals to reach, because these are the havens of the Roman Kindred.

Most Kindred sleep in a niche carved into the wall of the *columbarium*, rather than a free-standing sarcophagus, because a carved niche is more secure, and more traditional. A single bronze plate, hinged at the top, and with bolts on the inside, is a very effective means of security.

A few groups of Kindred trust each other enough to nest together, in which case there may be one niche per member of the group. Perhaps the most common case for this is when a regnant lairs with his thralls, relying on the Vinculum to keep him safe. In many cases, this also means that a sire is lairing with his childer.

However, many vampires, even if they have allies, prefer to lair alone, and in these cases, the *columbarium* may have but a single niche. However, it is common for Kindred to construct other niches, and place the remains of their enemies therein. These may be ashes, for Kindred enemies, or bodies, for mortals. In a few cases, Kindred keep particular enemies staked and bound in their *columbarium*. This is regarded as arrogant and risky, which makes it very appealing to certain vampires. The niches may also be used to store other treasures, primarily those that the vampire does not want to use, but does want to keep.

The entrance to the *columbarium* is also normally secured, often with a simple metal door with one or more bars and bolts on the inside. Some vampires favor more elaborate defenses, with traps, mazes and multiple doors, but most Kindred believe that these are not worth the effort. The most popular form of security is secrecy, ensuring that enemies do not know where your *columbarium* is located. Thus, many Kindred, if they can, like to dig their own.

Story Use: Most characters begin and end each night in a *columbarium*, and attacks on it are likely to make them feel very insecure.

The lair of a rival is an obvious target, and, similarly, *columbaria* that were used by Kindred who have vanished can be the target of treasure hunts. The treasure in question need not be gold and silver, although it certainly can be, and the treasure hunters may find that the Kindred are merely keeping apart from the Camarilla.

Equipment Bonuses: Almost anything can be found in a *columbarium*. Weapons of all sorts are common, although the resident vampire might already be using them. In addition, most Kindred put some effort into making their lairs easy to defend; this might translate into a +1 to +2 bonus to the defender’s combat totals.

CORRIDORS

Corridors make up the bulk of Necropolis, because the Kindred have chosen not to create an efficient subterranean complex in a single location. Rather, chambers are scattered all across Rome, and linked by long tunnels, most tall enough for a vampire to stand upright and wide enough for two to pass one another. Few corridors, however, are much larger than the minimum required for this.

The tunnels of Necropolis are a chaotic maze, and it is quite likely that there is no Kindred who knows where all of them lead, or how they link up. Certainly, most Kindred are doing their best to make sure that that is the case.

The reason for this is quite simple. A vampire's lair must be linked to the rest of Necropolis by tunnels, but most Kindred do not want other vampires to know where their lairs are. That means that there must be multiple tunnels in any area, so that it is not trivial to find the lair by simply heading in the same direction as the vampire you hope to run to earth. It is hard to keep the general location of your haven secret, so most Kindred settle for making the tunnels leading there as complex as possible.

This also leads to the extension of Necropolis, and as the complex of tunnels has grown, it has become possible for young Kindred to create *columbaria* for themselves in an obscure corner of an existing network, rather than having to dig the whole thing for themselves. Still, they normally ensure that more tunnels are constructed, making it still harder to find their nests.

As a result, there are a few well-traveled main tunnels, and many largely abandoned and ignored tunnels honeycombing the ground around Rome. Most of the main tunnels have been expanded over time, and some have even been decorated with columns, statues, mosaics and frescoes. This is particularly true of the tunnels near the most important sites, such as the Camarilla itself, but also applies to tunnels that have become the main routes from one part of Necropolis to another. Nevertheless, it is possible, even common, for a particular main route to be used by no more than a handful of vampires in a night; they are main routes because there are very few nights when no Kindred use the tunnels. These routes are lit, and the task of lighting the lamps is normally imposed on the most junior Kindred. The amount of oil is measured so that they burn out naturally around dawn.

The minor tunnels, however, are small, crudely hacked from the rock, and often completely unmaintained, and certainly unlit. A few are unsafe, and could collapse at any time. Some are so small that a vampire must crawl to get through, and a few even go underwater for a short distance. Even vampires find it difficult to keep their bearings in these tunnels, and stick to routes that they know to and from their havens.

Story Use: The Kindred tell stories of things that live in abandoned tunnels of Necropolis, things that pose a threat even to vampires. These stories may be baseless, but Kindred do vanish, and do report having caught a glimpse of something inexplicable. Sometimes, it becomes necessary to explore tunnels that have been unused for centuries, to determine whether there is a real threat.

Kindred who are pursued may flee into the networks of twisty passages to lose their pursuers, and while this often works, it can lead to Kindred being lost. Lost Kin-

dred may well find important things, but they can also fall into torpor before finding their way out again. Such Kindred in torpor are, of course, among the things that Kindred who become lost later may find.

Smaller tunnels may collapse, which can pose a real problem to Kindred who know only one route to their havens. This can lead to them becoming lost, as above.

The tunnels are not normally constructed by vampires in person; that sort of menial labor is what slaves are for. Such slaves are almost never allowed to survive after a task is finished, and often serve as a food source for their masters. However, a significant number of slaves, armed with picks and shovels, can overpower a vampire, particularly if the vampire is young and the slaves are lucky. Rogue slaves in the tunnels of Necropolis haunt the nightmares of the Kindred just as a slave rebellion haunts the nightmares of the free Romans living above.

Equipment Bonuses: The tunnels are mostly for getting from one place to another; they do not normally contain much, even loose rocks, in the way of things to pick up and use.

CUBICULI

Cubiculi are the basic rooms of Necropolis, where most of the activities of the city of the dead take place. Many *cubiculi* have been adapted to more specific uses, but there are still enough in their basic form that they are a prominent feature of the underground.

A *cubiculus* is created by widening part of a corridor, so that it has entrances in opposite walls. As this, naturally, means that any traffic along the corridor must pass through the *cubiculus*, *cubiculi* are normally constructed on minor corridors, and most often where one corridor joins another. The ceiling is often the same height as that of the tunnel, and the room is rarely more than four times the width of the original corridor. Lengths of more than 10 feet are also rare; underground construction takes a significant amount of effort, even when you use slaves.

A typical *cubiculus* has no established use or furnishings, although many do have doors hung in the doorways. All were created for a purpose, but the Kindred who did so have lost interest, been destroyed or moved to a different part of Necropolis. Many *cubiculi* do have decoration of some kind, and the well-known ones all have a name, based on a feature of the room. That might be "Dripping Crack," for a room that may be rather unstable, "Dying Boar," for a room with such a fresco, or "Headless Remus," after a damaged statue standing in one corner. Kindred refer to a *cubiculus* by name when arranging an event or meeting there.

The most popular *cubiculi* are slightly removed from the main corridors, to reduce the chances that other Kindred will want to pass through while the *cubiculi* are in use, but close enough that most vampires can learn how to get to them. Most vampires take all the evidence of their activities with them when they are finished, not because they are concerned about the environment of Necropolis, but because they do not want to leave any evidence behind for their enemies. However, vampires make mistakes, and some are simply careless, so every so often an interesting object turns up in a *cubiculus*.

It should go without saying that there is no central booking system for the *cubiculi*. Apart from anything else, few Kindred want to give their enemies such detailed

information on where and when they can be found. This does mean that, on occasion, two groups of Kindred turn up at the same *cubiculus* expecting a private meeting. Such meetings are generally tense, as neither group wants to be the one to move, but when hostile groups meet in such a way, the result is often violent.

Story Use: *Cubiculi* can be used for just about anything. They are the “default locations” for arranged events in Necropolis, everything from the gathering point for allies, through negotiations between factions, to small parties held by the dead.

Equipment Bonuses: Whatever the Kindred using the location have taken with them. As noted above, vampires try to avoid leaving evidence of their activities where their rivals can find it.

LIFE IN ROME

THE RULE OF LAW

A hundred years ago, the Empire was in chaos. Depopulated by plague and war, the infrastructure collapsed. The sewers began to silt up. The roads became harder to travel. A message that during the time of Augustus or Trajan would have taken weeks to arrive often took months during the time of Gallienus. Bandits thronged in the quiet places. There was no way of knowing if the man who claimed to be the official tax collector worked for the Emperor, one of the pretenders or for some robber prince who styled himself Augustus.

Even in Rome herself, the business of living became harder and harder, as chariot riots, religious strife and political unrest led to an atmosphere in which many felt they could get away with anything.

Diocletian restored the rule of law. He gave the people a figurehead to look to, merciful to the just, terrible for the guilty. His successors each added to the power of the law, but it was Constantine who brought the law crashing down on the people like a fist of marble.

His laws were many. He exempted the clergy from taxes and banned people of noble birth from joining the priesthood to avoid paying. He repealed the fines imposed on the unmarried. And he made Christianity the legal religion of Rome. Now bishops could act as judges in civil cases, and Christian priests could legally administer the rites of marriage. But most of all, Constantine tried to eradicate crime from his Empire.

GAME RULES: TORTURE

There are whole treatises on the best way to use pain to get results.

A character can take Torture as an Intimidation or Medicine Specialty, depending on what he wants to use the torture for: finding things out or just hurting people. A player whose character uses torture to get information rolls his character's Wits + Intimidation + Torture Specialty + equipment bonus vs. the victim's Stamina + Resolve, per the rules for Interrogation in **the World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 81.

Sometimes, though, torture is just part of the sentence. A player whose character just wants to inflict pain rolls Wits + Medicine + Torture Specialty + equipment bonus vs. the victim's Stamina + Resolve; if the torturer wins, the victim doesn't have to tell the torturer anything, although the victim might be screaming out to do so. He's just in a lot of pain.

The player of a character who wants to torture a helpless victim to death makes an extended roll of Wits + Medicine + Torture Specialty + equipment bonus – the victim's Stamina + Resolve; each success gained inflicts one point of lethal damage on the victim.

Torture equipment bonuses range from +1 (a set of knives, a branding iron) through to +5 (the fully equipped dungeon in the basement of the city guard's barracks).



Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine's official biographer, wrote this:

There was no threat of capital punishment as a deterrent for crime, for the Emperor himself preferred clemency.

Eusebius lied.

The laws that Constantine instituted, the laws still in effect in the time of his sons, show a different side to the reputed Great and Merciful Emperor of Rome. Petty thieves lose eyes, hands, noses or ears. Witches burn at the stake – so do people who wear magical amulets or charms.

The Emperors have always had professional informants, and those who make their money through entrapment, but now there is a whole class of men whose job it is to sniff out crimes against the Empire.

But now that the Praetorian Guard are no more, Constantius's city guard are always vigilant, because they know that if they shirk their duty, they lose their jobs and their right hands. Once, only slaves could be tortured, but now the brand, the flaying-knife and the rack are never far away.

JUDICIAL SAVAGERY

It was once the way for a tax collector or official to earn his fortune through exacting his profit from those under his jurisdiction. These are among the laws of Constantine concerning tax collectors, officials and clerks:

- Soldiers and tax collectors found guilty of charging more than they should legally demand shall be beheaded.

- Officials found guilty of pilfering or of embezzling small amounts shall lose their hands.

- A judge found guilty of taking a bribe to fix a legal case shall be beheaded.

- Officials who are found guilty of extortion or of using the threat of violence to squeeze money from the people shall be beheaded.

- An official who drags a woman of good standing who is in debt into the street and publicly humiliates her shall be put to death, with the most exquisite tortures.

- An accountant or clerk, who, through fraud, embezzles funds, shall be tortured on the rack and mutilated, losing his ears and his nose, and shall be barred from holding clerical employment for not less than two years.

- In all things, the Emperor, through his agent, is bound to investigate all accusations of treachery and theft, and has the power to torture suspects and to execute or mutilate the guilty, at his discretion.

It was once acceptable for a man who raped a girl or who eloped with her to pay her parents compensation and take the girl as his wife. These are among the laws of Constantine concerning rape and elopement:

- When a man with no previous claim on a virgin rapes her when she is unwilling or elopes with her when she is willing, the girl shall be considered suspect of being an accomplice to the crime, for her testimony has no weight, due to the weakness of her sex. At any rate, whether the

girl is willing or unwilling, her abductor shall be executed. He will be allowed no appeal.

- A slave or a nurse who abets an abductor, through passing messages or through presenting the abductor's case, shall have her mouth stopped with the swallowing of molten lead.

- If the girl proves to have been a voluntary accomplice in elopement, she shall be executed.

- If the girl is proved to be unwilling, it will be concluded that she could have fought him away, or could have cried out and have been rescued. She shall lose all legal right to her dowry or her inheritance.

- If the abductor makes an agreement with the virgin's parents to allow him to marry their daughter, or if the parents hide the fact of their daughter's abduction or rape, or if they pretend that nothing has happened or if they do not adequately show their sorrow, they shall be

exiled. A slave who gives evidence that the parents have done or failed to do these things shall be set free.

- Partners and accomplices of the abductor, whether male or female, shall be executed. There shall be no appeal. If any among them are slaves, they shall be burned at the stake.

OFFICIALS

It would be easy to imagine the men who enforce Constantine's brutal laws as thugs or charismatic military figures, but in fact they are gray, featureless men, who exist in vast numbers, hidden behind codices and inkpots.

Rome may be a city under eternal martial law, but it is ultimately in the hands of the bureaucrats. Military justice is swift and brutal, but depends upon a complex and ever-deepening bureaucracy to survive with the Imperial Court with the Emperor, wherever he may be, and the

PAUL AND MERCURY

AMONG THE AGENTS, PAUL AND MERCURY DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES. THE LATTER CAME FROM PERSIA, THE FORMER FROM DACIA. PAUL WAS A SECRETARY. MERCURY, ORIGINALLY A WAITER AT THE EMPEROR'S TABLE, WAS NOW A FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR. PAUL HAD THE NICKNAME "THE CHAIN," BECAUSE HE WAS SO SKILLED IN LINKING UNTRUE CHARGES TOGETHER TO MAKE AN UNBREAKABLE FETTER. HE EXPENDED HIS ENERGY IN ALL SORTS OF TRICKS, LIKE ONE OF THOSE WRESTLERS WHO PERFORM FEATS OF GREAT CLEVERNESS IN THE RING.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY CALLED MERCURY "THE COUNT OF DREAMS." HE USED TO WORM HIS WAY INTO DINNER PARTIES AND OTHER SOCIAL GATHERINGS, LIKE A MAD DOG THAT HIDES ITS VICIOUS NATURE BY WAGGING ITS TAIL. IF HE SAW ANYONE MENTION TO A FRIEND THAT THEY HAD HAD A DREAM — IN DREAMS, HUMAN NATURE WANDERS WHEREVER IT WANTS — MERCURY WOULD PASS IT ON TO THE EARS OF THE EMPEROR, PUTTING THE WORST POSSIBLE COMPLEXION ON IT WITH VENOMOUS FINESSE. IT MEANT THAT THE MAN WOULD BE THOUGHT GUILTY OF AN UNFORGIVABLE CRIME AND HIT WITH A SERIOUS CRIMINAL CHARGE. TALK GOT AROUND, AND THE INCIDENTS WERE BLOWN UP TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT MEN WEREN'T JUST AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT THEIR DREAMS AMONG STRANGERS. THEY DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO ADMIT THAT THEY HAD SLEPT AT ALL.

— AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *RES GESTAE* XV

ROMAN BUREAUCRATS

UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE PREFECT OF ROME:

THE PREFECT OF THE GRAIN SUPPLY, THE PREFECT OF THE WATCH, THE COUNT OF THE AQUEDUCTS, THE COUNT OF THE BANKS AND BED OF THE TIBER, AND OF THE SEWERS, THE COUNT OF THE PORT, THE MASTER OF THE CENSUS, THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE WINE-TAX, THE TRIBUNE OF THE SWINE-MARKET, THE OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF THE WATER-SUPPLY, THE CURATOR OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLIC WORKS, THE CURATOR OF GENERAL PUBLIC WORKS, THE CURATOR OF STATUES, THE CURATOR OF THE GALBAN GRANARIES, THE CONTROLLER OF THE PORT, THE TRIBUNE IN CHARGE OF PUBLIC TREASURES.

THE PERSONAL STAFF OF THE CITY'S ILLUSTRIOUS PREFECT:

THE CHIEF OF STAFF, THE CHIEF DEPUTY, THE CHIEF ASSISTANT, THE CUSTODIAN, THE KEEPER OF THE RECORDS, THE ADMINISTRATORS OF TAXES, THE CHIEF CLERK, ASSISTANTS, THE CURATOR OF CORRESPONDENCE, A REGISTRAR, SECRETARIES, AIDES, CLERKS OF THE CENSUS, USHERS, STENOGRAPHERS.

— *NOTITIA DIGNITARUM*

Senate simply a place where a man may wear a fine toga and talk about Rome without ever making a difference. Rome is one of the six dioceses of the West. The dioceses are mostly groups of smaller provinces; their governors answer to the Vicar, the military official in charge of the region. Rome has its own Vicar. Although the city is small compared to Dacia or Pannonia, there are more people within the walls than there are in the whole of most other dioceses in the Empire.

The military remain present here. The Praetorian Guard are gone, and their replacements, the Jovian and Herculian Legions, are wherever the Emperor is. Rome itself has a legion or two, but they are not the best soldiers in the Empire.

A dizzying array of military bureaucrats manages the city. The Prefects of Rome and Italy share the city's government with a Count of Military Affairs, under the eye of the Vicar. They control the army, and with it the city.

The Grain Prefect may be beneath them in rank, but the distribution of the corn dole falls to him. Without him, the people will riot. The other prefects, curators and masters jockey for position and obstruct each other's work

with increasingly complex edicts. They bury each other, and the city with them, under mounds of paperwork.

RELIGION

In the space of two years, the Christian church went from being a proscribed criminal sect whose membership invited a capital charge to being the religion of the Emperor of Rome, and the religion of the Empire.

The Christians who came into the Imperial fold at the time of the Edict of Milan had lived through the Great Persecution of the Tetrarchs, and the parents and grandparents of some had told stories of the persecutions of Decius and Valerian. And yet, through all these things, the number of Christians had grown. The Christians might not have been behind the plagues and civil wars that afflicted Rome in the time of crisis, but the dark times made the Christians all the more attractive, for all that the authorities tried to use Christians as scapegoats.

The Christians, although they didn't fight, accepted their fates with courage. Some thought it crazy, but many others saw something in these outsiders sadly lacking in the increasingly decadent pagans of the Empire. And

surely, if Christian impiety really was behind the ills of the Empire, why wasn't killing them making any difference? The Christians had an answer of their own: the pagans were worshiping, at worse, malevolent demons masquerading as angles of light. At best, the Christians were worshiping nothing at all. Their God promised a world beyond death and the sufferings of a world in the grip of what must have seemed like malevolent, incomprehensible forces.

Some Christians found the new order hard to accept. Others realized that in order for their faith to continue, they would have to make compromises. Without a second thought, many Christian communities jettisoned rules they had held dear for two centuries, and that some had died for: in an Empire founded by war and enforced by the army, pacifism had to go; traditions banning the clergy from taking part in government were soon modified.

Changes so drastic don't come easily. Christians since the age of Constantine, no longer united by the fear of persecution, no longer facing the stake or the lion, have had the opportunity to form in a short space of years a secular institution in which they can direct the future of the Empire. And during that period, Christians have taken a look at themselves, and they have fallen to fighting among themselves to a degree that they never had before.

NICENES AND ARIANS

Since the time of Paul the Apostle, Christians have argued among themselves about what they believe and why they believe it. Pagans who grew to know Christians mocked them for their inability to agree on anything, but Christian writers such as Origen and Tertullian would claim that the Christians' freedom of opinion was a strength, not a weakness.

But in the time of Constantine, suddenly, the Christians found that they had less in common than they thought. At the same time, the Emperor and the councils of bishops he instituted decided that everyone had to following the exact same path, with no deviation.

People in future ages will look back at the theological arguments that divide this new-born Holy Catholic Church in blank incomprehension, but in this age, these apparent niceties are a matter of life and death.

Heresies are everywhere, and the Christians are not afraid to deal with them in the most extreme fashion. A thousand variations of Christianity exist, and one by one, the holders of the majority view snuff the variations out. Sometimes the majority convince the heretics of their error. Sometimes the heretics are kicked out of the Catholic Church. And sometimes Christians use violence. The

reaction of Christians to pagans is as nothing compared to how Christians treat their heretics. The most confusing thing about the welter of heresies in Rome and the Empire today is that none of them consider themselves to be heretics. *They* are the truly orthodox inheritor's of Christ's grace; *everyone else* is a heretic.

THE HERESIES: GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism is a form of Christianity that has absorbed characteristics of the pagan mystery cults. The Gnostics denounce all matter as a prison created by an evil God, which Jesus sought to deliver mortals from through secret truths. Various branches and forms of Gnosticism have developed, with different ideas about what those truths might be: some say they were delivered by Jesus to Mary Magdalene, others insist that John the Baptist was the savior, for he taught them to Jesus.

Some vampires say that undeath is the ultimate proof of Gnosticism. They look at the horrors perpetrated by their fellows, the combinations of orgy and slaughter, the desperate pursuit of flesh to feed their hungers and see it as the final, sinful nature of matter abandoned by divinity. Many of these Gnostic dead show themselves to the sun, their hearts so crushed that they no longer fear Final Death. Others are freed, released from the moral shackles of their mortal beliefs.

Although hundreds of factions still exist, only two factions today really stand a chance of controlling the overall future of the Catholic Church: the Nicenes and the Arians. Each consider themselves to be the Holy Catholic Church, and the others to be the heretics. The argument is between who Christ was: was He the Son of God, begotten, not created, or was He the special, unique creation of God, more than man or angel, but less than God? The Nicenes believe the former; the Arians believe the latter. The Catholic Church was instituted by Nicenes — Constantine held that opinion, as much he could understand theology at all — and hence, the Nicenes have the advantage of orthodoxy by precedent. But the Arians now hold the upper hand. The Christian Goths are Arians, and Constantius is an Arian, too, meaning that the Arians have the support of the Emperor. Either side could win.

In Rome now, unrest between the factions threatens to overturn the city. A few years ago, Constantius ordered the arrest and execution of Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, a leader of the Nicenes and a dangerous man. Atha-

THE HERESIES: MARCIONISM

Marcion was a wealthy would-be Bishop of Rome, exiled and excommunicated because of sexual scandal. He rejected the canons of the Roman Church, most of which included several Gospels and some portions of the Jewish Bible, and proposed his own canon, designed to represent only the teachings and God of Jesus. The only Gospel included was Luke's (abridged to remove references to Jewish scripture), backed by the "Apostolicon," a collection of epistles. Marcion taught that the Jewish faith was completely true: there was a jealous God who had created man and adopted the Jews as His chosen people... but that Christ had come to show man a greater God. Jesus was not the Messiah of the Jews (who was still on his way, but presumably insignificant), but a Savior sent by the creator's own creator. Marcion's most curious innovation was the distinction between God's goodness, with which he associated kindness and forgiveness, and His divine justice, which was tempered by the former qualities. The God of the Jews possessed justice, which he meted out at every opportunity against sinners and the enemies of His people, while the God of Jesus was greater and forgave all.

After their founder's death, the Marcionites are torn apart by internal dispute, with some wanting to embrace a Gnostic division of the gods as fully good and fully evil, while others are more interested in reinventions of Jesus's nature.

Marcionism has not retained many vampiric adherents of its own, but many worshippers of the Spear were Marcionites in life. The loudest is Frater Deglubitus, a Nosferatu. He proclaims that when Longinus slew Christ, he was acting on behalf of the Just God rather than the Good God, and that all those in Damnation should follow his example. The dead are the instruments of the lesser God, whose purpose is to purify the world and make it worthy of the greater God. Vampires, he says, do heaven's dirty work.

VALENTINIANISM

Valentinus was another cleric who pretended to the Bishopric of Rome. He'd been taught by a disciple of Saint Paul. He was beloved by his students. Unfortunately for him, many of his fellow clergy didn't feel the same way. He rejected their alleged wisdom, and, just as Marcion, split off to form his own Church. The Christianity of Valentinus angrily rejects the authority of individuals, while at the same time placidly trying to reconcile Catholicism with various forms of Gnosticism. Valentinus posited a cosmology with many spiritual beings beneath the God of Jesus, and attributed the creation of the broken and pain-filled earth to the failure of one of them. By a complex metaphorical reading of several Gospels, he deduced that the creature at fault was the spirit of Wisdom, which was necessarily flawed.

Valentinus is most notable among the dead for having been rejected by the Monachus directly. Before the Dark Apostle's Embrace (or adoption) by Longinus, he was an ardent anti-Valentinian. Some vampires have taken this to suggest that they should eliminate the Valentinians, but the dispute over the Monachus's pre-Longinian writings continues.

nasius controls a network of enforcers and agents across the Empire. Liberius, Bishop of Rome, tried Athanasius and found him innocent, when Constantius had ordered the trial to be fixed. The Emperor had Liberius thrown out and a puppet Bishop, Felix, put in Liberius's place. Later, the Emperor had Liberius tortured and forced to sign the warrant for Athanasius's arrest. Athanasius is still a fugitive, and his agents are even now in Rome, stirring up unrest against the hapless Felix. Supporters of the two factions have, every so often, engaged in pitched battles against the heretics and the "anti-Pope," who sits in state, powerless, in Saint Peter's Basilica.

SCHISMS AND TRAITORS

Other Christians refuse to take part in an Empire that once persecuted them. In Carthage, the Christians became incensed when the Romans sent them a bishop who had once been a "traitor," a man who had handed

over his copies of the Scriptures for burning rather than be killed. They nominated a leader of their own, Donatus, and these "Donatists" responded with violence rather than submit to the authority of the Church. They retreated into the wilderness, and have taken to living in and around tombs. At night Circumcellions – which is the name the Donatists' tomb-dwelling fanatics have taken – venture out and assault and kill the "traitors" they see all around them, purifying the Church.

MANICHAEANS AND JEWS

It's a bad time to be a Jew in the city of Rome. The Romans have never liked the Jews. Similar to the Christians, the Jews refused to accept the pagan gods and rituals. Unlike the Christians, the Jews made a deal with the Romans early on to allow the Jews to worship their own gods, as long as they didn't make trouble. The Romans thought this was more than enough. The Jews

kept on rebelling. In the end, they lost their homes. The pagans don't like the Jews. The pagans tolerate the Jews, however, as opposed to the Christians, who treat them much as the Romans used to treat the Christians. The Christians believe that the Jews killed their God, and that — notwithstanding the words of their Christ — they can never forgive. The Jews seem destined to suffer for as long as they exist.

Fewer than Jews but no less hated are the Manichaeans. The followers of the Persian mystic Mani, they follow a bizarre hybrid religion, the bastard child of Gnostic Christianity and Zoroastrian dualism. They see the world as a cosmic battle between equal forces of good and evil. Matter and the flesh are evil, and the Christians are deluded. They keep to themselves and gather at night: as Christian heresy and pagan cult at once, they have good reason to.

THE HERESIES: MANICHEANISM

A Persian fusion of Christianity with Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and several other faiths. Manicheanism was founded in the third century by a young painter named Mani, whose followers believed that he was an equal to Jesus, Buddha and Zoroaster. Mani's father had received a commandment from God to live as an ascetic; Mani himself began receiving divine visions at the age of 12, though, just as Jesus, Mani did not begin his ministry until later in life.

His followers believe that each question has a single and irrefutable answer, and that these answers were communicated by the God of Light to Mani. Among the Christians of Rome, it has arguably been as popular for its lurid retellings of Jewish myth as its answers to human questions. According to the Manichaeans, Cain was Eve's son not by Adam but by a Prince of Darkness, at war with the God of Light. Abel was not only Cain's brother, but his son by the rape of Eve.

Mani himself was eventually crucified and flayed at the command of the king of Persia, but his apostles spread out across the world, considering it their work to complete the teachings of Christ. Manicheanism flourished in Rome for a few decades, but began to wither when Christians were permitted to worship. Several vampire Manichaeans dwell in Necropolis and associate with the Gnostics, though they disagree on the details of worship and scripture. A few older Daeva who emigrated from the Parthian lands are attracted to Manicheanism because of its resemblance to the Zoroastrian faith of their living days, but none seem to have converted.

MONKS AND HERMITS

For 300 years, Christians have made heroes of their martyrs, the men and women who died rather than abandon their faith. The tales of Paul, Justin, Lawrence, Cyprian, Sixtus and hundreds of others have been a source of strength and inspiration for the Christians in their darkest times.

There are few martyrs these days. Sure, every so often, the story comes back of one who tried to give the word of God to the Alans, or the Franks or of those caught within the still-heathen Empire of the Parthians, but they are few. Tales of miracle-working monks and hermits have taken their place. These people still martyr themselves, but they do it willingly, for the sake of their faith. The cenobites retreat from their former lives, whether alone or in communities. They take vows of extreme poverty. They mortify their flesh. The flesh is weak; the flesh is evil. The flesh must be purged of all evil, through mortification and hardship.

Through this, they do miracles. Antony the Great, not the first but the best of all the cenobites, who died only a few years ago, fought off the devil, made demons vanish with a word and converted the satyrs and the chimeras of the wilds to the True Faith. Other saints levitate, or walk on water, or speak with the dead, or grant visions, or hear voices from Heaven or perform impossible acts of self-starvation. A woman survives on three loaves of bread, making them last 17 years.

The stories inspire many others to follow their lead. Within the last 50 years, hundreds of men and a fair few women have spurned their families and friends to be cenobites.

The monks wear hair shirts. They refuse charity. They drink fetid water. And they are here. They are visible. They may have retreated from their lives, but in denying society, they are part of it. They make themselves visible. They loudly refuse gifts of food and drink. They place their cells in clusters at the city gates. They sing their hymns loudly and declaim their sermons at the top of their voices where anyone can hear them, day and night — sleep deprivation is part of their regimen, too.

The Christians and pagans hold the cenobites in awe; the Christians see these martyrs as the best of the faithful, the people who have a greater share of God's grace. The pagans think these martyrs are absolutely insane. The traditional Roman distrust of the fanatic doesn't allow for much patience with a cenobite.

A baptized Christian, even a hardened criminal, won't go near a monk or hermit. On the other hand, pagan criminals and bandits wouldn't have any qualms about

attacking a cenobite, if it weren't for the fact that none have anything worth stealing. Mostly, people either listen to cenobites and ask them to offer words of wisdom or advice — or give them a wide berth.

THE PAGANS

Paganism in Rome isn't really a faith in the way that Christianity is. Mostly, paganism is a political, cultural thing. With a few exceptions, pagan priesthods are part-time and on the whole, pagan worship is contractual: the people perform the correct rites at the correct times, and the gods make sure that the corn grows, and the sun keeps rising. The old Imperial cult was far more about political allegiance than about actually thinking the Emperors had become actual gods. By sacrificing to the Imperial Genius, the Romans were affirming that they were Romans. The sacrifices were a simple fact of citizenship.

Belief wasn't a factor at all. Most people, high and low, believed in the gods, but you didn't have to believe in the gods at all to perform the rites or be a priest. Julius Caesar held the post of High Pontiff, and he didn't believe in the gods at all. It didn't matter; he got the sacrifices done right. The pagans who believed in the gods might

not agree with a man such as Caesar, but he got the job done, and that was all the gods really wanted. Even the believers were rarely fanatics — why be a fanatic if you don't need to be?

This is one of the main reasons why pagans and Christians — even taking into account pagans who were once Christians — have never really understood each other. The Christians were willing to die on a point of principle that utterly eluded the pagans. The Christians should have been able to sacrifice with a clean conscience, pagans reasoned, and if Christians refused, it was because they did not care to be subjects of Rome, which was treason. Wasn't Heaven big enough for everyone's gods? Why make such a fuss over this? All they have to do is kill the goat, say the formula and forget about it.

The point of principle that kept the Christians from doing it back during the time of Galerius is the same reason they're now tearing each other apart: they don't compromise. But paganism, the paganism of the Romans at any rate, is *about* compromise.

But within the last few decades, the pagans have begun to understand Christianity. It's impossible not to have some idea. And they don't like what they see. They have



begun to identify themselves as the followers of the Roman gods, and to a degree, that's what the pagans' religion is about: identity. They are not defending their beliefs. They are guarding their way of life against the people whom the pagans believe are at best tearing their Empire apart with their squabbles, and at worst trying to wipe their culture off the face of the globe.

CHRISTIANS VS. PAGANS

Many Christians really are set on eliminating paganism. Reputed Roman astrologer Julius Firmicus Maternus shocked many when, having converted to Christianity, he wrote *The Errors of Profane Religions*. Firmicus's widely-circulated *Manual of Intolerance* urges the Emperor to eradicate paganism once and for all. And Firmicus Maternus isn't the only one who feels that way. But most Christian leaders, unaware that Constantius's Caesar is secretly a convinced pagan, see the conflict between Christianity and paganism as a battle already won.

They're dedicated now to cleaning out their own houses. Which is why, even though Constantius has ordered the pagan temples of the Empire closed, few re-

ally care that they're still more or less open for business. Pagans continue to be pagans.

THEURGY

Some pagans, in a kind of reaction against the mystics of the Christians, have begun to re-imagine paganism as a religion requiring personal commitment, just like the Christian religion. It comes from Neoplatonism, a pagan intellectual philosophy based upon developments of Plato's philosophy as written by Plotinus and his disciple Porphyry 100 years ago.

Its practitioners call it Theurgy, "divine working." They aim through rituals, meditations, prayers and sacrifices, to become closer to the emanations of God. They are academic and cerebral, and utterly opposed to the Christians. And only a few people know that the Emperor is a Theurgist. They may be the last hope of the pagans, but even so, their religion is not the old religion.

THE MYSTERIES

The Gods of the Mysteries still have their followers in Rome. Their rites are secret and elitist; the Isiac devotees

THE PROCESSION OF THE GALLI

THE NEXT DAY THEY SET OUT. THEY PUT ON BRIGHTLY-COLORED CLOTHES AND WORE GROTESQUE MAKE-UP: THEY SMEARED THEIR FACES WITH CLAY PAINT AND DAUBED THEIR EYES WITH KOHL. THEY WORE POINTED CAPS....

THEY MADE ME CARRY THE GODDESS, WHO WAS IN A SILKEN GARMENT... THEIR ARMS WERE BARE; THEY CARRIED FRIGHTENING SWORDS AND AXES. THEY JUMPED AROUND AND SCREAMED IN ECSTASY, FOR THE PIPES CAUSED THEM DANCE IN A FRENZY....

FOR A LONG TIME, THEY HELD THEIR HEADS LOW AND MOVED THEIR NECKS ROUND AND ROUND IN A FLUID FASHION, MAKING THEIR HEAVY LOCKS OF HAIR ROTATE AT SPEED OVER THEIR HEADS. SOMETIMES THEY BIT INTO THEIR OWN FLESH, AND FINALLY THEY CUT THEIR ARMS WITH THE SWORDS....

BREATHING FREQUENTLY AND HEAVILY AS IF FILLED WITH HEAVENLY INSPIRATION FROM THE GOD, ONE PRETENDED TO BE STRUCK MAD, AS IF MEN VISITED BY A DIVINE PRESENCE ARE MADE WEAK OR ILL RATHER THAN BETTER....

— APULEIUS, *THE GOLDEN ASS*, VIII. 27

and the *galli* may parade through the streets, but the substance of their religion is hidden.

Isis came to Rome from Egypt. Her simply-dressed, shaven-headed devotees wander through the streets by day or night, singing and clanging their cymbals. They look happy, in that wall-eyed, slightly intense way that a true convert has. People wonder if Isis's kohl-eyed priestesses can do magic: those who have dealt with the followers of Isis spread rumors of talking birds, of animals becoming people, of prophecies and dreams and prodigies other than the miracles of the Christians. Others wonder if the Isis cult has a way of putting an enchantment on a man, turning him from an ordinary member of society into the kind of person who grabs the arm of a passerby and tells him a story of conversion and redemption, whether the listener wants to hear it or not.

The followers of the Magna Mater are even stranger. They follow the example of Attis, the first of them. He was the son and lover of the Syrian goddess Cybele, and he was made himself a eunuch when the goddess appeared and gave him her gift of divine madness. The followers of the Syrian goddess claim to experience the goddess's gift of insanity, and in the initiation ceremony, each castrates himself in ecstasy, becoming priestess rather than priest. The Romans politely call them the *galli* (eunuchs), and, less politely, call them *cinaedi* (perverts). They make their livings offering oracles and performing fertility rites over couples. Their rites are colorful, disturbing and extremely loud.

The most private of devotees to the mysteries are the followers of Mithras. They meet underground and at night, and their rites involve the blood of bulls in vast quantities. Mithras is a soldier's god: he fights the great monsters of myth and triumphs over the dark by entering the dark. His adherents, given the knowledge of a real underworld full of demons and half a chance, would do the same.

BLOOD-DRINKERS AND BLOOD-CULTISTS

Of all the Mysteries, the Propinqui respect the followers of Mithras the most, and leave them alone. Sometimes, one of the dead will, through the ways and means common to them, try to join the mysteries of this god. But no Kindred who has so far tried to discover the mystery of Mithras has returned from the Mithraeum, the cavern at the edge of the catacombs where they meet.

Maybe the blood drives the dead insane, frenzied and wild and prone to be dispatched by a cave full of armed soldiers; maybe they knew he was dead all along and

lured him there. Do the rites of Mithras reveal monsters to the faithful? Do the followers of Mithras know of the dead? And if they do, would they be appalled at the very idea of walking dead men? Or do they know other things with their blood magics? A Mithraist who knows of the Kindred could become one of the most ardent hunters of the dead.

The tale of Mithras has the god dying and returning from the depths – but a dead man cannot die twice, and where the living find rebirth, it follows that a dead man finds Final Death. Or maybe it is simply that the stories of vampires joining the rites of Mithras and never leaving are simply stories and none have even tried.

One story, suppressed by the Senex but widely told anyway, tells how the followers of Mithras know a ritual to turn a vampire into a mindless hunting dog, a blood-crazed hound wholly under the control of the gods' devotees. It tells how the Mithraists have, in their cavern, a pack of vampires buried beneath the earthen floor, ready to be revived and used as agents of the god's wrath against their enemies, before leaving them to the sun, as reward for their unwilling service.

PANEM CIRCENSESQUE

The circus shows of Rome will hold a fascination for all as long as Rome is remembered. On a day appointed as a circus day, the leaders of Rome, whether Consuls or Emperors, order a day free from commerce. No matter what the age, they jockey for influence by putting on the most spectacular shows they could. As the Republic fell, the shows became more lavish. No wonder that moralists and traditionalists lay part of the blame for the Republic's downfall on a lapse in morals caused by the circus and the theater.

Chariot races, beast-fighters, gladiatorial bouts and the public executions of those thrown to wild dogs, big cats or bears all drew massive crowds on these festal days. Bare-knuckle boxers and wrestlers fight for the public in popular side-attractions.

From the days of Marius and Sulla all the way through to the time of the sons of Constantine, the leaders of Rome have considered the shows one of the best means of gaining popularity – the better the show he put on, the more popular a man can be. It isn't cheap, but the nobles believe that it keeps the plebs happy, this and the ration of free grain to which every poor Roman citizen is entitled. When the poet Juvenal wrote in the time of Trajan that the only things the people cared about were "bread and circuses," he was mostly right, and his words hold true 250 years later.

WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE

Gladiators, as everyone knows, kill in the arena for show. Some are slaves, some criminals under a death sentence and some are free men with a taste for killing and a yearning for fame. And fame is what they get. By day, they train under the whip of the *lanista*, ready for the day when they will stand in front of the crowds of Rome and kill or die in glory.

Successful gladiators have become celebrities in their own right. Graffiti on the streets of Rome has, for centuries, declared the supporters of one gladiator or another. Some are feared enough that noble Romans hire gladiators on off-duty days and nights as bodyguards and enforcers. If they're slaves, the money goes to their owner; if free, they make a pretty penny from work like this. While this happened much more in the earlier days of the Empire, it happens enough that anyone up to no good at night could well meet an off-duty gladiator moonlighting as a bodyguard or assassin.

Women, particularly noblewomen, often develop a strange fascination for these celebrity killers. A former gladiator who fought in the time of the Emperor Titus tells how a lady of the Imperial family hired two slave gladiators, one the writer of the account, to fight in her home one night as after-dinner entertainment. The lady took her time in the choosing, examining each man in turn, choosing only the most beautiful men for her entertainment. Gladiators were as often figures of scandal as they were of public admiration.

But it adds to their mystique, a mystique that in later years would draw in even Emperors.

Spectacular shows went down in public history and gained the man who put on the show massive popular support. Caesar flooded the Campus Martius to stage a massive gladiatorial sea-battle. Titus gained much political capital for completing the vast Flavian Amphitheater, which will one day be known as the Colosseum. It helped to give the people what they wanted. A leader whose idea of a good time differed too much from the sensibilities of the people could find that the intent of his spectacles backfired. The audiences prize strange gladiators — dwarfs, giants, flamboyant barbarians, women — and give them a great deal of attention.

The brutal, stupid Emperor Commodus was so obsessed with gladiatorial shows that he even went into the arena himself, the strangest gladiator of them all. Being Emperor, he wasn't allowed to lose. One time, he staged a re-enactment of Hercules killing the snake-tailed Echidna. Commodus played the part of the demi-god, while the Echidna were played by all the amputees his palace guard

could round up off the streets of Rome. Anyone missing their legs in the city ended up in the arena, leather snake tails pinned to their stumps. Left unarmed, they could only try hopelessly to get away as the Emperor clubbed them to death, one by one. Although the crowds of Rome had no choice but to cheer, they turned against Commodus that day.

Moralists have condemned the gladiatorial matches for as long as they have existed, from the days of grim, forbidding Cato (who considered all kinds of leisure a softening influence, even human blood sports) all the way down to the equally humorless Saint Augustine, who will describe gladiatorial matches as a kind of addictive bloodlust 50 years after Julian dies. Constantine tries to ban gladiatorial matches, without much success, but the Christians will ban the matches from the city of Rome in about 30 years' time.

TO THE BEASTS

The beast fights that always precede the gladiatorial shows never quite raise the emotions of the people the way that the gladiators do. Still, beast fights have maintained a steady popularity throughout the ages.

Shows begin, for the most part, with starved beasts set upon condemned criminals who are left, unarmed, in the center of the arena. If they survive, or the animals don't want to eat them, the Romans sometimes let the criminals go. Sometimes the Romans just send the criminals back into prison for the next time. But things such as Aulus Gellius's famous story of Androclus and the lion really don't happen much. Mostly, the animals are far too hungry.

Usually, the beasts are big cats, wild dogs or bears, although some showmen are more imaginative than others, and they feed some victims to exotic or bizarre animals. Their keepers often haven't even heard of these animals before, outside of the likes of Pliny's bestiary, and often don't have the faintest idea whether they are actually dangerous. One story tells of a Christian woman named Thecla, sentenced to die in the arena, and left to be savaged to death by hungry seals.

Stories from past years of Christians thrown to the lions were true, but it wasn't all that common an occurrence. Apart from the four great persecutions (instigated by Nero, Decius, Valerian and Diocletian), Christians weren't particularly singled out, and it was only really during the time of Decius and Valerian that the cry went up: "The Christians to the lion!"

After the criminals come the fights, either between gladiators and animals, or between two animals of different exotic species. During the heights of the late Republic and

ALYPIUS AT THE GAMES

ALYPIUS HELD THE GAMES IN DISGUST, TO BEGIN WITH. ONE DAY, HE WAS COMING BACK FROM A DINNER PARTY AND HE HAPPENED TO MEET SOME OF HIS FRIENDS AND FELLOW STUDENTS. IT WAS THE DAY OF THE BLOODY, VIOLENT GAMES, AND THEY USED FRIENDLY FORCE TO DRAG HIM, VIOLENTLY STRUGGLING, INTO THE AMPHITHEATER. HE SAID, "YOU CAN DRAG MY BODY INTO THAT PLACE AND SIT ME DOWN THERE, BUT DON'T THINK YOU CAN MAKE ME WATCH THE SHOWS. IT'LL BE LIKE I'M NOT THERE. AND SO, I'LL WIN." THEY HEARD THIS, BUT THEY TOOK HIM ALONG ANYWAY. MAYBE THEY WANTED TO SEE IF HE REALLY COULD. THEY ARRIVED AND FOUND SOMEWHERE THEY COULD SIT DOWN. THE WHOLE PLACE SURGED WITH LUST FOR THE MOST APPALLING THINGS. HE KEPT HIS EYES SHUT, AND TRIED NOT TO THINK ABOUT THOSE TERRIBLE EVILS. IF ONLY HE'D COVERED HIS EARS, TOO.

SOMEONE FELL IN THE FIGHT. THE WHOLE CROWD ERUPTED IN A CHEER THAT HIT ALYPIUS SO HARD THAT HIS CURIOSITY GOT THE BETTER OF HIM. SUPPOSING HE WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO BE DISGUSTED AT WHAT HE SAW AND TO OVERCOME IT, HE OPENED HIS EYES.... WHEN HE SAW THE BLOOD, HE DRANK IN THE VIOLENCE, ALL AT ONCE. HE COULDN'T TURN AWAY. HIS EYES WERE FIXED. HE DRANK MADNESS.... HE WATCHED. HE YELLED. HE WAS ON FIRE. HE TOOK THE MADNESS HOME WITH HIM, AND IT MADE HIM COME BACK, NOT ONLY WITH THE FRIENDS WHO HAD MADE HIM COME, BUT WITH OTHERS, TOO....

— AUGUSTINE, *CONFESSIONS VI*

the Empire, the arena housed all manner of animal, some comical, some utterly bizarre. Elephants and tigers are particular favorites, but gladiators can find themselves just as easily killing bulls, giraffes, baboons or flamingos.

Romans who lay on shows treat the beast fights just as seriously as the gladiatorial shows. On accession to the throne, for example, Caligula squandered a large percentage of his entire fortune on the import of animals for his celebratory games.

Beast fights will outlive gladiatorial contests, and will eventually outlive the Roman Empire, surviving particularly in Spain in the form of bullfights.

GREEN AND BLUE

On a race day, there are seven or more chariot races, in every circus in the city. Chariot races have always been popular, but now their popularity dwarfs that of

the gladiators and inspires what can only be described as fanaticism.

In every race, four-horse chariots, driven by youths who can be as young as 15, race between five and seven laps around the circus. The charioteers drive with their reins wrapped around their hands, meaning that if the horses break free of the chariot pole, or if the chariot suffers a "shipwreck," the charioteer will get dragged along the ground by the horses, unless he cuts himself free. A charioteer always carries a sharp knife on his person, because if the horses break away, cutting free is his only hope of survival.

Shipwrecks happen a lot, not least because charioteers from rival factions resort to every possible dirty trick, ranging from cheats in the race — sideswipes, a handful of spikes cast behind the chariot on the track — down to drugged horses and sabotaged chariots.

The gladiatorial shows drive the crowds wild with bloodlust, but it's the chariot races that really bring out the worst in the people. The drivers risk everything during those wild chases, but their lives are surely no more dangerous than the lot of the life-long supporter, whose loyalty to his chosen faction is such that he is prepared to kill for it. With seven or more races a day, going on well into the night, there are many opportunities for either half of the crowd to turn ugly.

As time goes on, the violence between factions escalates. A day of shows brings a night of riots; Emperors, meanwhile, openly support one faction over another and tacitly allow the violence to continue, punishing one faction and not another. Although Tiberius supported the Scarlets, by the time of the sons of Constantine only the Blue and Green factions survive. To support the same faction as the Imperial family is to have a small degree of immunity from prosecution. But only a small degree.

The one effect of Constantine's attempts to ban gladiatorial shows has been the rise in status of charioteers, in the public sphere and in the criminals world. Charioteers have replaced gladiators as the darlings and heartthrobs of the people. At the same time, charioteers are the preferred enforcers and henchmen for nobles up to no good and rich criminals doing their daily jobs. Charioteers are not as good at fighting as gladiators, but they make up for it with finesse.

ON THE STAGE

No respectable Roman takes to the stage, but the theater matters, and all Romans love the stage. The great tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles share the stage with the vulgar comedies of Plautus. All things are permitted on the Roman stage, and during the reigns of more permissive Emperors, even women have appeared as actors, and real executions and real mutilations have taken their part in shows for the sake of the entertainment of the crowd.

The plays go on all night, and they attract many of the homeless, who would rather sleep in the warmth of the sun than in the cold of the night, and who treat the awnings of the theater as entertainment, and shelter. The people are closely packed and warm, and there are always purses to cut away.

A night at the theater is a lively experience. The people under the awnings shout obscenities and throw things at the stage if they're not satisfied; if the actors haven't been sharp enough to bribe a portion of the audience, the chances are they'll be hissed off stage before they can even start their first speech. Rome is an unforgiving stage.

FRAGMENTS: A MILESIAN STORY, DRAMATIZED

Aelius Marcianus, Propinquus, writes in De Scaena:

During the second Consulship of Lucius Verus the Augustus, Macellarius Corbulo dramatized the famous Comedy of the Witches, and had it performed in front of Verus himself. The actor of note Eteocles played the role of Aristomenes, the narrator and protagonist; the freedman Vernacchio, played Socrates. Macellarius himself took the role of the witch. The story is well-known, and Macellarius versified it delightfully.

Eteocles made a fine Aristomenes, who, while traveling in Greece, finds his friend Socrates destitute and afraid. Socrates, played with real feeling by Vernacchio, tells of how the witch Panthia took him as a lover, and how, when he scorned her, she vowed revenge. He is terrified that she will make good her threat, Socrates says. Aristomenes laughs, and offers to take Socrates home to his wife. They stop at an inn, and the two men tell stories with a soldier. Both men get drunk and retire with a wittily composed song.

In the second scene, the witch — played by Macellarius himself — enters their room and overturns Aristomenes's bed, prompting the line, "Woe, for I am transformed from Aristomenes into a tortoise!" which the audience greeted with gales of laughter and which has become almost proverbial among those of us who were present.

Panthia pisses on Aristomenes — Macellarius effected this through use of a secreted bottle of piss he had acquired from a family member — and then cuts the throat of Socrates, placing an enchanted sponge in the wound. The audience enjoyed this immensely, considering Vernacchio's struggles most convincing. The following moments, where the guardsman bursts in, asking what the noise is, only served to increase the crowd's merriment.

The fourth and final scene shows the two men on the road; Macellarius' composition skillfully draws every drop of humor from Aristomenes' puzzlement and curiosity as to the state of his friend, especially during the moment when, as Socrates — and Vernacchio's — head fell off, the actor and character became one.

That the play was not performed again in its purest form was something of a shame; as was the arrest and crucifixion of Eteocles as a non-citizen. It became necessary that neither he nor any of those involved in the production could name the dramatist and likewise that none might know the location or name of our Panthia. Again, a shame. Still, Macellarius's fame as a dramatist and a creator of comedy persists among the Propinqui. Let that be some small comfort for him.

FEASTS AND WAGERS

The rich people in Rome have little to do these days. Three years ago, the Emperor came to Rome. He took part in a lavish, ear-splitting triumphal procession. He rode on a chariot, and he stood still like a statue, looking neither to the right or the left as he rode through the city. He was the Romans' lord and master, but he was not one of the Romans. He was something alien, something outside of their experience. No Emperor had visited Rome for 32 years, and it seems the Romans didn't know what to do.

They didn't have time to work it out. Constantius received a few nobles, passed an edict or two, erected an Egyptian obelisk in the Circus and left before any could get used to him. Rome, bereft once more of an Emperor, returned to its normal pastimes.

The people whose ancestors once owned Rome, the descendants of the Catos and Ciceros of the past, now spend their time in feasting and revels. They spend vast amounts of money on slaves skilled in music and dancing, as well as those proficient in more exotic arts. Roman nobles wager vast amounts on dice, and on the results of chariot races. They badger their parents, husbands

and friends to re-write their wills to give them ever-larger legacies, almost as if they're hoping their benefactors will just hurry up and die.

They neglect the study of literature and rhetoric, preferring fanciful stories. They listen to scurrilous and obscene Milesian tales and pepper their talk with obscenities they consider to be "daring." Sure, there are a few of the pagan elite of Rome who consider them all to be fools, but they grow fewer every year. And they feast. Caesar and Vitellius, they are told, used to step outside and vomit, that they could eat some more. Elagabalus made public sexual acts a regular part of his own feasts. If the nobles of today fall short of the excesses of those great voluptuaries of the past, it's not by far; pity the slaves whose job it is to clean up the vomit, blood and piss from the floor of an august senator's house, the morning after a feast.

The ancient families of Rome are a ruling class with nothing to rule. Perhaps it's the reason why they make such a point of their grand estates, their incomes, their ancient families and impressive titles. Step forward to embrace one or to kiss a Roman noble in greeting, and he will stand back, turning his face away and offer you his hand to kiss. They emulate the distance of the Emperor,



but unlike him, their distance is a sham, an insecure shield to hide the fact that without their money and their illustrious names, they are really no more important than any other Roman.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

The rich still maintain the social traditions that their Republican ancestors instituted. So it is with the tradition of *clientela*, of patronage.

Each morning, a Roman noble comes into his hall and receives his *clientes*, his dependents. Some are his freedmen. Some owe him some debt. Some simply came forward and offered their services. They come for handouts, and they come for the promise of aid, whether it be a recommendation to a husband for a dependent's daughter, or support in some court case — the Romans are still notoriously litigious, and civil cases go on constantly, and help of this kind is necessary far too often. In return, the dependents act as the Roman's agents in the city. They watch his interests in the market or on the farm, act as proxies in matters of business or law and back him up should he need their help. The relationship, while unequal, has always been mutually beneficial.

These days, it's a little different. A man who comes to the city, hoping to find a patron, gets enthusiastically courted by several men. He finds one he finds charming enough. He comes to the patron's house, and the noble asks him question after question: Where is he from? How much does he earn? How are the roads these days? Who are the finest charioteers in the provinces? The would-be dependent, satisfied with his new patron's charm, returns to his lodgings and sleeps the sleep of the secure.

The following day, he returns to the noble's house. But things have changed. Among the noble's dependents, he announces himself. The noble looks at him, cold and distant, and pretends not to know the newcomer. After a while, the rich man says yes, he remembers now, as if it were something distant and significant. The newcomer finds himself begging to be admitted into the noble's circle.

For years, the dependent labors on behalf of the noble. The dependent feels he's almost ready to gain a favor for all his work, but the favor never comes. One day, he cannot return to the noble's house; the dependent's wife is sick. He returns the following day. Again, he is back to the beginning. The noble pretends not to know the dependent; the man has to beg to be allowed back into the circle of dependents in front of all the others. What else is there to do?

THE POOR

No one wants to be poor. Sure, the pagan Romans inherited from the Greeks the myth of the pastoral idyll, a picture of clean-cut cowherds and pretty goat girls who lounged under trees and played their pipes and lived honest, decent lives. But Romans know it's a myth. And they have never had any illusions at all about the poor of the city. The rich have always thought the poor stupid, and filthy, and scrawny and dangerous, like a million half-starved rabid dogs. The poor are the people once dismissed as the mob, the plebeians. If there was ever a brief time where they had some say in the future of the city, it is but the record of ancient history.

Now, as far as the nobles know, the common people dedicate themselves to alcohol, gambling, the theater and the circus. If the crowds at the chariot races are anything to go by, the circus is as much a temple to them as any religion.

Noble Romans find the city accents and vulgar slang of the rural poor difficult to understand, imagining that the men sound like dogs and women like squawking peacocks. The rich accuse the poor of gluttony, imagining that their tendency to stand, waiting desperately in the cold for their food to be cooked and served, is the mark of one who loves food excessively.

But starvation is a fact of life, and among the cramped *insulae* and dark *cauponiae*, the people spend most of their time trying to get on.

THE POOR MAN'S RELIGION

One reason for Christianity's popularity with the urban poor: it offered significance to those who might never have been able to leave the *insulae*. Christianity gave them significance. Jesus was one of them, whatever the bishops of those two Catholic Churches might say.

Among the poor, the distinctions between heresies and factions fade away. There is only suffering. There is disease, and starvation and exploitation and misery, and only the promise of a better afterlife gives any hope at all.

SLAVES AND FREEDMEN

Slavery exists in Rome, and pagans and Christians believe slavery is necessary for the health of the Empire's economy. Roman culture cannot continue without slaves. Slavery is an institution that no one challenges. No one for a second imagines a world without slaves. About a third of the people in Rome are slaves, and this will not change for a very long time.

Being a slave isn't something that anyone wants. Once, a slave's evidence was not admissible if the slave hadn't

been tortured. Although that law isn't in force anymore, the possible sentences a slave faces for even the most trivial crimes are far worse than the penalties for a free man's wrongdoings. And it's still wholly legal for a slave owner to beat her slaves to death, if it suits her.

Anyone can be sold into slavery. Prisoners of war can become slaves — witness the fate of the Emperor Valerian. It's technically illegal for slavers to raid foreign lands and capture people to be slaves, but many do it anyway and get away with it.

People suffering from extreme poverty can sell themselves or their families into slavery as a final resort, just to stay alive. A man in debt can, as a last resort, offer his freedom as security on the loan. Since the time of Diocletian, it's been illegal for a man to sell himself or his children into slavery, but there's a demand for slaves and plenty of slavers on the streets of Rome who are happy to overlook the laws, even laws with dire penalties.

The children of slaves are born slaves. There is no moral imperative on a slave-owner to keep a family together, although many do, partly because a family often works better together. Some owners actively consider some of their slaves as breeding stock.

In the city of Rome, most slaves are house staff. Some have the exclusive job of cleaning up the vomit and urine from the floor after a feast. Some work as personal valets, dressers or cupbearers. A paranoid noble might have a wine taster. Often, it's a sensible expense.

Some slaves were educated when they were bought, or get educated as part of the investment. "Pedagogues" get the job of teaching children, or accompanying students to classes in order to take notes and keep an eye on them. Others might work as clerks, accountants or secretaries. Many nobles rely on slaves to run their households, handle their paperwork and run messages back and forth.

Other slaves have a niche as entertainers. Musicians, singers and dancers are always in high demand, although traditionally, only people with loose morals would actually make a point of owning such a slave. The prostitutes in any of the many Roman brothels are mostly slaves, too. It's a crime punishable by death to have sexual intercourse with a slave, but that doesn't stop many people — including many who should be enforcing the laws of Constantine — from using slave-prostitutes of both sexes, or from raping their own staff on a regular basis.

Still, most slaves recognize that town slaves have it easy. Out of town, the slaves who work in mines or on farms live short, crude lives. Chained together and under the whip, many work until they literally drop dead from exhaustion and pain, their corpses dragged along beside their living counterparts until their owners see fit to unlock the chains. It's small wonder that at the time of the Republic's death, so many slaves rebelled against their owners. There hasn't been a big revolt for a long time now, but that's not because conditions are better. No, they're just as bad as they've ever been; slave-masters keep a tight watch on their slaves, and mutilate and kill any who look like they might try to foment revolt.

Charioteers and gladiators live lives that are harder and easier than other slaves. Charioteers and gladiators undergo a regimen of training so harsh that it kills some before they're even ready. Most who survive don't live very long afterwards. Even so, some gain their freedom and remain in the circus and the amphitheater; there is nowhere else they can go. And why would they want to? Even as slaves, they become celebrities, the subject of adoration and desire.

Eunuchs, most pathetic of the slaves, have an odd status in Roman society. No Roman really likes the idea of a eunuch; it's an eastern conceit, the mark of a decadent society. On the other hand, a man without his ambition — or so the Romans think — becomes a man who can

CALLING FOR THE WHIP

YOU SAY THAT YOUR RABBIT IS NOT COOKED,
AND YOU DEMAND A WHIP.

YOU PREFER, RUFUS, TO CARVE UP YOUR
COOK RATHER THAN YOUR RABBIT.

— MARTIAL,
EPIGRAMS III. 94

be trusted, not only to guard one's daughter or wife but also to handle accounts or sensitive documents. In truth, many eunuchs are given so much responsibility that they become very ambitious indeed.

FREEDMEN AND THEIR MORALS

A slave can save enough to buy his freedom from his owner. An owner can choose to set a slave free at any time. A sick slave left to die by his owner who later recovers gets freed, too. Either way, the slave becomes a freedman and a Roman citizen. A freedwoman gets the same rights as a freeborn woman — such as they are. A freedwoman can inherit and own property, and little more.

Freedmen often achieve high-ranking positions. A slave who was set free on merit is generally considered talented, trustworthy and loyal. Setting him free often only ensures his loyalty, and his talent is well worth a living wage. The Emperors of Rome have always known this, and many of the most trusted agents of the Imperial court have been — and still are — freedmen.

It's never been a decision that pleases a lot of Romans. The idea of a free man being ordered around by someone who someone who used to be a slave chafes against a Roman's sense of self-importance. Most Romans believe that slaves wouldn't have gotten themselves enslaved if they weren't deficient and weak, or if their parents weren't deficient and weak, in which case the weakness is in the blood. "Freedman" is a word often spat out of a Roman's mouth.

Freedmen are often at the center of stories of moral decay. Did a frontier fort get over-run by the barbarians? It was the legate's freedman clerk who betrayed the Romans. Did the Emperor commit a shocking act of immorality? It was his freedman who procured the women. That young noble who drinks, gambles and whores — why does he always take his freedman with him? Why, it's because the freedman is his guide and encouragement. He knows the location of the gambling dens and the brothels, and most of what that wayward young man does is the freedman's idea.

A freedman might be favored by the establishment and wealthy, but in the eyes of many, it doesn't matter. He's still a slave with ideas above his station. In a thousand years, this attitude at least hasn't changed.



THE REQUIEM IN NECROPOLIS

LAW AMONG THE PROPINQUI

Constantine's laws have their mirror among the Propinqui, but to a much lesser extent.

Certainly, the Kindred enjoy inflicting imaginative and unusual punishments, and although the Senex frowns upon the use of blood magic, members of the Cult of Augurs (and in future years, the Lancea et Sanctum) will make use of their rituals to torture and brand malefactors. Although the Roman living don't crucify criminals anymore, the dead still do, preferring to nail the accused out in the open air, for the sun to rise, particularly for the crimes of defection or apostasy (while it's not illegal to be a member of the Lancea et Sanctum, it is illegal to convert and defect, and is doubly illegal to learn the ways of Theban Sorcery).

They call this punishment *Crucifixio usque ad Orientem*: crucifixion until dawn. In the last 200 years, however, it has been the tradition that if a vampire can get down from the cross before dawn, or if his dependents and coterie-mates can get him down, he can go free, although the humiliation of having suffered the punishment remains. Having said that, it's also traditional to put some sort of guard on the cross, so that anyone who tries to get the criminal down is in for a fight.

Apart from the punishments for apostasy and high treason, however, very few punishments among the Propinqui demand Final Death. Some punishments might require that the vampire be tortured until he falls into torpor, and then staked and buried in the deepest levels of Necropolis. Officially, the Legion of the Dead should send legates to revive vampires sent into torpor when their sentence is over. In fact, most vampires left in the deepest layers of the Necropolis stay there forever. No one ever comes for them. There are dozens of vampires down there, some truly ancient, many of whom have been in torpor since the time of Hadrian, or Scipio or even the time when Julius Senex was still in control of the Camarilla.

Although a vampire could theoretically re-attach a severed hand, ear or nose, or regrow a gouged-out eye, honor — and the law keepers among the Legion of the Dead — demand that as long as the vampire remains within the precincts of Rome, he abide with the mark of his crime. It's not simply a question of healing the wound; the branding was done in public, and the simple removal of the sign of punishment by its recipient is

not just an act of healing, it's a sign that the criminal does not accept the rule of the Camarilla. And such an opinion is treason.

THE PAGAN DEAD

The laws of the dead exempt them from the laws of the living, but the laws of gods and spirits are something else. Many of the dead adapt personal spiritual practices to take with them into the long night. Indeed, compared to pagan Roman life, death in Necropolis has a paucity of public ritual, making personal practices even more important. Kindred don't stop believing in the gods when they are Embraced, and the strength of the Cult of Augurs is a testament to the power of their enduring belief.

Though each clan of the dead keeps its own Masquerade, many Romans know that the dead do not entirely depart the living. Ancestor worship is a household cult, with each family having their own rituals, their own ways of remembering lost fathers and grandfathers. There are almost always gifts or sacrifices; often these are buried in the ground or immolated in the hearth. Some treat their ancestors as minor gods, leaving a slaughtered, but whole, animal in the place of memory for a night or two. Some of the Kindred take the opportunity to visit with their descendants during ritual worship, advising (or controlling) them and basking in the memory of life.

Rituals for ancestors are usually simple affairs. The exception used to be the Parentalia, from February 13th to the 21st. During the Parentalia, the temples were closed and no business was conducted, for fear of retribution from the dead, whose jealousy frightened even the gods. Dinners were held in honor of parents and siblings gone. The poet Ovid, still read tonight, warns of a Parentalia that was neglected. He describes tremendous losses in war and to plague, and funeral fires around the city. The dead, Ovid claims, rose in an army that night to take their due. Deformed, moaning creatures roamed the streets, taking any of their descendants they found back to the underworld with them.

Some elder Propinqui claim to remember this event, and recall it with satisfied smiles to their childer. They boast that once upon a time, the living denied the dead, and even lit fires over their tombs; the Propinqui say that the dead entered the city in force with the Nosferatu to take vengeance. The living would not feast for the dead, and so the dead feasted upon the living. Younger vam-

pires listen, and they disbelieve. For though some still visit their families, they cannot imagine a night without Masquerade. Above, the living listen in their Christian churches during what was once the Parentalia, and they shiver. For it has been neglected for many years.

Vampires also venerate their ancestors, with mortal and Kindred blood. Many broods, particularly among the Daeva, perform rituals of abasement before their sires, and address them in explicitly religious terms. Most, however, worship their sires and grandsires only after they have succumbed to torpor. Kindred gather by their forebears' moldy sepulchers and sing hymns of mourning and fear. Some broods Embrace only on these days; others shed no blood upon them.

Dead whose sires come from the Middle East tell stories of distant ancestors whose blood does not thin with torpor, and who, though mad and wild, can recall with perfect memory the deeds and names of their enemies. These are called Ancients, or among the Jews, Methuselahs. They attempt to keep these creatures away through rituals that might be supplications or might be wards. The most common is to stake a mortal corpse as they would transfix a vampire, and to bury him at a crossroads in the world above. The dates vary, but the task is always performed in silence, lest the sound attract the Methuselahs' attention.

THE DEAD AND THE CHURCH

The pagan dead, much as the pagan living, find it difficult to understand why exactly the Christians are fighting. The Sanctified dead *do* understand, but the conflict doesn't touch them. Now that they are dead, the only way they can make sense of their condition is to adopt their own heresy. They are dead, and they are damned, and damnation recognizes no distinction between heresy and orthodoxy. It is their business to be monsters, as Satan, in his role as the tester of humankind. That is all.

Having said that, a Sanctified dead man who was once an Arian might confine his depredations to the Nicenes. Or he might ignore the Nicenes altogether, considering them pagans, and only consider himself commissioned to test the faith of his known faction within the church.

Some few among the Sanctified have created their own heresies, gathering human cultists. Among the Sanctified in Rome, there are a small number who lead tiny groups of heretic Christians.

They approach their heretics in different ways. The Julian Propinqua Mamertia Pia styles herself as an apparition of the Magdalene. She leads a heretic cult that promotes sensual pleasures among the faithful, and murder of the

"heretic." Mamertia does this out of a kind of perverse belief in Nicene or Arian orthodoxy; she lures the weak into error that they may be destroyed. She pities her cultists, but has no mercy on them. A Daeva from the Peregrine College named Eupraxus controls the fate of a dozen humans who believe that he is the living vessel of the Blood of Christ, and that the Holy Blood can only be effective for salvation if mixed with the blood of sinners. Eupraxus isn't even a Christian. He's doing it because it amuses him.

And then there's Vitericus Minor, the Gangrel Goth, who has his own heresy, composed of a small coterie of vampires and about two dozen human followers. They're Gnostics, believing that matter is evil and that Christian orthodoxy is a screen behind which the faithful can divine a greater, more perfect secret. Vitericus is perhaps the most dangerous of them all, for he believes every word of what he tells his followers. He's undeniably mad, but those Sanctified monsters who hold discourse with him find themselves wondering if his visions are a symptom of his madness, or something else entirely.

FRAGMENTS: THE CAINITE HERESY

From the argumentum of the proscribed Euagetaematon by Vitericus Minor, Devotee of the Lancea et Sanctum:

For Cain did slay Abel, and this was the perfect will of God. For he placed a mark upon Cain, and Cain did not die, nor was man permitted to slay him. And Cain did rise up and walk through to and fro in the world and preach God's word through the course of the years, for God vouchsafed to Cain visions and prodigies, that he might be known and that he might prove his word.

And this is the secret of Cain: it was Cain who guided Lot from Sodom, and who worked God's perfect will on the cities of sin. And it was Cain who took the name Esaias, and it was Cain who took the name Jeremias, and it was Cain who spoke from the dark to the prophets. And it was Cain who spoke through Iesous, and it was Cain who showed the will of God, for he preyed upon the meek, for they are blessed, for they are God's prey, granted as bounty to us. For the word of Iesous was designed to make the living fit to feed the blessed dead, the Children of Cain, who feed not on gross matter — on air and meat and the fruits of the Earth — but on the life and the spirit of the pure and the humble.

And when Iesous was betrayed and he lay on the Cross, Cain stayed beside him and granted his blood the prophet shared to Longinus the Roman. And he spoke to Longinus, for as Iesous was Cain's Vicar to the living, so Longinus was Cain's Vicar to the blessed dead....

THE MANUAL OF INTOLERANCE

MOST WORSHIPFUL EMPERORS! THESE PRACTICES MUST BE DESTROYED UTTERLY. THEY MUST BE CORRECTED BY THE LAWS YOU CREATE IN THE HARSHTEST TERMS, SO THAT THE TERRIBLE ERROR OF PAGAN STUPIDITY NO LONGER POLLUTES THE ROMAN WORLD... THERE IS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR YOU, MOST WORSHIPFUL EMPERORS, TO PUNISH THIS EVIL, TO TAKE VENGEANCE ON IT. THE MOST HIGH GOD HAS GIVEN YOU THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PURSUING THE REVOLTING CRIME OF IDOLATRY IN EVER WAY, WITH THE UTMOST SEVERITY...

— FIRMICUS MATERNUS,
ON THE ERRORS OF PROFANE RELIGION

PATRONAGE: AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

The Kindred have long held onto a version of the tradition of *clientela*. It is far less benevolent than even the self-serving variation practiced today by the living. It works like this: a Propinquus elder grants a boon to a lesser vampire. The neonate is beholden to the elder, and becomes a dependent. As a dependent, the neonate must work on her patron's behalf, until the debt is repaid. But the elder grants more boons to the dependent, and the dependent, bound by the rules of *clientela*, must accept them. The result: the neonate dependent becomes further in debt to the elder, and further under the elder's control.

The more the neonate tries to extricate herself from the relationship, the more generous the elder becomes. Soon, there's nothing the neonate can do to get out of the relationship, and the tasks the elder makes the neonate do become more and more unreasonable, but never quite enough to discharge her relationship.

Why get into the situation in the first place? Simply, now: it's the only foolproof way to enter Kindred society. Becoming a dependent of an elder means becoming known as one his faction — and the central point there is that the neonate becomes *known*. She becomes a name and a face. She's not a player in the grand game of 12 Points that characterizes Camarilla politics — she's a piece. But there's always a chance that the elder won't last forever, and she'll be out of his control and able to forge her own name. Maybe one of his enemies takes him down. Maybe he falls into torpor, or has an accident up in the city above.

Or maybe the dependent finds a way to get him out of the way without getting caught.

FRAGMENTS: THE LAST DINNER OF JULIA SABINA

From the Memoriae of Julia Sabina, Propinqua:

Before any of the guests had arrived, two men strode into the house; the slave announced them as Julius Macellarius Corbulo and Flavonius Calvus. I had never seen them before, and neither had my husband. He made the sign to the slave indicating that the wretch should be beaten later, and then turned to the men as if to say that they were strangers, and were not welcome here.

He had just begun to berate the former man, a pale, grossly fat individual in an ornate but slightly outmoded cloak, when the man said in a high, fluting voice, "Come now; Eutherius, we are old friends. Surely we are welcome at your table, are we not?"

Eutherius paused in what he was saying, and then said, "We are old friends! You are always welcome at our table." I shuddered somewhat at the way he said that, and meant to take him aside, but he had left the room that he might make the slaves set two extra places.

The second man, bald like his name, as slim as the first was fat but equally effeminate, introduced himself to me and kissed my hand. I said to him, "I do not know you." He smiled and meeting my eye, he said to me, "But I am an old friend." And I said, "I do not know you." He

seemed somewhat surprised by this, and smiled a little less, but said, "As you wish, madam."

Thirteen reclined at the table that night, and the places of honor were given to Macellarius and Calvus. I sat alongside Mavortia, the wife of Reburus Valens, who should have taken the seat that Macellarius had usurped. Valens was visibly angered by this, as well he should be, for he had agreed to buy some of Eutherius's holdings, so that my husband could pay off his gambling debts.

I remember the meal more clearly than any in my life. I remember the tastes and the smells as if I had just eaten it. We dined on bottle gourds with asafetida and rue, on roasted crane in *garum* and Frontonian chicken, on dates in honey and a dozen other things. I never ate again.

Macellarius and Calvus did not eat, either. Every time a plate or a cup was offered, each man would decline. Vitrasius Victor, the slave merchant, asked Calvus why this was so; Calvus raised a hand, and said "*Tace*," and the man was silent, and no one asked more.

The conversation around the table was halting and awkward. No one knew these men, and yet no one could ask them. They looked upon us and smiled, and each time I met the eye of Macellarius and Calvus — for I did not look down, for I am no Roman matron, and no Christian — I felt a chill.

The last course having been taken away, a musician entered, and as he played, Macellarius said, "Now we must dine." He sprang up, faster than anything I had ever seen, and leaped across the table, and sank his teeth into Eutherius's throat. And then he drank my husband's blood. Mavortia screamed, and the lyre-player stopped playing, dumbfounded. Calvus said, "Play," and the lyrist, his eyes filled with horror, could do nothing other than play. Some of the guests were frozen, like a deer that sees the hunter with his arrow nocked and knows it cannot move. Valens leaped up and tried to grasp the throat of Calvus, who swatted him with his left hand as a horse swats a gadfly with its tail, and he fell to the floor and moved no more.

Calvus took Mavortia in his arms and kissed her on the lips; and she ceased struggling, and seemed to enjoy his kisses, and then ceased to move at all. I remember he looked up, and there was blood on his mouth, and welling up from Mavortia's mouth, too, and she was dead. Vitrasius, and Porcianus and his wife tried to make for the door, but Macellarius, who had left Eutherius broken on the floor, stepped for the door and blocked their way. He commanded the woman to watch, while he drank the blood of first one man and then the other.

Anicinus, who had once been a Tribune in the Legions, had begun to weep, and had taken the folds of Calvus's toga in his hands. Anicinus began to beg for his life, offering his wife in his place. The woman sobbed and covered her face. Calvus reached forward his hand and crushed Anicinus's throat. Anicinus's wife began to wail. Salvinianus Piso had fainted. Sextus Taracius was calling down dire curses upon the two, but he had not left his couch. I had not moved or spoken. This had all taken mere moments.

Macellarius turned to the unconscious Valens and opened an artery in the man's wrist with a fruit knife. Macellarius drank his fill. And then, the two murderers stood. Calvus told the horrified musician to keep playing, and the two men walked out of the room. Taracius fell silent. He sat, pale and shivering. The musician, weeping, continued to play.

I stood, and I followed the monsters. They were in the atrium, and they were each bending over the rain pool. Each had his first two fingers in his mouth, and each was disgorging more blood than I had ever seen, as Caesar is said to have done after his feasting. Macellarius looked up and smiled at me, and his teeth were sharp and his face was red with gore.

I returned to the *triclinium*, and said to Taracius, who was offering prayers over the corpse of Valens, "They are coming back. You must away." But even before I had spoken, they had returned, and Taracius was dead, and so was Piso, and only the musician, still playing, although sobbing like a child, was left alive with me.

Calvus said, "See, O Julius, she does not weep. And I could not fool her before."

Macellarius said, "She does not." He spoke to me, then. "And you, do you fear us?"

"I fear you," I said. "But if I die, what is there to fear?"

"You are a Stoic, and you have the heart of a man. You are no Roman matron, and it seems to me that you would be better off in another land," said Calvus. He turned to Macellarius. "You or I?"

Macellarius waved a hand, and Calvus fell upon me. And I died. But I did not cease to walk. I died, and screaming I returned to the world, dead. And I dined that night myself, on the musician, whose name I did not know....

WOMEN AMONG THE DEAD

Among the living, women are treated like chattel. A free woman can own and inherit property, but that's all. She can't divorce her husband. Her testimony isn't admissible

in any court of law. She is a non-person, in many ways, subject to the will of her paterfamilias, whether that's her husband or her father. It's not much better among the Christians: to them, women are the originators of sin.

Among the dead, however, these laws no longer apply, for it has become apparent over centuries that a dead woman can kill, hunt and use her dark powers in any way a dead man can. Although some Kindred balk at seeing women in positions of authority, the older the Kindred are, the more likely they are to realize that in the condition of death at least, a free man and a free woman are equal in the eyes of the Necropolis.

POVERTY AMONG THE DEAD

Some among the vampires of Rome came from the slums and hovels, Embraced from the ranks of the destitute poor. While the Kindred of the *gens* Julii have always avoided granting the Embrace to the low classes, the other clans have been less choosy. Many among the Nosferatu Vermes came from the slums. The three barbarian clans, too, accept neonates for other reasons than birth.

To be from true plebeian stock in Necropolis is to be mocked, abused and excluded from society. And if the plebeian vampire lacks a patron, it often means being denied access to the Camarilla. Whole broods of lowborn vampires, excluded from the society of the dead, form in out-of-the corners of Necropolis, or take over once-packed *insulae*, now abandoned thanks to the plague. These small groups carve out areas of the slums as their own. Their enmity against the Camarilla festers, and some dream of destroying it, not out of any egalitarian will but simply because they hate it. They swagger, but in the end, they amount to little.

Still, every so often, the Legion of the Dead makes an example of these low Kindred. All it takes is one Propinquus reduced to ash. The next thing anyone knows, a nighttime battle ensues between black-crested legionaries in old-fashioned armor and strange-smelling street fighters with deformed faces or odd accents. The Legion always seems to win, and the result is a trial, and vampires forced to join circles of dependents over facing Final Death, or losing their eyes and hands. Kindred would do well to stay out of the way of these altercations. It's all too easy for the over-zealous legionaries to arrest and try the wrong vampires.

SLAVERY AND THE KINDRED

Although the dead cannot be slaves — slavery is a condition of life; death provides final manumission — some dead still *own* slaves. Any slaves a Propinquus owned in life are still his, to do with as they wish. And they do. The

dead are not governed by the laws of the living, and by ancient custom going back to the time of Julius Senex, the treatment of slaves, being living, is not governed by the laws of the dead.

A very few Kindred treat their slaves well. Some, as the years go on, give their slaves frequent draughts of Vitae and so make faithful, unquestioning ghouls out of them. The Vinculum — literally a shackle, although a shackle placed on the mind — has an odd status among the Kindred. Historically, the Vinculum has been a substitute among the Kindred for sexual intercourse, and to a lesser extent, love.

But a Roman may like a slave. He may hold some affection for the slave. He might even use a slave for his sexual gratification. But he can't love the slave. The slave is property, and cannot be the object of true, deep feeling.

On the other hand, slaves subjected to a Vinculum that has been reinforced over what could be more than a century are no longer capable of feeling anything other than obsessive, utterly dependent love for their master. A living man or woman who becomes the target of this kind of unmatched, unrequited devotion from anyone can find it tiring, or disturbing or just creepy.

A dead man who receives such devotion from his slaves experiences more difficulty than any living human could imagine. He created the devotion with the Vinculum. It was his intention that they serve him faithfully. But he is a Roman, and they are his property. Every time he gives an order, or says a word, he sees a small shudder run through his slave's body, a brief exhalation of breath. The Kindred grows to hate the way that his slaves seem so obsessed with him.

He begins to experiment. Some he tortures. They're slaves, and torture is all they're good for. He remembers the days when it was the only way anyone would hear a slave's account. He experiments. He'd rather be feared and obeyed, without this excess of feeling, and if he can find a way to remove it, he will. So he takes his some of his slaves to his chamber in Necropolis and puts them to the rack and the flaying-knife.

And they thank him for it. It's not uncommon for older Kindred to arrive at the Camarilla with their slaves in tow, and for some to be missing eyes, or hands, or to have a wooden stump where a foot should be. They still love him. And he makes them suffer for it. They do the vilest jobs for him, and do it because they have no choice. Their will is his.

A Propinqua mistress of high esteem finds herself another way; she cleanses away everything that makes them human. Through years of using her powers on them,



she smooths away every atom of self they have, ceasing the flow of particles that, according to the Epicureans, govern thought, so that she has nothing but mindless dolls at her command.

She can make them move with a word, a wave of her hand, like a puppeteer moves the rods of the marionette. She amuses herself by making them play out tableaux, trains them in the words of Euripides, Sophocles and Aeschylus and then has them act out the bloody tragedies of Greece, with real swords and real murders. Pentheus loses his head. Hippolytus dies under horses' hooves. Medea murders her children. Oedipus gouges out his eyes. Orestes murders his mother, who herself has killed his father, and is flayed by the Furies while Pylades looks on.

The slaves cannot complain. They are property, and it is the prerogative of the Propinqua to do with them as she wishes.

DEBATE IN ELYSIUM

The Kindred of Rome are passionate, aggressive creatures. In the halls of Necropolis, dispute isn't an occasional disruption — it's a constant, night-to-night part of vampire society, no less integrated or ritualized than any other practice.

Early in the creation of the Camarilla, it was determined that violent resolution of conflict could not be the tolerated in any truly civilized gathering of vampires. While it was understood that occasional bloodshed was inevitable, philosophizing Kindred set out to create a ritualized system of disagreement and debate that could substitute, thereby providing an alternate means to victory over a foe (and laying the groundwork for a society ruled by socially adept vampires, in which those with physical might alone could be subjugated).

Now it is unseemly for Status-holding vampires of the Camarilla to do open battle in civil dispute. Simple bloodshed is how *barbarians* settle their differences. The bared fangs and flashing eyes in Necropolis are *gestures*, used to underscore a particularly vivid turn of speech or a salient point.

None of this is to say that the Kindred never just drop the pretense of civility and go for the throat. The Legio Mortuum is an organization rife with violence, and the filth-ridden dregs of the Peregrine Collegia are not exactly known for their clever rhetoric. It's just that killing another rightful member of the Camarilla with your own hand doesn't get *respect* in Necropolis. Proving that they *deserve* to suffer Final Death before a jury of peers, and convincing *them* to destroy him for you — that's the proper way to do things.

Both the Senex and the Peregrine Collegia provide forums for the ritualized debate of the Camarilla, and both have formal means of requesting and arranging an official gathering of witnesses for determining the outcome. Personal disputes can be witnessed by any number of Status-holding Kindred, while debates to determine official policy require the satisfaction of specific criteria (numbers, levels of Status and the presence of certain officials).

THE NATURE OF THE DISPUTE

There are three officially recognized types of debate in the Camarilla: personal, philosophical and procedural. Each comes with its own etiquette, including stylized gestures, rhythms of speech and specialized slang.

Each style of debate is conducted as an extended contested challenge between competitors, and each has its own method of calculating the base target number to defeat a participant. Anyone seeking to beat the participant must accumulate a number of successes against him that equal or exceed the target number.

In the case of multiple participants, a target number is associated with each involved. A vampire is eliminated from the debate when all others have equaled or exceeded the target number associated with that vampire. If a single participant defeats the vampire, he can no longer win the debate, but can still attack those participants who have not yet accumulated enough successes to defeat him. A vampire cannot attack a participant who has defeated the vampire, even if he is not completely eliminated from the debate.

Personal Debate

A personal debate between Kindred is a witnessed defense of virtue in an attempt to demonstrate superiority over the opponent. In essence, two (or more) vampires make declarations of their best features, supported by argument, and allow the audience to decide which is the more virtuous vampire. In general, the first speaker is randomly decided.

Personal debates can be held for a number of reasons. They are most common when attempting to decide who should fill an official role (as, say, a newsreader for the Senex, or as a Magistrate for the Peregrine Collegia), but can also come into play when two vampires are comparing their accomplishments, competing for recognized responsibility in official victories or just looking for popular approval. Formal personal debates are often scheduled in the assemblies of the Senex, but are just as likely to break out in spontaneous gatherings of any Wing. Even the soldiers of the Legion, hardly known for their rhetorical acumen, often turn to the personal debate in settling dispute over which vampire is the greater warrior.

The base target number to defeat a participant in Personal Debate is calculated as follows: the participant's highest Status rating + Intelligence *or* Presence rating (whichever is higher).

Philosophical Debate

While a personal debate focuses on the attributes of the speakers, a philosophical one deals primarily with a difference of opinion about something else. It can be on almost any subject, but the goal is simple: convince the audience that your statement makes more sense (and is more practical, appealing, or otherwise acceptable). In general, the first vampire to speak is randomly decided.

Philosophical debates are rarely called for official assemblies. They are usually regarded as relatively frivolous endeavors, although this perception couldn't be further from the truth. In many cases, the arguments presented are deadly serious to the participants (as, for instance, in the case of a proselytizing member of the Lancea et Sanctum defending his religion to an assembly of pagan Kindred). Often, a victory in philosophical debate can profoundly affect the members of the audience, changing their approach to the Requiem forever after. Arguments of this type do tend to take much longer than any other, though, so they tend to be frowned upon in legislative gatherings.

The base target number to defeat a participant in Philosophical Debate is calculated as follows: 10 + the participant's highest Status rating + Wits *or* Manipulation rating (whichever is higher).

Procedural Debate

A procedural debate is always called to make a decision on policy. Whether argued before an assembly of the Senex, a General of the Legion or a motley band of organized thieves in the Peregrine Collegia, it is the attempt on the part of Kindred to sway the opinion of the audience and direct future policy for the Wing, band, coterie or individual involved.

Procedural debates are almost always the central feature of an official assembly, and are almost always treated as solemn, important affairs, since the outcome can directly manifest in far-reaching future strategies. Arguments of this type don't often take as long as philosophical ones, but can stretch out if presented to a large enough audience (or are witnessed by enough Kindred willing to interfere or contribute to their outcome).

A debate cannot be considered procedural unless a body empowered to make or change law (such as the Senex, or the high-Status inner circle of one of the Wings of the Camarilla) declares that it is so. Otherwise, the subject of the debate is considered philosophical.

The base target number to defeat a participant in Procedural Debate is the participant's highest Status rating + Intelligence *or* Manipulation (whichever is higher).

THE AUDIENCE

The nature of the audience always has the chance to complicate a debate. A friendly discussion in front of one slightly disinterested compatriot is, of course, vastly different from an impassioned argument in front of 50 legislators with strong vested interests in the outcome. Several factors have the potential to modify the base target number to defeat each participant.

Audience Size

Numbers are strange, as far as witnesses to a debate go. Very small audiences are relatively easy to sway, since there are simply fewer bodies to throw in a vote. On the other hand, very large audiences are also easy to move, because of "voter's momentum," by which a number of voters will simply follow the apparent majority, not because they necessarily believe the majority is correct, but because they want to fit in.

It's the mid-sized groups that are the difficult ones. If a body of witnesses is large enough to draw out a vote, but small enough that individuals are easy to pick out (and may be asked to defend their choices), it can be problematic for those participating in the debate.

The modifiers for the size of the audience are as follows:

Number of Witnesses	Modifier
1-10	-
11-20	+2
21-40	+3
41-50	+2
51+	-

Predisposition of the Audience

An audience can be have reason to speed a debate toward its conclusion or draw it out, depending on its vested interests and the general emotional state of its membership. The modifiers for the predisposition of the Audience are as follows:

Circumstance	Modifier
Audience is prejudiced in favor of the speaker.	+3
Audience is frightened or otherwise in a hurry.	-3
Audience considers the subject very serious.	+5
Audience considers the subject frivolous.	-2

An Audience of Mortals

Mortals are profoundly affected by a difference in Humanity among participants in a debate. They may not realize it consciously, but a vampire with low Humanity will always repel them, and their tendency will be to vote against him. Mortals will also be quicker to judge vampires, if only because the mortals' instincts are telling them to end the debate and get away from the predators as soon as possible.

If at least half of the audience is composed of mortals, then a modifier of $(10 - \text{participant's Humanity})$ is subtracted from the target number to defeat the participant.

Example: *Septimus of Nosferatu is participating in a debate before mortals. He has a Humanity of 6. A modifier of $(10-6) = 4$ is subtracted from the target number required to defeat him.*

An audience of mortals also restricts the Social rolls of any participant. As with all vampire-mortal interaction, all non-Intimidation Social dice pools for the Kindred involved are capped by their Humanity ratings.

INTEGRITY

A participant in formal debate automatically makes argument more difficult by virtue of his poise and the resilience of his statements. This response is a reflexive action and applies even if a character's position is attacked before his place in the formal order. This reaction is the character's Integrity, a trait equal to the lowest of his Wits or Composure. The character's Integrity is subtracted from a speaker's dice pool. In essence, the foe's arguments miss the point of the character's quick-witted statements, or he is cowed by the character's impressive bearing.

A target must, of course, be conscious to apply his Integrity to a debate, but he need not be fully mobile or even capable of speech.

If multiple arguments are leveled at the character in the same turn, his Integrity suffers temporarily. Each statement after the first diminishes the character's Integrity modifier by one. So, if four arguments are leveled at the character (who has Integrity 3), the first argument suffers a -3 penalty, the second suffers a -2 penalty, the third a -1 penalty and the fourth suffers no Integrity penalty. You cannot choose to apply a character's Integrity to specific attacks in a turn — his Integrity is applied to all incoming arguments.

Spending a Willpower point increases the character's Integrity by two against a single statement, representing a special effort to stave off the argument. If his Integrity is normally 3, it increases to 5 for the incoming argument.

At the start of each new turn, the character's full, normal Integrity trait is restored.

The character's automatic Integrity does not interfere with any actions that he performs during the turn.

Integrity is not reduced by the character's wound penalties.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The witnessed debates of the Camarilla aren't idle entertainment. Kindred who want to sharpen their wits for fun or practice do so without arbitrators. The moment another vampire is called upon to determine the victor, no matter how facetiously, the endeavor becomes deadly serious. In general, the Status of both opponents is at stake. A vampire who frequently loses challenges is diminished in the eyes of his contemporaries.

The basic rule is this: every time a vampire loses a witnessed debate, he risks losing a dot of Wing Status, Camarilla Status or Clan Status (depending on the nature of the audience and the nature of the debate, at Storyteller discretion). Formal debate is serious business in Necropolis, and if you're not willing to risk your reputation, you're not treating the subject matter with the solemn weight it merits. Even a playful dispute will have an impact on reputation, no matter how frivolous the characters are about it, because the vampires of Rome treat skill in debate as no less important (and no less threatening) than skill in physical combat.

But a vampire can raise the stakes of an argument, making it more difficult for her opponent to win. She can, essentially, say that her belief is so firm, that she is willing to risk more on the outcome of the debate — forcing the opponent to either do the same (evening the ground) or play it safe (indicating that he is not so sure of his position — and letting the audience know that).

Raising the Stakes

Additional Stake	Target Number Modifier
Resources, Haven, Herd or Retainers	+ dots risked x2
Sum total of all possessions	+ additional 5
Vinculum or Final Death	+ 10

Once these stakes are named, they cannot be withdrawn. The vampire naming them understands that if he loses the debate, he must sacrifice everything he put on the table. In general, the winner of the debate is allowed to claim the sacrifice and take possession of any materials risked. The winner is free to disburse his prize any way he chooses (so, for example, a winner who claims

WAGERS IN THE AUDIENCE

It is possible (and, in some cases, expected) that members of the audience may be so moved by an argument that they choose to stake their own possessions or Status on the outcome of the debate, throwing their support behind one of the Kindred involved.

If members of the audience chooses to add to the stakes, the target number for defeating the vampire they support is modified just as if the vampire herself had raised the stake. An enthused member of the audience could, for example, add 2 to the target number by throwing in a single dot of Resources.

two dots of Resources from the loser could either raise his own Resources rating to two dots or he could raise anyone else's rating in the Merit to two dots).

Even if the stakes are not raised, the winner of a debate stands to gain on several fronts. He may or may not gain Status, at the discretion of the Storyteller. A Status gain is most likely the result of a Personal Debate. Philosophical Debates provide a less concrete, but much more valuable benefit for the winner: the chance to dictate sway the opinions and operating attitude of every member of the audience. Likewise, a Policy Debate may or may not involve a Status benefit, but has a direct benefit: the winner guides the legislative policy of the body on the subject at hand.

The stakes of a debate could be determined by outside factors. A participant accused of a crime may be arguing to prevent the loss of material possessions, his freedom or his life. In these cases, the stakes are set by the circumstance, and the target numbers are changed appropriately.

FRIENDLY DISCUSSIONS

Two or more participants could enter into a "friendly discussion" that relies upon the rules of formal debate just to provide a structure that everyone involved can agree upon. These discussions must be held before a small audience (any more than 10 witnesses and the discussion is no longer considered "friendly," no matter what the participants say), and the participants do not go out of their way to publicize the results once they are done.

If a formal debate is considered "friendly," the Status of the participants is not at risk. Just as a boxing match where two friends agree to spar lightly, the consequences are not serious — so long as nobody loses his cool.

RHETORICAL TECHNIQUE

There are four basic styles of formal debate recognized by the instruction of Kindred society. Each is associated with particular body postures and stock gestures, and educated vampires will easily recognize the styles in use. It is assumed that a vampire who enters into debate with a particular approach will maintain that strategy throughout the argument. In fact, those who switch tactics in the middle of the discussion will provoke a negative reaction from the audience. Unless special circumstances allow for it, changing tactics always immediately adds +5 to the target number of successes required for success, and substitutes the new bonus or penalty for the one that was in place previous.

• Aggressive Logic

Adopting a stance of intellectual superiority, the vampire attempts to calmly outline the logical strength of his own argument, while pointing out the flaws in his opponent's. The debate roll is based on the vampire's Intelligence + any Ability relevant to the conversation. Calling upon the teachings of elders would be represented by an Intelligence + Academics roll, while turning to one's expertise in hunting to underscore a particular point would mean an Intelligence + Survival roll.

The recognized, proper posture of a vampire employing Aggressive Logic is strong and firm, with slow, deliberate movements. All of the gestures of the hand and head are coordinated to add to this impression of unassailable strength and confidence. The conveyance of cool-headed rationality is critical to success in this mode of debate.

Educated intellectual audiences favor an aggressively logical argument. A +2 modifier is added to the target number of successes required to defeat the speaker if the majority of the audience is composed of sophisticated thinkers. A -2 dice modifier is applied if the majority of the audience is uneducated.

• Deft Maneuvering

Relying on clever turns of phrase, the vampire attempts to manipulate and reverse the apparent meaning of his opponent's statements while making his own appear unassailable. The debate roll is based on the vampire's Wits + any Ability relevant to the conversation. Employing wordplay to trip an opponent up would be represented by a Wits + Expression roll, while cleverly calling upon the jargon of warriors to create an illuminating metaphor would require a Wits + Brawl roll.

This approach is accompanied by more mobile gestures — the speaker usually covers more ground than one employing Aggressive Logic. Pointed gestures often underscore the arguments of the speaker, hammering

home particularly clever statements, and indicating a reversal of an opponent's weak debate.

Deft Maneuvering is better received by less solemn audiences, looking to the argument for impressive entertainment, not the resolution of life-and-death policy. A +2 modifier is added to the target number of successes required to defeat the speaker if the majority of the audience is relaxed, believing that the issue at hand is not gravely serious. A -2 dice modifier is applied if the majority of the audience believe that the affair is solemn and important.

• Playing to the Audience

The vampire eschews the intellectual approach completely, opting instead to win the argument by embodying correctness — that is, by seeming to be *better* than the opponent, regardless of the actual content of each individual's statements. The debate roll is based on the vampire's Presence + any Ability relevant to the conversation. Selecting a posture that is likely to impress the audience would be represented by a Presence + Empathy roll, while calling upon one's own achievements in scholarship to tip the scales against an upstart opponent would require a Presence + Academics roll.

The gesture and posture of a vampire Playing to the Audience are much more bombastic than those of the intellectual strategies. The speaker strides confidently about, facing members of the audience in turn, and making grand, sweeping gestures with his arms and hands. The speaker seems larger, by way of his motion, and the attention of the witnesses is attracted as fully as possible.

This tactic works best in front of an audience of compatriots. A +2 modifier is added to the target number of successes required to defeat the speaker if the majority of the audience is composed of individuals who identify as colleagues or compatriots with the speaker (i.e., are in the same Wing, or hold the same profession, etc.). A -2 dice modifier is applied if the majority of the audience do not see themselves as colleagues or compatriots of the speaker.

• Appealing to Emotion

This technique circumvents logic and relies upon the speaker's ability to stir the emotions of the audience. It's a "hot" style, in direct opposition to the "cold" approach of Aggressive Logic. The debate roll is based on the vampire's Manipulation + any Ability relevant to the conversation. Invoking the sympathies of the audience by demonizing the opponent would be represented by a Manipulation + Intimidation roll, while ridiculing the opponent's lack of expertise in the proper forms

of sculpture would be represented by a Manipulation + Crafts roll.

Vampires appealing to emotion make use of theatrical gestures and posture, exaggerating their own emotions to ensure that everyone in the audience can receive the intended message clearly. The stride is generally less enthused than that used for Playing to the Audience.

This tactic works best with large crowds. A +2 modifier is added to the target number of successes required to defeat the speaker if there are more than 15 witnesses in the audience. A -2 dice modifier is applied if the audience is made up of fewer than 15 individuals.

KEEPING IT INTERESTING

Formal debate, just as combat, is only as enjoyable as the language used to describe it. If the players just call out their Attribute and Ability combos for the rolls, it'll get tedious fast. Make sure that everyone involved describes what he's doing and how he does it as well — the dice rolls are just there to model the effectiveness of the approach and the response of the audience. Storytellers may even wish to encourage clever roleplay by applying a bonus to rolls for well-described arguments. That way, players who crack a great joke or make a compelling statement in their description of the character's position will actually have a better chance of winning than those who don't — a great incentive for keeping things interesting.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL COMPLICATIONS

No debate is just a simple matter of on-topic statements following on one another before a passive audience. Complications can always arise in a formal debate, brought forward by the participants and the witnesses, and many of them present the potential for significantly affecting the outcome.

• Defensive Argument

At any time during a debate, a speaker can opt to refrain from attacking his opponent's position, instead spending time and effort shoring up his own argument. Since no advances can be made against the target number in defensive argument, this is purely a stalling tactic. Some vampires choose to make Defensive Arguments just to draw out a debate, hoping to frustrate the opponent or just occupy him for a given length of time. Others may do so out of a sense of cruelty, knowing that they are on the verge of defeating the foe and satisfying an urge to prolong the opponent's struggles.

The character's action for the turn is spent anticipating argumentative attacks and deflecting them, so her Integrity trait is temporarily doubled. Thus, if the lowest of her Wits or Composure is 3, her Integrity trait for the turn is 6. That number is subtracted from incoming arguments instead of the normal Integrity rating.

Defensive Arguments operate outside of the normal order of statements in a turn. A Defensive Argument can be declared at any time during a turn, even before the character's action comes around, assuming she hasn't acted yet. Her action for the turn is dedicated to the Defensive Argument for the whole turn.

Multiple attacks still impose a cumulative Integrity penalty, as normal. A character can do nothing else in a turn in which she makes a Defensive Argument except to move as normal. She cannot perform any action that requires a roll in the same turn.

As with ordinary Integrity, a character can expend Willpower to add two to her Integrity against a single attack. So, if her Integrity is normally 3, and she performs a Defensive Argument action (raising it to 6 for the turn), she can also expend a point of Willpower to bring it up to 8 against a single attack.

• Humiliating Attack

If a vampire senses a weakness in his opponent's position (or if he's hoping to throw him off and create a weakness), he may opt to launch a humiliating attack on his argument, throwing everything he's got into a pointed statement. The attack is risky — it's an obvious move, and a cool-headed opponent might be able to take advantage of the attack. An audience is guaranteed to notice it as well, and repeated use of the Humiliating Attack can actually damage a vampire's position in debate.

In general, a Humiliating Attack is an attempt to "play the man and not the ball" — that is, to turn the focus of the audience on the failings of the opponent, not his argument. It's dirty pool, but it does tend to work.

The character performing a Humiliating Attack gains three bonus dice on his attack for this turn, but loses his Integrity trait for the turn. In addition, his Integrity is reduced by one for the remainder of the debate. Further Humiliating Attacks are cumulative: it is possible for a character to reduce his own Integrity to zero for the whole of a debate with sustained use. So, a character with an Integrity of 3 who performs a Humiliating Attack does not subtract his Integrity from incoming attacks that turn, and is treated as though he has an Integrity of 2 for the rest of the debate. If he were to perform another Humiliating Attack later in the same debate, his Integrity would reduce to 1 until the debate ends.

A character cannot perform a Humiliating Attack if his Integrity has already been used that turn. If his Integrity is lowered to zero because of previous Humiliating Attacks, he can no longer perform this maneuver.

- **Limited Time**

Circumstances may impose a limited time on a formal debate. In such a case, the Storyteller determines how many turns are available, and the debate is ended when those turns are complete. The character that accumulates the number of successes closest to the target for victory at the end of the set time is considered the winner.

- **Frustration**

If a character fails to garner a single success on three consecutive arguments, he is considered “frustrated” and may have to check against a rage frenzy. Any character fighting off frenzy suffers a -2 dice penalty on attack rolls until the threat of frenzy is eliminated.

In frustrating circumstances, three successes on a Resolve + Composure roll are required to overcome the urge to frenzy, as described in **Vampire: The Requiem**. A Storyteller may opt to modify this number based on the continued performance of the vampire; one who must make a second frenzy check within the same debate might need four or five successes to stay calm.

Succumbing to a rage frenzy and assaulting an opponent is always considered failure in debate, and grounds for forfeit. Kindred engaged in formal debate are well advised to shore themselves up against potential provocation and maintain control.

- **Outside Contribution**

The vampires standing at the center of the forum aren’t the only ones who actively participate in a debate – they’re just the only ones who are making formal arguments and setting their reputations on the line. Friends and allies can assist a speaker, either by aiding

in participation or by using subtle tactics to manipulate the audience and make things easier for her.

Each character who wishes to contribute to an ally’s performance in formal debate can be handled with one of the following options:

- **Assisting in Preparation** – a “flashback” scene can reveal how a character assisted in preparation by research, investigation, or Discipline-fueled espionage. The Storyteller can run a short intermission scene, allowing the contributing player to make a relevant roll (for instance: Wits + Academics to find a helpful logical precedent). If the roll is successful, the scene returns to the present, and the Storyteller can add a +1 bonus to the speaker’s argument for the turn.

- **Stacking the Audience** – another “flashback” approach, allowing characters to establish manipulating the audience before the debate begins to eliminate any hostile predisposition toward the speaker. The Storyteller can run a short intermission scene, allowing the contributing player to make a relevant roll (for instance: Manipulation + Subterfuge to convince the listeners that the speaker is a vampire of virtue). If the roll is successful, the target number for the speaker’s victory is reduced by two. This should only be allowed once per debate.

- **Supporting Gesture** – during a turn, characters allied to the speaker can verbally agree, applaud enthusiastically or make other demonstrations of support intended to bolster the argument. The Storyteller can allow a relevant roll (for instance: Presence + Persuasion to inspire the speaker with hoots of support). If the roll is successful, the Storyteller can add a +1 bonus to the speaker’s argument for the turn.

- **Signals or Telepathic Aid** – less honorable types may wish to actually provide information to a speaker during the debate, sending messages intended to strengthen her position. The characters assisting this way will have to be careful; if they’re caught, they may be escorted out of the forum or publicly humiliated. If they are able to escape notice, a success on a relevant roll may allow for a +1 bonus added to the speaker’s argument for the turn.

- **Outside Interference**

Just as characters may choose to bolster an ally’s arguments, they can also employ malicious tactics to undermine and weaken an opponent’s position. They may be underhanded, but some Kindred will do anything to get on the winning team, and ignoring these possibilities is cutting off half of the available arsenal in a formal debate.

- **Sabotaging Preparation** – another “flashback” option, revealing a character’s attempts to ruin an opponent’s attempts at research before the debate began,

GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

The nature of the formal debate, as in combat, is that it all comes down to the participants — which can mean that those members of a coterie not directly involved can be forced to the sidelines, relegated to the role of passive witnesses. While this might be realistic, it can make for boring play.

Making creative use of the “Outside Contribution” and “Outside Interference” complications can remedy this problem without resorting to concurrent subplots or other divisive play elements.

by falsifying evidence, interfering with an investigation or using Disciplines to damage the opponent's plan. The Storyteller can run a short intermission scene, allowing the contributing player to make a relevant roll (for instance: Manipulation + Academics to upset the opponent's confidence in the facts). If the roll is successful, the scene returns to the present, and the Storyteller applies a -1 die penalty to the opponent's argument for the turn.

- **Souring the Audience** – one more “flashback” option, allowing a character to establish manipulating the audience before the debate can begin to create a hostile atmosphere toward the opponent. The Storyteller can run a short intermission scene, allowing the interfering player to make the relevant roll (for instance: Strength + Intimidation to bully the audience into voting against the opponent). If the roll is successful, the target number for the opponent's victory is increased by two. This should only be allowed once per debate.

- **Undermining Gesture** – during a turn, characters opposed to the speaker can voice their disapproval, stamp their feet and hiss or make other demonstrations of animosity intended to diminish the strength of the argument. The Storyteller can allow a relevant roll (for instance: Wits + Expression to humiliate the speaker with mockery). If the roll is successful, the Storyteller can impose a -1 die penalty on the opponent's arguments for the turn.

- **Distraction Tactics** – just as Signals or Telepathic Aid, this is a less-than-honorable tactic of interference. Characters interfering in this way ought to be careful, lest they get spotted and ejected from the forum or publicly

denounced. If they are able to escape notice, a success on a relevant roll may allow for the imposition of a -1 die penalty on the speaker's argument for the turn.

• Arguing to Lose

It is conceivable that a participant in debate may attempt to ensure his opponent's victory without making it obvious to the audience. Most commonly, this happens when a formal debate is engaged by a vampire in an attempt to pre-empt a better argument, hoping that he will lose and allow his opponent to push a policy decision or philosophical statement through without genuine opposition.

But throwing an argument isn't just a matter of stepping into the circle and refraining from attack. If the audience feels that a debate isn't really being carried out, they may call for a speaker with true intent to step forward and take up the argument. To truly guarantee an opponent's victory, a speaker has to carefully deceive the audience into thinking they're watching a serious debate – ideally, the best they can hope for.

When Arguing to Lose, a character willingly reduces his own Integrity to zero and his player makes an extended Wits + Subterfuge or Manipulation + Subterfuge roll each turn of the debate, instead of his normal attack rolls. A -3 penalty is imposed on these rolls. If the character accumulates a number of successes equal to his target number for victory on these rolls *before* the opponent wins the debate, the audience is fooled and the outcome is considered genuine. If not, the attempt to deceive the audience is noticed, and the attempt is failed.



- **Debate Style Merits**

There are two schools of argument that allow a character to perform specialized “maneuvers” in formal debate: Debate Style: Rhetoric and Debate Style: Reason. They are covered in the Merits section of this book, on p. 108.

RESOLVING THE DISPUTE

Victory isn’t an abstract in the formal debates of Neropolis. As arguments are made, the audience responds, showing their support for the winning side and derision for the others. In the Senex, the witnesses vote, while a debate rages, by Division of the House — actually standing up and moving over to sit around and behind the speaker they support, or applauding after each agreeable statement. In less lofty settings, the behavior of the audience may be more crass, but it has the same effect: everyone can tell who’s winning.

Victory in an open-ended debate is achieved when a majority (or totality) of the audience is obviously siding with the speaker and no longer willing to consider alternate viewpoints. This occurs as soon as one participant in the debate accumulates enough successes on his extended rolls to defeat every opponent. At this point, the winner is declared by official witness.

NOBODY WINS

Not every debate ends in a clear victory. If a debate is taking too long, seems overly frivolous or just doesn’t present arguments that anyone in the audience finds interesting enough, the whole of the audience can just choose to shout down all participants or get up and leave.

If a formal debate is brought to a close by the derision of the audience, every participant involved loses a single dot of Status. Obviously, then, it’s a good idea to stack the audience with friends and supporters, if only to guarantee that *someone* gets to walk away a winner.

THE FINAL STATEMENT

It is not technically required for any of the participants in formal debate to make a final statement after the declaration of the official witness brings the arguments to a close. Vampires are passionate creatures, after all, and final statements would lead to embarrassment in more cases than not.

A vampire of particularly good graces may wish to make a display of his goodwill after losing a debate, conceding and acknowledging the winner’s skill. It won’t mitigate his loss (or defer the attendant loss of Status), but it can warm the audience — and the victor — to the speaker

and make things less difficult for him in the future. A Storyteller may wish to allow a Presence + Expression or Manipulation + Expression roll to represent these final statements, making a note of the result and applying a +1 bonus to later social interactions with the members of the audience (or the opponents in the debate) if the roll is successful.

EXAMPLE OF FORMAL DEBATE: PHILOSOPHICAL

Septimus of Nosferatu and Phineas of Mekhet are having a friendly dispute over the nature of fear as a legitimate strategy of rule. They decide to take it to an authority they trust: a mortal senator by the name of Caius Aemilius Marcellus, a man they both respect. They sneak into his home late one night, wake him and tell him that they need him to witness their debate and judge the victor. Frightened and intrigued, the old man agrees.

Septimus has Wing Status (Peregrine Collegia) 2, Wits 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 2 and Humanity 6. Phineas has Wing Status (Peregrine Collegia) 2, Wits 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 5 and Humanity 4. There is one member in the audience, and he is mortal.

The target number to defeat Septimus is $10 + 4$ (his Wits) $- 4$ (10 minus his Humanity) = 10. His Social rolls (except those that involve Intimidation) are capped at six dice.

The target number to defeat Phineas is $10 + 3$ (his Manipulation) $- 6$ (10 minus his Humanity) = 7. His Social rolls are capped at four dice.

The two debaters flip a coin to decide who goes first. Phineas is the winner.

Phineas knows the old man quite well, and understands that he will appreciate a logical argument. Phineas also knows that winning the old man over socially won’t be easy, because of the influence of the Beast. Phineas decides use the Aggressive Logic strategy. Since the senator is a well-educated, serious man, the Storyteller adds a +2 to the target number to defeat Phineas, bringing it to 9. Phineas opens with a statement about human psychology and the tendency to seek escape from (or a strategy around) fear. His argument is represented by an Intelligence + Science roll (seven dice + 1 for his Science specialty: psychology) — Septimus’s Integrity (2). Phineas scores four successes.

Septimus realizes that his strength is his Wits. He knows that the mortal may not appreciate the approach, but Septimus decides to use Deft Maneuvering anyway, confident that he can win. The Storyteller decides that the situation is too serious for the old man for him to

react well to wit, so the Storyteller applies a -2 penalty to the target number to beat Septimus, bringing it down to 8. Septimus responds to Phineas's opening statement with a joke, playing on his words and indicating that Phineas is theorizing that fear is escapable. The roll is Wits + Intimidation (six dice + 1 for his Intimidation Specialty: indirect threats) - Phineas's Integrity (2). Septimus scores two successes.

The next turn, Phineas elaborates, referring to history and showing the failure of leaders who terrorize their citizens. The roll is Intelligence + Academics (six dice for him) - Septimus's Integrity (2). Phineas manages to get three successes, bringing his total to seven. He's doing well. He needs only one more to win.

Septimus has a clever idea. Rather than attack this round, he decides to employ the Discipline of Nightmare, invoking Dread. He listens to Phineas's words, nodding gravely, and throwing a significant glance at the old senator. Septimus's roll is Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare (nine dice) vs. the Composure + Blood Potency of both of his victims. (For Phineas, that's six dice; for the old man, it's three.) Septimus gets three successes. Phineas gets none. The old man gets one. Thus, Phineas and the old man feel a creeping, oppressive fear throughout the rest of the scene. The old man cowers in his sheets, and Phineas takes an involuntary step back. Septimus smiles. His total for the debate remains at 2, so he still needs seven successes to win.

Phineas frowns, trying to tie the two statements he's already made together with straight logic. The roll is Intelligence + Academics (six dice) - 2 (for Dread) - Septimus's Integrity (2). Phineas gets no successes.

Septimus replies with a witty remark about Phineas's stuttering, noting that he seems to be failing in the face of... fear, perhaps? Septimus's joke is represented by a roll: Wits + Expression (seven dice) - Phineas's Integrity (2). Septimus scores three successes, bringing his total to five.

Phineas is struggling. He tries a Humiliating Attack, pointing out that Septimus is unable to conduct the discussion without attempting to cow the audience - an obvious admission of weakness in his position. The roll is Intelligence + Expression (five dice) + 3 (for the attack) - 2 (for Dread) - Septimus's Integrity (2) for a total of three dice. Phineas gets no successes.

Septimus calmly follows up with another deft statement: perhaps Phineas is afraid, not because of Septimus's power, but because of the weakness of Phineas's own argument? Septimus expends Willpower on this one, pushing to make his point. The roll is Wits + Empathy

(six dice) + 3 (for Willpower) - 0 (Phineas sacrificed his Integrity this turn for his gambit). Septimus scores two successes, bringing his total to seven. He needs only two more to win. The old man applauds this statement, indicating his growing support for Septimus.

Phineas reacts poorly. He flashes his fangs at the old man, trying to intimidate him (and taint the audience). The Storyteller rules that this is a change in tactic - from Aggressive Logic to Appealing to Emotion - so he adds +5 to the target number required to defeat Septimus, bringing it to 13. Phineas's action is represented by a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (five dice) - 2 (for Dread) - Septimus's Integrity (2). Phineas gets no successes. The old man is no more frightened than he was before - or at least no more so of Phineas than of Septimus.

Septimus puts a hand on Phineas's shoulder, hoping to reassure him (and keep him from flipping out). Septimus attempts to quell Phineas's growing frustration with a bit of light banter, reminding him (and the old man) that this is just a simple discussion. Septimus spends Willpower again, knowing that things are actually growing more serious than he intended. The roll is Wits + Empathy (six dice) + 3 (for Willpower) - Phineas's Integrity (reduced to 1 by his previous Humiliating Attack). Septimus gets three successes, raising his total to 10: more than he needs to bring this debate to a close. The old man strenuously agrees with Septimus, making an eloquent statement of his own.

Phineas is at the breaking point of frenzy because of his failure to accumulate any successes three times in a row. A Resolve + Composure (eight dice for him) roll is required to keep from losing control. He scores four successes, fighting the urge to unleash the Beast. Septimus claps Phineas on the back, and the two of them walk away into the night.

Since this is technically a "friendly discussion," Phineas won't lose any Status over the result. However, he must concede that Septimus's position is stronger, and is thoroughly convinced. In the future, Phineas's likely to side with Septimus in promoting this philosophy (and likely to apply it himself).

EXAMPLE OF FORMAL DEBATE: PERSONAL, THREE PARTICIPANTS

Antonia of Gangrel, Tiberius of Gangrel and Cassius of Nosferatu are exchanging war stories. The conversation evolves into a comparison of their relative prowess in battle, and that grows into a challenge: to establish, before fellow members of their Legion, who is the most

accomplished soldier. It is agreed: the three will abide by the decision of the five fellow members who are with them at the time of the discussion.

Antonia has Wing Status (Legio) 4, Presence 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2 and Composure 3. Tiberius has Wing Status (Legio) 4, Presence 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2 and Composure 2. Cassius has Wing Status (Legio) 4, Presence 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4 and Composure 2.

The target number to defeat Antonia is 4 (her Status) + 3 (her Presence) = 7.

The target number to defeat Tiberius is 4 (his Status) + 4 (his Presence) = 8.

The target number to defeat Cassius is 4 (his Status) + 3 (his Presence or Intelligence) = 7.

The three draw lots to determine the order of the debate. Cassius speaks first, then Antonia, then Tiberius.

Cassius is a Witty vampire, and he believes that the debate is not that serious, so he decides to use the Deft Maneuvering tactic. The Storyteller, however, deems that the audience won't treat the debate frivolously, whether or not Cassius does — so the Storyteller imposes a -2 on the target number to defeat Cassius, lowering it to 5. Cassius opens with a rousing tale of his accomplishments, which is represented by a Wits + Expression roll. He constructs his argument so that it attacks Tiberius, whom Cassius believes is the greatest threat. The roll is Cassius's Wits + Expression (six dice) - Tiberius's Integrity (2). Cassius gets three successes.

Antonia follows. She knows she'll never get anywhere with an intellectual argument, so she decides to Play to the Audience. The Storyteller rules that the majority of the witnesses, as fellow members of the Legion, consider themselves Antonia's compatriots, so he applies a +2 to the target number to defeat her, raising it to 9. She strikes a powerful pose, inviting the witnesses to look upon her and listen to her tales of conquest (which are peppered with fighter's jargon, to demonstrate her impressive battle experience). The attack is leveled at Cassius, whom she knows has a weaker appearance. Her argument is represented by a Presence + Brawl roll (eight dice) - Cassius's Integrity (2). She gets five successes! She has defeated Cassius; he can no longer attack her. The assembled listeners hoot and holler, deriding Cassius and making it clear that he can't win.

Tiberius has an even stronger Presence than Antonia, so he decides to use the same tactic: Playing to the Audience. He also gets a +2 added to the target number to defeat him, bringing it to 10. Tiberius struts before the witnesses, flexing and showing off his muscles as he speaks. He's attacking Antonia, since Cassius is already

out of the running. Tiberius's argument is represented by a Presence + Athletics roll (seven dice + 1 for his specialty: displays of fitness) - Antonia's Integrity (2). He gets four successes.

Cassius may not be able to win any more, but he isn't out of the debate yet — it still may be possible to prove that he's Tiberius's superior. Cassius senses that he won't last long, so he throws everything he's got into it, going for a Humiliating Attack. He makes a pointed joke about Tiberius's vanity, suggesting that he'd rather be showing those muscles off than actually killing the enemy. The argument is represented by a Wits + Expression roll (six dice) + 3 for the attack - Tiberius's Integrity (2). Cassius gets four successes.

Antonia is next. She needs only to defeat Tiberius to win, so she attacks him too, and she opts for a Humiliating Attack as well. She invites the witnesses to recall the last battle they all fought together, and compare her performance, which she knows was spectacular, with his — which she claims was less than stellar. Her attack is represented by a Presence + Expression (six dice) + 3 for the attack - Tiberius's Integrity (1, since he's already suffered an attack this turn). She gets three successes — not as much as she'd hoped.

Tiberius doesn't want to be ganged up on, but he's got a real opportunity with Antonia. He responds with a normal attack, noting that his performance in that one battle shouldn't be all that he is judged by. He invites the audience to recall several others in which he was the very model of a conquering soldier. His attack is represented by a Presence + Expression roll (five dice), and Antonia has no Integrity this turn. He gets two successes, bringing his total against her to six. He needs three more to defeat her.

Cassius keeps the pressure on. He's got no reason to hold on to his Integrity in this debate, so he goes for another Humiliating Attack. Since it will reduce his Integrity to zero for the rest of the debate, it's the last one he can perform. He constructs a quick pun associating Tiberius with the worm-ridden excrement the legionnaires scattered the ashes of their last foe over, hoping to knock him out of the running with scathing laughter. The roll is Wits + Socialize (six dice) + 3 for the attack - Tiberius's Integrity (2). Cassius gets four successes again, bringing his total to eight. He still needs two more to take Tiberius out.

Laughing heartily, Antonia hopes to keep the audience (who are already in stitches) going. Her roll is Presence + Socialize (five dice) - Tiberius's Integrity (1, since he's already suffered an attack this turn). She gets one success, bringing her total to four. She needs five more to defeat him.

Tiberius is within striking distance. However, the Storyteller rules that the sustained mockery is pressing Tiberius's buttons, and that he's going to have to resist a rage frenzy. The requisite Resolve + Composure roll is made, easily accumulating the three successes needed to quell the Frenzy. However, because he was fighting it off, he suffers a -2 penalty on his debate roll this turn. He grits his teeth and growls, showing fangs and making it clear that friends might joke with him in safety, but enemies fall cowering before him. The argument is a Presence + Intimidation one (eight dice for him) - Antonia's Integrity (1 because of her previous Humiliating Attack)

- 2 for the frenzy check. He gets four successes - one more than he needs to defeat her.

Since Antonia has already defeated Cassius, overcoming her proves that Tiberius is superior to her and Cassius. The debate is finished, and the audience shout out their approval, making it clear that Tiberius is the greatest among them, and making it that much easier for him to calm down.

There were no additional stakes, so Antonia and Cassius each lose a dot of Wing Status. Tiberius is henceforth their superior in rank as well as public acclaim.



FIAT VOLUNTAS TUA

I was an Equestrian by the time Lucretia's plan came to action. The Legio Mortuum was nothing if not a meritocracy, and my experience on the fields of battle elevated me over other soldiers. The silver ring I wear on my shortest finger? The way the knuckle bone has grown up almost to envelop it, fixed firmly in place? That is my ring from the Legion. The symbol of my status, and now, the symbol marking my betrayal.

I did a very bad thing at the Forum Romanum.

The Forum . . . how to describe it? It is both open to the air, a balmy wind blowing in over our heads, and claustrophobic. Bodies pressed against bodies. Ears trying to hear, eyes trying to see. The crowds of our kind — or those who were close to us in some way — extended out, a great sea of ashen and obsidian faces. Runners ran messages to the back of the crowd so that the debates that played out here could be carried even to the most distant witnesses. Of course, this was imperfect. No message is perfect when parlayed from person to person. It changes. Shifts. Never so extreme so that an enemy becomes a friend, but the hues shift, the debate distorts.

The words of argument are violent. Similar to what you see in the boardrooms or crypts these nights, but they pale in comparison. The debate was a vicious spar, a lashing of tongues instead of whips. Words cut, whittling away an opponent's argument — or his very status in our society — like a knife slicing chunks out of a pear. Oh, it was civilized. Words spoken could even be soft. Uttered with a fawning smile and an obsequious gesture of the hands. But the eyes were flashing like those of huntress Minerva. Cold, cruel. Other tiny gestures made the messages clear: a tongue playing idly around a fang, one hand squeezing into a fist, a pinched squint. You could see how words staggered an argument and its advocate. The way the vampire stood, suddenly shifting on her feet as if she had literally been put off-balance. The way she feigned a breath, a halt from our days alive to give one her second wind.

This was the civilized way that monsters destroyed each other, you see. Yes, we as the Legio Mortuum were built for violence and not for such subtleties, but we reserved that violence for those who were not of our society. The dregs. The barbarians. The heretics and idiots. The Forum was not a place for those repugnant elements. It was not a place of violence — at least not physical violence. We haughty creatures like the violence of the mouth, of the mind.

But I betrayed that. Gods, I did. It's the thing that saved me, but the thing that damned me. We're all slaves to someone, don't you see? Lucretia tugged on my leash, and like a diseased dog, I leapt. Disgusting. I deserve whatever pain you come to bring me, childer, know that. Know that I go to my final end not with peace (no, peace has long gone from me), but with the comfort that maybe one last splinter of my soul shall maintain, shall go on to some kind of life thereafter.

PRIMUM NON NOCERE

What she told me then was different from what I'd learn later. Where were we when she told me? Deep in the darkness of Necropolis? In a crooked alley above the city of the dead? On a hill overlooking the city, the firefly flickering of torches and braziers burning down below, even there giving me the faintest twitch of my still heart (the Fons Ater, all that fire, the air alive with it) . . . ? I don't know where we were. I remember only the whisper. The command of what I'd do.

I would bring violence to the Forum.

One does not do such a thing. That's why we were there night in and night out during any formal argument — as the Legio, we stood guard over those who would dare to do more than bare their fangs or ease claws from the tips of fingers. I was on the right side. I was on the side of peace through enforcement. For me to break that, to shatter the sacramentum, to vomit on the oath! Inconceivable. I was a soldier. I followed orders.

Oh, but that seductive whisper. We've all surely learned by now how hollow a promise is if it is not backed by blood? I can pledge my fealty to any person or any cause. I can even mean it. But when one whose blood lives in me comes calling . . . even the stoutest promise is crushed beneath the heel, ground into the mud.

Later I'd learn why she wanted me to do what I was going to do. She would tell me, "There are things greater than being a simple soldier. Would you not bravely leap into battle against a filth-caked barbarian knowing full well this could end your nights? This is no different. There is a barbarian sitting with the Senex. Certainly caked in filth."

I still hear those words, you know, when morning comes and I feel the tug of sleep.

And I remember how she said, with the hint of a smile:

"And you're going to destroy this barbarian in the Forum in front of everyone."

I wept.

I weep now.

Spatters of blood on the page.

FLAGRANTE DELICTO

Our nights are marked with critical moments. Moments that soothe the Beast or rile him into a froth. That night in the Forum shifts in and out of detail. Some things are blurry. The faces of all around me? Literally faceless. I call upon the memory, and I see nothing but heads without faces, smooth skin pulled taut over skulls. No eyes. Nary a nose hole or pair of lips. Heads cocking like blind cave snakes, listening to something that nobody can hear but them.

Nor can I say what the debate was that night. It seemed a serious matter. Was one of our kind up for execution, scheduled to be crucified on one of the hills when the sun crested it? Or was it a matter of procedure? A debate on the blood dole? A condemnation of an unjust law? Another fruitless discussion of rebuilding the Lapis Niger?

I hear a murmur. That's my memory. A buzz, a hum, low and rich. I can hear no specific words, and my writings are no help in this matter.

One participant remains stark, however. Everything about him is clear.

Renatus.

Ruddy-cheeked friend to the plebs. Pinched eyes. Broad smile. White toga, too clean. Renatus was all humble gestures, hands held in accession, his head sometimes rocking back in a quiet laugh that made his shoulders shake. I cannot hear his words. I don't know what it was he was arguing for or against. I can hear the shape of his words: equal parts obsequious and witty, playing to the crowd, reducing his opponent's contentions with little bites against his character (framed to be humorous, but wit can cut as deep as a blade and as wide as logic). The faceless crowd strained to hear him.

Here, things leave me. I see it happen above Renatus, outside myself, as if I'm floating like a ghost. My body and will were not my own. Lucretia did not control me directly, of course — no puppet strings, for they were not necessary. I danced for her all on my own. And yet, did I? I felt that I loved her. I felt that perhaps she loved me. Hollow. Impossible. But there nevertheless.

I marched forward. Through the crowd. Silver ring heavy on my finger.

I'm sure eyes were on me. But here in what I see, I see just faceless heads turning toward me — automatons, dummies, puppets themselves.

Renatus turned toward me, his face a curious mix of piqued interest and concern. Oh, but he trusted me, did he not? I was an Equestrian. Black toga. Silver ring. Certainly it was impertinent for me to interrupt the proceedings, but perhaps there was danger! Perhaps my talking to him, whispering, pulling the man close . . . maybe it would win him the argument. A gentle sway, a tug on the crowd's sympathies. (Though could it have done differently? Maybe the Kindred detested the Legio Mortuum, and I was just too daft to realize such a thing. Not that it matters, now.)

His wrist was cold. His breath smelled of gamy meat and wine. Bile, too. His skin smooth. I pulled his wrist toward me as if to move into say something into his ear. The room quieted. They all strained to listen.

They'd only hear him choke and gurgle.

I blighted him. A thing Lucretia taught me. I could feel his blood through his skin, lurking in the dark dead chambers of his fat body. I turned that blood against him. She had buried a curse against him, etched into a lead tablet this malediction, and now I was the carrier of that curse. His blood became a demon. A vengeful spirit.



I feel myself moving backward. I see him dropping to his one knee, a gout of black blood bubbling up out of his nose, then from his mouth. His smile is gone. Those pinched eyes now open wide, the whites of his eyes turning red. I hear someone ask me what I did to him but then they move past me because surely they can't think it was me? Surely they think it some trick, some malevolence from outside the Legion? He pivots his head, the blood now pouring in a steady flow from all his face's openings. I see the wildness in his eyes. Lucretia did not tell me this, I think. Did not tell me that he would become a mad lion in his last moments. Good. Let him be the one who brings violence.

And he does. Did. Did. He leaps — leapt into the throng of gathered Kindred, fangs bared, hissing like a fat goose.

I fade into the crowd, moving backward through them.

They do not see me. Not because I am hidden but because they have other things on their minds.

But even as I move away, I can hear the sounds. I see above the crowd swords — and an axe, maybe an axe — raise up, fall down.

I suppose Renatus lost his argument.

ALEA IACTA EST

I caused . . . a problem or two.

Later I'd learn why I was to destroy Renatus for the Augurs. It was for the good of the Senex, for the strength of the whole Camarilla.

Renatus was no pagan. Oh, he played at being one, didn't he? Altars to the ancestors. Offerings to Lares and Penates, those gods of the hearth, gods of the larder. He was a powerful man, Renatus. Well-liked. Patron to a hundred clientes, those lowly freedmen who enjoyed the trinkets and bits of money he passed down to them. They all were pagan, too — or so it was thought.

They were not. Every last one of them found faith in only one god. Public offerings were false, a ruse. Privately they prayed. To God. To the Monachus. To the Dark Father. To whatever aberrant name filled the mouths of those fools in the Lance and Spear.

And Renatus had inspired this faith in them.

He, a secret priest of that blasphemous chapel. *O praeclarum custodem ovium lupum!* The wolf, an excellent protector of the sheep!

Many years after, I heard countless rumors regarding Renatus. Did he truly wear a mask made of silver, stalking the halls of Necropolis in an effort to find those desperate grubs (as I once was) for purposes of offering them some kind of fool's salvation? (And what would have happened had he found me at my lowest, instead of Lucretia? Could I have loved him as I love her?) Was it true that he was a master of those sorceries taken from Theltes? I even heard that he had possessed the Spear of Destiny at the time of his frenzy (and subsequent beheading) in the Forum Romanum. That cannot be true, can it?

By destroying him, the intention was to rout the treachery even before it manifested.

Foolish. The Augurs, for all their anticipation, failed to see what would come after Renatus's destruction. It was not a revolution, not yet, but it would be the spark that would soon ignite the Camarilla the way that the incendia cast the darkness of the Black Spring into light.

Martyrdom is a powerful thing, as surely you know. Again, the Hydra. One head gone, many more sprout from the stump. Renatus dead, chopped up by Virgatores in the Forum? His people were very displeased that their patron was gone. They had burning faith in their hearts. And they took this faith to the darkness, hiding there with sword and stake. They assassinated prominent Legio Mortuum soldiers and figures. One staggering out of a bathhouse, stake in chest, head cut off. A Nosferatu coming up out of one of Necropolis's bolt holes, his crested helmet in hand — it clatters to the cobblestones, followed by the rolling thump of his head. A Praetor, skull split in twain by some barbarian's axe, his ashes spread out in a cross pattern in the street.

The Legion of the Dead, of course, was not one to sit on its hands.

They redoubled their efforts. Soldiers went out on great hunts, week after week. Pushing torches into every dark corner to find missionaries and martyrs, then dragging them to the gates and burning them under the dark of the moon. (Other Kindred were invited to attend, of course, to see what it was to be a member of the Lancea et Sanctum.) The pious fools went to their Final Deaths laughing. So certain were they of their salvation and righteousness. Given strength by their oppression. Disgusting.

The Augurs — through me — created a monster.

This monster lurked in the great divide. A divide that widened more swiftly now. This gulf would swallow us all. I heard the whispers. It seemed that the Chapel and Spear had taken up the divination game, claiming to have foreseen the end of the world (what we realize now was just the end of our world, was it not?). The Empire had grown venal, the whispers said. Base. Vile. Sucking at the teats of pleasure and self-service, failing to see the glory of damnation. It was too big; a lumbering, staggering beast sloughing toward nothing but its own demise. For a time, the Kindred refused to acknowledge such trite, defeatist drivel. That changed, obviously. More and more gave the notion some credence. Claimed to see the writing on the wall. Secretly, some went over to the Chapel and Spear.

Others went not so secretly.

The human herd was already rushing into that breach. So sure of the coming of a better kingdom under their so-called Lord. The Edict of Milan. The new capital of Constantine on the Bosphorus. The rats, once kept below the city, were forced up on a gout of their own pride, glad to smell their own feces. Now the rats were king. Closing down pagan temples. Claiming that our gods represented the presence of the diabolical, the demonic. Freedom of all religion? No longer.

Ah, but I get ahead of myself. What happened to me, you ask? What of Lucretia? That will come later. For again the sun threatens to rise over the city, and I must draw my shades.

You've let me go on another night, my childer. I thank you for that, as I could use one more night. Then I shall burn all my writings and smash my strongbox. I'll leave you this account, and you may do with it as you wish. Show it to your Archbishop. Tear it to pieces. Recognize that things are not always as they seem.



CHAPTER IV: STORYTELLING AND ANTAGONISTS

I TAKE YOUR BLOOD.

I BLESS YOUR
CHILDREN WITH IT
AND MAKE THEM
MINE. I RAISE THEM
TO BE SLAVES TO MY
MOUTH AND TO
CURSE YOUR NAME.

DEATH TO YOUR
FORTUNE! I FUCK
FORTUNA VIRILIS IN
HER TEMPLE AND
DRINK HER BLOOD!

— AGRIPPA THE GAUL

GRAND THEMES

Stories set in the ancient world can feature any of the more personal themes available to stories in the modern time period, but the setting of *Requiem for Rome* has grand themes of its own. You do not need to emphasize them in your chronicle, but the structure of the setting provides a great backdrop for these themes, and taking advantage of them can provide epic dimension to your story.

GRANDEUR AND HYPOCRISY

The Empire of Rome and the Kindred society of the Camarilla are both great achievements, and both are slowly rotting on the inside. The conquests of Rome and the pomp of the great noble houses are built around a collapsing infrastructure and play host to a degenerating leadership. The impressive labyrinth of Necropolis is a world of unparalleled accomplishment for the vampires of Rome — and a staging ground for disaster.

Almost all of the power players in both settings, living and undead, can feel the threat of collapse. The stresses placed upon Rome and Necropolis are many and ongoing: internal conflict, always running at a slow burn, threatens to flare up. The rich indulge themselves at the expense of the poor, creating an imbalance of power and opportunity that cannot survive. The barbarian forces (and the slaves of the Striges) probe tirelessly at the walls of the Empire, seeking purchase for assault after assault. The physical infrastructure of the cities, ingenious as it is, is more and more expensive to maintain each year, and threatens to crumble. And yet, the problems of civilization are willfully ignored, as if the only thing that lends them power is acknowledgement.

The beautiful façade hastily raised and kept up over a rotting core is a compelling theme for the *Requiem* — not least because of the obvious translation from the large-scale setting to the personal experience of vampire characters. In a way, every vampire is like Rome: degrading on the inside while struggling to maintain a perfect exterior. Those who acknowledge their internal damage risk exposing weaknesses to a harsh and unforgiving world — but those who ignore them are tempting total, catastrophic disintegration.

DECLINE AND FALL

The fourth century sees the decline of the Roman Empire and the Camarilla, although neither actually

collapses completely before the fifth century. Both are, however, considerably diminished from the peaks of their power, and all those within them are aware of that. There is no way, or at least no obvious way, to restore the glory.

The theme of lost glory and diminished opportunity is a powerful one for Vampire, and it maps perfectly onto the vampire's loss of Humanity. Most Roman Kindred genuinely miss their Humanity; they do not regard themselves as superior to mortals, no matter what power the Kindred may gain in undeath, and they feel the missed potential of a long mortal life and an honorable, proper death in ways that modern Kindred rarely do.

Despair and loss go hand in hand. It can seem as though all the great achievements of history are in the past, that present nights are reduced to trying, and failing, to emulate those giants. Even in an individual *Requiem*, it can seem that nothing can match the experiences of a vampire's living days.

Despair is an appropriate emotion for a horror game to inspire, but it might be a bit depressing for the players. Fortunately, it need not be the player characters who are moved to misery by acknowledging how far they have fallen; even while the weight of history and inevitability bear down on them, there can yet be hope.

OLD AND NEW

The conflict between old and new is another theme central to the setting. In the fourth century, it is not possible to simply say that one is good and the other bad; the battle is much more complicated than that. From a modern perspective, there is a strong tendency to think that the new must be good, better adapted to current circumstances, and the embodiment of progress.

In the fourth century, what is old represents the Roman Empire and classical civilization; what is new represents the coming of the Dark Ages. Many want to hold on to and preserve the old, and you can see their point.

The problem for the conservatives is that systems and beliefs that worked two or three centuries ago are not properly adapted to the present. Trying to preserve the past absolutely unchanged will guarantee that it falls and is swept away by the forces of change. On the other hand, once you change things, you are no longer preserving the past in some respects.

On the other side, even the forces of change, the barbarians and Christians, do not want to sweep everything away and start from a blank slate. Some barbarians want to be part of a wealthy society such as the old Roman Empire, while the Christians want to preserve civilization – and subsume it. They face a dilemma: to enact change, they risk destroying the prize they seek.

For *Kindred*, this conflict maps on to the struggle to preserve, or reform, the Camarilla. The Camarilla is the old, but it may not be entirely appropriate to the social climate of the changing world. The *Lancea et Sanctum* is a dangerous new element within Roman *Kindred* society, and the Camarilla must either incorporate the vampires of the *Lancea* or suppress them to survive – but they aren't the only force for change moving within the Camarilla – just the most overt.

At an individual level, the old is the vampire's life as a mortal, and the moral imperatives and physical needs that applied then. The new is the Requiem, where the needs are clearly different and the moral rules probably need to change to accommodate that. However, vampires do need to struggle to retain their Humanity. How much should they adapt to the new, and how much should they try to preserve from their pasts? At a more concrete level, this can deal with whether vampires try to maintain their contacts from their mortal life, or whether vampires cut themselves off completely and build again from scratch. Both extremes have severe problems, which again suggests the need for compromise.

In the end, the passage of time and the definitions of the words guarantee that the new will win. The real struggle, then, is over how far the new will resemble the old.

HISTORY IN PLAY

Requiem for Rome is a historical setting for **Vampire: The Requiem**. The first, and most important, feature of the game to keep in mind, though, is that this is a game, not a history lesson; fun is more important than accuracy. However, part of the fun of playing in a historical setting is feeling that the characters are grounded in a realistic setting. This section is about ways to preserve that feeling without getting bogged down.

ANACHRONISMS AND MISTAKES

Anachronisms and errors only matter if they break the feeling that the characters are in ancient Rome. Cell phones will do it every time, but mentioning a temple that, historically, was demolished in 289, or a church that wasn't built until 412, normally will not. The level of care you need to take depends on your group; if your players are all experts in late Antiquity, you have to be more careful than if their knowledge of the classical period comes from *Gladiator* and *Life of Brian*.

It is inevitable that you will make mistakes, and include historical impossibilities. Professional historians make mistakes; if they stray even slightly outside their areas of specialty, they can make quite spectacular mistakes. A mistake that does not spoil the historical atmosphere for the group is not a problem. A mistake can become a problem, however, if your historical research means that something starts feeling like a serious error.

This is best addressed outside the game, in a discussion with the group. If the mistake bothers only one person, then it's probably best to just accept that you are playing in a fantasy version of history, and there will be differences (for example, say, the existence of vampires). If more people are bothered, it may well be worth working out the best way to change the background of the chronicle to remove the problem. A simple declaration that the error was never there works in some cases, but in others it needs more work. Sometimes, fixing the error may be more trouble than it is worth, and declaring the chronicle alternate history on that point is the best choice.

It is important to remember that avoiding mistakes will not create historical atmosphere, because people do not notice the things that are not there. You avoid mistakes, as far as possible, to avoid spoiling the atmosphere you have created by other means. So, how do you do that?

MAKING IT FEEL ROMAN

The players notice the things that are important to the stories. That includes the other characters, the social relationships between them and the threats that drive events, as well as the places in which events happen and the items that are to hand.

Background color is less effective than things that the player characters must interact with to complete the story. Describing the aqueducts of Rome in a story that doesn't involve them is all right, but not strictly neces-

sary. If the player characters face a story in which they must track a monster hiding in and traveling through the aqueducts, that's when it's time to describe Rome's waterways in detail.

Much of the material in this book is designed to help you with this. Aspects of fourth-century Rome are discussed, along with ways you can make them central to a scene or story. There is nothing to stop you doing your own research for this, of course. One big advantage of this approach is that you need to research only one thing. If you want to run an adventure in the aqueducts, you need to research only the aqueducts.

A further advantage is that the central presence of something historical tends to make small mistakes in the background invisible. No one remembers, for example, that you said the food vendor they interviewed beside the fountain was selling fried potatoes. They remember crawling through the manhole behind the fountain, and following the trail of blood along dark, water-filled cavities high above the streets of Rome.

Using historical facts as positive, central elements in stories gets you the maximum amount of value from each bit of research. Still, you might wonder how much research you need to do.

CHANGING HISTORY

The default assumption of this book is that you are running a chronicle set in the history of the World of Darkness. Thus, the Camarilla is doomed, Rome will become entirely Christian and the Empire will fall to the barbarians. Even so, there is nothing to stop the player characters from taking on a major role in these events. Maybe a player character killed Julian the Apostate, and that's why the spearman was never found.

However, your group might prefer to play a chronicle in which they try to save the Camarilla, and to have a chance of success. Go for it! You could even follow it up with an alternate modern-day chronicle, in which the characters come out of torpor, see what the Camarilla has become and resolve to overthrow it. Changes to Kindred history, after all, need not change the history of the world too much.

Of course, your group might want to save the Roman Empire. The only reason not to let them succeed is that you would be on your own generating the alternate history in which the rest of your chronicle would take place. That could, however, be exactly what you want.

On the other hand, it can be a lot of fun to play in a chronicle when you know, in broad terms, how it will end. The players know that Rome and the Camarilla will

fall, and prophecies may mean that the characters come to know it, too. The actions of the player characters can still determine how well they weather the changes.

The most important thing here is to agree on whether large changes to history will be possible. If different players have different assumptions, it can lead to significant discontent in the group.

THE BURNING ISSUE

There is one historical detail that should have a significant impact on play. The only sources of artificial light in fourth-century Rome are open flames, and classical vampires are just as prone to fear frenzies around fire as their modern kin. Fear frenzies are thus a common feature of life for the Kindred. The successes needed to overcome frenzies for common levels of flame are as follows:

Single flame (one lamp, one candle)	One success
Normal lighting for a mortal room, torch	Two successes
Brazier or open hearth	Three successes
Bank of dozens of lamps	Four successes
Controlled fire in its proper place	+1 die (cumulative with the +2 dice bonus for being at a safe distance)

Fire is not normally a significant problem within Necropolis. Lights there are few, and mounted very securely. Nothing is brighter than a single flame, which means that only a single success is needed to overcome the fear. In addition, properly controlled fire in its proper place grants +3 dice to the roll to overcome frenzy, as long as the vampire keeps his distance. The fire is not only at a safe distance, but the fire is not going to move from that position. If the vampire moves closer to the flame, the bonus is only +1 die.

Once a vampire can cope with a particular level of lighting, he does not need to roll again to overcome frenzy until something substantial changes. Thus, a vampire walking along a corridor in Necropolis does not need to roll every time a new lamp comes into view. If, however, he saw a large brazier, rather than a lamp, he would have to roll again, because this is a larger source of fire. Similarly, he would have to roll if he wanted to move closer to a lamp.

Rome is more problematic. On nights around the full moon, if the weather is clear, the streets tend to be clear of fires; fuel costs money, and is not used if it can be avoided. These are popular times for Kindred to go



hunting. At other times, there may be braziers by the side of the road and people carrying torches to light their way. Flames being carried around are not properly controlled, so do not grant the +3 dice bonus. They may still qualify for the +2 bonus for fire at a safe distance, however, if the vampire stays away. Thus, on most nights, Kindred must overcome frenzy to venture out on the streets of Rome.

Rooms are typically lit with several lamps, which together are as threatening as a torch, requiring two successes. Lamps are a different threat from the lights on the street, so vampires must control their frenzy to enter a lighted room.

Frenzies provoked by the sight of normal flames tend to be short; the vampire flees to somewhere dark (normally within Necropolis), and then calms down. This means that you can normally ignore the first rolls of the night, because in most cases the character can simply retry until he succeeds. Even the weakest-willed Kindred is very unlikely to fail twice in succession, particularly in Necropolis.

However, there are other circumstances when you should require a roll. As noted above, when the general level of lighting changes, the vampire must overcome frenzy to move to the brighter area. Vampires may also

choose to remain in the shadows, and not risk frenzy, if the flames are not approaching them.

Second, vampires placed under significant emotional stress in the presence of flames may have to roll again to avoid frenzy. This should definitely be used to enhance the drama of a story, and emphasize that flames are still threatening to the Kindred. A vampire on trial, facing the possibility of Final Death, might well suddenly enter a fear frenzy, suddenly unable to handle the lamps in the room.

Finally, any activity that threatens to increase the flames requires a roll. If a mortal swings a torch at a vampire, the vampire must roll to resist frenzy, even if he had successfully approached the mortal earlier. Combat in a normal room automatically requires a roll to resist frenzy when the combat starts; combat can easily run wild and overturn lamp stands. Storytellers should apply common sense; if the fight is taking place in the middle of the cold pool at a large bathhouse, there is no real risk of starting a fire.

The omnipresence of fire makes life more difficult for the Kindred of the Camarilla, and while fire should not dominate the chronicle, the players should also not be allowed to forget about it.

CONFLICT

There are a million potential enemies in Rome, and purely personal enmities are as common in the fourth century as in any later period of history. The period also has its own unique antagonists, which can be used to motivate distinctive stories. Even personal rivalries tend to draw on, and build on, these larger relationships; a rival's affiliation becomes another reason to oppose him.

Each of these conflicts could serve as the focus for a whole chronicle, but they work equally well as motivations for a single story. In addition, none have one side obviously in the right and the other obviously in the wrong, which means that you can tell stories in which it is important to question the conflict. It is probably best to avoid having player characters on different sides of a conflict you plan to emphasize, however; conflict within the group can make a chronicle unplayable for purely practical reasons, as you have to handle different parts of the group separately.

These conflicts can also play an important role in character generation. A character who identifies strongly with one group, in opposition to another, is part of the fabric of fourth-century society and comes with ready-made plot hooks. Thus, players should also read this section. Everyone in Rome knows that these conflicts exist; the stories come from how the conflicts are handled.

ROMAN VS. BARBARIAN

The ongoing conflict between Roman and barbarian forces is one of the great struggles of the period. The perception of this conflict is utterly different from both perspectives. Romans perceive barbarians as having no culture, nothing to offer beyond mindless strength, and as a single, backward force threatening to drag down all of civilization. The barbarians, on the other hand, hate and fear the Roman Empire for its brutality and expansionist militarism, and envy its gathered resources. When the Empire is weak, the barbarians launch wave after wave of merciless raids; when the Empire is strong, the barbarians clash with great armies on all sides.

This conflict is also about the battle between the ancient ways, embodied by the barbarians, and new ways, personified by the Romans... or, depending on perspective, it may be about the new wave of barbarian societies arrayed against the staunch traditionalism of established Rome. Rome sees itself as a civilized improvement on

barbarian tribalism, and fights to prevent a slide back into the dark ways of old. Many peoples are covered by the blanket "barbarian" term: Goths, Gauls, Picts and Caledonians in the north, and Nubians and Bedouins in the south. On the other hand, the barbarians see Rome as an entrenched evil that must be broken, scattered and replaced.

The Roman army does accept barbarians as warriors, organizing them into units called *foederati*. These units are normally stationed along the frontiers, but some find themselves in Italy, even Rome itself. Just as all soldiers stationed in a foreign population, *foederati* have a tendency to cause trouble of various kinds, a tendency exacerbated because some Romans see these barbarians as the cause of the decline of the Empire. Local brawls, assassination plots, even riots are all story-driving events that can arise here, or be encouraged by the player characters.

There are also some actual barbarians among the Kindred of Rome, most notably among clan Gangrel. In the past, the barbarians may have been accepted, but as the sense that the mortal barbarians are a serious threat to the Empire grows, barbarian Kindred are likely to find themselves viewed more suspiciously. Some will respond by trying to prove themselves to be more Roman than the Romans, others by trying to undermine their opponents. Both responses will provoke stories.

ROMAN VS. PARTHIAN

Romans often refer to the Parthians as barbarians, but this is not really the case. Parthians have an even longer history than Rome, and a civilization that, while very different, is at least as elaborate. Even more important, the Roman Empire has never managed to conquer the Parthians, and border disputes have been the main source of wars in the East for a century. While the Romans will never admit it, the Parthians are arguably their equals and more.

The conflict here, then, is a clash of civilizations. Romans are ostensibly austere, disciplined and orderly. Parthians are ostensibly luxurious, independent and chaotic. Traditionalist Romans blame the influence of the East for degrading the virtue of the people and setting the great Republic (or later, Empire) on the road to decadence.

New fashions in display, whether in food, clothing or interior decoration, are particularly likely to be con-

demned as effeminate Parthian innovations. This is more likely to lead to social conflict than physical violence, but the Kindred can be even more violently conservative than Cato the Censor, and they may express their dislike of new styles through murder.

Accusations of Parthian influence are also used as a stick with which to beat those who spend more time on pleasurable activities than on tasks with a practical purpose. These accusations are often directed against the young, but not exclusively. Within the Camarilla, failing to display properly Roman virtues of restraint can be given as a reason for refusing promotion or responsibility. Elder vampires use such accusations to retain power, while the younger use such accusations to build a case that elders are no longer worthy of their positions.

Finally, the Parthian King of Kings is at war, on and off, with the Augustus of Rome throughout this period, and may employ agents in the Eternal City as part of his strategy. Chaos in Rome distracts attention from the East, and the right sort of chaos can even force an Emperor to divert troops, so the agents of Parthia aim to start riots and insurrections, maybe even providing financial support in the form of gold hidden in grain shipments, or the like. Such agents are very unlikely to be indulging their fleshly lusts, although they may pretend to.

CHRISTIAN VS. PAGAN

This is the central ideological conflict in the setting, and it is one with profound consequences for the future of all Europe — and later, the whole of the world. Both sides are fighting to utterly eliminate the other: the proponents of Christianity seek to supplant and destroy paganism, and the pagan establishment is working to crush the Christian uprising.

At the moment, neither Christianity nor paganism is strictly illegal in the mortal world, and which is currently in favor depends on who the Emperor is. While neither faction enjoys being out of favor, being out of favor does not make life impossible, which means that most people stick to their religion through the changes. Each change creates grudges and resentments that might wait for things to change back, or break out sooner in personal revenge.

Religious buildings are a specific flashpoint for these tensions. Christians want to see the symbols and centers of paganism destroyed, and are willing to take matters into their own hands, forming into mobs to burn and destroy. On the other hand, most Christian churches constitute a desecration of pagan grounds, leading pagans to oppose plans for new building and try to bring down

existing churches. Kindred might try to control this violence, or have no choice but to try to avoid it.

Religions on both sides also try to recruit new members, and to strengthen their current members against the attractions of the opposition. This means that someone the characters know might suddenly change behavior, and even become hostile. A change in religion is the obvious reason; a former pagan converted to Christianity might well cut off relations with pagan Kindred, if he does not decide to try hunting them. However, someone becoming more devout within the same religion can show equal changes in behavior. A follower of Cybele might castrate himself to join the *galli*, or threaten to do so, provoking his friends to try to stop him.

The characters in a chronicle could also be fully committed to the struggle on either side. There are many possible stories in strengthening your own community and weakening the others. While Kindred rarely become overt figures in religion, they can arrange events to guide mortals toward a favored faith, even supplying miracles if necessary — indeed, the scriptures of the Lancea et Sanctum demand it. Similar techniques can be used to weaken the opposition, by corrupting leaders and then revealing their weakness to their followers. Kindred with low Humanity might simply make a habit of killing anyone following the wrong faith; even Kindred on the same side would have an interest in stopping such a monster, before he drew unwelcome attention to the Kindred. Violence and intimidation are more effective in stopping particular plans, such as for a religious parade, or for a new building. The targets of the intimidation probably will not abandon their religion, but the failure of the plan can reduce recruitment. Some Kindred might consider assassination; some religious leaders become even more effective after death, but some communities disintegrate when they lose their focus.

RELIGION AND ROLEPLAYING

The conflict between Christianity and paganism is one that might be a sensitive point in your gaming group, as players can adhere to one side or the other. If all your players are on one side, and really don't want to play the other, then you should go with that. On the other hand, if the players are split, it is best to avoid this theme altogether. There are plenty of other sources of conflict in falling Rome.

The contemporary resonance of the issue can make for powerful and memorable games, but only if everyone takes care not to give offense. Use common sense; a game is supposed to be fun.

Naturally, Kindred may be caught up in defending their communities from the plots of the other side, as well as planning attacks. More positive assistance is also possible, removing obstacles to the achievement of plans or even providing necessary materials. The mortals need not be told how those materials were obtained, whether they are supplies of timber for a roof, gold for sacred vessels or labor to repair an aging temple.

CHRISTIAN VS. CHRISTIAN

Even though the main religious conflict of the period may be that between Christians and pagans, Christians are not entirely of one mind. As is often the case, differences that were overlooked while the whole faith was fighting for survival become more important now when the risk of elimination recedes. In the fourth century, the Christian church begins the process of defining orthodoxy and heresy as they apply to Christian belief.

This conflict can be very bitter. A little later than our period, Ambrose of Milan tells the Emperor Theodosius that failing to persecute heretics is morally equivalent to persecuting orthodox Christians, and that Theodosius's inaction makes him as bad as Diocletian. Doctrinal differences can thus drive any level of animosity.

The different factions in the early Christian movement are described in more detail in Chapter Three: Rome and Necropolis, on pp. 126-189.

The Lancea et Sanctum is caught up in the conflict over heresy, as individual members of the covenant consider themselves members of one or other faith, and have a lot of personal investment in the outcome of the dogmatic conflicts of the living world. The Sanctified are no less split with controversy and acrimony, battling constantly to define themselves and align themselves with a favored mortal system of belief.

PAGAN VS. PAGAN

Pagans are only a single group when viewed from an outside perspective. In fact, the competing pagan faiths are no less vicious in their attempt to absorb or destroy one another than the emerging Christian faiths — pagan faiths have just been at it for a lot longer.

The different factions in pagan Rome are described in more detail in Chapter Three: Rome and Necropolis, on pp. 126-189.

Pagan religions do not always seek to eliminate one another; almost all are tolerant of the existence of other faiths, even if they regard themselves as superior, and Roman religion often works to absorb competing pan-

theons into its own as a means to pacifying peoples — so long as the pantheon being absorbed doesn't force an issue of mutual exclusion (in the manner that the God of the monotheist faiths does). This makes the conflict less sharp than that with Christianity, and more a matter of jockeying for position than of fighting for survival. Of course, this does not stop particular conflicts escalating as far as murder. It does, however, mean that negotiating peace is normally possible.

EMPEROR VS. EMPEROR

Civil war is a recurrent feature of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. Julian rebelled against Constantius, and was only saved from a full civil war by the latter's timely death. After Julian's death, there were several claimants to the purple, although none managed to gather a large enough following to provoke a full war, as opposed to a local uprising.

When civil war does break out, or an official claims the purple, mortals have to decide whom to support. Unimportant people can keep their heads down and hope to stay out of trouble, but anyone influential is at risk of being forced to choose. Choosing the winner can lead to very rapid advancement, while backing the wrong Augustus normally leads to death. Trying to maintain neutrality is unlikely to do you any favors, no matter who wins, but you might be able to avoid the death penalty.

As Kindred are hidden, they are more able to avoid the conflict if they wish. However, those with influential agents will find that their agents are forced to take sides, which involves the Kindred in the conflict at one remove. Most Kindred put a lot of effort into building control over their agents, and the power of those agents, and so do not relish losing it over some petty competition for power lasting a year or two.

The ultimate pawn for a vampire is the Augustus, the absolute ruler of the Roman Empire. All the Kindred of the Camarilla are well aware of how much power this would grant, and hence work against any vampire who seems to have a real chance of installing a pawn as Emperor. This plotting may even involve raising other candidates, to deprive the pawn of a peaceful Empire to govern. This is ultimately destructive, as it weakens the Empire and thus, indirectly, the Camarilla and the Kindred within. Immortality does not, however, automatically grant a long-term view.

As outright control of the Augustus inspires allied opposition, most Kindred settle for trying to influence the general opinions and attitudes of the Augustus and his courtiers, to shape politics to suit their plans. Such

schemes generally involve outright control of one or two minor figures close to the Augustus, strong influence over a number of more major advisers and thus indirect influence over the Emperor. While building such a network does not inspire unified opposition, it does inspire opposition from the other Kindred trying to do the same thing, making establishing it a difficult task.

To avoid this, some Kindred establish indirect control over a lesser figure, and then push him into challenging for the purple. This results in a sudden change in the sorts of problems the Kindred must deal with, from building subtle and solid influence with little or no opposition to surviving a war and heading off dozens of schemes to get a foothold in the court.

GREEN VS. BLUE

One of the most open divisions in Rome is also the most trivial. The cause of thousands of minor fights and of several major riots claiming thousands of lives, is the contest between the Green and Blue teams in the Circus Maximus. Romans might switch between Emperors and religions as convenience demands, but their loyalty to the teams of chariot races extends to death. And beyond.

Faction affiliations are passed down through families, and maintained by the Kindred of the Camarilla. Vampires stage their own races, and attend the circus when the chariots run at night. Kindred have agents who follow the daylight races, and bring full reports. More Kindred spies watch the doings of the stables of the factions than watch the councils of the Emperor, and the information the stable spies bring is more accurate.

The most important thing to each faction is that their charioteers be the greatest, and that their faction be covered in glory. The compounds of the factions are thus very well guarded against mundane intrusion, and have the best charms against supernatural intervention that money, and the machinations of ancient Kindred, can supply. The net result is that the chariot races are very nearly fair, and no faction can gain the advantage for long.

This does not stop either group from trying, however. Kindred are easily caught up in this, as even if they are among the few who are not partisans, they need favors from those who are, and to gain them they may be asked to defend or attack a faction. Distracting or kidnapping a star charioteer, killing, crippling or subtly hampering a horse, sabotaging chariots: all of these are possible requests. On the other side, they might be asked to stop any such activity. The horses and chariots do not leave the compounds other than to go to the circus, but the

charioteers are celebrities, welcome at any dinner party. Vampires seeking to corrupt charioteers could find themselves in any social milieu.

The security at the compounds is very strong, probably stronger than that around the Emperor himself. On the other hand, there is much less security at the Circus Maximus, because anyone sabotaging the race in front of tens of thousands of rabid fans would have to be suicidal. And the race would be re-run in any event. Kindred, however, have access to abilities that can allow them to influence a race without being obvious. Other Kindred know that, naturally, and thus attend the night races to stop them.

While the races are the most important part of the life of the factions, races are not the only part. Recruitment is also vital, and the faction that can recruit the best horses and men has an advantage. Thus, young Kindred might be sent to find those with a talent for the races, and direct them to the appropriate faction. At another remove, even supporters can be moved from one group to another, thus undermining the financial base of the opposition.

Although many Kindred are as fanatical about the Greens and Blues as any mortal, other Kindred treat the whole thing more cynically, manipulating one faction or the other to serve as thugs when blunt violence is required. Other Kindred see themselves as neutral connoisseurs. These are the Kindred most likely to Embrace a masterful charioteer to adorn the Kindred races, an act that draws the enmity of those who supported the faction that has just lost its star. Such former charioteers enter their Requiems with even more allies and enemies than is normal.

CAMARILLA VS. WING

The Kindred are not motivated purely by mortal conflicts, even though they would be unable to avoid such conflicts completely even if they wanted to. Just as at any period, there are conflicts between individual Kindred and between factions within greater Kindred society; many ideas for the 21st century are equally applicable to the fourth. However, there are also a couple of conflicts more specific to the last nights of the Roman Empire.

The first is the conflict between the Camarilla and the Wings that compose it. This does not mean that the Camarilla is ranged on one side, with a particular Wing on the other. The Camarilla still includes all Kindred and exerts authority over all the Wings. Some Sanctified are calling for the Camarilla to be overthrown, but that is very much a minority view. Most Kindred are seeking

power within the structures of the Camarilla, not seeking a new structure.

The conflict is, rather, between the interests of the Wing and the interests of Kindred society as a whole. Promoting the interests of a Wing might strengthen the Kindred of that faction while weakening the Camarilla overall. If that endeavor progresses far enough, it could risk bringing about the fall of the Camarilla, and the splintering of Kindred society into independent, semi-hostile groups.

There are two main ways in which this conflict can drive stories. The first is when some Kindred are promoting their Wing at the expense of the Camarilla, and others oppose them to strengthen the position of the over-arching authority. Most often, the opposing Kindred are also members of a different Wing, but the important thing is that they are acting to strengthen the Camarilla, not their own faction. Some Kindred really do believe that they are better off in a slightly weaker faction that is part of a strong Camarilla, rather than in a strong Wing in a weak Camarilla. Others, however, want to recruit allies from other Wings in a particular case, and thus have to work for the common good. The judgment here

is that the faction will, in this case, benefit more from strengthening the Camarilla than the faction would from simply pushing its own agenda.

The second manifestation is a conflict within individual Wings over the best approach to take. There are always reasons to promote your own interests over the common good, but there are also reasons to work together with everyone. Actions taken with one goal in mind have an impact on the other, and if the characters are interested in both, they may find themselves reacting to the consequences of their own actions, trying to maintain a balance.

One of the main threats to the integrity of the Camarilla is the increasing factionalization of the Kindred, so characters aiming to preserve the Camarilla want to mitigate it. Overlapping membership between Wings is one of the best ways to do so; if one in 10 members of the College of Augurs are also Peregrini, it becomes difficult for the Augurs to take up a position hostile to the Peregrine Collegia. Overlapping membership reduces the influence of the faction leaders, because the members of a Wing answer to more than one leader. They cannot *all* demand, and receive, absolute loyalty.



Another line to take is strengthening the central organs of the Camarilla. If Kindred in a dispute want take it to the Camarilla for resolution, they are motivated to maintain the Camarilla as a strong, and respected, organization. On the other hand, if the Camarilla does not seem to be doing anything useful, they are more likely to concentrate on their factions, and not worry if the Camarilla is undermined.

CAMARILLA VS. STRIX

One of the simplest, most elemental conflicts of Ne-cropolis is that between the Kindred and the Striges. The Striges are, as far as most Kindred are concerned, simply monsters. They may have been responsible for the initial

creation of the Kindred, and may have ruled them for centuries, but the Striges were defeated, allowing the Kindred to live free and govern themselves in the Camarilla.

This history, and concerns about the intentions of the Striges, make them more than simple monsters. They are referred to as the Nemeses of the Kindred, the divinely-ordained punishment for the arrogance of vampires. This means that, while stories built around this conflict can start as simple tales of a monster, and the resolution of a direct threat, they can easily connect and build into chronicles the delve into the history of the Camarilla, the nature of vampires and the future of all vampires.

The Striges are described in detail later in this chapter on p. 225.

ASPIRATIONS OF THE CHARACTERS

There are many good stories to be told about things that the player characters want to achieve. This gives the players some control over the course of the chronicle, makes it easier for the Storyteller to create stories, and, in general, moves the focus of the game away from "enemy of the week." For the Storyteller, one major advantage is that, as the players decide on what they want their characters to do, they are very unlikely to ignore plot

hooks that offer opportunities to achieve their goals, or to deal with threats to them.

CREATE A CULT

Fourth-century Rome is home to many mystery cults, which often teach secrets of life and death. A vampire could be the center of veneration, gaining easy access to blood, supporters and potential childer. A secret cult could survive the fall of the Empire, the fall of paganism and the Dark Ages, something that might be very attractive to Kindred looking at the contemporary situation in Rome. Cults are even likely to care for a vampire in torpor, and still provide support when he awakens.

Even if creating a cult were easy, not every vampire would want to do it; it requires a special sort of arrogance to set yourself up as a god, and a special sort of callousness to exploit people in this way. Still, not all such vampires are pure monsters, as some are also concerned for their followers, and use their abilities to support them. Such vampires can maintain moderate Humanity over the long term.

Of course, creating a cult is not easy. The first step is deciding on the symbolism, mythology and practices. While these have to involve darkness, blood and probably death, that still leaves a wide variation. The vampire can draw on the traditions of any known culture, and modify them at will.

The next step is recruitment. Dominate is no use here; the whole point of creating a cult is to create a group of

ASPIRATIONS AND HISTORY

Some of the aspirations suggested here would change history if they were fulfilled, so the whole group needs to consider whether they want to allow that, as discussed earlier, and decide before players decide on their characters' goals. While success is never guaranteed, some players might not want to play characters who are doomed to fail.

However, you shouldn't reject the possibility out of hand. While vicarious success is fun, it is also fun to play tragic figures who struggle to achieve something but are ultimately defeated by history. Ultimate failure does not rule out temporary successes, and you get to define how your character faces his fate. The important thing is that the players should know in advance if you've decided that failure is inevitable, so that they're free to choose whether or not to play characters with these goals.

people who are genuinely loyal. Judicious use of Majesty and Nightmare, however, can help a great deal. Still, Social Skills, in the selection of candidates and in the choice of approaches, are vital.

Once the nucleus of the cult exists, the mortal members can be left to do some of the recruitment by themselves. The vampire then needs to concern himself with protecting the cult from threats, which may be mundane or supernatural. The members might be prosecuted for witchcraft, or simply threatened by a riot or barbarian raid.

Ultimately, the vampire needs to establish mechanisms that ensure that the cult will survive, and remain loyal to him, even while he is not active. Since he cannot easily predict how long he will be in torpor, he also needs to allow for the possibility of mortal high priests dying, and possibly being appointed without ever dealing with him in person.

This is a good low-impact aspiration, as a small, secret cult can easily be inserted into history.

LEAD A WING

A character may want to rise to leadership of the one of the Wings of the Camarilla, gaining political power within the organization. This sets up a very political chronicle, which, in many ways, could resemble chronicles about power struggles within a city in the 21st century. This is not entirely a bad thing, as it makes it easy for the players to relate to, but particular care needs to be taken to add period flavor.

Thus, the unique features of the Camarilla should be emphasized, from the simple fact that there is a ruling body of all vampires to the use of the forum as the site for key events. In addition, the conflicts listed earlier in this chapter should be used to make the politics difficult. Of particular importance is the conflict between the Wing and the greater Camarilla. Characters taking this route want their Wing to be important, so that the leader is important, but are seeking power within the Camarilla, so they also want it to survive. They face a particularly strong dilemma.

This is another low-impact aspiration, since the character simply becomes one of the Kindred who were important in the Camarilla before it fell.

SAVE THE CAMARILLA

The Camarilla is deeply imperfect, but it provides unified government for the Kindred and enables them to influence mortal society far more efficiently than they could as a collection of individuals. The Camarilla also provides power and influence to specific, individual

Kindred. Thus, there are quite a few vampires with an interest in seeing the Camarilla continue.

In the official history of the World of Darkness, the Camarilla is doomed. If the player characters are to save the Camarilla, they must contend with a multitude of forces, not least of which include the influence of foreign Kindred, the attacks of the Striges, the corruption and collapse of the ruling Wings and the rise of the rebellious Lancea et Sanctum.

The collapse of the Roman Empire is unstoppable within the context of this setting (but see below). It may make it very hard for the Camarilla to exert any authority outside the city of Rome, and the characters may have to travel to distant parts of the former Empire to bring restive cities back into line.

This aspiration has the useful feature that partial success is possible. At the lowest level, the Camarilla might survive in Rome, but lose authority over other cities. Above that, the Camarilla might retain control of the Italian cities, but lose the rest of the Empire, and similarly for other areas of control. It is also medium impact, in that success will mean major changes in the history of the Kindred, but is likely to have little or no effect on mundane history.

RESTORE PAGANISM

Paganism is far from dead in the fourth century, but is under undeniable pressure from Christianity. Pagan Kindred might aim to restore paganism to its position as the official religion of the Roman Empire. This aim is independent of hostility to Christianity; the pagans might want to drive Christianity back underground, and then out of existence, or they might be happy for Christianity to take its place as one of the religions of the Empire.

The first issue to establish here is "which paganism?" As mentioned before, paganism is not a single religion. The weakest option is an attempt to establish religious pluralism, without supporting any paganism in particular. This is possibly the most difficult goal to achieve, because it doesn't give the Kindred any obvious rallying cry.

The best choices are, obviously, those that already have a following among the mortal population, although a vampire ambitious to the point of megalomania might try to establish his own blood cult and make it the official religion of the Empire.

In the fourth century, the official religion of the Empire is the same as the religion of the Augustus. If his religion is unpopular with the general population, it is unlikely to persist beyond his lifetime, as examples from the third century show. However, if the Augustus cannot

be convinced, then the religion has no chance of being official. Thus, Kindred with this goal must try to either convert the reigning Augustus, or advance a co-religionist to the purple. At the same time, they have to support and propagate the cult across the Empire.

This is, obviously, a high-impact aspiration. Success would radically change Kindred and mortal history.

ESTABLISH CHRISTIAN RULE

From a 21st-century perspective, it is easy to think that Christian rule was already cemented by the middle of the fourth century, but it didn't look that way at the time. Christians and pagans really thought that Julian the Apostate might restore paganism in the long term, and had he lived to rule for, say, 40 years, he might have done.

Christian vampires, or at least those in the *Lancea et Sanctum*, might work feverishly to ensure that their mortal compatriots are empowered. This could include striking down pagan Emperors; Julian was killed by a spearman who was never identified. It might also involve inciting mobs to attack temples, removing influential and charismatic pagans and defending churches and bishops. In some cases, it might even be best to remove Christians who are not doing as much for the faith as they might.

If the characters in a chronicle follow this aspiration, they have the possibility of writing a secret history. That is, the course of mortal (and Kindred) history goes as expected, but the reasons for it doing so are the actions of the player characters. This probably works best if the players know that the characters might fail, and thus see history change, but playing characters when you know that their goals will be achieved can be just as much fun as playing ones you know will fail. Even if the players know that Christianity will win, they do not know that it will be due to the characters' actions.

RESTORE THE GLORY OF ROME

During the decline, Rome is nominally the center of the Roman Empire, at best. Many Emperors never visit the city, and it has little to no influence on most historical events. All the important things happen away near the frontiers. Roman Kindred may aim to change this, to make Rome really important once more.

There are several possible approaches to this aspiration. One, the secret history approach, has the Kindred backing the papacy, manipulating the Church so that Rome becomes the seat of the first of the Patriarchs. This may

need to be handled carefully in some groups, however, as some players may find the idea that vampires pulled the strings of the early popes offensive.

Other approaches do require changes in history if they are to succeed, because Rome, in reality, did lose much of its status. The most obvious approach is to restore the city's political importance, and the importance of the Roman Senate. The foundation of Constantinople by Constantine the Great makes this more difficult, and means that Kindred with this aim must also undermine the second capital, which even has its own Senate.

However, the most important thing is to get the Emperors, particularly the Augusti, to return to Rome, at least for important ceremonial events. Kindred could arrange spectacular events to tempt Emperors to attend, construct Oracles or use Disciplines to drive the Emperors there. Alternatively, Kindred could back individuals with a strong link to the city for the purple.

Defending Rome against the barbarians also becomes an important part of this goal once the raiders make it into Italy. Rome's political importance virtually vanished after the Goths sacked the city, and even if the characters succeed in increasing its importance before that, it certainly wouldn't help.

As an alternative, Rome could be pushed as the center of the cults of the Roman deities. This would mean promoting Roman paganism across the Empire, to encourage pilgrims, and thus would have to be combined with restoring paganism.

Depending on the precise version of this aspiration adopted, it can have almost any level of impact. Promoting the papacy can be low-impact, and create a secret history. Making Rome more important in the late Roman Empire, but still having the Empire fall on schedule, is medium impact; history changes a bit, but not too much. Other options have a major impact, since they involve either the survival of the Empire or the restoration of paganism.

SAVE THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Preventing the fall of the Roman Empire is one of the most popular alternative history scenarios around, and players might well enjoy trying to bring it about. This is a truly grand-scale aspiration, and, realistically, probably beyond the capacity even of vampires. However, roleplaying is rarely about realism to that extent, so you may wish to give the characters a chance to succeed.

The reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire are controversial. Some blame the spread of Christianity, in which case the restoration of paganism would become part of this goal. Others point to fundamental flaws in

the economic and social structure of the late Empire. It's probably best to avoid this option, unless your group is full of economics and sociology majors who really want to play in a chronicle of secret social engineering.

The most popular culprits, however, are the barbarians. It is plausible to argue that, if the Empire had weathered the fourth- and fifth-century waves of barbarians, the Roman Empire would have survived at least until Islam swept out of the Arabian deserts in the seventh century. In fantasy, this could be achieved simply by having the Roman army win all the major battles. While vampires cannot fight directly in these actions, as almost all happen during the day, Kindred might gather information, assassinate key leaders and weaken defenses, so that the mortal army has an easy time of it. Such a chronicle would happen largely outside the city of Rome, as the characters traveled the borders opposing the barbarians.

The characters could also concentrate their efforts on ensuring that competent officials were sent to the borders, and were given adequate support. If the characters first restored the political importance of Rome as the governing center of the Empire, they could do much of this from Rome itself. Even so, occasional trips out to the frontier would be called for.

Another possible cause of the collapse is the near-constant civil war. It is undeniable that Roman Emperors spent almost as much effort fighting each other as fighting the barbarians. Thus, the Empire might survive if the characters can simply prevent civil war. Again, this would happen outside Rome, unless they can first move the political center of the Empire back to the Eternal City. The characters would then strengthen an Emperor, and weaken, or kill, rivals who might seize the purple. Immortal monsters also have an advantage when it comes to the succession: they will still be around to guide it.

This, it goes without saying, is a high-impact aspiration. One possible result is an intact Empire ruled by a puppet Augustus controlled by a coterie of vampires.

FOUND A BARBARIAN KINGDOM

On the other hand, the characters might accept that the fall of the Empire as inevitable and aim to get themselves a good position in the aftermath. While being the power behind the purple would be great, being the power behind the throne of a barbarian king is arguably no less advantageous.

The process here is fairly simple to state. First, find a barbarian leader, and take control of him. Make sure that he maintains control of his followers, and encourage him to raid the Roman Empire. Support him against the Roman army, so that he wins a series of victories, and then convince him to declare independence from the Emperor. Such a course of action would attract a lot of attention from the Roman Emperor, from rivals for the throne of the barbarian king and from vampires who do not like the prospect of the characters having that much influence in a kingdom.

One significant problem with this aspiration is that almost all of the necessary actions need to be taken some distance from the city of Rome, which makes most of this book only marginally useful. However, some barbarian leaders do come to Rome, either posted there as servants of the Emperor, or as hostages or even as allies being sent somewhere impressive, resonant and far from the levers of power. Thus, the early stages could happen in Rome, followed by a change of scene when the leader returns to his troops. It is even possible to have the kingdom established in Italy, with its capital at Rome; this would provide more action as the Emperor at Constantinople struggles to recapture the historical heart of the Empire.

The historical impact of this option can vary from none, if the chronicle tells the secret history of one of the historical successor states, to medium, if Italy becomes a barbarian nation in the late fourth century. However, the political complexion of Europe changed radically during the Middle Ages, so mortal history could still be put back on track if desired.

STORY HOOKS AND TRIGGERS

Player-driven stories make a good backbone for a chronicle, because they guarantee that the players are actually interested in pursuing the goals of their characters. However, if the whole chronicle revolves around the things that the characters want to do, it can feel as if the world is nothing more than a backdrop for their stories. Strictly speaking, that's true, of course, but the stories feel more complete if the setting has a life of its own.

This is where catastrophic background events are useful. They disrupt *everything* happening in Rome, so the player characters have no choice but to react to the events. The way in which the characters react should be influenced by their plans, and some characters might even manage to take advantage of the chaos to advance their own agendas. This section gives some information about catastrophic events that are appropriate to the setting, and suggestions on how they can be used.

THE PURPLE

The Roman Empire of the late fourth century is not a calm place in which sons succeed their fathers as Emperor to the peaceful applause of the populace. Rather, the purple goes to anyone who can claim it, and hold it against others. All that is needed to do this is the support of soldiers, military skill and a degree of luck.

There are essentially two kinds of claimant of the purple. The first are powerful individuals, often relatives of the current Augustus and successful generals, who fear, often with good reason, that the Augustus has decided that they are too powerful. The Augustus aims to remove them before they can stage a rebellion, and his moves toward that end provoke the very rebellion he was hoping to avoid. Julian the Apostate claimed the purple in such a manner.

These rebellions tend to happen when the Empire is relatively calm. The claimant establishes his military reputation by fighting enemies of the Empire, and as long as he is fighting them, he is too busy to challenge for the purple. In addition, as long as he is fighting successfully, he is more use than a threat to the current Augustus. It is only when the enemy is defeated, or at least temporarily pacified, that things change. The potential claimant is now a popular general with loyal troops, and no one to fight. The best Emperors can get through this difficult stage, but many provoke revolt instead. Those with a good knowledge of the Empire

can see these situations coming, and the wise ones make their own preparations.

The other claimants are opportunists, taking advantage of chaos to have themselves raised in rank, and hoping to make their position unassailable before other claimants can bring their forces to bear. Such claimants might not be able to secure a position as sole Augustus, but the tradition of multiple Emperors now goes back almost a century, and a general can make it easier for another claimant to form an alliance rather than fight to the death.

These claimants most often arise shortly after the death of an Emperor, particularly if there was no clear heir or surviving Augustus. They generally move to build a power base, rather than immediately attacking other candidates. Thus, particularly if the death of the Augustus was unexpected, the rise of these pretenders is hard to predict. This can make it harder for others to react, since support and opposition are both irrevocable decisions that can mean death, depending on the fortunes of war.

As the quote opening this section suggests, a central part of the claim to Imperial power is the donning of the purple. Purple clothes are reserved for the Imperial family, and so wearing them makes a claim to supreme authority clear. No pretender would claim the dignity of Augustus without appearing in public with at least some item of purple clothing, even if only a sash made from a soldier's banner. As it happens, Julian sent the accused mentioned in the quote a pair of purple shoes, laughing off the threat. In other times and places, however, an order for purple clothing was sufficient cause for execution.

Although, historically, most pretenders did not make their claims in Rome, the Eternal City is still a resonant place in which to declare oneself Augustus. Thus, the Kindred might suddenly find that they have an Emperor in their midst. While some might choose to ignore him, feeling that mortal politics are none of their concern, those Kindred who have agents and contacts among the senators cannot avoid dealing with it. Their agents must declare for or against the usurper, and may have to do so before the vampire can issue instructions. Since senators may declare different ways, this can shatter a network built over many years in a single night, leaving the Kindred picking up the pieces.

Other vampires see an opportunity to advance their own agenda. Some aim to support the pretender, others to support those responsible for bringing him down, who are likely to find favor with the successful candidate.

The stories arising from an attempt to seize control of the Empire involve a great deal of politics, close involvement with the mortals and occasional violence. While, no matter the result, there are winners and losers, it is almost unheard of for someone to maintain his status unchanged through such a violent upheaval in the order of things.

RIOTS

Riots are not uncommon in Rome. The city has a population of almost a million, of whom many are poor, kept alive by the bread dole to nurse their grievances as they urge the charioteers on. It does not take much to inspire a few to break a few heads or damage a shop they think has cheated them. It takes a little more to provoke a full-scale riot, but the cause can sometimes be rather obscure.

There are two possible causes that are not at all obscure, however. The first is a failure of the bread dole. Many citizens of Rome rely on this to keep them alive, so even rumors that the bread dole might fail cause uneasiness, unrest and sporadic minor violence. Suggestions that the grain barges have been delayed, or, worse, sunk or captured can spark immediate riots, even if the rumors are groundless and without even the suggestion of support. However, that generally needs the city to be in a nervous state already; otherwise the people do not go beyond demanding reassurance and distraction. Their uncertainty can certainly be used by unscrupulous demagogues, and unless the grain barges can be produced, or the people distracted by the circus, the mob can be directed to take out its unquiet on certain targets.

Real problems with the dole are even more serious. The city officials try to keep problems secret for as long as possible, because the officials are well aware of the risk posed by rumors. However, if the grain barges are late, the whole city knows about it. In most years, the warehouses have a buffer to keep them going for a few days, a couple of weeks, because even though the Mediterranean is a Roman lake, the arrival of ships cannot be guaranteed to the day. There are too many people working on the dole for this to be secret, and rumors of the day on which the bread will run out soon spread. Tensions gradually rise, and if the barges do not arrive, the people break out in rioting. The precise day is hard to predict, and depends on the efforts made to keep people under control, or to stir them up.

The other cause of riots is the Circus Maximus. The loyalties of the population are evenly split between the

Greens and the Blues, as are the honors of the races. This does not stop the partisans of each side from fervently believing, and insisting, that their charioteers are far superior to those of the other faction, prevented from achieving their richly deserved clean sweep of victories by a combination of bad luck, curses and sabotage. Most of the time, this does not go beyond talk, loud arguments in *caupona*e and frequent brawls. People with more money than morals know that it is very easy to convince a group of Green supporters to attack the Blues, and vice versa, and frequently take advantage of this.

Wiser, or more cautious, criminals stay away from manipulating the factions, because it is impossible to predict when an outrage will develop into a riot. A foul on the racing track might, one week, provoke nothing more than vigorous boos from one half of the stands, a few hundred minor brawls and half-a-dozen deaths. The next week, an apparently identical foul might spark a riot that levels neighborhoods and counts the dead in the thousands.

The two kinds of riot differ somewhat in appearance: dole riots have people clamoring for food; chariot riots have them yelling for the blood of the other faction. The significant difference, however, is that dole riots are somewhat predictable; they do not happen when the grain barges have just arrived, and can be defused if a large quantity of grain visibly arrives in the city. Chariot riots, on the other hand, spring up without warning and sweep through the city like a conflagration.

That is not entirely a metaphor. Riots in Rome are almost always accompanied by fires. Rioters do not deliberately set fires, but neither do they take great care to right upended lamps and braziers, and part of Rome burns. In most cases, the fires are brought under control; the Urban Prefect will happily slaughter hundreds of citizens to clear space for his troops to destroy the buildings necessary to create a firebreak. Rome has, however, burned on several occasions, and could do so again. Even then, the flames are almost always kept safely away from the homes of the wealthy, with as much bloodshed as is necessary.

A riot is chaos and fire rushing through the streets of the Eternal City. A riot threatens Kindred as much as mortal, and cannot be turned aside by subtle political schemes. Survival is the first priority, protecting one's own power base the second. A riot guarantees a story of fast-paced, physical action.

WITCH HUNTS

The people, and the authorities, of classical Rome are paranoid about the risks of witchcraft and sorcery over



the possibility that they might be used to threaten the rule of the Empire. There is no doubt over the efficacy of such methods, or of the low moral character of those who work the dark spells.

On the other hand, the only way to defend oneself against magic, it is widely believed, is by the use of magic. Thus, even those who would never dream of creating a curse tablet to revenge themselves on their enemies might pay a witch to prepare a counterspell, hoping for protection. This means that there are very, very few people who are wholly innocent of magic, and thus very few who do not have reason to fear an investigation.

Attitudes among the Kindred are similar, but slightly more nuanced. The powers granted by Disciplines are not regarded as sorcery, and there is nothing inherently wrong with using them, even glorying in their use. They would be crimes were the perpetrators alive, but the appropriate penalty is death, and those who have already

paid the penalty are free from the weight of the law.

However, the more magical powers are condemned. Unsanctioned blood sorcery and Theban Sorcery are regarded as abominations deserving of Final Death, while even the rituals of the Augurs are condemned if performed without proper authorization, or outside the proper context. A properly conducted ritual, as authorized by the hierarchy of the Augurs, honors the gods and brings good fortune, but one conducted secretly can only bring harm; at least, such is the official line.

Practices among the Kindred are also similar; they are no more inclined to avoid using magic than mortals. This also leaves many vampires highly vulnerable in the face of investigation.

In such an environment, witch hunts are an all-too-frequent occurrence. Something happens to bring one sorcerer to the attention of the relevant authorities. He is, naturally, tortured to find out what he knows. Equally

naturally, he tells everything he knows, in the hope that they will stop. The others he names are arrested, and tortured, and the net widens. People, panicking, start naming others, in the hope that their strong stand against such evil deeds will raise them above suspicion. A small handful, of course, are strong-willed enough to retain their virtue. It does not help.

Witch hunts are most likely to start when the authorities feel insecure, or need to distract the mob from other concerns. Evidence of an extensive supernatural conspiracy, however, would shake even the most confident Emperor, and create its own witch hunt. In this context, it is worth noting that, although the Kindred do not condemn those who use Disciplines, mortals make no such distinctions; they are all sorcerers, worthy of destruction.

There are thus two kinds of witch hunt that might affect vampires. The first is a purge within the Camarilla,

when Kindred hunt down other vampires who practice forbidden arts. Alliances are broken, trusts betrayed and stories of subterfuge, politics and escape from certain doom follow.

The second is a hunt among the mortals that uncovers the existence of the Kindred. This is one of the Camarilla's greatest fears. They are not secret enough to be completely safe from this; they could not be, and still retain their influence over the daylight world. If the authorities of Rome turned to hunting the Kindred down, they could be eliminated. If that is unlikely, the power of the Camarilla could still be broken, and many ancient vampires consigned to the flames.

The stories provoked here are of unlikely alliances, as the Kindred band together against the threat, intimidation and subterfuge against the mortals, political manipulation of agents in positions of influence and the selection of scapegoats to appease the bloodlust of the mob.

OTHER TIMES

Although this book is set in the latter part of the fourth century, Rome already has a thousand years of history by then. Vampires can endure for centuries, and you might want to play characters who see the rise of Rome as the great power of Europe, or the fall of the old Republic. You can even run a chronicle that skips through the centuries of Roman history, coming to a longer, and more detailed, climax in the fourth century.

There is no space to deal with every period of Roman history in detail; indeed, there is not even enough space to properly cover the fourth century. Thus, this section can only provide suggestions on how to make each historical period different, and what stories you could tell then.

THE RISE OF THE REPUBLIC

It is the seventh century since the foundation of the city, and the second century before Christ, although no one knows that yet. Rome has conquered Italy, and is busy crushing Carthage, Spain and Greece, building the Empire. The city, and its possessions, are ruled by the Senate, headed by two Consuls and checked by the Tribunes of the people. Julius Senex has vanished, but the Camarilla rules the Kindred. It is a good time to be Roman, and a good time to be dead.

THEMES

This is an age of glory and victory, when courage, conviction and decisive action can build an Empire that will last for a thousand years. There is now doubt about the relative worth of past and future here; the past is the foundation on which a more glorious future will be built.

Of course, the glorious future is also founded on the bones of those who opposed the great conquerors, or simply got in the way. This is when it was decided that Europe would be dominated by Rome, not Carthage, and history is written by the winners. So this age is about the creation of reputations that will endure for ever, through lies, destruction and murder.

GODS OF BLOOD AND FIRE

One of the charges that the Romans leveled against the people of Carthage was that they sacrificed humans to their gods. While Romans had no objections to killing people, whether in war, for justice or for entertainment, Romans found human sacrifices to the gods repellent. The vampires of Carthage found this arrangement useful, however, and were not ready to see their comfortable living arrangements destroyed by a bunch of arrogant mortals. They sent some of their own to Rome, with instructions to cripple the Republic so that the armies of Carthage could destroy the city.

The mortals of Rome cannot be expected to successfully oppose supernatural killers, but fortunately for them, the Kindred of the Camarilla are also committed to the survival of the city. Vampires get to replicate the battles of the Roman armies in the shadows of Rome, defeating the Carthaginian warriors sent to destroy the Romans.

PATRICIANS AND PLEBS

The greatest tension within Rome itself at this time is that between the patrician clans and the hordes of plebs, the ordinary people. Wealthy patricians serve as patrons for plebs, disbursing money to their clients in return for support. But there are still more plebs than the patrons can support, and some of the ordinary people do not want to live purely at the beck and call of their betters.

Kindred can serve directly as patrons, as well as controlling the mortals who do so. When the plebs, inspired by their Tribunes, rise up against the patricians, vampires must scramble to preserve their influence. They might maintain their positions by making concessions, but then those allowances will haunt them afterward. Alternatively, they might use violence to frighten people back into line. Either way, the rest of the Camarilla is facing the same problem, so while they can find sympathy, aid is in short supply.

FALL OF THE REPUBLIC

Rome now rules the Mediterranean and has pushed north into Gaul. But the Republic has been weakened, by slave revolts, private wars and secret schemes. While Sulla voluntarily lays aside the position of dictator, Caesar has no such intention, and must be cut down by those he believed were his allies.

The Republic falls anyway, and the chaos extends even to Necropolis.

THEME

The dominant feeling of this period is fear. The structure of the state is changing radically, people are seized from the streets and their homes and never seen again and expressing an opinion about anything can mark you as the mortal enemy of a faction. No one can be trusted; even your closest friends might stab you in the Senate House. Mortals and vampires use violence to seize power, as much from fear of what others will do to them if they do not as from desire for mastery. Even ambition is tainted.

CIVIL WAR

As noted in Chapter One, the Roman civil war also extended to the Kindred. The chaos and fires on the streets

destroyed some Kindred directly, and destroyed the herds of others. This disturbed the power structure of the Camarilla, creating openings for ambitious younger Kindred who wanted to seize power. They sprang at the opportunity, wading through the ashes of their opponents.

The event that drops the player characters into the war depends on their status. If they are young and relatively weak, their patron is destroyed. This means that they are also on someone's list, as the allies of an enemy, but there is a position of authority open; they may well feel that their only real chance of survival is to seize it, no matter what it takes. Older and powerful vampires are targeted directly by enemies seeking their authority.

Although the characters start off fighting for power, they may end up fighting for survival. They may also seize power briefly, only to be betrayed by their allies of convenience and be compelled to flee or be destroyed.

IMPERATOR PROPINQUORUM

As individual mortals seize power over the day, vampires decide that they could also seize power over the night. Elders have always dominated the Senex, but thus far they have always been a group, even if Julius Senex did exert great authority. At this point, however, individual elder vampires offer peace and security in return for loyalty, and pain and destruction as the reward for opposition.

The characters should fear what will happen if these would-be Emperors fail at least as much as they fear what will happen if they succeed. Elder player characters may even become candidates, but should still fear the consequences of their own success: an eternity of being the obvious target for ambitious youngsters. Politics, assassination and outright war in the tunnels of Necropolis are all part of this story.

SLAVE REVOLT

This is the age of the great slave revolts in Italy, the time when Spartacus leads his armies through Italy, only to be crushed by the legions, the survivors crucified along the Appian Way. In such an environment, even the slaves of the Kindred think that they can make a bid for freedom. The mortal, or ghoul, slaves of the characters join a wider slave revolt, which the characters must put down.

The characters should be afraid, for three reasons. First, there are more slaves than vampires, and some of the slaves are ghouls, who have the power to face vampires in single combat. Second, these slaves know many of the secrets of the Kindred, including the locations of their havens, and most of the general weaknesses. Third,

the Vinculum should have made the rebellion impossible, but it has not. There may have been supernatural intervention of some unexplained kind (the Nemeses, perhaps), or some clever planning, so that the slaves of one vampire are never directly involved in, or told about, assaults on that vampire.

While all vampires affected by the revolt work against it, the player characters get the opportunity to track down the ringleaders and kill or destroy them. The characters may find that the whole thing was a ploy by another vampire to support his seizure of power.

SAVE THE REPUBLIC

The obvious way to change history at this point is to save the Roman Republic. Realistically, there were serious structural problems with the existing system, which was not up to running a large Empire, but social and constitutional reform is not really what **Vampire** is about. Instead, characters might intimidate, bribe, manipulate or simply eliminate the mortals trying to seize the position of Emperor, while strengthening the resolve, and hands, of those more committed to the Republic.

It is important not to portray the Senate and Republic as noble, democratic institutions, because they were not; the Senate was hereditary, drawn from a tiny group of ancient families. It was, however, not a completely closed caste, and provided a route for advancement that discouraged despots and civil war. The characters could, reasonably, feel that they were supporting an option that represented the lesser evil.

It is an open question just how different a republican Rome would be, in the grand scheme of things. Small oligarchies are just as capable of oppression as dictators, after all. Thus, the Storyteller can choose how much he wants things to change if the characters succeed.

NERO, FIRE AND CHAOS

In the middle of the first century, the first Christians have come to Rome, and the city burns in the greatest fire ever to strike it. In the aftermath, the Christians burn, too. A succession of monsters have worn the purple, and they are replaced by a rapid turnover of incompetents, before Vespasian seizes power and restores order. Throughout all of this, however, there is no suggestion among mortals that the basic structure of the Empire might change; they fight over the top spot in the system, not over what the system should be.



THEME

This age is dominated by chaos and madness. No one knows who might be the enemy, or when the authorities might take them in, and that applies to vampires as well. The order imposed by the Principate means that they must be careful to hide their existence and activities, lest the mortals hunt the Kindred all down. Human and Kindred form friendships and alliances, but are ready to dissolve them in a moment when the world changes. Everyone is on the lookout for traitors, and that itself is enough to drive some to treachery.

THE COMING OF THE OTHERS

This is the period when Christians first appear in Rome. It also represents the first time vampires who are not truly of the Propinqui arrive in significant numbers and seek a place within the Camarilla. Outsiders are, obviously, a potential threat; no one knows where their loyalties lie.

They are also, equally obviously, potential tools, because their loyalties do not lie within the Camarilla. Thus, they quickly get caught up in tangled political webs as the Kindred try to recruit and restrain these others. Outsiders who can play the political game well can end up in a position of considerable power and influence; those who fail end up as slaves or dead.

THE GREAT FIRE

The great fire of Rome is one of the defining events in the history of the Camarilla. Four in five of the Kindred perish, and the structure of Kindred society collapses. The fire itself is a story that cries out to be played through.

The story covers the fire itself and the immediate aftermath, and the characters' goal is simple survival. The flames themselves are the greatest threat; they are everywhere, and more intense than anything the characters have encountered before. The fear frenzy that the flames provoke is another threat; a vampire on the surface needs seven successes to overcome it, and suffers a one-die penalty due to the omnipresent fire. Even vampires in the upper reaches of Necropolis need three successes to resist the urge to flee deeper into the tunnels. Fights provoked by fleeing Kindred trigger anger frenzies in those facing them, so Necropolis descends into chaos.

The fire burns for five days, which means that Kindred must find somewhere safe to spend five days while the city burns, and maddened monsters stalk Necropolis. Feeding also becomes more urgent as time goes on; many vampires used Vitae to escape the flames, but find that they cannot return to the surface to feed, as fear of the fire drives them

back. This provokes hunger frenzies, in an environment where there are only vampires to feed from.

In this story, the fire is background; the characters cannot fight it, and must simply stay away from it. The threats with which they must engage are the beasts of vampires, their own and others. Things should be dangerous enough that the characters have a good chance of meeting Final Death, or at least falling into torpor.

END OF THE ANTONINES

With the death of Marcus Aurelius, a sequence of good Emperors came to an end. Or, perhaps it is better to say "a sequence without notably bad Emperors." Either way, it marked the end of one of the better periods of Roman history, and was followed by the renewed rule of tyrants.

THEME

This is a time of regret for what has been lost. The Empire is not collapsing, yet, but things are clearly getting worse. The Kindred have also benefited from the internal stability and reasonable government, building up networks of agents and influence, which are now threatened by the more erratic behavior of the new Emperors.

EMPEROR ON THE SANDS

Commodus was famous for his urge to fight as a gladiator. Naturally, he fixed the fights in his favor, but, as he was a better fighter than Nero, Commodus did not need to do it quite so blatantly. He wanted to be honored as a reincarnation of Hercules, and believed that there was no contest he could not win.

Somehow, the Emperor hears of the Kindred races at the Circus Maximus, and demands to be allowed to compete and, naturally, win. It is clear that he does not know the full details of what is going on, or about the competitors, but not even the Camarilla can simply turn down the Emperor of Rome. The characters are landed with the task of making sure that Commodus *thinks* that his request has been acceded to, without revealing anything about the Kindred. Along the way, they are asked to find, and plug, the leak that let him found out.

ANARCHY IN THE EMPIRE

The mid-third century was a time of chaos and civil war, with Emperors replacing each other before the news of their accession could reach the outer provinces. Parts of the Empire declared independence, and maintained it for several years. Plague laid the population low. By rights, the Empire should have fallen, but instead it was saved by Diocletian, who then retired to farm cabbages.

THEME

Uncertainty and opportunity fill the air. Anyone can seize the purple, or at least part of the purple, and Emperors rarely hold power for long enough to conduct a thorough purge, which means that the consequences of supporting a faction tend to be less, in either direction. There is less subtle betrayal, and more blatant changing of loyalties. Politics tends to be direct, and backed up with a sword rather than a dagger.

IMPERATOR AETERNUS

In the chaos, one Kindred has done what none previously dared: he has had himself declared Emperor, and wears the purple. The Praetorian Guard have recognized him, whether due to Majesty or simple bribery is uncertain. His bodyguards are certainly bound by Vinculum. He is ready to rule with a will unfettered.

Obviously, he must be stopped. That means that he must be destroyed, and in such a way that most citizens

of Rome do not realize that an undead blood-drinking monster had been their ruler. However, he is a powerful vampire, guarded by elite warriors of the Praetorian Guard, who are now ghouls enhanced by Vitae. This story is in the genre of impossible missions, and thus most suited to experienced and powerful Kindred.

PLAGUE

The plague strikes swiftly, sweeping through the city and killing hundreds, even thousands. While vampires cannot die of human diseases, they also cannot feed from the dead. Many vampires lose their herds when plague visits.

This creates conflicts as vampires move into new feeding areas, areas previously claimed by the player characters. They must defend their resources against Kindred who have nothing to lose, all the while fearing the arrival of the plague in their own area.

THE OUTER LANDS

Dark, violent and unfamiliar, the lands beyond the borders of the Empire represent everything that is frightful and abhorrent to Roman mortals and Kindred. The outer lands, from the chill woods of the north to the unrelenting sands of the south, present a wide range of atmospheric scenery and tense settings for any story in the ancient world. Each of the environments described in the following section provides its own unique flavor, allowing you to set a backdrop that can make a plot more interesting and color it with a touch of the unknown. Roman characters operating in the outer lands are always at odds with their environment, most often seeking to return to familiar territory and customs as soon as possible. Those with origins outside the Empire may feel a strange stirring, as if pulled back to the home that they have so long forsaken, for better or worse.

Bringing a Roman story into an outer land setting always increases the difficulty, since the characters are removed from the world they know and thrust into one that doesn't seem to operate with the same rules (or, to Roman eyes, with any rules at all). It's a good idea to consider the tone and difficulty of your plot before choosing an outer land setting, to ensure that the choice you make best suits the intended effect on the story. A search for a fugitive assassin might be complicated by a tense chase into deep Germanian woods or the peculiar shifting sands of Arabia, intensifying the suspense and

focusing on Stealth and Survival Skills, while the same story brought to the wide winter fields of Albion could simplify the hunt and direct the focus to the tactics of a more direct pursuit.

Of course, the outer lands are vast and varied. They are defined only by a negative, after all: that which is not Rome is designated "outer." Each entry in this section could fill a book on its own if it described a land in detail. Instead, each distinct territory, chosen because they all border on the outermost territories of Roman conquest, is assigned a thematic role and described only in terms of that role. Simplifying these lands not only provides Storytellers with an easier choice when deciding to set a story outside of Roman territories but also helps to simulate the Roman viewpoint as each country is broken down into a single overriding, atmospheric descriptor. In truth, Germania is huge, ranging from temperate to arctic, and host to complex societies boasting a multitude of cultures, religious traditions and origins. To the Romans, though, Germania is perpetually cold, barbaric and wild. Since their belief is limited by that assumption, their perception follows suit — a feature of Camarilla society that the entry here is constructed to accommodate.

ALBION AND HIBERNIA

Albion and Hibernia, the Roman names for the territories of Britannia north and west of the Empire's

limit (in modern terms: Scotland and Ireland), are a mass of cold, rolling hills, shrouded in mist and dusted with the icy dew of the north. To Roman Kindred, the place is distinctly unpleasant: wet, crude and populated by fierce, unabashedly savage tribes. There is plenty of food for the skilled hunter — beasts and mortals seem to run wild over every square foot of muddy field and moss-bound wood — but, as the Roman Kindred put it, you have to work for every drop of blood you take. Nothing is easy here for the vampires of the Camarilla. Nothing is pleasant.

These twin territories make great settings for stories that would benefit from a pervading sense of heaviness and dread. Constant descriptions of the wet — weighing down the clothes of the characters, ruining their wooden implements and chilling them to the bone — help to keep the atmosphere up and convey the sense of unpleasant distance from the familiar “civilized” settlements of Rome. The presence of ancient stone formations and the ever-present suggestion of similarly aged cultures (and vampires) in their arrangement goes a long way toward provoking fear in Roman characters, since the whole place is very clearly a land that predates the eldest elements of Rome. The great sense of foreboding can be balanced, though, by hinting at great energies that rumbles throughout, just waiting to be discovered or understood. Thematically, it is a place of *forgotten power*, spawned of long-lost tribes and waning gods.

The thematic focus of Albion and Hibernia can be underscored by referring to structures that have long fallen into ruin, their markings faded and their edges blunted by centuries-long erosion. Scattered stones may appear random and natural at first, only to reveal a system of conscious placement on closer examination. The mortal tribes should seem desperate in their defiance, as if they know that they are the last of their kind, facing off against the modern force of Roman civilization. Everything here is the product of something old and strange, and everything — the weather, the people, even the landscape itself — should seem arranged in a subtle and crude shape designed, when it's all put together, to keep the Romans out.

The Romans are no more eager to interact with the spawn of these ancient influences. A triple wall separates the Roman province of Britannia from the unclaimed land of Albion to the north: the furthest is the Gask Ridge, a series of warning towers and fortifications designed to serve as a line of first defense. Most endured frequent raids and were abandoned by CE 90. Roughly 40 years later, Hadrian's Wall, a structure of rough stone and packed soil, was built, cutting across

the whole of Britannia. It was breached several times by invading Caledonians from the north, and the line of the Empire moved back and forth over it, eventually pushing nearly 100 miles further north. There, the Antonine Wall was constructed, again cutting across the whole of the island. This wall, just as the others, failed to prevent the tribes of the north from attacking Roman territories, and eventually the Empire's border settled back near Hadrian's fortification.

Much of the land of Albion is grassy, mountainous, dotted with ancient, massive stone formations and boggy, shallow lakes. The land is temperate, with a significant forest growth and long grasses dominating. The coasts are windy, salt-scoured and relatively inhospitable. Hundreds of small, rain-soaked islands are scattered off the shores, cropping up in greater numbers and proximity the farther north you go.

Hibernia is no more inviting. A small island to the west of Britannia, Hibernia's largely flat interior is protected by a ring of coastal mountains. The climate is milder than Albion's, but a constant dampness pervades the whole of the territory, souring the peaceful, verdant landscape for visiting Romans. Beasts of the land are relatively few in numbers, but birds seem to rule the whole of the island, flocking in staggering numbers. The whole of Hibernia is heavily forested. Unlike Albion, which was largely unconquered due to difficulties with the aggressive native populace, Hibernia was never really a tempting conquest for Rome, and it was left largely untouched.

Albion and Hibernia are stalked by distinctly unpleasant barbarian vampires. A great cult of bloody-minded druidic monsters have insinuated themselves throughout both territories, lending their fierce, chthonian magic in support of the wild mortals there. Those Kindred who have encountered these barbarian vampires and survived are few and far between, and most are loathe to recount their horrifying experience or the black sorceries they witnessed. The vast majority (if not all) of the vampires here are twisted, filthy Nosferatu and hardy, bestial Gangrel.

Flora: Abundant, dense deciduous and coniferous forests. Tall grasses, thistles and heather dominate the flatter moorlands and tundra. The land is rolling, difficult to navigate, and frequently covered in hard, wet rains that encourage the growth of tangled brush and thick, wooded canopies.

Fauna: Brown bear, reindeer, elk, wolf, fox, hedgehog, stoat, swallow, seagull, tern, eagle. The wild is populated enough to offer sustenance to a vampire who can stomach animal blood and is at least somewhat capable of forest hunting.

SAMPLE SETTING: THE BLACK LAKE

One of the many small lakes of Albion, located just a short distance from Hadrian's Wall, the Black Lake is seems unremarkable enough: just another windy, cold, watery hole in the ground. Its distinguishing feature is a series of huge black stones, roughly pointed and pitted with age, scattered all around its shore.

Moving between these stones on the approach to the lake, visitors can't help a feeling of foreboding, as if they are crossing some kind of unmapped border. The air feels distinctly colder as one nears the water, and the grasses seem to become stunted and thin. Moving quickly is almost impossible; the uneven ground is patchy and often gives way to thick, deep mud. Anyone who attempts to run here risks injury if he isn't careful – and a misstep could leave him stuck in an ankle-deep morass of black mire.

The lake is the center of operation for a circle of undead cultists, and the energies of their sorceries have been warping the lake for centuries. The vampires sleep at the bottom of the water, blackening the lake with mud that is ritually drawn up from the ground and mixed with blood, forming a shield against the sun's rays. Vampires with keen senses who smell or taste the water will notice traces of blood in all of it... if they ever get that close.

Trespassers who venture too near to the lake risk attracting the attention of the hungry creatures within. All of the tribes nearby know to stay well away, lest they be dragged in and devoured, and most of the local animals actually keep their distance. Because the feeding is sparse, the waterlogged vampires of the Black Lake must emerge every so often, striking out in search of sustenance. They stalk the highland fields, dripping the stained waters of their haven and muttering to one another in the ancient, forgotten tongue of their long-dead people as they go. What the vampires find, they drag back to the waters, sating themselves on the victims' blood and saving the rest for sacrifice under the waves.

The stones around the lake grow subtly every time a victim is sacrificed there. The vampires of the lake believe that their unimaginable lengths are buried deep, reaching toward the core of the Earth, and that the ritual offerings of flesh give the stones the strength to rise slowly. When they are tall enough, they will activate, calling forth an impossibly ancient elder – and the cult will trap him and share in his diablerie, inheriting the staggeringly powerful, thick Vitae that coats his heart.

Roman Kindred characters may be drawn to the lake by following up on the disappearance of mortal allies,

or simply because they sense the ritual magic at work there. They may seek to destroy the barbarian vampires within, or they may attempt to make diplomatic contact in hopes of brokering peace and gaining an understanding of the cults of Albion. The story of the elder may actually be true, and characters may respond when the stones reach their prescribed height, bringing forth a power old and terrible.

GERMANIA

Blood stains the northern borders of the Rome, shed over centuries of battle between the legionnaires of the Republic (and, later, the Empire) and the fierce tribes of Magna Germania, the unconquered lands beyond the Rhine. Legend says that the very land itself has gained a thirst for Roman blood, like a dog turned vicious. Frigid winters and foreboding forests await visitors, and Roman Kindred tell terrifying tales of the brutish vampires who dwell there, waiting to unleash their mad fury on the civilized undead who cross the border.

The Rhine (Rhenus to the Romans) marks the edge of Roman territory through the majority of campaigns, dividing the forces of the Legions from the impenetrable forest home of the enemy. Roman legions are stationed all along the western and southern banks of the river, staffed with sentinels tasked with keeping the Germanic tribes at bay. Conflict is frequent and brutal, claiming many lives on both sides. The bones of fallen warriors are scattered along the bottom of the cold river, spawning awful spirits and serving as a warning to all who would pass unbidden. The famed battle of the Teutoburg Forest, beginning in CE 9 and setting the stage for seven years of brutal war, marked one of the most shocking defeats in Roman military history and the beginning of the long legacy of bloodshed over the Rhine.

The winters of Germania are long, dark and severe, testing the limits of Roman endurance. Thick snowfalls and icy winds make travel difficult and demoralize all but the sturdiest explorers. The dense forests disrupt sightlines, and the thick canopy of coniferous trees can interfere with nocturnal navigation by blotting out the sky, masking stars and blocking moonlight.

The outer lands of Germania make a great setting for stories that are thematically compatible with the concept of *natural threat*. The land doesn't carry the same sense of hidden power that unconquered Albion does. Instead, Germania is a territory ruled by rude nature itself, presenting an environmental menace to Roman visitors instead of a mystic one. Survival is difficult there as a variety of skills are tested by the difficult terrain, harsh weather and unfamiliar peoples. Every attempt

to tame or conquer the land is met with a maelstrom of resistance, demonstrating the chaos of unhindered natural forces and the incredible task of locking a land down under Roman rule. Wind shrieks and claws at unprotected flesh. Frost hardens cloth and slicks weapons. Beasts of the forest harass Roman Kindred, and tribal mortals (and their vampire brethren) attack without warning or mercy. The land is actually temperate, but its atmosphere is best served by a winter setting, contrasting it with the environment that most Roman Kindred will be familiar with.

Members of the Camarilla in Germania find that one of their most common assumptions is challenged on a nightly basis: the notion that they are naturally superior predators. Here, they are presented with a land that seems almost unconquerable, and yet demonstrates little or no evidence of supernatural influence.

The vampires of Germania seem, to the Romans, to be completely bereft of human intelligence. The vampires flicker like shadows through the wooded land, moving in small groups and stalking their prey like mad wolves. There is a cleverness to these vampires that can't be denied — a sort of innate sense of vicious tactics — but Roman vampires are reluctant to admit that the Germanian vampires' behavior indicates anything like premeditation. Confederations of tribal Gangrel dominate the land, and Striges run wild throughout.

Flora: Heavy coniferous and deciduous woodland dominated by pine, fir, oak, ash, beech, birch and elm. The forests of Germania are notoriously dense and devoid of civilized landmark. In the winters, the trunks are blackened by moisture and stripped bare, making them even more difficult to differentiate.

Fauna: Brown bears, deer, foxes, weasels, songbirds, storks, geese, land fowl. Sources of blood are abundant for vampires who can sustain themselves on the blood of animals, but many of the creatures of the wood are potentially dangerous or difficult to catch.

SAMPLE SETTING: THE ICY COPSE

On the northern bank of the Rhine, at a bend that falls some distance between two of the Roman fortifications, there is a particular cluster of trees with a bloody history. In winter, the snows seem to fall heavier over this one spot — perhaps because winds seem to converge on it from several directions, turned by the lay of the land. The barren trees are crusted with ice when the snows come, and they shine in the moonlight, crackling eerily with the swaying of the boughs.

Those who enter the woods at this point often claim to feel the cold more intensely, as though it is somehow concentrated between the damp, black trunks of the creaking trees. The snow drifts deeply over tangled roots, covered in a thin, brittle layer of ice. No birds chirp here, and no beast breaks the surface of the snow.

The Icy Copse is the staging ground for a Germanian tribe of warriors whose experienced familiarity with the terrain and deceptively clever tactical methods make them a serious threat. The bones of Romans carpet the forest floor beneath the snows, and the bodies of a few torpid Kindred lie there, left to rot with the rest of the corpses and blanketed, there to remain until the thaw reveals the vampires to the tribesmen — who are sure to burn them when they suspect a curse or corruption that prevents decay.

Experienced Roman tacticians will recognize that anyone entering the copse from the riverside is walking into a strategically unfavorable environment. The position of the trees and the lay of the land make it too easy for hidden enemies to lie in wait undetected, and the only route of escape is the river itself: difficult to ford and almost impossible to reach without stepping out onto the open ground of the northern bank.

Roman Kindred characters might find themselves in the Icy Copse while pursuing a native enemy across the river. They could hear about the frequent battles there from the garrisoned soldiers and investigate out of curiosity, or they could happen upon the copse while searching for lost allies. They may even be seeking a fallen vampire, knowing that he was last seen in the vicinity of the Icy Copse, and that his body must be concealed somewhere within. The story of the Icy Copse could serve as a small chapter in a larger tale about the ongoing campaign to conquer Germania, demonstrating the strange and difficult character of the land beyond the Rhine.

PARTHIA

The subtropical lands on the southeastern border of the Roman territories play host to an array of dangers: an aggressive mortal Empire, a great mountainous barrier and the unspeakable power of primeval vampire dynasts.

Between the Roman territories and the Parthian empire, the Taurus Mountains stand: a range of grand peaks spanning across a great plateau, some of which reach more than 10,000 feet high, disappearing into the clouds above. The mountains are treacherous and pitted with deep caves, making them all but impassable except at certain well-guarded gaps. To the west of the mountains, fertile grasslands stretch far and wide. To the

east, the green lands give way to an arid, mind-numbingly featureless desert that extends all the way to the gates of the Parthian cities far beyond.

These desert lands are ruled by the mobile cavalry of the Arsacid dynasty: the armored cataphracts with their iron armor and heavy swords, or the mounted archers, trained in lightning strike-and-retreat tactics that take advantage of the relative immobility of the Roman infantry. Even small bands of Romans trying to cross the sands must contend with mounted patrols when they near the fortifications of the Empire.

The empire of the Parthians extends far to the south and east, cutting into Arabia and reaching all the way to India. The Roman Empire's push eastwards originally opened a route of traffic for Asian vampires, but the Empire's latest aggressive move, beginning in the first century BCE, has attracted the attention of a small number of extremely old Daeva, bringing some westwards on a dangerously close approach to Rome. Elders of staggering age and power made relatively speedy conquest of the loose accumulation of Parthian Gangrel and Nosferatu, dragging them into organized service and assembling an

undead culture that actually presents a growing threat to the Camarilla itself. Rumors of the influence of Striges abound among Roman Kindred, suggesting that the whole of the Eastern Empire is assembling itself into a staging ground for an organized invasion. Whether or not this rumor is true, Kindred of the Legio Mortuum report a clear systematic intelligence behind the attacks they endure along the Taurus range.

Thematically, Parthia represents a *culture in competition* with Rome, and best serves stories that benefit from an aggressive foreign threat. The setting is extremely old, centered on the cradle of human civilization, so the vampire influence from the east should seem similarly ancient and unknowable. This is the land of desiccated Methuselahs, drawing on the power of ages to extend their predatory influence. An incursion of Daeva elders moving westward from India, enslaving the native vampires as they go, provides the basis for an exciting and challenging story from the perspective of the Camarilla.

Descriptions of the Parthian environment should highlight the structured and foreign qualities of the landscape: the marks and sculpture of the Arsacid dynasty, the mass



of strange languages and cultures absorbed into the empire (no less diverse and impenetrable to an outsider than those of Rome) and the scattered evidence of frequent conflict between the two great enemies: the occasional fly-blown corpse of an armored Roman legionnaire can go a long way to getting the message across.

The vampires of Parthia are almost all victims of Daeva conquest, tangled up in potent emotional manipulations and the power of the Vinculum. Windblown Gangrel crawl the sands, searching to extend their masters' authority, while cruel Nosferatu flicker through the mountain ranges, watching for Roman invaders and seeking their prey among the garrisons stationed there. At the core of it all, the glittering Daeva dwell in cushioned luxury, spinning their honeyed webs for all.

Flora: Subtropical grassland on the western edge: palm, oak, lotus and sedge grasses. Eastern desert: sand scrub, cactus and palms. The vegetation here is sparse enough and low enough to provide characters with a wide vista – and to leave them exposed to enemy detection on moonlit nights.

Fauna: Western edge: herons, frogs, tortoises, crocodiles, snakes. Eastern desert: vultures, goats, camels, horses. Feeding is difficult in this territory unless vampires are willing to strike into mortal settlements.

SAMPLE SETTING: THE HIDDEN OASIS

Deep in the Parthian desert, less than two night's ride from the city-state of Hatra, a small stand of palms surrounds a watering hole of exquisite beauty. Deep, clear and always full of water, the pond at the Oasis has saved the lives of many wanderers – and drawn them into a ferociously clever trap.

The Oasis is the haven of a wickedly powerful Daeva elder who has conquered most of the vampires of the great city and rests too far away for any man or vampire from Hatra to get to within a single night. The elder himself is perfectly capable of making the journey in just a couple of hours, because of the staggering speed his Blood confers upon him. He sleeps deep within the waters, merging with them by use of Protean (learned from Parthian Gangrel the elder enslaved many decades ago).

Any visitor who drinks the waters of the Hidden Oasis is safe, so long as he does not stay past dusk. Those who do witness the rising of the Daeva elder and are almost always instantly driven mad by his divine beauty. Those mortals whose minds shatter are slain in a blur of barely visible motion. Those who manage to keep it together are faced with a terrible demand: pledge to give them-

selves over to the vampire's worship forever more or be destroyed. Those who accept are sent into Hatra with instruction to infiltrate and await the elder's commands.

Vampires who encounter the elder must react quickly, and with appropriate humbleness, in petitioning for his mercy. Most are drawn in by his brilliant Sovereignty and find themselves accepting his Vitae, willingly or otherwise.

The Hidden Oasis presents an extreme challenge for Roman Kindred. Even those who manage to convince the elder not to slay them must understand that his existence proves that the fearful tales of incredibly powerful foreign elders are true, and that the Camarilla is facing an imminent threat. Kindred may have no choice but to confront and neutralize the Daeva – but to meet him in direct combat is sure suicide.

Roman Kindred may come across the Oasis while investigating tales of unusual activity in and around Hatra. They might be drawn to the waters because a mortal caravan was destroyed there, or because contact with a fellow vampire of the Camarilla was severed after he made the journey to Hatra. They could learn about the elder by dealing with other Parthian Kindred desperate to escape his clutches.

OUTER ARABIA

Past the southern edge of the Parthian lands, an arid, extreme terrain extends to the Mare Erythraeum (or, in modern terms, the Arabian Sea). All but inaccessible by land (due to harsh, mountainous ranges in the north and the dangers of crossing the hostile Empire of Parthia), most Roman Kindred who find their way to Outer Arabia do so by sea.

The land is scorched, dry and largely uninhabited, providing little in the way of shelter or feeding for most vampires. Heated to searing temperatures in the daytime and cooling sharply at night, the flat plains are scoured with fierce, gritty winds. When rains come, they submerge the whole of the land in flash floods, washing the whole of the land clean and vanishing into the hungry earth. Only the land at the very southern edge of the territory boasts fertile greenery, and that place is ruled by the Himyarites, an unchallenged society of former conquerors. Everything about the vast stretch of territory between Parthia and Himyar seems harsh and cruel, as if calculated to test the limits of mortal endurance – and to provide the Kindred with nothing in the way of sustenance.

Those hardy mortals who do wander the lands – Bedouin nomads and small Himyarite trading caravans – are expert in matters of survival, and difficult to find, let

alone subdue. There is, simply put, no good reason for a Roman vampire to visit this place of his own free will.

That isn't to say you can't set a story in the Outer Arabian wasteland. The atmosphere of *barren hopelessness* makes this land a good place to start a story of vengeance or redemption — where the characters must start at the very bottom and find their way (by claw or by faith) to the very top. The blasted plains and sand dunes are a physical representation of the emptiness of spirit many Kindred face within themselves and must learn to overcome. The lands of the Himyarites can offer unexpected reward at the end of a journey for Romans condemned to wander the sandy plains, representing the hidden paradise that awaits characters who are willing to be stripped of all luxuries in their quest for strength or enlightenment.

There are almost no Kindred in the Outer Arabian desert. Even the toughest Gangrel would be mad to wander there unless they move with a Bedouin tribe, and those who do are likely to be ferreted out and destroyed by the mortals the vampires prey on. The Himyarite states are plagued by their share of native Nosferatu and Gangrel, of course, and even play host to a number of adventurous (or shipwrecked) Mekhet and Daeva.

Flora: Sparse desert brush through most of the territories, giving way to deep, lush, tropical jungle in the mountains along the southern coast. Until a character gets to that jungle, caves and sand pits offer the only available shelter.

Fauna: Wildcats, baboons, hyenas, ibex, scorpions, small rodents, desert wolves. Hunting is difficult in the desert, and most of the creatures wandering there are dry and relatively bloodless. Once the barrier is crossed into the jungle, though, the feeding is abundant and comparatively easy.

SAMPLE SETTING: THE WELL OF BLOOD

There is a tale that Kindred tell, brought to the cities, they say, by Bedouin Gangrel, of a peculiar and frightening feature of the unmapped Outer Arabian desert. Lost deep in the shifting dunes of the sea of sand, there is a subterranean font of blood that runs rich and without end. Only the Bedouin know the site, and only they can find it. The Gangrel who have burrowed through the searing sands and fed from the crimson well say that it sates any hunger, providing sustenance unmatched by any living prey and granting great power to the drinker.

The tale is not true. The nomad Gangrel spread the myth to ensnare credulous vampires, who are lured out into the desert and diablerized for their greed. The

character of the story seems to suggest the perpetuation of some great ritual or the subterranean slumber of a cursed Methuselah, but the story changes whenever it's told to help ensure that it cannot be disproved (and make it difficult to track the original tale-tellers).

All but one Bedouin tribe will disavow any knowledge of the hidden well and treat enquiries with suspicion. The one tribe, corrupted by the Gangrel and prepared for the approach, on the other hand, is all too happy to help — but tribe members will demand payment for guidance to maximize the benefit to them and make the story more believable. Observant Kindred will spot a couple of ghouls among the tribe, and may gain some understanding of the trap if they manage to track the retainers back to their diabolist Gangrel elders.

Those who follow the tribe into the desert are walking into an extremely dangerous situation. There is little in the way of concealment or shelter for those incapable of merging with the sands, and the Bedouins will lead the Kindred straight to a pre-arranged ambush. If there is one weakness the would-be guides share, it is the distinct pleasure they take in watching the eager vampires blunder into the trap, for the Bedouins hate all undead creatures except their masters.

Kindred characters may encounter the trap because they are genuinely pursuing the myth of the well, but this story works best if they actually know (or suspect) what's going on before they undertake the journey. They might not actually be guided by the Bedouins, instead shadowing the nomads as they lead a willing patsy to the trap. The characters might be sent to retrieve or destroy the Gangrel masterminds with a full appraisal of their technique and their power — something that may throw the antagonists off balance, but doesn't necessarily make things easy.

OUTER AFRICA

Outside of Egypt, the Roman provinces of Africa barely reach beyond the northern coast, hugging the waters of the great Mare Nostrum (Mediterranean). Few Romans venture further inland, their advances halted by the forbidding terrain and constant threat of Berber assault. The great barrier of the Sahara desert is all but impassable, and the land beyond, occasionally reached by sea, is a thick and inhospitable rainforest jungle. Deadly predators crawl and slither throughout, and the mortal population is anything but welcoming as far as the Roman interlopers are concerned.

Africa is a land of unrelenting heat and strangeness to the Romans. The stunningly varied and unfamiliar animal life is an endless fascination and apparent evidence

of the dominion of twisted and malevolent gods. The Romans transfer their fear of the predatory and strange wildlife to the mortals who dwell on the continent, assuming that they, too, must be bestial, violent and cruel. Tales told about encounter with the native population invariably turn to unflattering portrayals of monstrous savagery and uncomprehending brutishness.

The theme of the Outer African setting is *intense competition*. The land is crawling with dangerous animals, and the vampire population is higher than normal. Mekhet native to the continent engage in an ages-old practical cycle of propagation and elimination, creating an environment in which the strong survive and the weak are destroyed in constant battles for territory. Gangrel and Nosferatu lurk in the shimmering heat as well, doing battle with the Mekhet and, in some places, even managing to match their strength. Roman vampires who arrive in the setting are likely to expect the prevalence of inter-familial violence and diablerie because of the eyewitness accounts brought back to Rome, but Kindred seldom understand the ferocity of its practice until they experience it for themselves. What is, to the African vampires of the ancient world, a carefully orchestrated and ongoing ritual of selection seems, to an outsider, to be nothing but madness unleashed. Striges run wild among the diabolists, corrupting the selection process and turning it to their own advantage, using it to recruit and forge undead warriors of their own. Stories set in the African wild should be extremely challenging, pushing characters to make use of the full range of their abilities in order to survive.

Flora: Incredibly diverse and lush. Tall grasses and dense scrub surrounding huge baobab trees dominate the savannah. The jungle is solid with greenery: ferns, palms, deciduous wide-leaved trees, water flowers, hard tropical grasses. An astonishing array of strange color and shape present themselves to visitors, and cover is abundant.

Fauna: A staggering assortment. Buffalo, deer, giraffes, lions, tigers, crocodiles, huge constrictors and small poisonous snakes, elephants, rhinoceroses, large insects, monkeys, frogs, camels, birds of all types. Hunting is easy, but it's just as easy to find oneself trespassing on a predator's territory and provoking an attack. Kindred used to fighting off wolves and small birds of prey may have difficulty facing down a desperate lion or a vicious crocodile.

SAMPLE SETTING: THE RED BEND

Just off the shore of the Mare Rubrum, far to the south-eastern edge of the Roman territories, a river disappears

into the deep jungle of unknown and unconquered lands. Somewhere around the eighth bend, resting well within thick foliage, a centuries-old feud is playing out, forever invisible to Roman eyes.

A band of shadowy Mekhet hunters once staked a claim to a mortal tribe that settled near the river, guarding them and encouraging their growth so that the vampires might feed at ease. The tribe was discovered by a small family of Nosferatu who descended upon it, clashing with its guardians and laying waste to the village. Vampires on both sides fell in those nights, broken under brutal fists and torn by gnashing teeth. Both sides swore vengeance, and their childer and childer's childer have been locked in immortal combat ever since. The Nosferatu are almost completely fallen to the Striges, who now seek to prolong the battle and encourage the Mekhet to keep embracing mortals so that they can be subdued and diablerized.

Any visitor who happens upon the Red Bend is walking into a world of trouble. Mortals are almost immediately seized for blood, rarely escaping the rending of the frenzied warriors. Kindred are no less likely to suffer attack, although those who display proficiency in battle might earn the respect of the assailants — if the Kindred can prove that they aren't members of the enemy's family.

Kindred might wander blithely into the middle of this conflict while exploring the terrain, or after a shipwreck on the eastern coast of Africa. They may follow lost mortals or vampires along the river, searching for evidence of their passing. Kindred may even know about the conflict in advance, and willingly visit the domain in hopes of finding the source of the violence and resolving it.

THE SEVEN SEAS

Seven seas make up the whole of the oceanic world to Roman Kindred: the Mare Nostrum, the Pontos, the Mare Rubrum, the Mare Suprum, the Aegean, the Mare Erythraeum and the Mare Caspiane, or, in modern terms, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Red Sea, the Adriatic Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean and the Caspian Sea.

Sea travel has always been notoriously difficult for vampires. It's almost impossible to find a vessel that's reliably sealed against sunlight, and there are too many potentially uncontrollable factors at work in naval voyage: the currents, the winds, the health of the crew, the likelihood of pirate assault and the skill of the navigator can all make or break a trip for a vampire. Only those who are truly desperate or truly insane would attempt anything other than a short jaunt — and even that takes courage verging on suicidal lunacy.

What's more, the seas are as great deserts to Kindred. There is precious little blood available on the open waters, and feeding on the crew of a ship can rapidly turn into an exercise in self-destruction — especially if those responsible for propulsion and navigation are weakened enough to falter.

Voyage on any of the seas, charted or otherwise, can support and reflect a theme of *shifting uncertainties*. Danger is ever-present, conditions can change with little warning and the characters literally have no solid ground to stand on. Rapid shifts in atmosphere, from placid calm to crashing tidal violence reinforce this theme quite powerfully.

Running a story on the high seas presents a couple of great opportunities, as well. The nature of the journey forces the characters into close quarters with one another and allows no real escape until the trip comes to a close — a fantastic way to build tension, especially if the antagonist of the story is hidden among them. A storm can blow a ship away from charted lands, allowing you to run stories of exploration and discovery unlimited by anything in this or any other book.

Flora: None. Great masses of weeds grow beneath the surface of the ocean, but they are unlikely to be noticed unless a vampire walks the seabed.

Fauna: Abundant, but concealed beneath the surface. Marine life of all types swims below the waves, but most Kindred are too sluggish under water to hunt capably.

SAMPLE SETTING: THE ROARING WHIRLPOOL

There is a great river in Outer Arabia that empties into the Mare Erythraeum with great rushing velocity, crashing into the coastal currents and forming a whirlpool of staggering dimension. A scouring mist is thrown into the

air over the whole of the raging vortex, dimming the skies and causing frequent rains. Ships that stray too close to the currents at the outer edges of the whirlpool risk being drawn into its spinning rapids and getting trapped in an uncontrollable, hours-long journey that ends at the bottom of the ocean.

Legend has it that dozens of wrecks lie under the core of the vortex, the remains of their cargo and crew scattered on the seabed for miles around. Treasure beyond mortal measure awaits the explorer who can find a way to navigate the whirlpool and escape its draw — but none have survived it to date, and few are brave enough (or foolish enough) to make the attempt.

Gold and precious stones aren't the only valuables that lie under the vortex, though. An immeasurably old vampire is buried within the wrecks, lost in the sleep of ages. Rumors abound: that a great reward awaits the Kindred who rescue this noble elder, that she is a sorceress of immense power and that the Roaring Whirlpool is a mystic defense, that he is a member of the lost clan of traitors waiting to rise and claim vengeance against the Camarilla, and that he is not a vampire at all, but a fallen god caught in a diabolical trap. Nobody knows which, if any, are true, but many claim to know someone who has seen evidence to prove one story or another.

Roman Kindred may be tempted to investigate the whirlpool, hoping to discover the truth (and benefit from it — either by drinking the heart's blood of the slumbering one or reviving her and seeking reward). Characters in a story might undertake the journey themselves, or they might seek lost allies who already made the attempt and vanished into the vortex. They might be caught in the whirlpool while on a journey to another destination, stumbling upon the truth at its core by accident. They might even get to the whirlpool some other, stranger way, as the result of a ritual of the Veneficia or Theban Sorcery.

THE STRIGES

"No!" Trulla shouted, struggling to reach her sibling. Petronius held her tight in his strong, ivory-white arms, pulling her away. He already had a dagger in his fist, its blade glinting in the firelight.

"Forget him! He's gone! He's GONE!" Petronius flung her around, pushing her down the corridor. "Run, you fool. Don't you see his eyes? RUN!"

Even as she fled, blood tears blinding her, she could hear the creature growling with the voice of her fallen brother.

"Petroniusss of... the Julii..." The last word was more hiss and spit than speech. Flailing, stumbling, she choked back a fearful sob. She heard a loud slap, the sound of meat hitting meat. She heard bones breaking, and an anguished, stuttering cry cut short.

She ran as fast as her legs would carry her.

Background: Vicious, predatory and utterly inhuman, the Striges are the progenitors of the Julii and their relentless, hateful enemies. Betrayed and rejected by their Kindred descendants, the Striges have vowed to destroy the whole of that clan and erase all of its accomplishments, including the civilized union of the Camarilla and the glories of its Necropolis. To the vampires of Rome, the Striges are known as the Nemeses, the diabolical spirits of vengeance with the horrifying power to seize command of friends and allies, striking Kindred down with the hands of their own lovers and childer. Few understand the relationship the Striges share with the Julii, and few of the Julii are eager to acknowledge or explain it in any but the most oblique terms.

Nobody knows how the Striges were created, how they reproduce (if at all) or how many there are. No one has ever reported an encounter with more than three or four of the ghostly Nemeses at once, but their presence has been noted in almost all of the Outer Lands, and incidences of simultaneous or near-simultaneous encounter suggest that there must be dozens – perhaps even hundreds – in existence, spread throughout the ancient world.

Because of the Striges' legendary interaction with dying Remus (the contact that led to the creation of the Julii) and their power to inhabit the bodies of the dead, the Striges are considered creatures of death and the underworld, referred to by some as the Birds of Dis. The word *strix* means "owl," and those birds are associated with the Striges in vampire lore. Therefore, it is taboo for Roman Kindred to feed upon owls or make ghouls of them.

The Striges commit horrifying debaucheries in the bodies they possess, violating them in ways unspeakable and unforgivable. It is the Striges' tendency to revel in stolen flesh (and the tithe of flesh that they demanded from Aulus Julius Senex, the founder of the Camarilla), that precipitated the break between the Julii and their ancestors, leading to the vengeful oath of the Striges.

Description: In disembodied form, the Striges look like vaguely bird-shaped accumulations of fog or smoke. Disembodied Striges caught in sunlight or fire (which are impenetrable solids to them) are held in place, but otherwise unharmed, floating incongruously in mid-air until darkness frees them. They can speak in their disembodied form, even when trapped in light.

When possessing a body, the Striges are almost impossible to detect by ordinary means. Time degrades mortal remains, and those who walk beyond death might be spotted by the marks of lividity or decay, but Kindred flesh is undamaged by the passage of nights, and betrays little outward symptom of inhabitation. Only one outward sign marks a body possessed by a Strix: the eyes reflect light like an owl's, shining whenever they look toward a source of illumination.

Storytelling Hints: The Striges are utterly inhuman creatures, completely without sympathy or compassion. There are two things they desire: to revel in a violent excess of sensation – something that is novel to them, since they have no sense of touch, taste or smell in their disembodied state – and to destroy their misbegotten descendants, the Julii. The Striges care little about all other Kindred, except insofar as they aid or serve the Julii, provide bodies for entertainment and allow access to the hated enemy and their creations. When the Striges are nowhere near the Julii, the Striges are often content to possess bodies and "play" with them, desecrating the flesh in a manner horrifying to even the most jaded mortal creatures. As soon as the Striges detect the presence of their blood, though, they become murderously focused. Striges in vampire bodies love nothing more than to diablerize the Julii, consuming and destroying their souls.

The Nemeses are not bestial. They possess a cold, cruel intellect, and are perfectly capable of communication. Indeed, one spoke to Remus himself as he lay dying; not bargaining with him, as the legends of the Kindred state, but soothing him as he died, knowing well that

it was about to seize control of his body. It is not above the Striges to strike a bargain with vampires or mortals so that the Striges can get closer to their hated foes — or just so that the Striges can indulge themselves.

STORY SEEDS

- A Strix attempts to barter with a young vampire, offering to help arrange his acquisition of Status and ascension to power as long as he provides it with mortal bodies to “enjoy.” The vampire succumbs to temptation and begins to kill humans for the Strix, and it returns the favor by surreptitiously eliminating his competitors in the Camarilla. The characters know that something strange is going on, and are compelled to investigate the neonate.

- A vampire is accused of diablerie by a Mekhet seer, who claims to see the marks of the crime on the vampire’s soul. She denies any memory of the event, sparking fears of Strix possession. The characters must delve into the vampire’s recent past and discover whether or not she’s telling the truth — and, if she is, where the Nemesis that possessed her has gone....

- The Striges have murdered and possessed a traveling band of merchants. Now the Striges leave a trail of staggering brutality in their wake, moving from place to place and grabbing, killing and violating anyone they can get their hands on. News of the band of rampaging corpses has reached the Camarilla, and the Kindred are considering measures to ensure that the Striges do not reach the gates of Rome. The characters participate in the debates, hoping to keep the enemy at bay.

SAMPLE STRIX

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 5, Stamina 0, or as determined by body

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Skills: Investigation 3, Occult 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: N/A

Willpower: 7

Morality: N/A

Health: In the disembodied form, a Strix uses Willpower instead of Health. If reduced to zero Willpower, a Strix dissolves into nothingness. When a Strix is inhabiting a body, the Health of the Strix is determined by the body’s trait.

Striges regain Willpower at the rate of one point every week when disembodied, or one point every two days when possessing a body and indulging their ghoulish, destructive whims.

Initiative: 9, or as determined by body

Defense: 3, or as determined by body

Speed: 20, or as determined by body

Size: 2 in disembodied form. When a Strix is inhabiting a body, the Size of the Strix is determined by the body’s trait.

Supernatural Powers:

Possession – A Strix has the power to possess any inert corpse, spending a Willpower point to inhabit the flesh and take control of it. The Strix must be in physical contact with the body to claim it, and it takes one full turn to pour itself into the body. Deceased mortals or animals and vampires in torpor qualify for possession. While possessing a body, the Strix maintains all of its Social and Mental traits, but takes on the Physical traits of the body (including Attributes and the purely Physical Disciplines: Celerity, Resilience and Vigor, all of which may affect the creature’s Initiative, Defense, Speed and Size ratings). The Strix replaces the mind of the body with the Strix’s own — it cannot access the memories or Mental or Social Attributes and powers of the possessed individual (although those Attributes tied solely to appearance, such as Striking Looks or Noble Heritage remain in effect). Striges can learn Mental and Social Disciplines just as vampires do, and Striges carry the Disciplines from body to body as the Nemeses move.

Deceased mortal bodies decay as normal, losing one dot from each Physical Attribute every two days, and losing a dot of Health per day after their Stamina reaches zero. When the Dexterity of a body reaches zero, it can no longer move under its own power. When the Health reaches zero, it collapses into a heap of rotten flesh and bone.

Vampire bodies do not rot as mortal ones do, but must be sustained with blood, just as with normal vampires. Vampire bodies may use Vitae to enhance Physical Attributes, heal wounds and fuel Disciplines as normal. Since they are technically already torpid, possessed vampire bodies are not vulnerable to staking, and will not fall into torpor when all of the Health boxes on their sheets are filled with lethal damage. Possessed vampire bodies can only be stopped by destroying them utterly. A torpid vampire who is abandoned by a possessing Strix can subsequently be revived as normal, and she will have no memory of what was done with her body.

Striges cannot move through fire, and cannot take possession of a body that is aflame. A Strix caught inside a burning body will not be able to escape it unless there is a part of the body that is submerged in water (creating an escape route that will not catch fire).

Striges cannot flee a body in sunlight. They can, however, move around in the body as normal.

A Strix that is inside a body at the moment it drops to zero Health (or, in the case of a vampire, experiences Final Death) is dissipated and destroyed.

Spiritual Essence – A disembodied Strix can hover, glide or fly at the Speed listed above. Permeable physical barriers do not impede Striges; they can pour themselves through even the tiniest cracks such as smoke. Striges can even pass slowly through stone or wood, seeping into the microscopic spaces in the material and moving through it at a 10th of their normal Speed. The only barriers Striges cannot pass are flame and sunlight, which are solid to them.

Physical attacks are completely harmless to disembodied Striges. They cannot be moved or blown about by winds or other physical forces. Any attack that would normally injure a spirit can harm a Strix in disembodied form. The Striges are vulnerable to exorcisms and abjura-

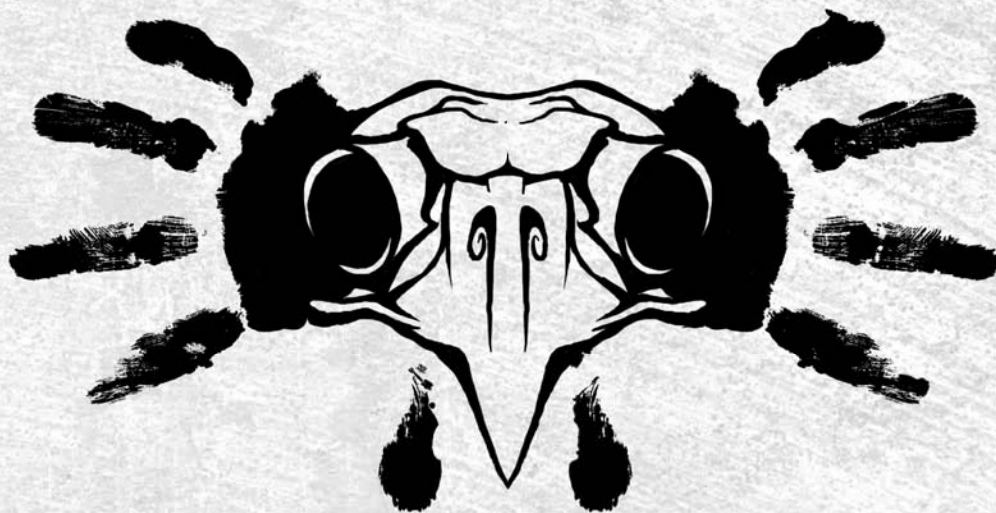
tions (see p. 214 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Sense Blood – A Strix can sense the presence of its own blood and all of those who bear it, allowing it to spot any other Strix, any member of the Julii or any being that bears the Vitae of the Julii (such as ghouls or other vampires who have recently fed upon one of the Julii and not yet expended the Vitae gained). Striges cannot use this Ability sense vampires with the Mask of Tranquility (Obfuscate ••) power active, although they may perceive them by normal means.

Embrace – A Strix possessing a mortal body may Embrace a vampire, just as the Kindred do. Doing so destroys the Strix, though, as its essence passes into the blood fueling the Embrace. Any vampire so Embraced will inherit certain qualities from the Strix; for all intents and purposes, she is a vampire of the Julii.

Owl Eyes – The Striges can see clearly in conditions of low light, including those that are so dim that normal mortals and Kindred would consider complete darkness.

Dominate – Every Strix may use the Discipline of Dominate up to the third level (so: Command, Mesmerism and The Forgetful Mind) when the Strix is possessing a body. The Striges cannot Dominate a victim when they are disembodied.



BLOODLINES

There are a number of Kindred bloodlines known to be active in and around Rome, each diverging from its parent clan and bearing a curse of its own, just as

they do in the modern nights. Three of those lines are profiled here, and may be used to add variety or mystery to your chronicle.

LARVAE

The bloodline known as the Larvae is a dangerous family of Gangrel operating at the fringe of the Camarilla, providing unsavory and illegal services to the legitimate Kindred of Rome. Criminal mercenaries, the Larvae hire themselves out at a premium, mercilessly killing their targets, living or otherwise, in the most painful and humiliating manner the Larvae can conceive. They are, as their name suggests, the “malicious dead.”

The line was founded by a conquered barbarian Gangrel named Godaric, later known to the vampires of Rome as Godaric Ferratus. A crude, vicious warrior, he was brought to Rome in chains after members of the Legio Mortuum tracked him down and ended a series of bloody personal attacks on mortal legionnaires stationed in Germania Inferior. Godaric was displayed in a punishing arena of Necropolis and subjected to a long program of abuse for the entertainment of the civilized Kindred of Rome. He was never released from his iron chains, and they rusted on his wrists as the years passed — hence the name humorously attributed to him: “iron clad.”

One night, an assembly of the Peregrine Collegia purchased Godaric’s freedom from the Senex, trading their territory and support in the Forum in exchange. Paying his liberators no thanks or respect, Godaric left the city without a word.

Somewhere out in the Roman territories, he Embraced two mortal soldiers who had abandoned their legion, teaching them his ways and language. Years later, they took childer of their own, and assembled a fighting unit

of their own. They returned to Rome, and murdered the Kindred soldiers who had first captured Godaric, then the officials of the Senex who sentenced him and then the prominent members of the Peregrine Collegia who freed him. Godaric was beholden to no vampire, they said, and bent the knee to no sentence.

They were hunted down. When the Legio Mortuum finally confronted them in a dark tunnel of Necropolis, the battle was shockingly fierce — and short. The legionnaires were destroyed, and the Larvae vanished into the lower levels of the undead city. Few knew where the Larvae could be found, and fewer still cared to approach them. They were a terrifying, brutal force.

It wasn’t long before the Larvae realized that they couldn’t survive forever on their own. Slowly, the Larvae put their feelers out in the lowest echelons of Kindred society, offering the use of the Larvae’s crude talents in exchange for blood, gold or information. Word (and evidence) of their work filtered upwards, and, while some called for the Larvae’s heads, others realized the potential the Larvae represented.

Now, perpetually on the run, the Larvae commit acts of shocking savagery on behalf of a surprising clientele; officials of the Senex and high priests of the Cult of Augurs make enemies just as well as anyone else, and sometimes a demonstration that defies the law is more effective than any legitimate show of force. Godaric’s mercenary force stalks the tunnels of Necropolis, drenched in blood and ash, kneeling to no one. The gold of the Senex purchases their passage now, and the fear of those who know the Larvae clears their path.

Parent Clan: Gangrel

Nickname: Brutes

Wing: Technically, the Larvae is a small band of hired soldiers working under the protection of the Peregrine Collegia. The Larvae have been known to serve the interests of Kindred in nearly every Wing of the Camarilla (although members of the Senex are loathe to admit using the Larvae in any circumstance, since employment of the Larvae always suggests unsavory or potentially illegal activity), but they are also wanted by law, and Kindred of the Camarilla who encounter the Larvae are expected to report their presence to the Legio Mortuum so that the Larvae may be detained.

Appearance: The Larvae make an effort to appear as dangerous and malicious as possible,

if only to frighten off potential enemies and perpetuate their reputation as cruel, deadly vampires. They are scarred, black-clad warriors, usually making little or no effort to conceal the weaponry they carry. Most wear strapped leather armor and ragged scarves, shirts and bandanas stained with blood.

Haven: The Larvae generally sleep in the earth or the trees as they move from place to place, and make little effort to keep respectable havens. Sometimes, when working in the employ of a wealthy vampire, they will make a point of staying in his palace, just so that they can enjoy the amenities and watch their host squirm.

Background: The Larvae are still a relatively small bloodline, and they know very well that their low population is just about the only thing keeping the Legio Mortuum from crashing in and destroying all the Larvae. Wary of growing too noticeable, they place heavy restrictions on recruitment and Embrace of new members, making it almost impossible for their ranks to grow unless some are lost in battle.

When they do Embrace, the Larvae prefer to take disgraced soldiers and criminal enforcers into their ranks, making integration into the Requiem of the mercenary bloodline easy and quick.



The Larvae are extremely wary about taking in Gangrel from outside the line. All of the members of the line are very comfortable with one another, and years of fighting side-by-side have formed ties of loyalty that outside Kindred just don't share.

Character Creation: Larvae Kindred aren't thinkers, and most aren't talkers. The line is built on the strength and speed of its members. Physical Attributes are almost always primary for the Brutes, and Physical Skills play a major role. Those with the wits to outsmart enemies and negotiate good deals are appreciated, though.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Celerity, Protean, Resilience

Weakness: All Larvae suffer the weakness of clan Gangrel. In addition, Larvae are violent, crude creatures, and

they have little capacity for mercy or moderation. Once a member of the bloodline enters into combat, even if it's just a friendly sparring match, he feels the urge to frenzy and kill his opponent, suffering a -2 dice penalty on the roll to resist this deadly rage.

Organization: The whole of the bloodline is organized into a single fighting unit, something like a combination between a small military platoon and a pack of predatory animals. All members defer to the leader of the line, and the rest of the members shake out into a pecking order based almost entirely on strength and experience.

Concepts: Battle-crazed soldier, mercenary assassin, criminal scout, back-alley enforcer, infamous killer, unsavory bodyguard, leering murderer



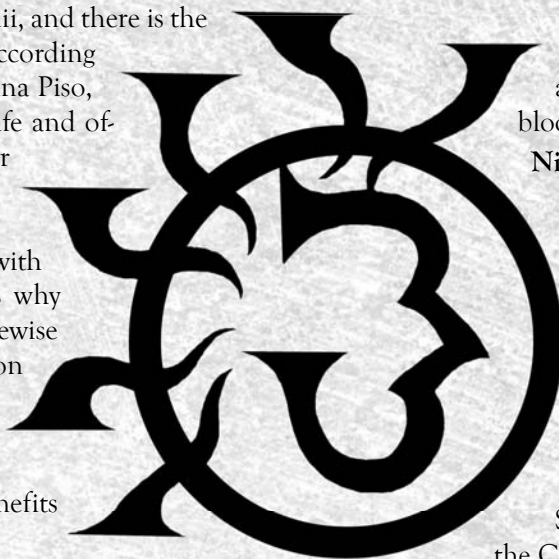
LICINII

There is the truth of the Licinii, and there is the story that they choose to tell. According to them, their founder was Licina Piso, a lowborn Roman woman in life and official of the Senex and inheritor of the Vitae of the Julii in death. Nobody knows, they say, why the childer she sired seemed cursed with infirmity, and nobody knows why all of their descendants are likewise cursed. Despite the superstition and disgust of their peers, the Licinii declare themselves legal and honorable members of the Julii, claiming all of the benefits associated with the blood.

Most of the Licinii who walk tonight are not aware that the tale is a lie. There was a vampire of the Senex named Licina Piso, but she was not the founder of the line. She, herself, was never Embraced by a vampire of the Julii, although her blood says otherwise. Instead, Licina was the misbegotten product of treachery: the childe of a Strix-possessed Nosferatu, created to sow discord within the Senex and install a perverse corruption among the ruling clan of the Camarilla.

The true founder, a low worm of Necropolis, is long destroyed. No testimony remains to explain his motives — or to undermine the apparently noble inheritance of the Licinii — and no witness can tie him to his childe. Licina herself also passed into Final Death some years ago, murdered by a barbarian vampire in service to the Strix so that she might never reveal the truth of her origin.

Most of the Licinii honestly believe that they are a family of the Julii, disgraced by a curse that the Licinii tirelessly work to lift. They consult with the Vaticinators of the Cult of Augurs frequently, paying dearly for sacrifices and auguries in search of release. The Licinii have no idea that there is no way to escape: they are as much Nosferatu as they are Julii, and the Licinii must bear the weaknesses of their mixed blood in equal measure. They are outcast because they *must* be, not just because of the work of disgusted and bigoted Kindred in the Senex. The Licinii have the stink of the worm on them, no matter how hard they try to shake it.



Parent Clan: Julii or Nosferatu; The Licinii believe that they are all of the Julii, but the taste of their blood evinces a puzzling mix.

Nickname: Pretenders

Wing: Almost all of the Licinii attempt to claim a seat with the Senex, arguing that they are entitled to it by right of blood. Many of the Julii dispute the Licinii's claims, though, and even the ones who are accepted can find themselves extremely unwelcome among the Wing of Ancients.

Some of the members of the line join the Cult of Augurs in a quest to discover which of the gods the Licinii have displeased, and work to appease them so that the Licinii may be released from their curse. All of those who do so are fervent believers, and many chafe against the cynical Kindred who claim much of the leadership of the Wing.

Those Licinii who abandon the attempt to redeem their name and those who decide never to bother making it in the first place often gravitate to the lower echelons of the Camarilla: the Peregrine Collegia and even the Lancea et Sanctum. To do so, though, is considered a kind of surrender, which many of the members of the line find unforgivable.

Appearance: The Licinii take great pains to embody nobility, wearing only fine, immaculate fabrics and jewelry of the highest quality. All of the members of the line bear a singular deformity, though: they become sallow and twisted, their limbs turning inexplicable after the Embrace. They all walk with a pronounced limp, and some are hunched or have serious difficulty with their arms or fingers. Many engage in practices that allow them to conceal or minimize the impact of their deformity: traveling in cushioned litters, wearing long sleeves or keeping their hands within the folds of their robes and dresses.

Haven: Many of the Licinii are rich, and keep well-appointed homes in the best districts of Necropolis. They follow the fashions of the Julii closely, eager to prove their acumen and loyalty at every turn.

Background: The Licinii are Embraced only from the best stock of Rome's nobility in an ongoing effort to break the curse of the bloodline. Almost every member of the line is Roman-born, and all of them are the very best their families have to offer: attractive, intelligent and skilled. It is rare for the Licinii to select anyone else.

While Kindred of the Julii and the Nosferatu clans could technically become Licinii, none of the former have ever attempted to pledge the line, and none of the latter would ever be accepted.

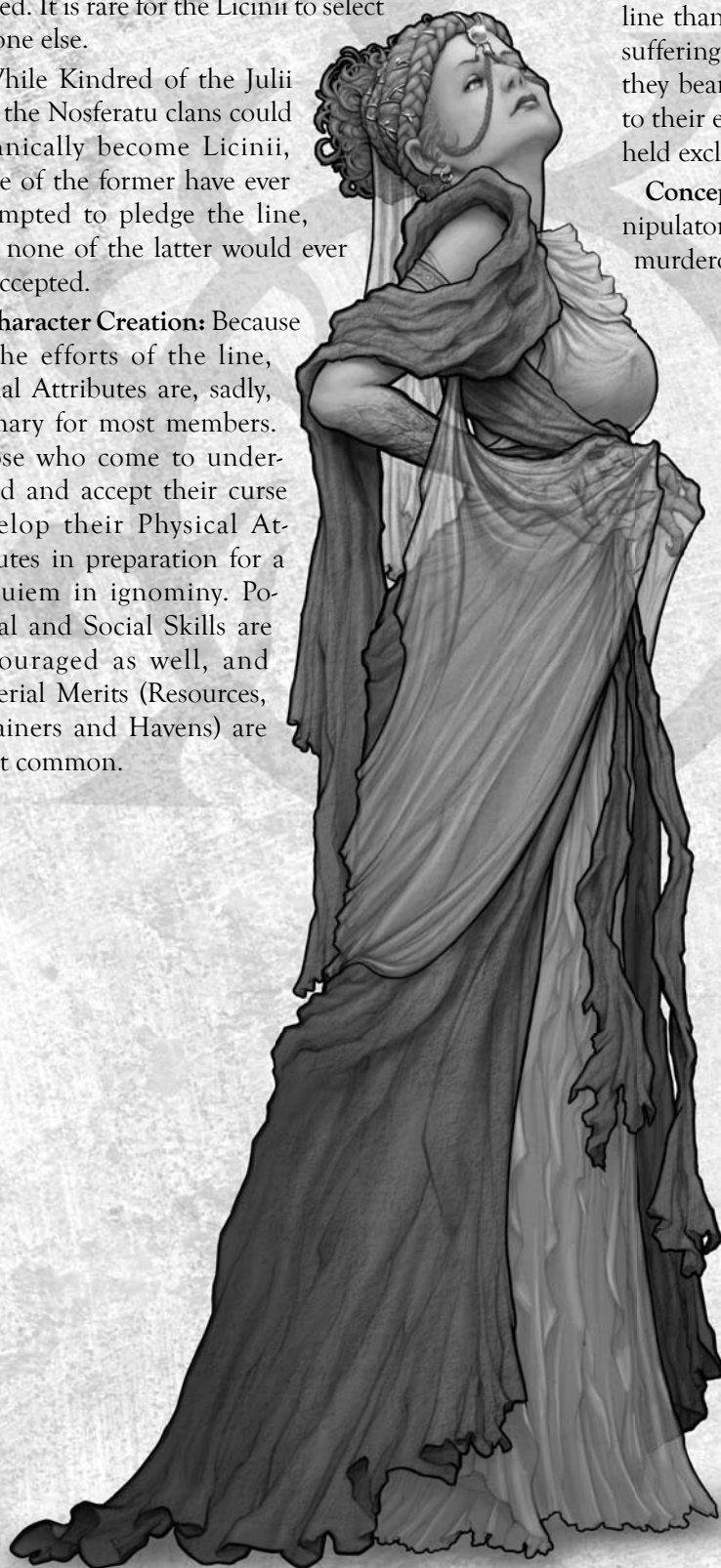
Character Creation: Because of the efforts of the line, Social Attributes are, sadly, primary for most members. Those who come to understand and accept their curse develop their Physical Attributes in preparation for a Requiem in ignominy. Political and Social Skills are encouraged as well, and material Merits (Resources, Retainers and Havens) are most common.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Nightmare, Vigor

Weakness: The Licinii inherit the weaknesses of the Julii and the Nosferatu clans.

Organization: The Licinii are less an organized bloodline than they are an extended family, sharing in their suffering and working to lessen the effect of the stigma they bear. Younger members of the line pay deference to their elders, but there are no laws, traditions or rules held exclusively by the family.

Concepts: Impassioned speaker, twisted back-room manipulator, fervent Vaticanator, hopeless failed politician, murderous toady, desperate slave to fashion



MORBUS

The Morbus are a nascent bloodline, just emerging in the nights of ancient Rome. Some Morbus, gifted with an understanding of their purpose by the teachings of Thascius Egnatianus Hostilinus, their founder and patron, operate quietly and comfortably within the ranks of the Lancea et Sanctum, visiting themselves upon the mortal populace with the assured dedication of holy servants. Other Morbus, unaware of their heritage or unwilling to see themselves as divine plague-bearers, believe that they are only indulging a rarefied (if peculiar) taste for diseased blood, or simply wonder if they have gone mad.

Their founder, Thascius Egnatianus Hostilinus, once a bandit, now a great and fervent leader among the Lancea et Sanctum, was known to the vampires of the Camarilla as *Pestilens*, “the Plague,” for the rapid spread of his religious teachings and his rumored predilection for feeding on diseased blood. His childer, and their childer and theirs — all are believed to follow his upstart faith, and all are cursed to feed as he does.

The Afflicted are charged with a holy mission, encoded within the public declarations of their founder. They see themselves as part of the Christian God’s holy plan, visiting the plague-ridden mortals with a merciful hand in times of pestilence, and seeding the unbelieving human stock with disease in times of calm. The Morbus are God’s servants in judgment, hastening apocalypse to drive the sinful mortals into the faith, and winnowing their ranks so that the Kindred of the Camarilla are subject to famine and tribulation, so that they, too, might turn away from indolence and sin.

Even those who are not willing participants in the mission of Hostilinus find themselves fulfilling it in order to survive. They must move among the diseased mortals of Rome (because, argues Hostilinus, God has deemed it so), and they must spread their disease when it fades, else risk starvation.

Those outsiders who discover the predilections of the Morbus are absolutely horrified. No humane vampire of the Camarilla can comprehend the coldness that they ascribe to the plague-bearing children of Hostilinus, believ-

ing that the Morbus inflict themselves and their disease upon the unsuspecting mortals with knowing cruelty. Even those vampires who give themselves over to the Beast don’t appreciate the tendency of the Morbus to taint the mortal stock, thinning their numbers and making feeding more unpleasant, if not more difficult. Furthermore, elements within the Senex have taken to portraying the Morbus as possessed by the worst of Sanctified fanaticism, ripping through the feeding stock in the name of their misbegotten faith, with little or no concern for what they do. Every time a plague scare rises among the mortals of Rome, a motion within the Senex dispatches officials of the Legio Mortuum, and Necropolis is stormed in search of Morbus Kindred (or unlucky, ordinary Mekhet) to pin the blame on.

Nobody really believes that the Morbus are going to survive for long. The officials of the Camarilla constantly push to wipe the Morbus out completely, and even Hostilinus himself preaches the imminent judgment of the Christian God, declaring openly that he, the whole of the Morbus line and every member of Kindred society are only decades away from their final release. Thus, the Morbus constantly defy the laws of the Camarilla, constantly fall to the claws and fangs of the Legio and constantly replenish their ranks with new members, ensuring that their work continues unabated until the coming of the fateful night of rapture.

Parent Clan: Mekhet

Nickname: The Afflicted

Wing: Those Morbus who know and understand what they have become are likely to join the Lancea et Sanctum under the guidance of their founder, Thascius Egnatianus Hostilinus. The rest of the members of the line, operating in ignorance, attempt to conduct their Requiem as normal Mekhet, joining with any of the Wings of the Camarilla that would ordinarily attract them.

Appearance: The Morbus make an effort to appear as normal as possible, blending in with the rest of their clan and hoping to escape notice. Those who come to understand their affliction sometimes turn to self-inflicted punishments as an expression of regret or a

means of appealing to God. Some even become monks and hermits, dressing in rags and wandering alone, away from Necropolis. While few will deny their identity when questioned, the Morbus don't see any reason to advertise — especially because the forces of the Camarilla are so eager to wipe the Morbus out and bring their divine mission to a close.

Haven: The Afflicted must, by necessity, house themselves in or near the worst neighborhoods of Rome so that the vampires can find access to the diseased blood they need to survive. Most dwell in those levels of Necropolis nearest to the ramshackle *insulae* of Rome's poorest citizens, or take up residence near the slave markets, hoping that their habits will go unnoticed in a milieu of filth and abuse.

A rare few, taking the instruction from Hostilinus to an extreme, work to conceal themselves within the most traveled parts of Rome: the forums, the markets and the bathhouses, hoping to sow their disease and cause an explosion of pestilence in the society of sinners.

Background: Christian mortals are most often sought for the Embrace. The more fervent the better; the solitary monks and wild-eyed seekers of the fringe cults are prized for their willingness to understand and undertake the mission of the bloodline. Occasionally, mortals of great station and influence are chosen as well, but their integration into the line is often difficult and may not always be worth the effort. Suicide and betrayal result from these “conversions” more often than acquiescence and cooperation.

Those rare Mekhet who seek out the Morbus with intent to join are always welcome, whether or not the Mekhet demonstrate their faith. The willingness of the Morbus to accept any comers, even when they know that a betrayal is planned, is most disconcerting — and more than one treacherous Mekhet has learned the lesson that results: even if the Morbus are betrayed, even if the mission is disrupted and the servants of Hostilinus exposed, she has still become a member of the line, and she cannot resist the call of God's purpose.

When the ranks of the Morbus are thinned (usually because of the work of the Legio Mortuum), the bloodline is not above tricking Mekhet into joining unawares. The Morbus promise secret knowledge and hidden power to credulous new neonates, encouraging them to take lessons from the line and expend the

will to join it. Only after the neonates have done so do these Kindred realize what they have become — and many rationalize their behavior, pretending that they intended the result all along. Those who do not are released without harm; as with all Morbus, they can but serve the will of God in their Requiems, no matter how hard they try to do otherwise.

Character Creation: Most of the Morbus are selected for their inclination to philosophy or bold cleverness. Mental Attributes are nearly always primary for the members of the bloodline, and nearly



equal emphasis is placed on Mental Skills (such as Academics, Investigation and Religion) and Physical ones (such as Larceny, Stealth and Survival). Most Morbus come from poor backgrounds, so few are possessed of material Merits, opting instead for Mental or Social ones.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Cachexy, Celerity, Obfuscate

Weakness: The Morbus suffer the weakness of their parent clan, the Mekhet. In addition, as is with their modern counterparts, the Morbus of ancient Rome must feed upon diseased blood. They cannot replenish their Vitae from healthy mortals, although Kindred Vitae is still as nourishing as ever.

Most of the Mekhet of ancient Rome are not aware of the existence of the Morbus, so the bloodline does not suffer the same Status restriction as its modern counterpart... yet.

Organization: The Mekhet of the Lancea et Sanctum are organized much as an order of monks, gathering

together for study and taking lessons from their elders. They take part in the solemn celebrations of the scripture of the Monachus, and refer to their founder as a Saint of the dead.

In matters of Sanctified dogma, the Morbus speak as a unified bloc, following the words of their founder and arguing against any perceived dilution of their scripture. They are extremely active in the ongoing debate to canonize the teachings of the Monachus, and are not above striking out at opposing factions (or their feeding stock) in an effort to bolster their position.

Those Morbus who shun the beliefs of the Lancea et Sanctum are not forced to participate in the rituals and scholarly pursuits of the bloodline, but they are often watched and frequently pressured to reconsider their faith by their blood relations.

Concepts: Mad plague-ridden monk, wallower in flux, holy weapon, unwilling victim of the Blood, cowardly sufferer, feverish preacher, pestilential hermit



SAMPLE ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

NON-COMBATANTS

MORTAL CENOBITE

Quote: *It is right for the ones who serve God to be confined in themselves.*

Background: The cenobite might have been, when he was young, the son of a rich family. If she was a woman, she could be anything from the daughter of a Count in the Emperor's household right down to a common actress or prostitute. Whoever he or she was, the cenobite says it doesn't matter now. That's all in the past, and giving worship to God through mortification and hardship.

The past matters quite a lot, actually. The cenobite makes a point of telling his or her story. Maybe, as a young man, he did something terrible, and became a monk out of guilt. Maybe he was jilted by a lover or left by his wife. Maybe he simply met a charismatic monk like Antony or

Paul. Maybe she lived a life of terrible sin, or had been a concubine rather than a wife.

The cenobite haunts the city gates at night, asking people to stop and listen to lengthy sermons on the world and the flesh and temptation, and a dozen other things. But frankly, the cenobite is no Saint Antony or Saint Mary, and is neither a compelling preacher or particularly charismatic.

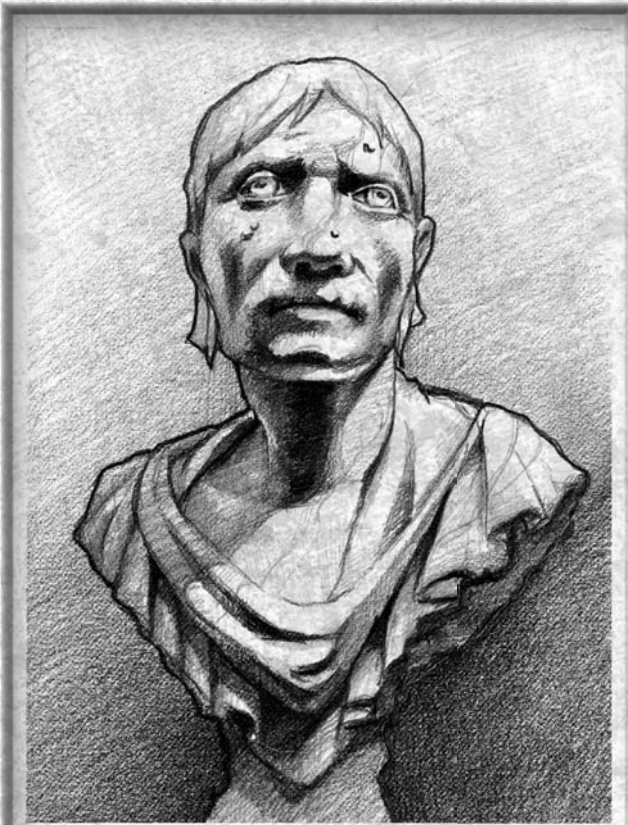
Description: The first thing anyone notices about the cenobite is the smell. It announces the hermit's coming, a smell of sweat and rancid hair and decaying flesh. This haggard figure comes shambling toward any likely target, croaking out words of edification and warnings of damnation in a hoarse, high-pitched voice. It's difficult to tell whether the cenobite is male or female, or even how old he or she is. One wild, watery eye stares out from under a discolored brow – the other has a cataract and doesn't even look in the same direction. The cenobite's hair is lank and thin, and his or her skin is yellow and covered with rashes and pustules. The few teeth he or she has are crooked and black, and the cenobite's breath is like the lowest *columbaria* of Necropolis.

The cenobite has terrible cold sores. The rough, sack-cloth robes and hair shirt cover a body so emaciated as to be little more than a skeleton covered with scabby skin, some of which is beginning to rot away or which holds colonies of parasites.

Storytelling Hints: The cenobite has a horror of sex and wealth. He (or she) particularly targets clean, well-dressed members of the opposite sex – the richer-looking, the better. The hermit internalizes his or her hatred for humanity, mortifying his or her own body with sticks and sharp stones, drinking only fetid water from puddles, and the like.

If the cenobite decides that a particular individual Needs to Hear the Truth, his life could be made quite miserable as the foul-smelling figure pops up wherever the poor victim goes, pronouncing dire warnings should the target not repent. Acts of violence against a hermit who follows one around in a public setting are cause for social death.

It's probably fair to say that the cenobite has something of a fetish for pain. He or she enjoys suffering.



The cenobite probably hasn't got long to live. Soon, he or she will die in joyful agony. If the cenobite is a woman, it might not be immediately apparent. Finding a well-known hermit's corpse, and then discovering it's actually a woman could be thought of by the public as a miracle in its own right, since the general attitude toward women these days is that they are frivolous and weak. Suddenly, an annoying figure becomes a cult figure, with her own veneration and maybe even a widely circulated biography.

Abilities:

Preach (five dice): The cenobite can certainly get people's attention, preaching dire sermons about the evils of the world and the flesh in a quavering, high-pitched voice.

Endure Pain (eight dice): The cenobite doesn't just have the ability to endure pain — he or she *likes* it, although the fact that it's a source of pleasure is probably a reason for more mortification, and more illicit pleasure and so on. The upshot of this is that no one is ever going to be able to torture this particular religious fanatic.

AGENS IN REBUS

Quote: *Oh, I think that the current administration certainly has room for improvement. Why, don't you?*

Background: The Agens in Rebus are officially a government courier service. Actually, they're the secret police. They're spies and informers, skilled in gathering information and adept at pressing capitol charges. This Agens has a partner close by — they always work in pairs — and always has access to a fresh horse. He and his partner govern the city of Rome. He has one pair of colleagues in every province.

He probably has a background in accounts, or as a secretary, and he likely distinguished himself by turning in one of his colleagues or superiors for a minor — but probably nonetheless fatal — infraction. Given the opportunity to travel and the offer of a substantial salary combined with bonuses for the information he gathers, he jumped at it, having realized that personal advancement often comes at the expense of others' lives.

Description: The Agens is a living man in his late 20s or early 30s. He looks wholly ordinary. People who meet him forget what he looks like within seconds of his leaving the room. His face is always tightly controlled. It's impossible to tell what he's really thinking. He might be smiling, or appear drunk or relaxed, but he is never off guard. He wears unostentatious clothes of good quality. Hidden under the heavy Gallic cloak he wears while traveling or on business, he keeps the Emperor's seal, his badge of office.



Storytelling Hints: The Emperor's secret policeman is quite possibly the most dangerous living human anyone could meet anywhere in the Empire. He doesn't have too much skill with a sword (although he always goes armed), and he doesn't appear to be threatening at all. But a word from him, and a wholly innocent man can lose his ears, his eyes, his hands or his head. And the Agens knows it. People who knowingly meet an Agens react with fear and hate, but they're unlikely to try to harm him. Everyone knows that he is the favored agent of the Emperor, and that his partner is close by. To kill one is to risk the full wrath of the Imperial court. Get on the wrong side of this man, and he's off on his horse, speeding to the Imperial court, with a story of treason fresh on his lips.

As paranoid as he is capable of fostering paranoia, the Agens sees any odd behavior as an opportunity to find out some evidence of a crime, and get a financial reward for it. His aim is to get rich and remain spotless, because he knows that the first men to get killed and replaced when the Empire changes hands are the secret police.

Vampires who meet the Agens could, if they're not extremely careful, find him more of a threat than the most insane elder vampire. The Agens knows they're hiding something, and he's far too adept at finding out the truth about them, and with his connections, the whole Camarilla could be in danger, even if they kill him.

Abilities:

Steer Conversation (seven dice) — The Agens is adept at making people feel at ease, and before they know it, he's suddenly elicited from them some statement, probably wholly innocuous in intent, that, through clever manipulation, he can turn into evidence of some terrible crime.

Lying (seven dice) — No one can lie like the Agens. Whether hiding his own tracks, concocting charges against some innocent or just baldly lying about who he is and what he's doing, the Agens never loses his cool, and he's always convincing.

Riding (six dice) — He's got at least one fresh horse to hand, and the ability to leap in the saddle and be off before anyone can catch him.

YOUNG NOBLE

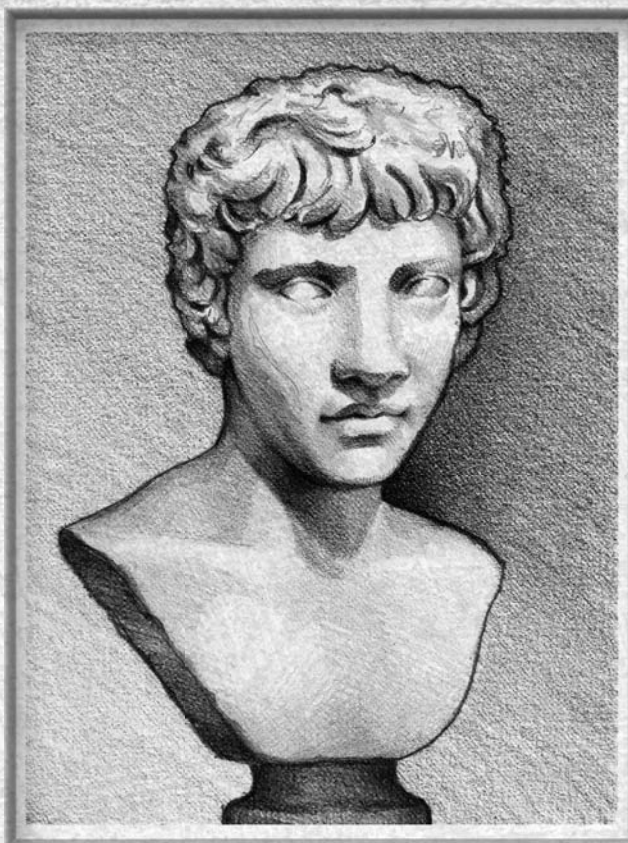
Quote: *I have 3,000 acres of Sabine land now, and little inclination to keep it for long. I won it at dice from Ostorianus the other day. So. Do you play?*

Background: The young noble was born rich, and his parents were born rich. He can trace his family line back to before the time of chaos, which is no mean feat in this day and age. Having said that, his illustrious ancestors would be most upset if they knew what this scion of such a grand old family was getting up to.

In fact, some of them, down there in Necropolis, *are* most upset about what he's doing.

He's wasted a huge portion of inheritance on wagers. He's frittering away his inheritance on dice and whores. He rides his horse at breakneck speeds through the back streets of the city, followed by his hangers-on, dependents and slaves on horses of their own, taking no notice of anyone who gets in the way. He brags about his ancestral holdings, even though he keeps losing slaves, tracts of land and properties in dice games. He's in training to be a senator, officially, but in his learning eschews Cicero, Seneca and Plato for less reputable literature such as the satires of Juvenal or the racy biographies of Marius Maximus. The young noble is one of the "wreckers," the students whose main pastime involves annoying his teachers and bullying weaker, poorer, more academically responsible students — when he turns up, that is. Still, his parents keep paying the teacher of rhetoric, because the alternative is admitting that their son is a no-hoper.

Maybe when he gets older, they think, he'll find himself some responsibility. Or maybe he'll get himself killed in one of the drinking dens he keeps finding himself in.



Description: He's good-looking, always fashionably dressed, foul mouthed and often drunk. He talks a little too loudly and doesn't really listen to other people. If he pauses, it's because he's thinking of something else to say about himself.

Storytelling Hints: This young noble is resolutely cheerful, arrogant, obsessed with games and utterly selfish. Other people's lives mean little to him, and duty means even less. He's more or less devoid of redeeming features. He runs after attractive women, no matter how low-born they might be (in fact, the lower-born, the better) and is in awe of the charioteers.

Kindred from this young man's family might consider it their duty to do something about his attitude, perhaps scaring him into virtue. Alternatively, their enemies might be using him to destroy their mortal family, by luring him into a world that will destroy him. A seemingly friendly vampire might encourage this fool to elope with the daughter of a poorer man (and then arrange for him to be caught, and face the penalty for it). Another might use the brothel the young noble frequents as a means of controlling him, or placing him under a Vinculum. Characters related to the young noble might find keeping him out of trouble a full-time job. Alternatively, he might be a member of an enemy's mortal clan, and thus the perfect tool to use against a rival with a sense of family.

Abilities:

Gambling (four dice): The young noble isn't a really good gambler, but he's a persistent one. In fact, he's something of a gambling addict. Whether dice, bets on chariot races or wagers on anything else, he'll put money on it. Sometimes, he even wins.

Carousing (five dice): He can't quite drink everyone under the table, but he can hold his own. And since it's his main pastime, he gets a lot of practice.

PUBLIUS OCTAVIUS MAGNUS, SPEAKER OF THE SENEX

Quote: *An excellent point, Magistrate. Most astute, and most cleverly presented to these, our learned compatriots. If I may, and I do beg your pardon, I would like to address a small flaw in your logic.*

Background: A wealthy senator of the Republic in life, P. Octavius Magnus treats his Requiem exactly as he did his mortal days: an ongoing opportunity to display his cleverness, fatten his coffers and feed his ego. His Embrace was a reward for his skill in scholarly argument and a punishment for his arrogance in contributing to an overheard debate between Kindred. Now he struts the Forum floor, plying his talent at structured debate for the Senex. He specializes in the justification of

programs and laws that benefit the upper strata of the Camarilla, and has won the acclaim and support of his compatriots by carefully ensuring that they stand to gain as much as he does whenever he steps forward with an argument.

Magnus is responsible for defeating a series of proposals for leniency in punishing the faithful vampires of the Lancea et Sanctum, and is eager to engage on the subject, coming from a popular and unassailable position.

Description: A dignified, elderly man, Magnus wears the toga of the Senex with ease and confidence. His eyes and forehead are seamed with the deep lines of an aged intellectual. His body is slightly plump and pale, betraying the easy, coddled life he lived.

Storytelling Hints: Magnus is quietly smug, listening carefully to everything that happens around him so that he can best arrange the argument that will bring him what he wants. He has no real moral baseline, and will speak out in favor of any measure that directly benefits him and as many of his fellow members of the Senex as possible. If he sees no personal gain, he will rarely risk making a statement of opinion.

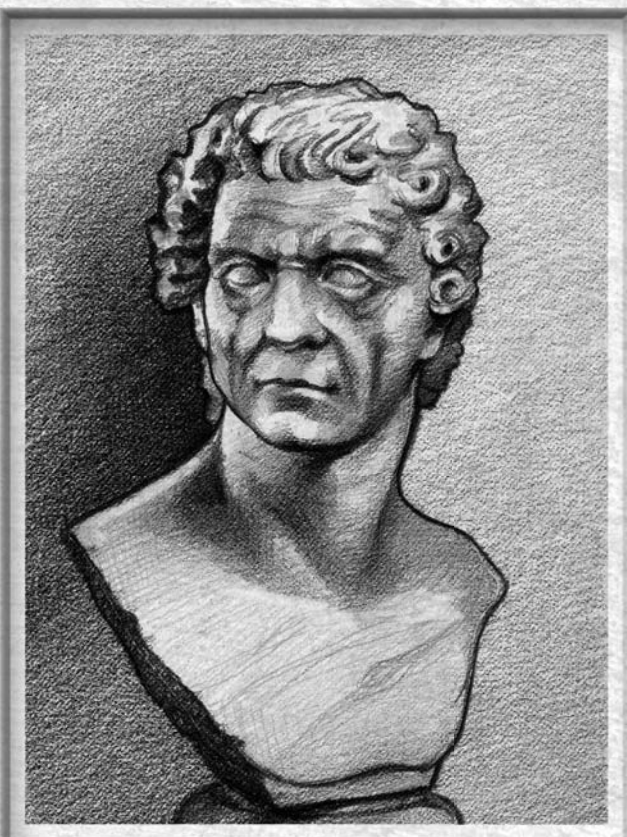
If anyone makes an argument based on faith, Magnus quickly leaps at the chance to tear the argument apart, fueled by previous successes and recognizing it as a perceived weakness in the speaker. If an argument turns against him, he will risk great sums — possibly even his Requiem itself — to prevent humiliation.

Abilities

Public Speaking (dice pool 7) – Magnus is an entertaining and intelligent speaker, and he thrives on debate. Public speaking is his calling, and he takes to it like a fish to water, fairly bursting with energy when presented with the opportunity to address a crowd.

Politics (dice pool 5) – This is a vampire with an innate understanding of risk and benefit, in the political sense. He has a talent for backing the right horse, and somehow manages to make it look like he was always on the winning side... probably because his skill ensures that his night-to-night conversations are pointedly bland. He always seems to be supporting everybody, but is very difficult to actually pin down with a direct question.

Appraisal (dice pool 5) – Magnus has been gathering riches and accepting bribes for a very long time, and has developed the ability to appraise valuables with a quick glance. It's pretty hard to pass a forgery by him, and it's equally difficult to convince him he'll want a parcel of land if it's less than ideal.



PORTIA, VATICINATOR OF THE CULT OF AUGURS

Quote: *Hmph. I can assure the favor of the gods if you're willing to make the appropriate sacrifices. Are you sure this is all you can afford?*

Background: This unhappy vampire was once the wife of a merchant, Embraced after a violent feeding frenzy resulted in her untimely death. Shamed by his actions, the noble Kindred who brought her into the Requiem dragged her down to Necropolis and abandoned her there, never revealing himself.

She was found and taken in by the Cult of Augurs, and educated in their way of divination and ritual. With time, she came to believe that the gods had directed her to her destination in undeath so that she could bring their message to the Kindred of the Camarilla, hoping to help cushion the pain of the Requiem for all. It is her belief that her mortal husband met his end because of a failure to perform the proper sacrifices before entering into his ventures.

Description: Portia is a sweet, small woman dressed in a simple white robe and cowl. Her long black hair is kept back with a white scarf. Her eyes are soft and brown, brimming with sad understanding. She moves slowly and carefully, still carrying the trauma of her Embrace with her wherever she goes.



Storytelling Hints: Poor Portia. Her sire made a victim of her when he gave her his Vitae, and she seems to be setting herself up for more pain and disgrace, no matter how kind her intentions. She's a true believer, suffering the derision of her corrupt compatriots and the dismissal of those Kindred who say they're looking for honest auguries, but are really just seeking a convenient stamp of approval from on high.

If she encounters characters who actually appreciate her honesty and abiding faith in the gods, Portia will be almost overwhelmed with relief, and will scramble to provide help and comfort to them. She draws the line at lying about the will of the gods, though, and expects that anyone who takes them seriously, as she does, should be ready to make the appropriate sacrifices to get in good graces.

Abilities

Augury (dice pool 6) – Portia might be blind to the real workings of the Cult of Augurs, but she's put a lot into learning the ins and outs of proper augury. She can be relied upon to perform any divination properly, and to accurately report the result (unlike many of her corrupt contemporaries). She won't hold back if the news is bad, though.

Provoking Pity (dice pool 6) – Whether she knows it or not, this vampire cuts a truly pathetic figure. The cynical Kindred of the Camarilla's upper strata tend to think of her as a mild lunatic, and the more credulous lower vampires see the pain in her. Either way, most of the vampires who encounter her are moved to leave her in peace. Even the most boorish and cruel Kindred fall silent when they see her. Nobody wants to add to her sufferings.

Negotiation (dice pool 5) – Everybody wants something from the gods, and nobody wants to pay more than they have to. Portia sees tough negotiation as a benefit to all: if she wrings a greater sacrifice out of a vampire seeking augury, the gods will be happier, and they will be more likely to favor the applicant. It's win-win, as far as she's concerned – so she fights tenaciously to get the most out of anyone who comes to her.

GALO, GUTTER-CRAWLER OF THE PEREGRINE COLLEGIA

Quote: *Disappeared, y'say? Into our tunnels? I doubt it. We'd see anyone who came down these tunnels here. Are you sure you're looking in the right place? We been here all night, every night this week. Didn't see nobody, did I?*

Background: Galo has no idea who he is. He's been beaten into torpor and awakened so many times that his

memory is a complete wreck, ripped throughout and shot full of fantasy, nightmare and confused imagery. What he does know, though, is that he's a member of the Peregrine Collegia, and he might have been one of the first.

For the past couple of years, he's been trying to piece together what happened to him, and why. He's kept to the shadows, assuming one new identity after another in an effort to shake off any old enemies who might be watching out for him, and surrounding himself with the lowest, most hated and most helpless members of the Collegia. Only a trusted few know where Galo can be found on any given night, and how to recognize him.

Description: A bent and filthy Nosferatu, Galo wraps himself in stained, frayed rags. His hair is falling out in patches, and his skin is mottled. He looks as if he might have been leprous in life, even though he isn't actually diseased now. His whole body trembles slightly, all the time – even when he sleeps. He stinks of refuse, and his flesh crawls with vermin.

How much of this is genuine and how much is an act is up to the Storyteller. Galo may be putting all of this suffering on while he gets himself together, making the effort to appear worthless and weak until his confidence returns. Alternately, he might be truly afflicted – but no less capable of escaping notice or disguising his weaknesses when it's necessary.

Storytelling Hints: This is a vampire who is very confused and very canny. He represents the lowest of the low in the Camarilla – the scraping by in the grimy lower tunnels of Necropolis. He knows how to turn his state to his advantage, though, and is expert at concealing himself and protecting others from prying eyes. He already has a number of loyal allies, grateful for his help, and he knows it.

Since Galo can never be sure if anyone he encounters is someone from his past, he is incredibly cagey in conversation. He always tries to make it look as though he already knows whoever he's talking to (just in case he's supposed to) – a habit that makes him seem a little addled, even senile.

Abilities

Camouflage (dice pool 6) – The most important thing for Galo, as for many of the Peregrine Collegia, is knowing how to avoid notice. When he needs to, he's perfectly capable of curling up in a tunnel, doing a great impression of a pile of rotten garbage or a diseased corpse. To keep the trembling of his limbs from giving him away, he rests in positions that place as much of his weight on his extremities as possible, tucking them away under his belly or back.



Dodging Questions (dice pool 5) – Because he can't remember what he is or isn't supposed to know, Galo does his best to avoid answering any direct questions. He's great at it, too – he just slips into "senile old fool" mode, letting his eyes drift out of focus and changing the subject. Most vampires with a time-sensitive agenda don't bother with him for long, even if he's privy to all the information they're after.

Disgusting Display (dice pool 3) – In an emergency, Galo can get rid of interrogators by putting on a very unpleasant performance. Encrusted as he is in garbage and offal, he moves in on his victims, letting them feel the full impact of his stench and opening his worm-ridden mouth to answer their inquiries. It's not the best strategy, but it does turn weak-stomached nobles away.

NOAH, MARTYR OF THE LANCEA ET SANCTUM

Quote: *Laugh if you like. Have your sport with me. Your time will come!*

Background: This vampire was once an enslaved Jew, set to work in the stables of a patrician household. He was quietly grabbed and Embraced by a member of the Lancea et Sanctum, freed and brought into the ranks of the faithful. His mortal master and his family died that night, although Noah claims not to know how or why the

murder occurred. He refuses to implicate his sire in the attack, and will not admit committing it himself.

Noah has witnessed the destruction of several Sanctified Kindred, as well as the electrifying effect their Final Deaths have had on his compatriots. Somewhere along the way, he decided that he was destined for fame and martyrdom as well, and he has been steadily working toward that goal ever since.

Description: Noah is slight and nearly completely human in his appearance. He's got a fierceness to him: the mark of faith (or, rather, the practiced appearance of piety), that gives most Kindred who see him pause. He gestures wildly while he talks, throwing a notable intensity behind his words and attracting attention. His dark hair is a tight mass of curls, and his short beard is well kept. He wears the simple, unadorned robes of a peasant freeman. His brow is smeared with the ashes of a martyr who died for the Sanctum, crucified before the dawn by decree of the Senex.

Much of the time, Noah bears the wounds of a recent beating. He does his best to leave the more visible wounds unhealed most of the time, wearing them like badges of honor.

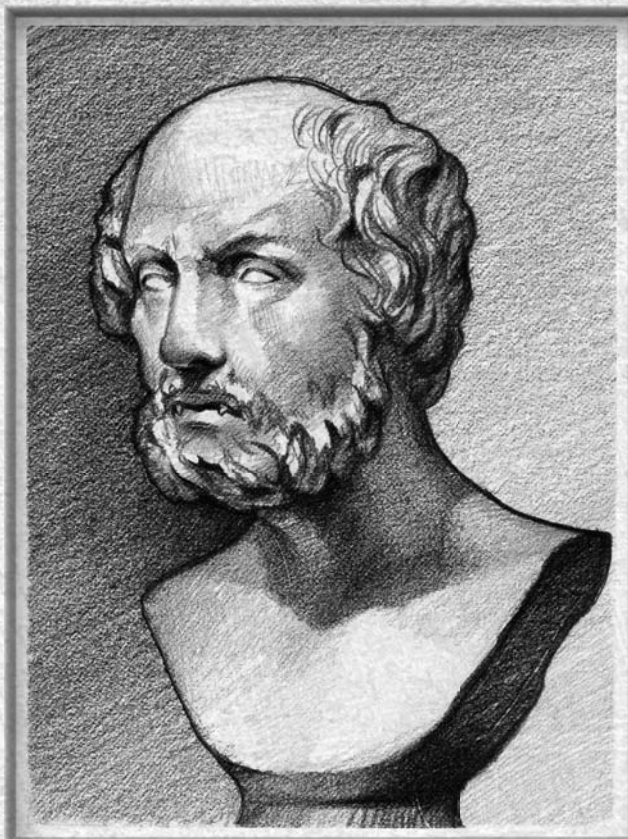
Storytelling Hints: Noah isn't a true believer as much as a vampire who hungers for the feeling of influence and a real legacy. He lived a hopeless life, and fully expects to suffer a similarly truncated Requiem, so his fervent declarations on behalf of the Lancea et Sanctum are an attempt to seize control of his impending Final Death and arrange it according to his own wishes.

This vampire likes to make noise. He likes to attract attention, and he gets right up in the face of any member of the Legion or the Senex who tells him to quiet down. He's constantly daring them to destroy him for his views so that he can make a public display of his faith. One night, someone's going to take him up on his dare — and when they do, he will be satisfied.

Abilities

Inspiration (dice pool 5) – Whether or not he's a real believer in the doctrine, all the noise Noah makes does a great job of inspiring those who are. His suicidal defiance comes across as great bravery and piety. He thrives on the notion of idea of motivating other believers, hoping that he will be sainted and remembered forever for his deeds.

Defiance (dice pool 4) – Noah responds to authority with a practiced defiance that is calculated to aggravate and frustrate his would-be oppressors. When he is confronted with an order meant to silence the Lancea et Sanctum, he's the first to step up and shout his denial,



disrupting the delivery. When he gets worked up, it's pretty difficult to resist the provocation.

Occult (dice pool 3) – Hanging around with the Sanctified, one is bound to pick up on the occult ephemera traded back and forth throughout the covenant. Noah's learned to recognize the workings of Theban Sorcery, and he knows a thing or two about performing "miracles" of his own.

COMBATANTS

OFFICER IN THE GARRISON OF ROME

Quote: *I'd prefer it if I didn't see you here again. You know I can't offer you another chance.*

Background: He's far from home. He's a Goth, an Arian, and he's been a soldier for the Romans for the last 20 years. He's seen little action. His unit of barbarian auxiliaries have been here a long time now, and they've gotten soft. He's worried that he's become soft, too. He's weary of the way that it's so hard to get anything done here.

Description: He's a hard-faced man in his late 30s. He still trains his men, and he's in good shape for a man his age. His armor and equipment are in good order,

and his men are killers, although they have not seen action for a long time, and they would be no match for the Herculians or Jovians, or, for that matter, the bands of Goths who even now are beginning again to raid the north of the Empire.

He talks in short, clipped sentences. The Gothic officer has no time for Roman pleasantries. He speak Latin with a pronounced Gothic accent.

Storytelling Hints: Mostly, the officer just wants a quiet life. He's sick of parchment edicts and having to bounce from one official to another in order to get anything done, and he's sick of having to see three officials every time he has to arrest someone. This is not the reason he joined the Romans. In the end, it's easier for him to take a bribe and pretend he didn't see you than arrest you for something he considers to be trivial anyway.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to think the officer of the garrison to be simply corrupt. He still cares enough about his duty to pursue those crimes he *does* care about, and he has friends in the city: the madam of the brothel he and his men frequent, the owners of a dozen Roman taverns, the shopkeepers and merchants who supply his men with extra provisions at a discount, the gatekeeper at the Circus. This barbarian is more respected than any of the clerks and notaries he supposedly answers to, and should one of his friends suddenly die, or get

robbed or lose money to some bizarre occurrence, the officer will deal with it, whether or not the bureaucrats are involved.

He's often the most important man present at the aftermath when something bad has happened. He's efficient in his own way, but he's also highly superstitious. He knows about vampires, and he fears and hates them. He might even know about ways to kill them. If he thought that there were vampires in Rome, he might be an implacable hunter of their kind. He'd fail, but not before taking down some of the more prominent among the Propinqui. A faction of Kindred with their claws in one of his bureaucratic superiors might try to use that to their advantage, pointing him against their enemies. It's a more dangerous gambit than they could realize.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Medicine 1, Politics (City Bureaucracy) 1, Travel 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 1, Survival 4, Weaponry (Sword, Spear) 3

Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation (Authority) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Drink All Comers Under the Table) 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Roman Businessmen) 2, Barfly, Contacts (Roman Streets) 1, Disarm, Weaponry Dodge

Willpower: 6

Health: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2 (0 in armor)

Speed: 10 (8 in armor)

Weapons:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Sword	2(L)	9
Spear	3(L)	9 (thrown)

Armor:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Chain mail	2/1	-2

CHARIOTEER

Quote: *On the third lap? Thirty solidi. Fifty for the fourth or fifth. If I lose a wheel, it'll look good, but that's two hundred more. I have my dignity to consider.*

Background: Many charioteers are still slaves, but this charioteer is a freedman — a Greek — and a free agent. He could be a member of the Green or Blue factions, really,



and to be fair, it matters a lot less to him than it does to the fans. He's a well-known figure on the streets of Rome, particularly in the rougher areas, and he hasn't had to buy his own drinks or try all the hard to get a girl for years.

He's a hero to approximately half of the chariot-fans in Rome and a figure of hate for the other. For the rich, he's an expensive but worthwhile henchman. He'll plant evidence, press false charges in a court of law (capitalizing on his public image to secure a conviction) and even arrange a murder if the mood takes him.

He's a damned good charioteer, but in the end, it's a means to an end, and that end is girls, money and drinks. But mostly the money.

Description: The charioteer is a fit, good-looking man, still in his early 20s. He's been a charioteer since he was 15, and he has the classic charioteer build, tall, slim and graceful. He's clean-shaven and clean-cut, with short, dark hair and a winning smile. He dresses in a tunic and breeches, and wears little to hamper his movements — a gold ring getting snagged in a rein could cost him more than just a race. When he operates more secretly, he tends to wear a *caracalla* (a heavy, hooded black cloak), which obscures him completely.

Storytelling Hints: The charioteer is wholly venal. He moves in a world where money talks louder and more eloquently than anything else, and he'd sell his own mother

if she hadn't been sold several times already. He has his price, and he knows exactly what it is. It isn't cheap. If the price is right, he'll throw a race, and if someone paid him enough, he'd probably even switch factions, although he might regret it later, as former allies start trying to kill him. Most nights, he's busy, either receiving drinks from adoring fans, enjoying the attention of two or more pretty girls or doing some job for one of his contacts. He's under no illusions about his value, and rarely asks for favors from the nobles who hire his services. Characters probably meet him in his capacity as a high-class henchman. He's just doing his job, and although he'll resort to all sorts of dirty tricks, nothing he ever does is personal, and he doesn't take things personally. Dirty tricks are just part of the race he's running.

Killing a famous charioteer could have terrible consequences — or really good results. Or both. It depends who's watching.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Craft (Chariot repair) 2, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Travel (Eastern Mediterranean) 1

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Larceny 2, Ride (Chariots) 3, Stealth 1, Weaponry (Knife) 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Horses) 3, Persuasion 3, Intimidation 2, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Chariot Faction) 4, Contacts (Criminal, Senatorial) 1, Fame 2, Language (Latin; his native language is Greek), Resources 3

Willpower: 4

Morality: 4 (Narcissism)

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 10

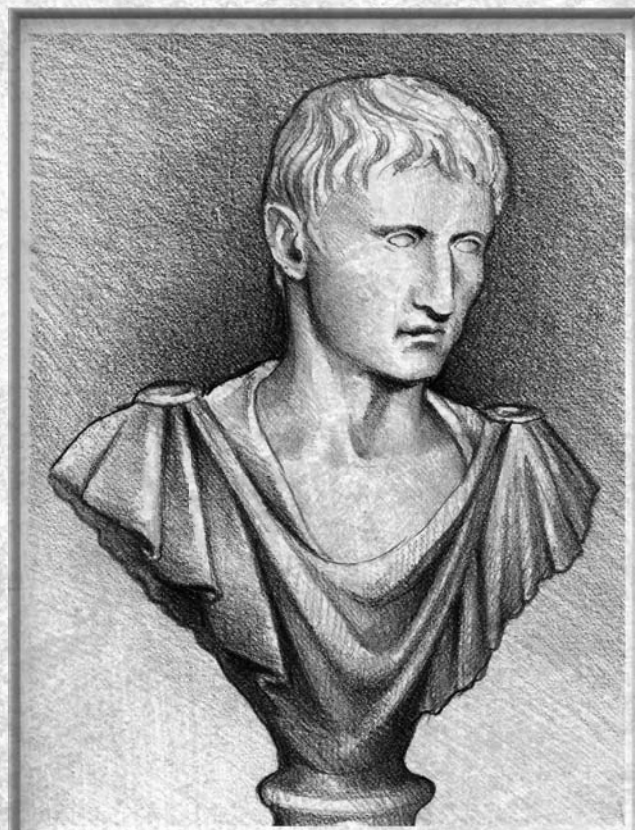
Health: 8

Weapons/attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Knife	1 (L)	1	7

SECUNDUS JULIUS RAPAX, EQUESTRIAN OF THE LEGIO MORTUUM

Quote: Stand down and surrender your arms. You are a prisoner of the Legio Mortuum, under suspicion of participation



in and instruction of illegal sorcery. Come in peace, and you will be allowed to argue your innocence. Resist, and be destroyed.

Background: In life, Secundus was an undistinguished enlisted man in the Legio XXI “Rapax,” serving in Germania Inferior. He fought and fell in battle at the Rhine in CE 13, succumbing to wounds on the battlefield. An Equestrian of the Legio Mortuum named Gaius Julius Drusus was with the army there, pursuing a barbarian vampire suspected of kidnapping a lesser member of the Senex and dragging him back to Germania for purposes unknown. Inspired by Secundus’s courage in death, Drusus Embraced Secundus and brought him into the service of the Camarilla.

Secundus proved a good choice. He took to the Embrace surprisingly quickly, and aided his sire in the retrieval of the noble vampire and the destruction of his barbarian captor. For valor in the field, he was named Equestrian and allowed to take the instruction of his sire. Now, Secundus serves as a tracker and point man for the Legio Mortuum, hunting and capturing the enemies of the Camarilla in his service. In undeath, he has taken the honorific name of his living Legion, the “predator.” Those who know him say it is a most fitting title.

Description: Secundus is a thick set, battle-hardened veteran. He is scarred, rough and always tightly wound, ready for action. His flint-gray eyes have acquired a permanent squint, as though he is forever looking into the cold winds of Germanian winter.

He wears the silver ring of the Equestrian on his right hand, and when he’s upset, he often taps it absently against the butt of his sword.

When he’s engaged in carrying out his duties, Secundus cuts an imposing figure. He wears the distinctive black *lorica segmentata* of the Legio Mortuum, its plates bearing the pits and scores of multiple battles, and carries his great shield at the ready.

Storytelling Hints: This vampire embodies the cold efficiency of the Legion. He’s dedicated to his duty, and will brook no interruption or distraction when he’s on the job. He is short with his speech — anyone who addresses him is likely to get clipped, monosyllabic answers to their questions. He’s not disrespectful, just unwilling to spend his time talking when he could be out chasing down the enemies of the Camarilla.

In battle, he should be a terrifying sight. He is practiced, focused and relentless. His high Resilience allows him to give the impression of the unstoppable force; nothing slows him down until the job is done.

Secundus makes a great antagonist for characters who break the law of the Camarilla or defy the orders of the Le-



gion. He works best if accompanied by several subordinate legionnaires, making full use of his fighting style to display the might of the Camarilla to would-be criminals.

Clan: Julii

Wing: Legio Mortuum

Embrace: CE 13

Apparent Age: 31

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Investigation (Murders, Signs of Frenzy) 4, Occult 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Ride 3, Survival 2, Weaponry (Gladius) 4, Animal Ken (Horses), Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3

Merits: Iron Stamina, Fighting Style: Formation Tactics 3, Quick Draw, Wing Status (Legio Mortuum) 2, Camarilla Status 1, Haven (Size) 2, Haven (Security) 4

Willpower: 4

Humanity: 4

Virtue: Justice. Secundus is a true believer in the law of the Camarilla, and he dispenses it with a firm, but fair, hand. He prizes the purity of his unit and their equanimity in pursuing wrongdoers. He is filled with respect for Kindred who uphold the law, and considers himself a sworn protector of all who serve the Camarilla in good faith.

Vice: Wrath. When faced with the criminal selfishness of the lower Kindred, Secundus can barely contain his frustrated rage. It's not hard to push him over the edge — especially when he's got to turn his unit inwards, instead of watching for foreign enemies. On any given night, characters are likely to encounter him on his second or third call to action, and irritation is always boiling just under his surface.

Weapons/attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Gladius (small dagger)	2L	2/S	–	11
Pugio (small dagger)	1L	1/S	–	9

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense	Speed
Lorica Segmentata	2/2	–2	–2
Shield	–	+2	–

Health: 9 (13)

Initiative: +5

Defense: 3

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 2 (11/1 Vitae/per turn)

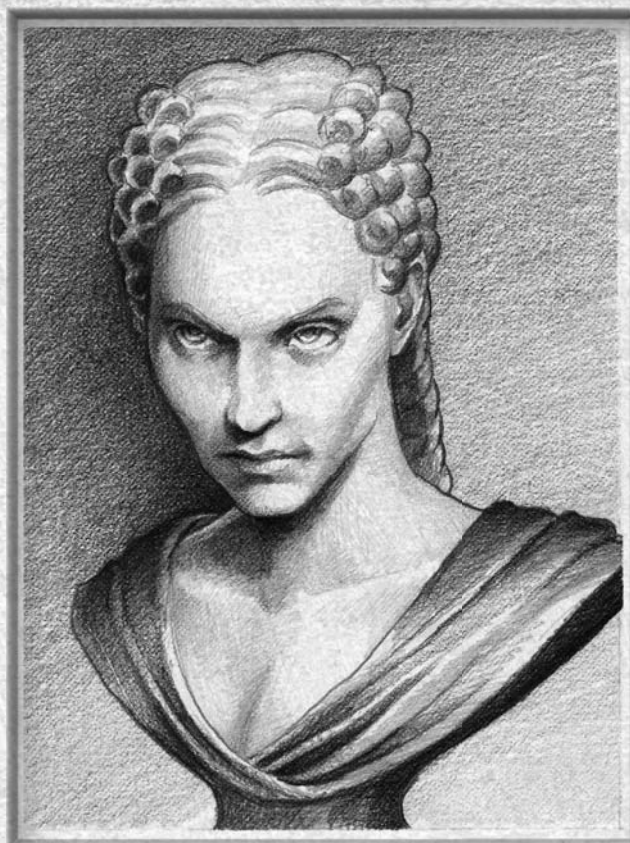
Disciplines: Dominate 1, Resilience 4

MIU, ASSASSIN OF THE PEREGRINE COLLEGIA

Quote: *Yes, my love. You are safe now. You are safe.*

Background: In life, Miu was an Egyptian peasant. Stolen from her home and enslaved as a young teenager, she was sold to a Roman brothel and set to work as a receptacle for the lusts of men of the Empire. Rage boiled within her, and though she was subjected to countless beatings for her “insolent looks,” she never broke down and accepted her circumstance. One night, she strangled a perverse old man instead of accepting his violent, repulsive requests. Fully expecting to die for her crime, she grabbed a blade from his belt, vowing to take down as many “good Romans” as she could before she fell.

Unbeknownst to her, the old man was never going to leave her room alive whether she struck him down or not. An assassin of the Mekhet was stalking the old man invisibly, preparing to murder him and fulfill a shadow contract taken out by a member of the Senex seeking vengeance. Amazed at Miu's strength and her viciousness, the Mekhet took her and brought her into undeath. Even as she succumbed to the Embrace, she stabbed him again and again. He laughed with astonishment, knowing that



he'd made the right choice.

Description: Miu is a deceptively slight girl with waist-length, glossy black hair. Her tan flesh has a sickly, ash-gray tint to it — the mark of her extremely low Humanity. Her eyes are jet black and incredibly deep, burning with a silent, permanently unsatisfied hunger for vengeance. She is exceptionally beautiful and delicate in appearance... making her job that much easier.

Because of the Discipline of Obfuscate, Miu does not read as Kindred unless a vampire bothers to pay attention to the tint of her skin and her lack of human tics and twinges. When pursuing a vampire target, she makes an effort to expend Blood and appear more alive, to further the illusion of “weak” mortality.

Storytelling Hints: Miu is a malicious, cold-hearted killer. Her voice is a seductive purr, calculated to further disarm Kindred who assume that she is not a threat. If she interacts with anyone who doesn't know what she is, she will make the effort to appear frivolous and harmless. If trouble comes up and she's not ready to deal the deathblow, she has no problem with appearing cowardly and running for cover. She always knows she can return later, when a better opportunity arises.

In business, or in general dealings with her fellow assassins, she drops the charade entirely, revealing her bloody-minded obsession with retribution. Her true face

sickens many of her more humane compatriots, but they can't exactly ask her to calm down.

Miu would make a great antagonist for a mystery-driven story, committing a murder and then pinning it on someone else (or deflecting blame by seducing one or more of the investigators). She can also serve as a surprising ally, lending some muscle to a coterie that faces a physical threat – provided they're either willing to pay or able to inspire her sympathy.

Clan: Mekhet

Wing: Peregrine Collegia

Embrace: CE 220

Apparent Age: 17

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1

Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 2, Medicine (Poisons) 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Larceny (Sleight of Hand) 4, Stealth (Shadows), Weaponry 3, Empathy 2, Persuasion (Lulling) 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Weapon Finesse, Fast Reflexes 1, Fresh Start, Contacts (Prostitutes) 3, Allies (Apothecary) 1, Striking Looks 2, Haven (Size) 1

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 3 (Obsessive-Compulsive 5)

Virtue: Prudence. Miu has the brains to know when it's not a good idea to make a move, and the patience to wait for favorable circumstances. She may take great pleasure in dealing death to the nobles and soldiers of the living world and the Camarilla, but she's not about to let her enthusiasm put her in danger she can't handle.

Vice: Wrath. A constant rage seethes just barely under the pleasant mask Miu has constructed. She is a victim of brutality, and she unleashes horrifying violence on anyone who reminds her of the men who used her so crudely in her living days.

Weapons/attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Dagger	1L	1/S	poison	9
Plumbatae (weighted darts)	0L	0P	poison	5

Health: 6

Initiative: +11 (+12)

Defense: 4

Speed: 12 (48)

Blood Potency: 1 (10/1 Vitae/per turn)

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Obfuscate 2

AED, BARBARIAN WARRIOR

Quote: YAAAAAAAGGGHHHHH!

Background: Once a powerful and respected warrior of the Caledonian tribes of Albion, Aed was a vicious enemy of the Roman Imperial forces. Leading a small band of his tribesmen, he took part in several significant battles (including the breach of Hadrian's Wall in CE 180) and numbered his claimed kills in excess of 50 men. One night, just before a planned raid, his camp was discovered and attacked by a band of Roman scouts. Unbalanced by the speed of the assault, many of his compatriots were cut down. Aed fought valiantly, but was overwhelmed – until a startlingly violent, animalistic stranger flung himself upon the attackers and scattered them. The bestial stranger revealed himself to Aed, offering him the chance to take Embrace and unleash even greater power on the invading enemy.

Ever since becoming a vampire, Aed has done just that. He visits himself upon hapless Roman soldiers in the night, shattering their bones and tearing them to pieces in the name of his tribes. Even after the Picts' surrender to the Emperor Septimus Severus, Aed fought without diminishing his rage. While the Romans starved and crushed his living tribesmen, Aed made an unholy legend of himself, bloodying the fields with the broken bodies of his hated foes.

Description: Aed embodies the nightmare of the Camarilla. Huge, naked, maned with fierce dreadlocks and smeared with blue-green paint and dirt, he seems the very picture of uncivilized, animalistic rage. He carries a terrifying two-handed cudgel, gnarled and notched with the marks of countless skirmishes.

Storytelling Hints: Not nearly the unthinking monster the Romans would make him out to be, Aed should be full of surprises. His hit-and-run tactics indicate a military intelligence that Camarilla Kindred are reluctant to credit him with, and his clear preference for Roman targets proves that his violence is far from mindless.

In general, Aed is meant to provide a serious physical challenge to characters. He could be brought into any story that involves the soldiers of Rome. While he is most logically placed in a Britannic setting, it's not impossible to imagine him being displaced by guile or force, or harrying a particular enemy across Europe. Aed could even be enslaved and brought to Rome so that he can fight in the Necropolis arena, to the amusement of his oppressors.

If anyone gets the chance to talk with him (and can speak his language; Aed does not understand Latin),



they will quickly learn that he is incredibly loyal to his people and dedicated to their protection. He can actually be reasoned with, but will be extremely unlikely to trust anyone in Roman garb.

Clan: Gangrel

Wing: Unaligned

Embrace: CE 182

Apparent Age: 23

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Skills: Crafts 2, Occult 2, Athletics (Running) 4, Brawl 4, Ride 1, Stealth 2 (Forest) 2, Survival 2, Weaponry (Two-

handed Cudgel) 4, Animal Ken 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation (Screaming Rage) 4, Persuasion 1

Merits: Disarm, Fighting Style: Gladiatorial 2, Giant, Allies (Caledonian Tribes) 3, Inspiring

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 3 (Fixation 5)

Virtue: Hope. Aed believes that the Romans (and the Kindred who come with them) are an evil force, and he sets himself against them with steely determination, bound to prove to his tribesmen that they can and will endure invasion — and repel the enemy. Every blow he strikes demonstrates that Romans are no less fragile than anyone else, inspiring hope in his free colleagues.

Vice: Lust. He'll never admit it, but Aed loves fighting more than anything else — and takes real pleasure in knowing someone who can't defeat him has no choice but to try. If Aed's not under pressure to make quick work of an opponent, he will take his time, taunting his opponent and slowly beating him to death just because it makes Aed feel powerful.

Weapons/attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Cudgel	4B	4/N	requires two hands, recover after swing*	14 (16 with Vigor)

*The cudgel is so slow and heavy that the wielder must wait a full turn after an attack before making another, or suffer a -3 dice penalty. All subsequent turns suffer that -3 dice penalty until the wielder spends a turn taking no action but to rebalance himself.

Health: 9 (13)

Initiative: +3

Defense: 2

Speed: 12

Blood Potency: 1 (10/1 Vitae/per turn)

Disciplines: Animalism 1, Protean 2, Resilience 4, Vigor 2

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REQUIEM FOR ROME

NAME:

CLAN:

CONCEPT:

WING:

VIRTUE:

COTERIE:

PLAYER:

VICE:

CHRONICLE:

ATTRIBUTES

POWER	INTELLIGENCE ●○○○○	STRENGTH ●○○○○	PRESENCE ●○○○○
FINESSE	WITS ●○○○○	DEXTERITY ●○○○○	MANIPULATION ●○○○○
RESISTANCE	RESOLVE ●○○○○	STAMINA ●○○○○	COMPOSURE ●○○○○

MENTAL

(-3 UNSKILLED)

ACADEMICS _____ ○○○○○
 CRAFTS _____ ○○○○○
 INVESTIGATION _____ ○○○○○
 MEDICINE _____ ○○○○○
 OCCULT _____ ○○○○○
 POLITICS _____ ○○○○○
 RELIGION _____ ○○○○○
 WARFARE _____ ○○○○○

PHYSICAL

(-1 UNSKILLED)

ARCHERY _____ ○○○○○
 ATHLETICS _____ ○○○○○
 BRAWL _____ ○○○○○
 LARCENY _____ ○○○○○
 RIDE _____ ○○○○○
 STEALTH _____ ○○○○○
 SURVIVAL _____ ○○○○○
 WEAPONRY _____ ○○○○○

SOCIAL

(-1 UNSKILLED)

ANIMAL KEN _____ ○○○○○
 EMPATHY _____ ○○○○○
 EXPRESSION _____ ○○○○○
 INTIMIDATION _____ ○○○○○
 PERSUASION _____ ○○○○○
 SOCIALIZE _____ ○○○○○
 STREETWISE _____ ○○○○○
 SUBTERFUGE _____ ○○○○○

MERITS

_____ ○○○○○
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FLAWS

DISCIPLINES

_____ ○○○○○
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SIZE _____
 DEFENSE _____
 ARMOR _____
 INTEGRITY _____
 INITIATIVE MOD _____
 SPEED _____
 EXPERIENCE _____

HEALTH

○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

WILLPOWER

○○○○○○○○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

VITAE

PER TURN _____

□□□□□□□□□□□□
 □□□□□□□□□□□□

BLOOD POTENCY

○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

HUMANITY

10 _____ ○
 9 _____ ○
 8 _____ ○
 7 _____ ○
 6 _____ ○
 5 _____ ○
 4 _____ ○
 3 _____ ○
 2 _____ ○
 1 _____ ○

EQUIPMENT

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 clan Attribute bonus) • Wing • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in-clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Starting Vitae = d10 roll

OMNIA MEA MECUM PORTA

Of course I miss it. How could I not? Look outside. I dwell in a cold spire of glass and steel. Most of what I own is made by the greasy hands of children half a world away or produced by hissing, complaining machines. I may not breathe, but I can smell, and I no longer detect the earthy aromas one picks up when walking the streets of old Rome — a garland of laurel, a trickle of bull's blood drying between the cobble, shit in an alley, pepper and garum and hen's meat floating out a window in the dark. I remember standing outside the Temple of Venus Genetrix feeling very small indeed. It almost crushed me, this sensation of total insignificance. (Did you know that rumor had it that the Venus Genetrix, Rome's divine ancestress, was said to be one of our own? One of the Methusalehs, old beyond possibility without the need for sleep, as I have done innumerable times since those far-flung nights.)

Then, I did not think I'd survive much longer.

It was not long before the conspiracy of what we'd done wormed its way into the ears of our enemies. Was the Senex pleased or angry? Would he hunt us or heap wreaths upon us? Certainly the Chapel and Spear had little love for what we'd done.

We did not linger. No need to discover the hate for us firsthand.

The Augurs let Lucretia and myself, along with a handful of other collaborators, leave and head north. At the time we did not expect Rome to fall to the Christians, later rebuilt by their own hands (gods damn that idiot Constantine!); no, we believed that it would all work itself out, that the great city would toss those fools from its back like a dog shaking itself free of fleas. We did not think that there would come a night when we walked among the barbarians, lowering ourselves again to the role of dogs to keep ourselves from being cast into dust. (Odd, that. I always expected to perish honorably — my own wish was to meet an honorable end and go on to the next life. But the Beast inside has other ideas, doesn't he? When pressed, he survives. At any cost, even that of my own dignity. Will he make me sup diseased blood served out of a wooden bowl set upon the forest floor? Yes. The Beast fights to remain. Though, by now you perhaps know that, don't you? I want to march willingly to my demise by your hand, but I don't doubt that the Beast has had other ideas.)

DIRA NECESSITAS

Lucretia and I lurked among the Thervingi for a time, dwelling in pit-floor stall-houses, sleeping in brackish water, sometimes deep in the mud. Their vampires were mad shades, luried night after night with their heads facing the south, not the north. They awoke fresh every evening, crawling free of the grave dirt in some kind of hollow resurrection. Some Arian heretics lurked at the fringes, though — so-called civilized barbarians who believed that Jesus the Son was not a man at all, but some kind of divine sorcerer created by God the Father (I even heard the word 'golem' whispered, though I do not know that other Arians believed this nonsense). Idiots. We were barely able to keep our mouths shut.

It was here among these Goths that we witnessed the sacking of our city from a distance. The Thervingi — among other barbarous peoples, all united now in their distaste for the Empire — had a grudge against the glory of Rome. They tried to explain the details to me, something about Roman treachery. How we helped them but then abandoned them, left them to famine, disease and the swords of the Huns. Alaric, their false king, was inspired by the death of Stilicho, a traitorous Roman general who was born a Goth. Alaric led a wave of thieves and monsters into the city, sacking my city. The siege did not stop at night, you know. Those vampires who were not kindred, not propinqui, went in under cover of darkness like wolves. They went hunting. Feasting.

The Senate reportedly offered the barbarians tribute and for that they ceased the siege. But the tribute failed to manifest. Honorius thought not to pay. And so the siege continued. Alaric gutted the city. I watched as the men held up the treasures of the Empire by flickering torches . . . the gleam of bronze, the way firelight

plays off a painting or a hunk of broken frieze. Women and children, now slaves to the barbarians, dragged back through mud and briars. Knees bleeding, wasting all that sweet blood on broken thorns.

Lucretia helped them, you know. She drew maps for them. Gave their pale shades the entrances to Necropolis so that their brutes and fiends could stalk the halls of our dark kingdom. Treacherous bitch. I left her — quietly so that she could not command me otherwise. I fled the monsters, taking a few last small treasures and trinkets from the Empire as my own tribute.

I've heard rumors that it was I who betrayed the Empire. That I provided maps and the locations of havens, but that is impossible. I am a soldier — gone soft, yes, but a soldier still. Even when I betrayed Rome by blighting Renatus, I did that because I thought it was right. For the good of the Senex. Would I truly throw that all away, casting pearls before barbarian swine? I think not.

I would meet Lucretia on and off over the many decades. She is destroyed by now, so I believe. How she met her end is confused, I . . . sometimes have memory of it, but the memory is never the same. Was I sleeping at the time, resting deep in some barrow? I have odd flashes sometimes of a great dragon with a jagged diadem upon each of its heads, closing black coils around her. Other images are less consistent. Nemesis stalking the Black Forest. Ash carried on foam-capped lake water. An olive branch formed into a stake.

I weep at what I lost. At what the world lost. The divide of god and gods, of vampire and man, of civility and barbarism . . . it widened faster and faster until all of the glory of Rome broke free of its moorings and tumbled into the darkness.

ANGUIS IN HERBA

I'm sure by now you cannot help but be staggered by all of this. How old did you think I was? I know I've never told you, wouldn't care to allow such impolite questions to roll off your tongues. But surely you heard rumors? What did they say? A hundred years? Three hundred? Surely none suggested I've seen two millennia come and go, true?

Ah, and I'm quite certain that no one was aware of the greater treachery, because they'd have had me up on a cross by now. You know, for a time . . . I almost believed it. For a while, I felt a stirring of faith whenever anyone called me Bishop. Leading the dark mass, spreading my arms wide to encompass the whole of the flock — including you, childer. Playing shepherd, playing adherent to the Dark Prophet, pretending to take your confessions with pious ears and trying dearly to quiet the laughing inside my own head. If anyone should've known, it would've been you. The things I did to you . . . my hands and mouth working upon you the same way that Decimus had done to me, did you think those things somehow holy? Yes, of course I told you they were. But deep in the Black Spring, I always knew that Decimus's words were bitter lies spoken by a mad old man in the body of a young wolf. He claimed my many tortures were gifts to Bacchus, but they were no such thing. They were gifts to himself, deviant delights feeding the snake inside his heart. So, too, was it with me. I was slaking my own hungers upon you. It was no expression to the Lord, no demonstration of damnation. You're too naïve to have survived, don't you think? (And yes, I've heard the rumors that you were all destroyed while I slept this last time, cast into darkness by some faceless enemy. But I know those are lies, because I can hear you in my head. Cursing me! Threatening to come for me! Well, do it already. I grow weary of this.)

I am Renatus. Not exactly, of course, for he was a different monster many nights long ago, but I have since taken his name as an . . . honorific, if you will. An homage. He played at venerating the gods, when in reality he was a mouthpiece for heretics. And I have feigned heresy when in truth I still venerate the gods. When I feed, I always leave a mouthful for Bacchus. When I pray, I ask Rome's ancestors to raise that city up out of the earth once more to show the world the glory it has lost. In hidden nooks and caches across the city lie my many artifacts

and altars: a small bust of Minerva of the Flashing Eyes, a coin bearing the profile of Vulcanus, a cruet of bull's blood blessed by the eunuchs of Cybele.

I don't lie when I say I almost believed it. One night I awoke and thought that perhaps all this time I've been wrong, that what Constantine saw was real. One True God. Death and Rebirth. The Blood of Christ spurting from a spear wound and bathing us all. It was no grand revelation. I wasn't struck like Saul on the Damascene Road, I did not feel the warmth of blood on my face like the Dark Father. I saw no cross in the sky. *In hoc signo vinces*, I think not. And it was this lack of any great revelation that kept me to my faith of the gods, for the many gods I can feel. I can feel them inside me. Tumbling about like ghosts in the blood.

What has come before comes again. Think about it. See the parallels? The time of the gods has come again. I've seen the adherents of the Magna Mater deep beneath the city. I've seen the Crone in her many guises: Venus Genetrix, consort Isis, the many-breasted huntress called Diana. Hiding in their bolt holes the same way that the Monachus's rats lurked in the walls within Necropolis. One night soon, they shall wriggle free from their holes, and the Lancea et Sanctum will come crashing down. The gospels will taste like bitter wormwood. Pews will be broken into splinters to make stakes. They shall be put on crosses like their savior, for if they want to be like him so badly, so be it.

One needn't look too hard or too deep to see other parallels, too. A triumphant empire cast into disarray — morals on one side, depravity and deviance on the other. Fear of barbarians and foreign interests. A fat and lazy populace. Failing economies. Acts of disaster upon the natural world. It's all coming back around again. What's that the poet said? The widening gyre? Some rough beast sloughing toward Bethlehem?

Even the most glorious structure collapses when its foundation is rotted. You were the rot. Like beetles boring tunnels in wood or worms chewing pinholes in bones, you were the rot that weakened Rome's foundation. All your morality, all your claims of salvation and damnation — upon those things, you built a new empire. But those things aren't real. They're not stone or brick. They're insubstantial, as much a shade as any ghost.

The old gods are coming home to roost. Ours is the faith of the column, the belief of the stone and altar. Diana's arrow. Vulcanus's hammer. The cup of Liber Pater. Our morality is the fundament. It is the salt and the earth.

And now, look around you. We are the wood bugs. We are the bone worms.

The gulf widens, and the empire will tumble into the shadows again.

AUT INSANIT HOMO, AUT VERSUS FACIT

A girl murmurs now across the room, laying strewn across my bed. Sheets tangled in her perfect legs — skin that olive color that I love so well. It's nice to enjoy the blood of mortals again. It's been too long. She whispers my true name, tells me to come back to bed and finish the work that I've started. I will. My hungers rise anew, but for the moment they can wait.

Well. Morning comes and I am still here. Consider me disappointed in you, childer. Even now, I hear your voices chattering in my head, clamoring over one another to have your words be heard. Yes, yes. Threaten all you want. I'm beginning to believe that these are all hollow promises. That almost saddens me. Thinking of Rome again — as I always do upon waking from the long sleep — makes me long for that time. In Elysium, past the white rock and across the fields of lilacs, do you think that Rome rises again? Seven hills standing proudly like seven jeweled diadems in a golden crown? Come, cowards. Take me to Elysium. Own your threats.

Someone suggested once that it could all be a dream. That my memories of Rome are false, just a phantasmagoria of invented details (after all, aren't the histories of our time just that, imagined by liars and madmen?) . . . maybe I'm only a few hundred years old. Born a pauper in Portugal. A thieving magpie in Spain? Or maybe it's real, but I'm still slumbering next to the brother of death,

trapped in this torpid loop, this infinity, this spinning lemniscate. This parchment might not even be real. My strongbox with its lion feet and iron lock might be a concoction of an addled mind.

You must think me mad.

Perhaps I am.

But do not mistake madness for weakness.

Real or no, I'll always remember Rome. The thunder of hooves in the circus, the rattle of chariot wheels (the Greens, the Greens, the people want the Greens). The sweet honeyed blood of a slave girl. The turning waterwheels of the Janiculum Hill, creaking in the night. The hisses and gasps of the Kindred gathered in throngs outside the Forum. The Ministratores bringing us bowls of blood accompanied by apophoreta — little bits — of ran meat that one squeezes like a lemon into the mouth, the human muscle releasing the red juices trapped in its pink fatty fibers. Delicious. Glorious. Monstrous. Rome.

REAL OR NO,
YOU CAN NEVER TAKE THAT FROM ME.





GLORY REIGNS ABOVE.
THE LIVING WORLD IS CIVILIZED
BY THE VISION AND THE POWER OF ROME.
BUT NOT ALL THAT WALKS IS LIVING,
AND NOT ALL THAT FALLS WILL DIE.
WE DO NOT LIVE.
WE ARE BUT SHADOWS AND WORMS, CONSIGNED TO
THE EARTH AND SHAMED BY OUR INCOMPLETION.
BUT WE ARE CREATURES OF ROME.
AND THAT WHICH IS NOT CONQUERED
BY THE CHILDREN OF ROMULUS
SHALL SUBMIT TO HIS BROTHER'S GET.
IN THE NAME OF THE REPUBLIC.
IN THE NAME OF THE CAMARILLA.

— S. JULIUS MACELLARIUS CORBULO

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